

Special Education Fact Sheet

General Learning Program



Required Documentation

Current educational and psychological assessments including an assessment of Adaptive Functioning are required before a student may be considered for placement within this program. Assessments will document a) scores that are significantly below the average range, but above the developmental disability range on a standardized individual psychological test of intellectual ability, b) evidence of delays in social/emotional development, communication and daily living skills, c) limited intellectual potential for academic learning (Mild Intellectual Disability) and d) significant delays in academic progress. Other relevant documentation may also be considered if necessary. Assessment reports from hospitals, private practitioners and other educational jurisdictions may also be considered.

Application Procedures

Entry into this program is based on both the student's specific needs and the availability of space within the program.

Step 1 Application:

An application is submitted by the principal of the student's community school. This application is completed in collaboration with the in-school team and in consultation with the multi-disciplinary team (school psychologist, speech-language pathologist, social worker and learning support consultant). The application must be supported by the student's parent (s)/ guardian.

Step 2 Central Recommendation Committee:

This committee a) reviews the student's learning profile in relation to the program's entry criteria, b) determines whether or not there is space available in the program, and c) decides on the location of placement based upon the age/grade of the student in relation to the ages/grades of current students within the program, the learner's profile, and the distance between specific locations and the students' home addresses. When placement is a possibility, the sending principal is informed of the recommendation. Within 48 hours parents confirm acceptance of this placement and their intention to proceed to an IPRC meeting. Student and parents are informed of implications of the program placement. The student and parents have an opportunity to visit the class location recommended by the central recommendation committee.

Step 3 Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC):

The IPRC will a) formally identify the area(s) of the student's exceptionality (ies) according to the categories and definitions provided by the ministry of education, and b) formally place the student into the specialized program class.

*Parent (s) denotes custodial parent or guardian

The Student

The General Learning Program is for junior, intermediate and senior level students who:

- Experience serious difficulties acquiring basic academic skills because of their intellectual ability
- Require specialized instruction to grasp basic concepts because their intellectual functioning results in slower information processing
- Score significantly below the average range, but above the developmental disability range on a standardized individual psychological test of intellectual ability
- Evidence of delays in social/emotional development and daily living skills/adaptive functioning

Academic Profile

Students may demonstrate the following

- **Elementary:** working below the 10th percentile for age in Language Arts and mathematics – more than 2 years below grade level
- **Secondary:** working several years below grade level in Language Arts and mathematics
- **All Levels:** Working primarily on IEP goals/expectations that include alternative programming expectations
- Requires program with an emphasis on developing daily living/adaptive skills
- Requires intensive instructional support

Cognitive Profile

Students may demonstrate the following

- Limited intellectual potential for academic learning – mild intellectual disability

Elementary: generally between the 1st and 4th percentile for age

Secondary: 1st to 4th percentile for age

Social Profile

Students may demonstrate the following:

- Limited expressive and receptive language skills; difficulty with communication
- Difficulty with social interactions and basic daily living skills/adaptive functioning
- Academic frustration
- History of attendance issues related to academic frustration/school refusal

General Learning Program

Definition of Mild Intellectual Disability:

The Ministry of Education defines a mild intellectual disability as a learning disorder characterized by:

- a) an ability to profit educationally within a regular class with the aid of considerable curriculum modification and supportive service
- b) an inability to profit educationally within a regular class because of slow intellectual development
- c) a potential for academic learning independent social adjustment and economic self-support

The Program

The General Learning Program is for exceptional students at the junior, intermediate and senior levels. The General Learning Program is located in designated schools across the OCDSB. The focus of the program is to provide a structured learning environment in order to maximize the learning potential of students and to provide opportunities to develop academic, social, work and life skills. Curriculum is modified to meet the individual needs of the students. The program allows for integration into school activities. It is expected that students will integrate into regular classrooms and /or school activities to the greatest degree possible.

Programming is based on the learning expectations outlined in the Individual Education Plan (IEP). The IEP is developed and coordinated by the special education teacher in consultation with parent (s), Learning Support Services personnel, and subject-area teachers. The IEP is designed for each student according to individual learning needs and strengths. The plan is revised and updated based on the results of ongoing assessment and evaluation.

The Classes and Resources

The General Learning Program classes are limited in size as outlined in the OCDSB's Special Education Report. There are up to sixteen (16) students in each General Learning Program class. Classes are equipped with special education resources including educational assistants.

The Teachers

The General Learning Program is taught by teachers with special education qualifications (Part I; Parts I and II preferred). Learning Support Services personnel provide assessment and consultative services to the program teacher.

Evaluation and Review

Assessment is ongoing and evaluation occurs throughout the year. Student progress is formally reported as per the reporting structure of the OCDSB on the provincial report card and alternative report cards. The progress of a student, who has been identified exceptional and has a placement through an IPRC, is formally reviewed on an annual basis during an IPRC meeting.

Change in Placement

Students may be demitted from the General Learning Program based on the following criteria:

The student:

- Does not require the same degree of alternative programming
- Has academic and or social needs that could be met more successfully within a different specialized program
- Has the ability to succeed in a regular class with support from the Learning Support Teacher (LST) and with appropriate accommodations and modifications
- No longer benefits from the General Learning Program placement
- Evidence of on-going successful integration

Alternative Placements

The in-school special education team will meet with parents to discuss alternative placements if necessary. Placements may include the following: a) regular classroom with monitoring from the LST or Learning Resource Teacher (LRT), b) regular classroom with support from the LST or LRT, or c) other special education placement if appropriate.

For Further Information

Please consult the OCDSB Learning Support Services' *Special Education Parent Guide* and *The Identification, Placement and Review Committee Process: Parent Guide*.

As well, you may contact the school principal or the OCDSB Learning Support Services personnel serving the school.