

Identification and Assessment

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Identifying and Planning for Your Child's Needs

If your child is entering school with special learning needs or if you and/or the classroom teacher find that your child is having difficulty learning, certain areas need to be considered to plan appropriately. To find out more about your child and how he or she learns, a teacher may look at the following areas:

- social or behavioural skills
- communication skills
- cognitive/learning skills
- physical or sensory skills



A doctor's diagnosis of a specific condition or disability does not provide enough information for planning for your child's individual needs. No two children are exactly alike. Children identified with the same diagnosis often have different abilities and learning needs, and require different supports. For example, two children could be diagnosed as having fetal alcohol syndrome, but each child could have very different learning needs. One child might function quite well in the classroom with the regular curriculum and need a little support to be successful, while the other child might have severe difficulties and need programming outside the curriculum as well as close supervision at all times.

First Steps in Getting Support

If you feel your child is having difficulty learning, the first step is to talk with the classroom teacher. To identify your child's learning needs, the teacher may

- talk with your child
- observe your child during classroom activities
- analyze your child's class work
- assess your child's abilities in areas such as mathematics, reading, and so on



As a parent, you can also gather information that may be useful in the assessment process. This information could include medical reports and observations you have made about your child's learning needs and recent behavioural changes outside of school.

After taking these steps in assessing a student's needs, the teacher, in consultation with the parents, may decide that a referral to a specialist for support or further assessment is necessary. Written parental consent is recommended before any referral to other teaching or clinical resources within the school/division is made. Each school/division has different assessment procedures, so talk to your child's teacher or the school principal about what kind of assessment or referral will take place and how long it will take.

“ Share copies of your child's assessments and medical information with appropriate team members. ”

Early identification and intervention for young children with special needs often leads to better school adjustment and performance. The assessment will help determine the child's individual needs. Some children may have difficulties learning at a particular time and may require short-term assistance. However, many special needs may be lifelong needs. Your child's needs may change, depending on the environment and the coping strategies he or she develops. Many other factors can affect a child's educational needs, and it is important that the school team meet regularly to identify and discuss these factors, and adjust the child's programming as needed.

Developing an Assessment Plan for Your Child

After you give consent to the school for referral of your child to a resource teacher or clinician, an assessment plan will be developed. Parents can be involved in the assessment process in various ways.

How an Assessment Is Carried Out

Depending on your child's needs, a number of specialists may be involved in the assessment plan.

These specialists could include a resource teacher, reading clinician, speech-language pathologist, psychologist, occupational therapist, or others. Different professionals are qualified to assess different areas of your child's development. For example, a psychologist assesses a

child's cognitive ability or potential. A classroom teacher or resource teacher can assess children's learning skills or how they learn. Talk to your child's classroom teacher about who will assess what.

A variety of assessment tools may be used to determine a child's learning/cognitive, social, emotional, communication, and/or behavioural development or needs. Some assessment tools include both parents and teachers to ensure that the information gathered accurately reflects the child.

An assessment may be done for the following reasons:

- To find out whether your child has a special learning need.
- To identify your child's current capabilities, skills, and needs.
- To find out how those special learning needs affect your child's ability to learn and function in school.
- To identify appropriate programming and services that will meet your child's individual needs.

Your child's development may be assessed in one area, or in various combinations of areas, depending on his or her specific needs.



“*Bring a friend, neighbour, or relative with you to school meetings.*”

When all the assessment results for your child are completed, the school will contact you and arrange a meeting with the staff who participated in the assessment to explain the results, discuss the recommendations, and involve you in making any related decisions. A written report may be shared with you, the teacher, and/or others working with your child.

If you are concerned about how long an assessment may take, discuss your concerns with your child’s teacher or the school principal. The school works with the student services personnel to identify clinical services and supports required. The clinical staff assigned to a school will review the referrals they receive and prioritize their involvement according to need or urgency. Check with your child’s teacher about the timeline for your child’s assessment.

Notes