

Student Support Services

Department of Education & Early Childhood Development



Exceptional News

November 2017



SSS Update

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has undergone a restructuring. The former Division of Student Support Services is now part of the new Division of Programs and Services. The contact information and the roles of the SSS program development specialists have not changed.

We welcome Melanie Fudge to the SSS team. She has taken on the role of mental wellness.

Gifted and Talented: Suggested Websites

Students who are gifted and talented have strengths and interests in many areas. What interests one student is very different from what intrigues another. These are some sites which might be of interest to some of your students for a closer look or to help facilitate an independent study.



BBC Languages

www.bbc.co.uk/languages

This website has language courses and tools to help learn the vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar of many languages. There are printable mini guides as well as essential phrases in 40 different languages. This is a great site to visit before a trip abroad!



Museum of Fine Arts in Boston

www.mfa.org/collections

The Museum of Fine Arts opened in 1876. Today it includes almost 500 000 pieces of art and has over one million visitors per year. This website provides previews of its many collections and videos by the curators.

- support a specific action that has been identified through the school development process,
- support the implementation of key components of the Safe and Caring Policy such as school-wide positive behaviour supports, inclusive education, code of conduct, violence/bullying prevention, social/emotional learning, inclusive and/or digital citizenship, and
- help sustain partnerships and actions that support a positive school climate.

Regions, individual schools and/or teacher sponsored student groups may apply. **Please forward applications to the Safe and Inclusive Itinerant assigned to your school.** Funds will be disbursed to the selected schools through the school district.



Relationships First:
Restorative Justice in Education

School Wide Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports and Restorative Practices: What Is the Link?

The question has been asked, “Are School Wide Behaviour Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS) and Restorative Practices different?” The answer to this question is “No.” The truth is these two initiatives can complement each other in several ways.

- SW-PBIS uses knowledge of what triggers patterns of behaviour in order to select appropriate proactive strategies or teach new behaviour. Restorative Practice uses the relationship between individuals to gain an understanding of what happened, who was impacted by what happened, and what each individual needs to move forward.

- SW-PBIS uses a continuum of supports to meet the needs of all students - whole school interventions, targeted interventions for students who are at risk for behavioural problems, and interventions for individuals who need intensive interventions. Restorative Practice provides a continuum of practices which can be offered within SW-PBIS. These include a focus on building nurturing environments through the use of restorative practices such as circles, individual or small group conferences to further build connections and solve issues, and specific structures for addressing serious harm and conflict.

Prevention is another commonality between these two ideas. The philosophies of SW-PBIS and Restorative Practice are grounded in teaching, learning and mutual respect. Students need to be taught problem solving skills, and then given continued opportunities to practise these skills. The learning and practice of these skills prevent the breakdown of relationships, and reduce conflict and problematic behaviour(s).



The Importance of Intervention for Reading and Writing

Unlike walking or talking, human beings do not naturally develop the ability to read and write. Evidence to this exists in cultures without reading and writing. Reading and writing is something humans learn by repurposing and connecting different parts of their brains through repeated exposure to the process. This repurposing is only possible insofar as an individual’s brain is able to make the necessary connections to perform the task. For most people, such connections become strong, specialized, and automatic. However, for others, the connections are hard to make.

Those who continuously struggle to make the needed connections are identified as having Specific Learning Disorder (SLD).

Before an identification of SLD can be made, there must be evidence that reading and writing interventions have occurred and been unsuccessful. This is because providing good educational service to students having difficulty acquiring reading and writing skills can prevent the development of significant reading difficulties and therefore reduce referrals for comprehensive assessment. In fact, the incidence of later diagnosed Specific Learning Disorder can be decreased by up to 70% through knowing where students are in their reading development, monitoring their progress, and teaching to their learning needs (Fletcher, Lyons, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2007; National Reading Panel, 2000). Researchers have also found that early prevention works better to improve reading difficulties than do approaches introduced later in schooling (Barnes & Wade-Woolley, 2007). This is because the young brain is distinctly positioned to heal and learn.

Intervention for students who struggle with literacy must include additional time to learn. Those who significantly struggle to read may require thousands of exposures to make the necessary connections. If an intervention is unsuccessful, the resulting comprehensive assessment may determine that a SLD is present. Students with Specific Learning Disorder may have a Record of Accommodations and/or an Individual Education Plan (IEP) detailing their specialized programming.

Alternate Format Materials (AFM)

AFM-NL Applications

The most recent application form for alternate format materials is available at www.gov.nl.ca/edu/forms/studentsupport/applications.html. Students with a perceptual

disability meeting the following criteria should qualify:

- student has an exceptionality, supported by a comprehensive assessment
- student requires print resources in an alternate format, because of an inability to hold or manipulate a book and/or an impairment in reading comprehension
- student has a current *Record of Accommodations* indicating that he/she requires alternate format materials



AFM Advisors

If your school does not have an AFM advisor, please discuss this at your next team meeting. AFM Advisor applications for access to the Alternate Format Materials Library NL are available at:

www.gov.nl.ca/edu/forms/studentsupport/applications.html



Feedback

Please share your thoughts regarding this newsletter including any suggestions for future articles. Our hope is to facilitate better communication with all teachers throughout the province.

Send feedback to sewhalen@gov.nl.ca.