

# *Education Programs and Services*

## *Educational Placement of Students with Special Needs*

### BACKGROUND

Most Alberta students with special needs are placed in regular classrooms in their neighbourhood or local schools. The availability of these placements benefit students with special needs. Successful placement depends on such factors as adequate teacher training, learning resources and guidance by administrators.

The placement of students with special needs in regular school programs is based on a philosophy of equality, sharing, participation, and the worth and dignity of individuals. Most Albertans agree that students with special needs must be full participants in school and society. These students have the right to take part in regular school activities, and when they do so, they have a better chance of developing their full potential. School boards are ultimately responsible for making placement decisions that are in the best interests of individual children and of all the children they serve.

### POLICY

Educating students with special needs in regular classrooms in neighbourhood or local schools shall be the first placement option considered by school boards, in consultation with students, parents/guardians and school staff.

### STATUTE

#### School Act

##### Preamble

WHEREAS the best educational interests of the student are the paramount considerations in the exercise of any authority under this Act; and

WHEREAS parents have a right and a responsibility to make decisions respecting the education of their children.

##### Special education program

47(1) A board may determine that a student is, by virtue of the student's behavioural, communicational, intellectual, learning or physical

characteristics, or a combination of those characteristics, a student in need of a special education program.

- (2) Subject to section 48, a student who is determined by a board to be in need of a special education program is entitled to have access to a special education program provided in accordance with this Act.
- (3) Before a board places a student in a special education program it shall
  - (a) consult with the parent of that student, and
  - (b) where appropriate, consult with the student.

#### Other sections:

- s.8 Right of access to education
- s.45 Responsibility to students
- s.48 Special Needs Tribunal
- s.123 Appeal to board
- s.124 Review by the Minister
- s.125 Powers on review

### ADDITIONAL DEFINITIONS

In this policy:

- 1 "students with special needs" mean:
  - (1) students described in section 47(1) of the Act as being in need of special education programs because of their behavioral, communicational, intellectual, learning or physical characteristics;
  - (2) students who may require specialized health care services; or
  - (3) who are gifted and talented.
- 2 "education program for a student with special needs" means a program based on the results of ongoing assessment and evaluation, and includes an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) with specific goals and objectives and recommendations for educational services that meet the student's needs.

- 3 "Individualized Program Plan" (IPP) means a concise plan of action designed to address the student's special needs, and is based on diagnostic information which provides the basis for intervention strategies. All students with special needs, from severely disabled to the gifted and talented, require an IPP.
- 4 "integration" means the practice of meeting the physical, intellectual, social and emotional needs of students with special needs in regular classes in neighbourhood or local schools with non-disabled, same-aged peers and with appropriate support.
- 5 "regular classroom" means a setting in which students are brought together for instructional purposes with program accommodations to meet the diverse and unique needs of each student.
- 6 "neighbourhood or local school" means the school a child would normally attend with siblings and neighbours.
- 7 "consultation" means a process that gives parents/guardians of a student with special needs the opportunity to help make decisions about all aspects of placement and programming. Consultation includes conferencing and meeting with school staff.
- 4 School boards shall develop, keep current and implement written policies and procedures regarding education programs for students with special needs consistent with provincial policy and procedures on educational placement.
- 5 School boards are responsible for advising and informing parents of their right to appeal administrative decisions affecting the education of their children (section 123); and in their right to have the Minister to review the board's decision (section 124).
- 6 School boards should consider involving students, parents, teachers, administrators and representatives of community agencies in the development of placement policies and procedures, where appropriate.
- 7 The IPPs of students with special needs will identify:
  - (1) special education and related services to be provided;
  - (2) long-term goals and short-term objectives;
  - (3) assessment procedures and diagnostic information on which the plan is based;
  - (4) review dates, results and recommendations;
  - (5) placement plans for students who are served outside the regular classroom; and
  - (6) placement plans to reintroduce students to the regular classroom who have previously been withdrawn.

## PROCEDURES

- 1 School boards are responsible for ensuring that students with special needs receive adequate special education programs; have access to the most enabling setting that meet their needs; have regular opportunities to interact with their peers, to enjoy the life of the school and to participate in local community activities; and have access to specialized classes and services as required.
- 2 Consistent with section 47 of the **Act**, school boards shall make decisions regarding programs for students with special needs by identifying, assessing and placing students with special needs; developing and implementing IPPs; and evaluating the individual progress of students with special needs.
- 3 Consistent with section 47(3) of the **Act**, school boards shall provide for meaningful parental consultation and involvement in decisions that affect their children. School boards shall consult parents regarding each of the program areas described in procedure 1. To the fullest extent possible parents shall have choices regarding program options and be involved in the development of the child's IPP.
- 8 School boards are responsible for ensuring that program placement decisions involving students with special needs are based on appropriate and well-documented student assessments.
- 9 School boards are responsible for providing teachers of students with special needs with adequate learning resources and other classroom support, as well as appropriate inservice training and access to professional development opportunities.
- 10 In developing and implementing programs for students with special needs, school boards shall identify the key professional responsible for coordinating and monitoring a student's program.
- 11 Alberta Learning's funding to school boards support the placement of students with special needs by allowing flexibility in making decisions about programs.
- 12 As described in section 48 of the **Act**, if a school board determines that a student has special needs that cannot be met in an education program, the board may refer the matter to a Special Needs Tribunal.

- 13 Alberta Learning is responsible for monitoring programs and services provided to students.

## REFERENCES

Please refer to the current editions of the following for additional information:

*Funding Manual for School Authorities*

*Learning Resources Centre (LRC) Buyers Guide*

*Programming for Students with Special Needs Series*

*Review by the Minister (Policy 3.5.1)*

*Special Needs Tribunal (Policy 3.5.2)*

*Standards for Special Education (formerly Guide to Education for Students with Special Needs)*

See **Section 7** of the *Policy, Regulations and Forms Manual* for information on where the above document(s) may be obtained, and for Department / Branch addresses, phone and fax numbers.