
SECTION 4: SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES – EARLY IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

The Ontario Ministry of Education mandates that all school boards establish an Early Identification Procedure [Education Act s. 8, 35(3)(a)]

The Ontario Kindergarten Program 1998 states:

The learning needs of all children should be identified initially through the board's early identification procedures. These procedures, which are part of a continuous assessment and program planning process, are in place to ensure that educational programs are designed to accommodate each child's learning needs and to facilitate his or her growth and development.

This identification procedure is part of an ongoing assessment process that boards are required to initiate when a child first enters school.

Ministry Policy Program Memorandum # 11-EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING NEEDS (1982) also states:

These procedures, which are part of a continuous assessment and program planning process which should be initiated when a child is first enrolled in school or no later than the beginning of a program of studies immediately following Kindergarten and should continue throughout a child's school life."

Following the guidelines set out by the Ministry of Education, the Renfrew County District School Board included the following statements in Board Policy:

- An early identification program shall be conducted in junior and senior kindergarten classrooms.
- A social and health history of the child shall be compiled at the time the child enters school in junior or senior kindergarten.
- Some children will require more than, or fewer than, the normal number of years to complete the program in the early, formative, and transition years. These children should be referred to Special Education Services for assessment and programming suggestions.
- If the child is in a modified program, which may involve special education assistance with programming, this should be clearly indicated to parents both on the report cards and during conferences.
- Parents shall be informed no later than the end of January each year of any concerns which may affect grade placement.

ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES

- Schools advertise in local newspapers in the spring of each year for parents to register their children in the junior and senior kindergarten programs.
- Parents complete a registration form. This is the first step in enrolling their child in the kindergarten program.
- An interview is conducted in early September with each parent/child entering the program.
- In consultation with the junior or senior kindergarten teachers and permission from parents the Speech Language Pathologists conducts a screening/consultation of new children enrolled in the Kindergarten program. This screening is provided at any time during the school year.
- A review of children that have been previously identified as at risk for speech/language difficulties in their junior kindergarten year is conducted in September of each year.
- Subject to parental consent, the Special Education Services of the Renfrew County District School Board may request information from the following:
 - Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario
 - Child Development Service
 - Children's Treatment Centre
 - Psychology Department
 - Community Care Access Centre-Renfrew County
 - Renfrew County Developmental Support Services
 - Day Care, Nursery School
 - Phoenix Centre
 - Family and Children's Services

The following information is included in this section:

- A. Early Identification of Children's Learning Needs (Revised 2004)
- B. Early Identification – Model of Intervention (Revised 2004)
- C. Appropriate Assessment Strategies in Kindergarten

Early Identification of Children's Learning Needs
Revised 2004

The RCDSB feels that the earlier children are identified as “at risk”, the earlier intervention can be provided within the school setting. These procedures to identify each child’s level of development, learning abilities, and needs begin on entry into our schools’ Junior Kindergarten and/or Senior Kindergarten programs. Information is gathered from the parents regarding their child as they enter the school. The parents are encouraged to work with the school as a partner in their child’s growth and development. This sets the foundation for the ongoing process of Early Identification and the educational programs designed to accommodate and facilitate for the needs which may be identified; whether through the Early Literacy Program or assistance by the SERT.

Role of the Teacher

- Alert parents to observations which lead the teacher to feel the need of further medical investigations for their child as necessary, especially vision, hearing etc.
- Follow the schedule for observation, and reporting as outlined in the schedules provided by the RCDSB.
- Contact parents about child’s progress and provide support for parents of “at risk” children with academically appropriate ideas and information as needed
- Plan and implement appropriate program accommodations in areas where the child is experiencing difficulty
- Consult with, by sharing results of testing and other appropriate information, all individuals who will be involved in providing educational assistance for “at risk” students (parents, principal, SSC, SERT, Literacy Teacher)
- Send in referrals, with parental consent, to special education department, when further assessment is necessary to establish understating of child’s specific needs

Role of the Parent

- Share all information, before school entry, which might affect child’s progress (ie. medical, vision, hearing, preschool programming, behavioural, family, motor development, involvement with outside agencies)
- Provide any change of information which might affect the child’s progress throughout the school year
- Follow up with suggestions provided by the school regarding the child’s progress in the program being provided for him/her
- Accept information about the child’s specific needs and explore programming options provided by the school which have the child’s best interests in mind
- Take a pro-active role in the Early Identification Program provided in the school
- Be an advocate for the child in their growth and development
- Ensure regular attendance in school
- Become familiar with special education information provided by the school and the RCDSB

<p>Early Identification – Model of Intervention Revised 2004</p>
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The following procedures are a part of a continuous assessment and program planning process which is initiated when a child first enrolls in school and will continue throughout the child's school life.

All high needs children (eg. Autistic, PDD, Developmentally Delayed), who have been identified prior to their entry into Kindergarten, will be referred to an IPRC (Identification Placement and Review Committee).

Junior Kindergarten

- After the initial interview and a period of classroom observation, teachers will inform parents of children who appear to be "at risk". This may occur any time during the current school year and will outline concerns regarding their child's progress in the kindergarten program.
- Case conferences, with the school team, will be held for "at risk" students to develop or refine in school interventions by February of the school year.
- Students who appear to have speech and language related difficulties, could be recommended for assessments by the Speech/Language Pathologist, at any time through the school year
- After assessing in February, progress of all students is reviewed
- The monitoring of "at risk" students continues with some special programming provided by the JK teacher within the classroom
- Information regarding "at risk" students is passed on to the receiving teacher, who will continue to provide assistance in the classroom the following year

Senior Kindergarten

- Children who did not attend JK will attend a new to kindergarten interview
- "at risk" students are carefully monitored throughout the school year to provide appropriate assistance and consultation with parents is ongoing
- case conferences for these students, will be held with the principal, SERT, Literacy teacher and parents, to provide further information regarding possible assistance and/or formal assessment requirements
- possible options will be considered for informal intervention at this early stage of school programming (ie. extra help in classroom, extra home assistance, request further formal assessment to be completed by SERT, SSC or Special Education Central Staff
- parents are provided with "Parents as Partners" information booklet provided by the RCDSB about Special Education programs and services available
- signed permission on SS#1 to consult with special education personnel is provided
- following any assessment or consultation by special education staff, parents are invited to discuss the results and further program needs are discussed
- if student continues to demonstrate difficulty in the classroom program with the accommodations the teacher has introduced, in an effort to meet the child's particular area of weakness, referral to IPRC (Identification Placement and Review Committee) will be made
- parents are invited, in writing, to attend the IPRC where information regarding strengths, weaknesses and student needs are shared
- following the decision of the IPRC to identify a child as exceptional, special programming will be introduced
- the IEP (Individual Education Plan) will be developed based on the information gathered at the IPRC and other important information, which would affect the child's progress
- parents are invited to participate in this development with the SERT and the classroom teacher
- IPRC's are held annually and progress is reviewed on an ongoing basis
- information about "at risk" students is passed on the receiving teacher at the end of the school year

Appropriate Assessment Strategies in Kindergarten

(from the Kindergarten Assessment Document)

The following types of assessments are used in Kindergarten:

Diagnostic assessment

is used to determine what the students currently know and can do and to identify strengths and weaknesses so that suitable instruction can be provided. Methods of diagnostic assessment used in Kindergarten include:

- Anecdotal
- Inventories
- Teacher's School Readiness Inventory (TSRI)
- Interviews
- Checklists

Formative assessment

Is the on-going assessment of student learning used to inform and improve performance and guide instruction. Methods of formative assessment used in Kindergarten include:

- Observation
- Student journals
- Portfolios
- Self reflection
- Questions and answers
- Discussions
- Checklists

Summative assessment

Provides a cumulative description of student achievement and assists students, parents and teachers to plan further instruction and learning activities. Methods of summative assessment used in Kindergarten include:

- Performance based tasks
- Conferences
- Checklists

Note that some assessment strategies may fall into both formative and summative categories, depending on how the data will be used.

In Kindergarten, assessment data on a student's progress are gathered using a variety of strategies in the **context of daily classroom experiences**. A range of assessment strategies will help the teacher to develop accurate profiles of each child's growth and to plan appropriate programs.

Assessment Strategies for Kindergarten

1. Observation

The process of systematically viewing and recording student behaviour for the purpose of making instructional decisions.

In Kindergarten, opportunities for observation occur throughout the day during classroom activities.

2. Checklist

A list of expected skills, concepts, behaviours, processes and/or attitudes used to facilitate assessment of student achievement.

In Kindergarten, opportunities for the use of checklists may occur during activity time or at certain periods during the day (e.g., Math circle) as key behaviours or expectations are observed.

3. Conference

A meeting of teacher with one or more students and in some cases parents/guardians to review progress.

In Kindergarten, opportunities for informal student conferences can occur before, during and after teacher- or self-directed activities. Conferences with parents occur at initial school visits, during reporting periods to discuss student progress and throughout the course of the year as necessary.

4. Demonstration

An assessment strategy in which students demonstrate their competence by performing specific skills.

In Kindergarten, opportunities for the use of student demonstrations can occur during calendar time, circle time, sharing time, shared reading and writing or play periods.

5. Performance Task

An open-ended, hands-on activity performed by a student or a group of students under the supervision of a teacher for the purpose of demonstrating specific skills and/or knowledge.

In Kindergarten, opportunities for performance tasks can occur individually or in small groups. In mathematics, for example, a small group of students may be given a collection of buttons and asked to show the various ways they can be sorted.

6. Portfolio

A selective, reflective and collaborative collection of student's work that demonstrates the range and depth of the student's achievement, competencies and skills over time and across a variety of contexts.

In Kindergarten, portfolios are often kept as records of student progress in all areas of learning. Even the youngest students can be involved in selecting and reflecting on portfolio entries.

7. Questions and Answers

An assessment strategy during instruction to determine whether students understand and can use the material being presented.

In Kindergarten, opportunities for the use of questions and answers occur every day during such classroom activities as shared reading, shared writing, calendar, teacher read aloud, etc.

8. Self-Assessment

Student's own assessment of his/her personal progress in knowledge, skills, or processes.

In Kindergarten, opportunities for self-assessment occur during group sharing times, individual conferences with the teacher, one-to-one interaction during activities. Simply constructed self-reflection sheets allow students to express their personal feelings about skills or situations. These can be as simple as colouring sad, happy or neutral-faced icons.