

# Introduction

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## Partnerships between Families and Schools

### Working Together As Partners in Education

Parents are valued partners in education in Manitoba. As parents, you know your child best. You know your child's strengths, abilities, needs, and challenges, and, as a result, you have a vital role in the education of your child. It is important that you and your child participate in making decisions that affect your child's education. Your participation in planning for education and your ongoing involvement and support will make a positive and meaningful contribution to your child's education.

School boards in Manitoba are required to provide an education for all school-age children and youth who live in their school division. Children and youth have the right to attend school from age five to high school graduation or age 21. Students with special needs, including those with lifelong disabilities, require educational opportunities that are appropriate for their learning needs, age, and level of school achievement.

### Developments in Special Education

Since 1966, schools in Manitoba have been responsible for the education of students with special needs. During this time, there have been many changes and improvements in the area of special education.

Significant developments have taken place in recent years:

- **Manitoba Special Education Review:** A complete review of services for children and youth with special needs was undertaken in 1995.
- **Special Education Review Initiative:** This initiative was established in response to the recommendations in the *Manitoba Special Education Review: Final Report* (1998). The work of the initiative has included the development of support documents and a public consultation on proposed new policy, funding processes, and accountability measures.
- **Bill 13—Appropriate Programming Legislation (2004):** This legislation in *The Public Schools Act* establishes the framework for appropriate educational programming for all students.

In Manitoba, we believe that a strong partnership between schools and families is the key to the success of our children and youth.

## How to Use This Parent Handbook

### Content and Organization

This handbook is intended for parents of children with special needs in school. It contains the following five main sections:

- **Introduction:** The introductory section explains the background, content, and organization of this parent handbook. It includes definitions of words related to special education that are used throughout this resource.
- **Identification and Assessment:** This section outlines what is involved in identifying and assessing individual learning needs so that your child can make the most successful adjustment and progress in school.
- **Planning and Programming:** This section provides information about contacts and supports available in your school/division to assist in planning and developing effective educational programming for your child. It also suggests ways in which you can be involved in and contribute to your child's education.
- **Communication:** This section talks about the importance of ongoing communication between families and schools throughout a student's education and suggests ways in which questions and issues may be addressed.
- **Additional Information:** In this section you will find forms/lists that may help you in meeting your child's needs. The References page lists resources that were used in the development of this handbook.

The tabbed divider pages for the five main sections within this handbook are meant to help you organize information. You are encouraged to keep the handbook in a three-ring binder and add other information relevant to your child's education.

### Advice from Parents

Throughout this handbook you will notice words of advice provided by parents from across Manitoba who were involved in the development of this handbook.

## Words You May Hear Used in School

### Definitions of Commonly Used Words

Whether your child is entering the school system or is currently in school, you may hear teachers or other people working with your child use words such as those defined on the following pages. It is important that you ask teachers or others in your child's school about words they use and have them clarify what they mean in relation to your child.

“ Ask for clarification. Jargon can be defined. ”

## Words Related to Special Education

**Adaptation**—changing the teaching process, the types of materials, and/or the assignments or products a student may produce to achieve the expected learning outcomes.

**Assessment**—the systematic process of gathering information about what a student knows, is able to do, and is learning to do.

**Behaviour intervention plan (BIP)**—an intervention plan developed by a team to meet a student’s social and behavioural needs.

**Clinician**—a person who is certified as a school clinician under the Teaching Certificates and Qualifications Regulation (Manitoba Regulation 515/88) in *The Public Schools Act* and who provides support for special education services for school personnel, parents, and students.

**Counselling and guidance services support**—school personnel who provide support for activities that involve

- counselling students and parents
- evaluating students’ abilities
- assisting students in personal, career, and social development
- providing referral assistance
- working with other staff members in planning and conducting guidance programs for students

**Daily plan**—a plan that outlines how a student’s individual education plan (IEP) will be carried out each day. Usually it outlines a daily timetable for a student and the outcomes or goals to be worked on.

**Differentiated instruction**—a way of teaching that acknowledges and responds to the differences among students. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods to support student learning and to help each student be as successful as possible.

**Educational assistant**—a person hired by the school/division to provide support for teachers or students. This person is supervised directly by a teacher or principal.

**Inclusion**—a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe.

**Inclusive education**—providing all students with the supports and opportunities they need to become participating members of their school community.

**Individual education plan (IEP)**—a yearly written plan developed and used by a team to meet the individual learning needs of a student.

**Individualized programming**—programming designed to meet the needs of students with severe cognitive disabilities who need programming outside the regular curriculum in the areas of cognitive, social/behavioural, self-help, motor, and communication skills.

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**Legal guardian**—court-appointed legal guardian or guardianship established through a provision of *The Child and Family Services Act* or *The Court of Queen’s Bench Surrogate Practice Act*. The legal guardian of a child is usually the child’s social worker working for an agency or authority linked with Child and Family Services.

**Life skills programming**—programming based on functional skills that all individuals need to live, work, and take care of themselves. It often focuses on skills needed for independent living.

**Modification**—changing the number or the content of the learning outcomes that a student is expected to meet in the provincial curriculum. The student’s teacher or school team makes these changes.

**Occupational therapist (OT) (clinician)**—a professional trained to help people improve their ability to do activities related to their daily living, such as self-care, work, and leisure. The purpose of occupational therapy is to promote and maintain performance and health. An occupational therapist provides student-specific assessment, suggests student-specific adaptations and modifications to classroom equipment, and provides training of staff to help children participate as fully as possible in school programming and activities. Occupational therapists often work in conjunction with physiotherapists.

**Physiotherapist (PT) (clinician)**—a professional concerned with the assessment, maintenance, and improvement of physical function and performance of the body. Physiotherapists often work with students who have difficulties with movement, coordination, or balance. They provide student-specific assessment, recommendations, and staff training to meet a student’s physical needs. Physiotherapists often work in conjunction with occupational therapists.

**Placement**—a school or a special learning environment chosen for a student. Placement may be determined by school/division policy or by a student’s team.

**Psychologist (clinician)**—a school psychologist is a specialist in psychology and education. School psychologists are qualified mental health professionals in the areas of psychoeducational assessment, childhood development, behavioural management, individual/group counselling, and consultation.

**Pupil file**—a collection of written information about a student’s education stored in a file in the school or school division office.

**Reading clinician**—a specially trained teacher who works with children whom the school has already identified as having learning problems. Reading clinicians provide assessment, make recommendations, and suggest modifications or adaptations in the areas of reading and writing, including suggestions on the most effective teaching strategies for children with reading difficulties.

**Resource teacher**—a teacher employed by a school/division to support students and educators through consultation, resources, and/or direct assistance. This person usually coordinates the student services within a school.

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**Social worker (clinician)**—a school social worker provides a link between home, school, and community. School social workers provide individual and group counselling, consultation to teachers, and other services that help students cope with their disabilities. They collaborate with community agencies and provide support for students and families requiring multiple services.

**Speech-language pathologist (clinician)**—a professional who supports the school team by providing specialized knowledge and skills in the area of communication development and difficulties and their impact on curriculum and social outcomes for students. A speech-language pathologist provides assessment, makes recommendations, provides therapy, and suggests modifications or adaptations in the area of communication.

**Student services administrator**—an individual with special education certification hired by the school division to coordinate and support the student services needs in schools.

**Student services/special education services**—staff and services provided by the school/division to meet the needs of students who have exceptional learning, social, behavioural, or physical needs.

**Student-specific outcome**—another term currently used for “goal(s)” in an individual education plan (IEP) for a student. The outcome or goal states what the student will learn, when this will be accomplished, and how the goal will be met.

## Notes