

PROGRAM FOR PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED STUDENTS

Background

It is the declared policy of the Ministry of Education that educational services per se are available to all youngsters in British Columbia, regardless of whatever physical challenge they may have. If educational services cannot appropriately be provided in a traditional school setting, then the Special Education Division of the Ministry will assist Districts and school administrators to see that appropriate educational services are provided in the home, an institution, or other setting.

Education and health professionals share with parents the responsibility for providing the optimal opportunity for each child to learn. Our knowledge and sensitivity to the processes of normal growth and development assist us in recognition of those students who are developmentally vulnerable, are at risk, or manifest a specific difficulty. All those caring for the student must work co-operatively to enhance the student's development.

It is well recognized that the difficulties experienced by many students are a mix of physical, intellectual, social, and emotional factors and may lead to secondary emotional or behavioural complications. Of greatest concern is that some of the student's developmental needs are not being fully met. Whatever the difficulty, each student is affected uniquely and requires a unique program in school, based on individualized assessment, planning, and evaluation of progress.

Procedures

1. The District will provide an educational program for all school age children in the District, including physically challenged children; insofar as possible, these children shall be placed in regular classrooms or programs in the schools, although other placements may be found for children with severe or multiple physical challenges for whose needs the District cannot properly cater.
2. Children require varying degrees of support in order to realize their full potential. The provision of a continuum of programs and services is essential in considering the range of needs which exists. Programming shall be based on the children's abilities rather than their disabilities. The provision of programs and services shall follow the principle of the least restrictive alternative within available resources, thereby allowing each student to experience the most normalizing school environment possible. Integration of exceptional students in regular school programs shall occur at various points along a continuum of service, depending on the level of support required.
3. Maximum learning occurs where the efforts and expectations of various institutions affecting children complement each other. The home, the school, and the health and social agencies in the community are to work together effectively in order that an attitude favourable to the acceptance and development of all children may be encouraged and sustained.

4. Every child has a right to an appropriate education. The ultimate function of education is to provide for the development of all students as self-actualizing individuals, capable of making a positive contribution to society. The District supports this goal through counselling, consultation, diagnosis, and specialized teaching.
5. Identification
 - 5.1. Parents, administrators, teachers, and health professionals are key persons in the identification of difficulties. Once the difficulty is recognized, it is the responsibility of these key persons to initiate an assessment. When requesting assessment of a student, it is important to clarify the general nature of the student's difficulty. Normally the request for assessment comes after a preliminary discussion by the school-based team.
6. School-based Team
 - 6.1. The school-based team approach is aimed at arriving at educational plans for students who are not functioning in their present placement or who require special services.
 - 6.2. The school-based team meets to discuss cases referred by teachers and considers appropriate educational options for them. The school-based team shares its concerns with the parents of students involved and parents are provided with information about these plans.
 - 6.3. A consent form is required for release of confidential information to agencies outside the District.
7. Placement of Physically Challenged Students
 - 7.1. The school-based team helps to ensure an orderly, systematic and efficient system for the delivery of the identification, diagnostic, and remedial services to all children who require them. The school-based team process provides comprehensive evaluative and assessment data and helps in the development of a total picture of the strengths and weaknesses of each child.
 - 7.2. The school-based team meets as required to discuss referrals from its various members. Minutes of the meetings are kept, as well as a list of specific actions that will take place on behalf of each referred student.
 - 7.3. If the school-based team concludes that it cannot meet the needs of the student within the school, the team will refer the student for direct placement, providing all the criteria for a specific program or service are met. The team will refer the case to the Central Screening Committee.
 - 7.4. The District has developed and approved procedures for the screening and placement of children with special needs and for the involvement and right of appeal of parents regarding placement decisions concerning their children.
 - 7.5. Educational placement decisions for each child will seek to place the child in as normal a setting as possible, in keeping with the Ministry guidelines and the needs of the child. Each child's learning will be reviewed periodically for re-evaluation and adjustment of their individual educational plan.

8. Facilities for Physically Challenged Students

- 8.1. Provisions for the physically challenged shall be provided in all new school constructions, and a reasonable number of existing buildings will be renovated to permit access by physically challenged students to designated schools (see Administrative Procedure 540 - Facilities Planning). Wherever possible, District schools will share special education facilities with neighbouring Districts to increase efficiency and cut costs.

9. Assistance to Physically Challenged Students

- 9.1. The District requires that all teachers, students, employees of the District, and school volunteers extend aid and assistance to physically challenged students in the District schools.
- 9.2. Any person assisting a physically challenged student must take reasonable care in giving such assistance in order to protect both the safety of the physically challenged student and that of the assisting person (see Administrative Procedure 532 - Liability Insurance).

10. Special Placement Appeal

- 10.1. When parents have a concern relating to the educational needs of their child, they are to normally involve those listed in sequential order:
 - 10.1.1. The classroom teacher and/or counsellor,
 - 10.1.2. The Principal,
 - 10.1.3. The Central Screening Committee at the District,
 - 10.1.4. The District Principal,
 - 10.1.5. The Director of Instruction
- 10.2. If the avenues suggested above have been explored and no satisfactory resolution has been achieved, the parents may invoke the Section 11 appeal process.

Reference: Sections 6, 11, 17, 20, 22, 26, 75, 85, 88, 89, 91 School Act
School Regulation 265/89
Individual Education Plan Order M638/95
Special Needs Students Order M150/89
Support Services for Schools Order 149/89
Special Education Services: A Manual of Policy, Procedures and Guidelines

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