

Chapter Two: The Prescribed Curriculum

Prescribed Curriculum

The education plan for the majority of students is the provincially prescribed curriculum available at www.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/curriculum/index.html.

This is the first option for all students. It includes all of those courses prescribed and approved by the Department of Education and listed in the *Program of Studies*. The Program of Studies gives a brief description of the school programs, Kindergarten through Grade 12. It also identifies authorized learning resources for each course.

With the diversity of learners in classrooms, the task of matching instruction to individual strengths, needs and learning styles is not an easy one. It requires a well defined school-wide approach, a mechanism for teachers to support each others' efforts, and a consistent organized method of record keeping. Good teaching practices reflected in classrooms include:

- teacher knowledge of the provincial curriculum guides
- creation of classrooms which employ a variety of processes and strategies responsive to student learning styles
- recognition of the student who is experiencing difficulties, or being inadequately challenged, and the exploration of unique ways to support that student
- recognition that supporting the unique strengths and needs of a particular student is likely to benefit other students
- referral for additional assessments/supports when necessary

The term “differentiated instruction” simply means responsive teaching which attends to the learning profiles of all students. The differentiated classroom addresses the diversity of learners by:

- being flexible
- using effective and ongoing assessment to plan instruction that meets learner strengths and needs
- providing access to a wide variety of learning opportunities and working arrangements
- using a variety of teaching and assessment strategies to accommodate student learning styles
- integrating current and established best practices
- accepting and validating the range of student performance in any classroom

Pre-referral Process

The pre-referral process involves a period of problem solving at the classroom level. At this stage the student is on the prescribed curriculum. The teacher is aware of an area of concern and is actively taking steps to ensure that the student is given every opportunity to be successful. The focus at this stage is to gain a better understanding of the student's strengths and needs in order to plan instruction. It is an opportunity to use knowledge of the student to introduce strategies and practices which may enable the student to have his or her strengths and needs met within the provincial curriculum. Teachers gather data regarding the trial of various strategies during classroom instruction and evaluation and make decisions, while soliciting advice or support where necessary, regarding the various facets of instruction. Supporting the learning needs of students is an ongoing problem-solving process best accomplished by groups of teachers sharing ideas, experiences and resources. This includes classroom/subject teachers, instructional resource teachers and others.

During this process, the classroom/subject teacher decides whether a referral to the service delivery team is warranted. The classroom/subject teacher is responsible for using the Record of Pre-Referral Strategies to keep notes regarding the strategies tried, the period of time involved, and the results. The parent/guardian is informed of these strategies through parent-teacher interactions (e.g., phone calls, notes sent home, parent-teacher interviews). The Record of Pre-Referral Strategies is kept in the student's cumulative file.

If the areas of concern are not resolved through the pre-referral process, the student is referred to the service delivery team for further assessment.

For additional information regarding strategies, consult *Pre-Referral Intervention Manual* by Stephen R. McCarney et al. supplied to all schools by the Department of Education in Spring 2010. This manual includes strategies for students who are performing below grade level. For students who are gifted and talented, please consult the *Gifted and Talented Handbook*.

Note: Accommodations as listed and defined in the Record of Accommodations are not
to be implemented until an exceptionality has been identified.

Service Delivery Team

Each school is required to have a service delivery team. This team meets at least every two weeks to review and direct special education services in the school. The team should not be so large that it is ineffective as a problem solving group. It is comprised of:

- administrator
- guidance counsellor
- representative classroom/subject teacher(s) for primary, elementary, intermediate, and secondary based on school configuration (large intermediate and high schools may choose representatives from subject area specialties)
- instructional resource teacher(s)
- educational psychologist and other itinerant teachers as required

The focus of this team will be to:

- problem solve around optimal deployment of resources
- problem solve issues identified by program planning teams
- support classroom/subject teachers through the pre-referral process
- problem solve with referring teachers by identifying strategies to support students on the prescribed curriculum
- review referrals and determine when and to whom a referral for assessment or re-assessment is appropriate
- designate team member(s) to follow Referral Tracking System (RTS) protocols
- invite other professionals (program specialists, classroom/subject teacher(s), etc.) for input as required
- other responsibilities as assigned by administration

Minutes of these meetings are kept and circulated to members.

Teachers who have initiated the pre-referral process will refer to the service delivery team if the strategies implemented do not satisfactorily meet the student's strengths and needs. Teachers submit a Referral for Assessment to the Service Delivery Team with the following attachments: the Record of Pre-Referral Strategies, hearing and vision results, work samples and any classroom-based teacher assessments that reflect the concerns prompting this referral.

Referral Process

The referral process and forms used at the school level are available on-line at the Department of Education websites listed below.

Referral Tracking System:

www.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/rts/index.html

Referral Forms: www.gov.nl.ca/edu/forms/studentsupport/referral.html