

2.3: Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies

2.3.1: Early Identification

Every school board is required to have procedures to identify each child's level of development, learning abilities and needs and to ensure that educational programs are designed to accommodate these needs and to facilitate each child's growth and development (Ministry of Education, Program/Policy Memorandum #11). In the Lambton Kent District School Board, procedures for ongoing early identification begin at the onset of registration for Kindergarten Year 1 and Year 2. These procedures are a part of a continuous assessment and program planning process which should be initiated when a child is first enrolled in school and should continue throughout a child's school life.

Philosophical Statement

The purpose of the Early Identification Process is to identify each child's learning needs and identify the required supports.

The primary objective of Early and Ongoing Identification of Children's Learning Needs is to help each child develop to his/her maximum potential and to guide teachers in helping all children succeed. This objective is intended for the full spectrum of children within our elementary education system. While the formal "Early Identification Procedures" focus on children in the kindergarten years, on-going classroom assessment and evaluation provides additional information to ensure on-going identification of students at risk of experiencing academic difficulties.

The early and ongoing identification process is a collaborative and inclusive process involving the home, school and community.

Early and ongoing identification is a long-term process based on the observation of developmental stages. For most students the school will begin to gather data when the child is registered for school entry in Kindergarten Year 1 and Year 2. The classroom teacher will observe each child in the total learning environment before focusing on particular needs and characteristics. It is imperative that teachers be familiar with the normal stages of development. The unique patterns of growth and diversity of characteristics of each child need to be recognized and respected. Since the process identifies both strengths and needs, the child's program can then be individualized accordingly. Continuous progress for the individual child must remain the focus.

On an annual basis Special Education Coordinators meet with appropriate community agencies at pre-school intake meetings in order to gather data regarding the special needs of students entering the school system. Any special arrangements that need to be made will be determined through the Coordinator's consultation with appropriate community agencies prior to school entry. (Refer to Section 4, Appendix 4.1)

In February, registration for Kindergarten Year 1 and Year 2 takes place. Orientation activities are organized for late spring, which enable the classroom teacher to gather data regarding the students who will be entering the kindergarten program in September. Once students begin classes, on-going observation is conducted by the classroom teacher and other support staff as needed. Refer to Appendix 2.3.1 for a portion of the Administrative Procedures for Kindergarten.

The Early Identification Process

The early and ongoing identification process is a collaborative and inclusive process involving the home, school and community. When developing strategies for the individual learner, the process involves continuous observations, interpretation, planning and assessment.

The Teacher's Role in Early Identification

The teacher will:

- Use a variety of strategies to maintain a systematic and ongoing review of each child's emotional, social, intellectual and physical development
- View language development as a major component of early identification
- Ensure ongoing observation and assessment which results in appropriate changes in the child's program
- Involve parents in the process and consult on a regular basis
- Accommodate various learning styles to enhance each child's self-concept and development
- Treat information from assessment as tentative, temporary and confidential
- Identify children with needs who require further assessment and record all information
- Recognize and provide support to children previously identified during their pre-school years

The Parent's Role in Early Identification

Parents should:

- Provide the school with pertinent information in order to assist the school staff in meeting their child's needs (Appendix 2.3.1)
- Complete the "School Entry Parent Questionnaire" (Appendix 2.3.2)
- Become familiar with the school program and staff working with their child
- Encourage their child to share the daily activities of their classroom at the end of each school day
- Share observations and relevant data as the school year progresses
- Participate in parent-teacher conferences and other relevant school activities
- Support their children at home (e.g. reading aloud, crafts, sharing time) and communicate any observations that would be helpful to school staff

Early Intervention and Identification Continuum for Students with Special Needs

The *accommodation/modification* of programs for individual children will occur at different stages:

Stage 1: OBSERVATION

At this stage, the classroom teacher will utilize observations over time to determine how to adapt learning experiences to meet the particular needs of individual children. When this type of accommodation is required, the teacher will record the various strategies that have been employed.

Stage 2: CONSULTATION

After a reasonable period of observation, if a child is encountering learning difficulties, or if a child has entered school with previously identified special needs, the Kindergarten teacher may wish to involve personnel such as:

- a) Principal
- b) Resource Teacher
- c) Program Staff - Elementary Program Consultant
- d) Program Staff - Special Education Co-ordinator
- e) External Support

Principal will:

- Convene School-based Team Meeting
- Access supports
 - internal consultant/coordinator
 - external agencies
- Communicate with parents
- Facilitate completion of SEA (Special Equipment Amount) if required
- Facilitate Referral to Special Services - Steps to Success

Resource Teacher will:

- Consult with Kindergarten teacher
- Observe child in classroom
- Consult with other personnel
- Complete achievement or behavioural checklist(s) or assessment
- Participate in School-Based Team meeting
- Communicate with parents
- Complete IEP (Individual Education Plan), where appropriate, through co-operation with classroom teacher and in consultation with parent
- Prepare the SEA claim if required
- Participate in preparation of Referral to Special Services

Program Staff - Special Education Coordinator may:

- Participate in School-based Team meeting
- Access additional supports
- Facilitate access to resources
- Assist with preparation of SEA applications and purchase of special equipment
- Meet with parents
- Provide information for child's involvement with outside agencies (prior to and after school admission)
- May recommend involvement of Itinerant staff, as per the Steps to Success

External Support, when requested, may:

- Provide information on child's development and needs
- Consult with school personnel
- Observe child in class
- Participate in School-based Team meeting
- Communicate with parents
- Facilitate transition from pre-school facility
- Provide direct or consultative service to child

Stage 3: INTERVENTION

Formal identification of exceptional students usually does not occur until there is sufficient documentation and history of learning needs, and modification requirements, which indicate the need for an increased level of intervention. If identification is required, staff will refer to Lambton Kent District School Board Policy and Procedures for IPRC, and parents will be given a copy of the Lambton Kent District School Board "Understanding the IPRC Process - A Parent Guide". (See Section 2.4, Appendix 2.4.3)

Success Through Early Intervention

"In any given classroom, children may demonstrate a wide range of strengths and needs. Kindergarten educators plan programs that recognize this diversity and design tasks and challenges that respect the children's particular abilities so that every child can derive the greatest possible benefit from the learning process. Integrated assessment and instruction that are suited to the characteristics of a diverse group of children but are also precisely tailored to the unique strengths and needs of each child can be achieved using the principles of Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction, and a tiered approach."

(The Kindergarten Program, 2016)

"All students can demonstrate competence in literacy and numeracy. Teachers can ensure their students' success by getting to know them through ongoing observation, assessment and evaluation, and then carefully establishing the next steps each student needs to take in order to learn."

Education for All, 2005

Early Learning–Kindergarten teams are the key educators of children who have special education needs. They have a responsibility to help all children learn, and they work collaboratively with special education teachers, where appropriate, to achieve this goal. They commit to assisting every child to prepare for living with the highest degree of independence possible.

Education for All: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students With Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6, 2005 describes a set of beliefs, based in research, that should guide all program planning for children with special education needs. Early Learning–Kindergarten teams need to pay particular attention to these beliefs, which are as follows:

- All students can succeed.
- Universal designs and differentiated instructions are effective and interconnected means of meeting the learning or productivity needs of any group of students.
- Successful instructional practices are founded on evidence-based research, tempered by experience.
- Classroom teachers are key educators for a student's literacy and numeracy development.
- Each student has his or her own unique patterns of learning.
- Classroom teachers need the support of the larger community to create a learning environment that supports students with special education needs.
- Fairness is not sameness.

Ongoing assessment is a key component in the early identification of children's learning needs. While the majority of Kindergarten students adapt to the level of programming offered during their early school years, a minority show evidence of learning difficulties. This places them significantly behind their peers in their readiness to learn some literacy and numeracy skills.

Using their professional judgment, teachers will determine the use of accommodations or modifications (as outlined above) to address students' needs on an on-going basis. They will be supported in their efforts through their work with parents, community agencies, and board resources.

Once a student's needs have been identified, specific differentiated instruction will be provided to facilitate learning. Suggested intervention strategies have been included in this document.

Ongoing communication with parents regarding student progress is recommended during the assessment intervention cycle. The teacher, in collaboration with the resource teacher, will provide up-to-date information to parents based on assessment and School Based Team Meeting discussions.

TOOLS FOR GATHERING INFORMATION

Gathering information is critical to early identification and early intervention. Some of the tools teachers will use and the sources for information are listed below.

- ⇒ Student School Registration Form (Appendix 2.3.1)
- ⇒ School Entry Parent Questionnaire (Appendix 2.3.2)
- ⇒ KinderSTARt JK/SK Kindergarten Registration Parent Survey (Appendix 2.3.2.2)
- ⇒ Interviews with Parents
- ⇒ Pre-School Special Needs Intake Meetings with Appropriate Agencies
- ⇒ (See Section 4, Appendix 4.1)
- ⇒ KinderStart Ages & Stages Report
- ⇒ Steps to Success
- ⇒ Informal Assessments