



Special Education Policy and Guidelines

CISVA Rationale

The Catholic school is a Christian community committed to students with special needs. We recall the words of Pope John Paul II at B.C. Place in 1984, "the value and dignity of the human person does not arise from the physical or mental qualities, from efficiency, productivity, or speed in one's actions. It comes rather from the fundamental fact that each individual is created by God and redeemed by the blood of his Son, Jesus Christ." Our commitment is rooted in the fact that we are all God's children. (Special Education Policy 421, CISVA)

Inclusion

Sacred Heart School promotes the inclusion of students with special needs as fully participating members of a community of learners. Inclusion describes the principle that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs. The practice of inclusion is not necessarily synonymous with full integration in regular classrooms, and goes beyond placement to include meaningful participation and the promotion of interaction with others.

Integration

One of the major strategies used to achieve inclusion at Sacred Heart School, is by the integration of students with special needs in educational settings with their peers who do not have special needs. Students are provided with the necessary accommodations determined on an individual basis, to enable them to be successful there. The principle of "placement in the most enabling environment" applies when decisions are made about the extent to which an individual student is placed in regular classrooms or assigned to an alternate placement.

Placement

Sacred Heart School offers to consult with a parent of a child who has special needs regarding the student's placement in an educational program. Sacred Heart School will provide a student who has special needs with an educational program in a classroom where the student is integrated with other students who do not have special needs, unless the educational needs of the student with special needs or other students indicate that the educational program for the student with special needs should be provided otherwise. The emphasis on educating students with special needs in classrooms with their age and grade peers, however, does not preclude the appropriate use of resource rooms, self-contained classes, community-based programs, or specialized settings. Students with special needs may be placed in settings other than a classroom with age and grade peers.

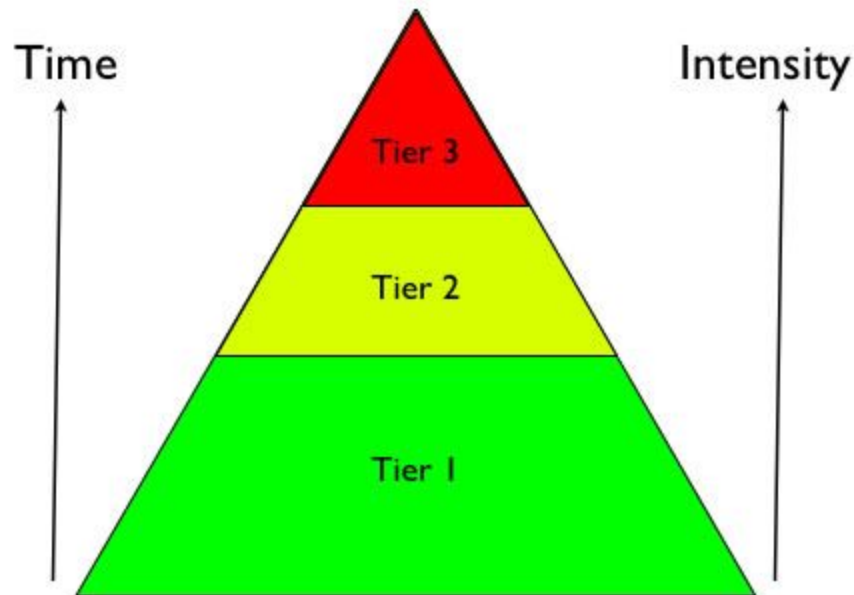


Early Identification and Assessment

Early identification is an essential element of successful program planning for students with special needs. Students may be identified as requiring extra support before they enter the school. In such cases, assessment and recommendations from qualified professionals are necessary and imperative in order to best meet the learning needs of the student.

Service Delivery Model

At Sacred Heart, we use an RTI (Response to Intervention) service delivery model. Using this model, we have systems to identify learning needs and provide support at appropriate levels of intervention.



Tier 1: Effective Classroom Based Instruction

- Evidence based practices
- Use of assessment to adjust teaching strategies and interventions
- 80% of students will be successful with universal support



Tier 2: Effective Small Group Intervention

- Increased intensity and frequency of support
- Use of assistive technology and adaptations
- Coordination of the school based team (teachers, learning resource teachers, educational assistants, Orton-Gillingham tutors)
- Increased progress monitoring to assess if the intervention is successful
- Targeted interventions to meet a specific goal
- 10 - 15% of students will be successful with small group support

Tier 3: Effective Individualized Support

- Increased intensity and frequency of support
- Use of assistive technology and adaptations
- Coordination of the school based team (teachers, learning resource teachers, educational assistants) with outside agencies (consultants from CISVA, occupational therapists, speech therapists, counsellors, psychologists, behavioural interventionists etc.)
- Increased progress monitoring to assess if the intervention is successful
- Targeted interventions to meet a specific goal
- 5% of students will be successful with individualized support

Pre-Referral Strategies

Collect data

For most students, the identification/assessment phase begins in the classroom, as the teacher observes possible academic, physical, social, emotional, and behavioural challenges. The classroom teacher begins the first phase of the process, initiating in-depth, systematic classroom observations, evaluations and data collections.

Consultations

While beginning a comprehensive assessment of learning needs, the classroom teacher communicates informally with previous teachers or other colleagues who are familiar with the student's learning profile. Consultation with parents regarding concerns and progress is initiated by the classroom teacher. The classroom teacher may also discuss with the parent the possibility of a referral to a physician for a comprehensive medical examination to eliminate medical concerns including, but not exclusively, hearing and / or vision impairment. The classroom teacher may also embark on a process of consultation and collaboration with the learning resource department which may involve classroom observations, additional assessments, and classroom intervention strategies.



Student Referral to the Learning Resource Department

Complete a Request for Assistance Form

If the pre-referral strategies do not fully meet the learning needs of the student, the classroom teacher refers the student to the Learning Resource Department by completing a *Request for Assistance* form. On the form, the referring classroom teacher indicates specific, observable characteristics of the problem/concern as well as what has already been implemented in the classroom. The form is then reviewed by the Learning Resource Department Head, and a meeting is held with the referring classroom teacher. Classroom interventions and strategies tried are discussed/reviewed with respect to their success or lack of success. Additional adaptations may be suggested and/or further assessments by the classroom teacher and/or learning resource teacher may be necessary.

Communication with Parents

The parents are informed by the classroom teacher of any concerns. The classroom teacher and parent discuss the plan for support. The parent acknowledges they were consulted regarding the additional supports by signing a Sacred Heart document called, Confirmation of Consultation Regarding Additional Supports. If the student's needs are met, the classroom teacher documents the support the student requires and the referral process ends. If the interventions are not sufficient, full involvement of the Learning Resource Department begins and an Individual Education Plan (IEP) process is initiated.

Individual Education Plans

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a working document developed for a student with special needs that describes individualized goals, adaptations, the services provided, and includes measures for tracking achievement.

Any student who has been formally identified as having special needs and meets the criteria for a ministry designation and/or who requires specialized support in order to access curricula and fully participate in the life of the school is eligible to be placed on an IEP.

At Sacred Heart School, we invite parents to collaborate with the school to develop the IEP. Prior to the IEP meeting, a questionnaire is provided to the parents which assists them in sharing information concerning their child. The parents' input is considered when the classroom teacher and learning resource teacher draft the IEP. During the meeting, a *Special Education: Parent/Guardian Confirmation Form* is signed, acknowledging that the parent has been given reasonable opportunity to comment and provide input into their child's IEP. The school recognizes the parents as the first and foremost educators of their children and respects the knowledge they can provide about the child and his/her learning. While the school requests and values parental input in deciding on goals and strategies for the child, final decisions about the child's educational program at school remain the responsibility of the school staff.



Reviewing the IEP

The classroom teacher, together with the learning support teacher, meet with the parents a minimum of two times per academic year. Minutes are taken each meeting and kept in the student's Special Education file. In order to keep the parents informed, progress and achievement are updated, strategies are reviewed and observations are shared. A copy of the IEP is also given to parents twice per year, once when the IEP is created, and once when the IEP is reviewed.

Learning Resource Teachers

The Learning Resource Department Head is responsible for the school's entire Learning Support Program. As such, the Learning Resource Department Head consults with the staff to drive the direction of learning support and professional development, assists in the creation of program plans, organizes the student files, consults with various school based teams to increase effectiveness of programming and delivers student programs. The role of Learning Resource Teachers is to support and enhance the role of the classroom teacher in providing the opportunity for children to reach their full potential. In this role, Learning Resource teachers may assist in the creation of program plans, organize the student files, consult with various school based teams to increase effectiveness of programming and deliver student programs. The objective of the Learning Resource Department is to assist and support (and not replace) teachers in their job as "holistic" educators.

Communication and the Role of the Education Assistant

Sacred Heart School employs Educational Assistants (EA's) to support student learning. EA's work under the direction of a teacher and are under the supervision of the classroom teacher and learning support teacher. Classroom teachers are expected to design programs for students with special needs. EA's play a key role in many programs for students with special needs, performing functions which range from personal care to assisting the teacher with instructional programs. Under the direction of the teacher, EA's hold important roles implementing the program. While EA's may assist in the collection of data for the purpose of evaluating student progress, teachers are responsible for evaluating and reporting on the progress of the students to parents.

Communication about a student's progress and the student's day to day behaviours are at the discretion of the teacher. The IEP describes the method of school / parent communication. Any communication taking place must be in the form of email or written notes in a communication book with the exception of students who have medical issues. If a student has a medical issue (ie. diabetes), communication may take the form of a text. Any communication may be initiated by the classroom teacher, educational assistant or learning resource teacher. However, it is important that all communication includes the classroom teacher (with the exception of medical issues ie. diabetes) in the email mailing list of recipients. In addition, it is important that any communication from the parent is forwarded to and shared with the classroom teacher.



We strive for open communication with parents in an effort to promote the optimum development of the child. It is important for parents to be informed of their child's activities, successes and challenges and to reinforce the learning which happens at school. Similarly, teachers need to be advised promptly of any home incidents or details which will affect the child's learning or behavior at school. In this way, we can cooperate in providing the best possible learning opportunities for each child.

Resources

Ministry of Education. (2013). *Special education services: A manual of policies, procedures and guidelines*. Retrieved from http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/special_ed_policy_manual.pdf

CISVA Board of Directors. (2014) Special Education Policy 421. Retrieved from <https://cisva.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/421-SpecialEducation.pdf>



Confirmation of Consultation Regarding Additional Supports

Date: _____

Dear _____,

At Sacred Heart School, we value each child's individual strengths and areas needing growth. We recognize that children develop in different ways and at different rates. To provide a program that meets your child's unique needs, we recommend that your child receive additional supports from the Learning Resource Department. These supports range from individual instruction to small group supports that may occur inside or outside the class.

We value parents as partners in education. Our goal is to keep you informed regarding your child's program and progress. This letter acknowledges that you have been consulted with regards to the types of additional supports that your child receives.

Please sign and return this letter to your child's teacher.

Sincerely,
Brandy Grund
Vice Principal and Learning Resource Department Head

I _____, acknowledge that I have been consulted with regards to additional supports for my child, _____, for the _____ school year.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

