



Exceptional News!

Student Support Services Division
Department of Education

Newsletter

April 2009

Welcome to the Premiere Edition of Exceptional News!

This is the first in a series of newsletters to keep you abreast of news, events, and initiatives in the student support services division of the Department of Education. Look for the next edition in June 2009.

Visit the New Department of Education Website



The Department of Education has updated its website with an emphasis on making it more accessible to the general public. Have a look at:
www.gov.nl.ca/edu

Update on Inclusion

The Department of Education has begun a pilot for inclusive education. This pilot will inform how schools can work toward becoming more inclusive learning environments for all students. The initiative has proceeded along this timeline:

October 2008

A two-day seminar was held with SEOs to discuss leadership in a differentiated school.

Fifteen schools were chosen by districts to participate in an inclusive education pilot: four each in Eastern, Nova Central, and Western districts, two in Labrador, and one in Conseil scolaire francophone.

Fifteen shadow schools in close proximity to pilot schools were selected.

Marcy Emberger, an expert on differentiated instruction, spent a week in St. John's working with department and district personnel as well as classroom teachers on the key components of differentiation.

November 2008

A steering committee for inclusive education was selected.

December 2008

In partnership with Newfoundland and Labrador Association for Community Living, inclusive education seminars were begun-completed in all districts by March 2009.

Resources in inclusive education were ordered for pilot schools.

March 2008

A two-day seminar was held with the 15 pilot and 15 shadow schools to discuss inclusive education and to assist pilot schools in the creation of an

action plan aimed at implementation of inclusive practices.

An inclusive education seminar, chaired by Dr. Gordon Porter, was held for all districts' program personnel. As follow up, discussions of the department's vision for inclusive education aided districts in developing action plans.

May 2009

Gayle Gregory, Canadian consultant and author in the field of differentiated classrooms, will chair a two-day seminar on differentiated instruction with itinerants and lead teachers across all districts.



In Process...

Pathway 4 online resource - Six provincial subcommittees continue their work on developing a bank of possible outcomes in a variety of disciplines to aid teachers in their development of alternate programming. This information will be available on a website which is expected to be up and running by fall.

Curriculum Outcomes - Curriculum and student support services divisions have met and have agreed that the template versions of curriculum outcomes, as they appeared on the previous departmental website, will shortly be reinstated. This will be an interim measure as, in collaboration with the curriculum division; we will be expanding the current template to include teaching and learning strategies and other pertinent information.

The intent is that these templates be used solely for administrative record-keeping purposes. When modifying any course, it is critical that full review be given to all aspects of the curriculum guide including strategies for teaching, learning and assessment. Curriculum modification should not be done solely by special education teachers, but should involve consultation with classroom teachers, content experts, and others as deemed necessary.

Latest Professional Resources

Functional Curriculum

A new Pathway 5 functional curriculum guide is now available at www.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/FunctionalCurriculumGuide.pdf. The focus of a functional curriculum is the enhancement of independence through the teaching of functional life skills. The curriculum emphasizes skills that children and youth with severe cognitive disabilities require in their current and future environments. These include personal care, social skills, money identification and management, communication skills, food preparation, recreation and leisure. Professional development sessions on the new guide were held in all regions during January, February and March.

Assessment Materials

Further to recommendation 26 of the ISSP report, a survey of current holdings of assessment tools was completed. This resulted in the identification and provision of appropriate standardized testing materials to school counsellors, school psychologists and speech-language pathologists. These materials address the areas of speech, achievement, intelligence, learning disabilities and behaviour. Where required, scoring software was also provided. Reference materials on learning disability and intelligence test interpretation, a pre-referral intervention manual, and multiple year supplies of consumable forms for intelligence and achievement tests were distributed throughout the province.

Gifted and Talented Working Group

The ISSP/Pathways report identified the area of gifted education as requiring consideration. A fall 2008 survey of principals, school counsellors, and some school district personnel outlined current practices in identifying and programming for this group. A provincial working group met on March 6 to begin re-examination of our provincial definition and to generate guidelines for resources and programming. For suggestions on differentiating instruction for highly able learners, visit such sites as

Curriculum Differentiation

www.austega.com/gifted/provisions/curdifferent.htm

or

Differentiation for Gifted and Talented Students: Principles and Practices

www.tki.org.nz/r/gifted/reading/theory/different_e.php

Did you know... ?

Alternate format materials are available upon application to the Department of Education. As in past years, the materials are available on CD and cassette tape. Some of these resources are also available on the Department of Education website in PDF and MP3 format. They can be accessed by a password obtained through the alternate format materials application process. The application form is available on the department website at www.gov.nl.ca/edu/forms/studentsupport/applications.html

News Flash!

Model Me Kids®



The Department of Education recently purchased the entire ModelMeKids® DVD collection for all speech-language pathologists working in the K-12 school system. These DVDs demonstrate appropriate social skills. Children model and narrate each skill. There are roughly 12 skills per DVD and the collection includes six DVDs. These tools are appropriate for children and adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder, nonverbal learning disability, Down syndrome and those with developmental disabilities. Some teachers in the province are using them with their entire class. If you would like to preview these DVDs, please visit the website (www.modelmekids.com) or speak to the speech-language pathologist responsible for your school.

Pathways Update

Please consult the Department of Education website for:

- questions and answers detailing changes to Pathway 2 accommodations
- a memo outlining the details of the IEP document
- updated IEP and Pathway 3, 4 and 5 forms
- Pathway 5 functional curriculum guide



Feedback

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

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