



Exceptional News!

Student Support Services Division Department of Education

Newsletter

June 2009

Exceptional News!

There has been enthusiastic response to the reinstatement of the Student Support Services newsletter. Thank you for your feedback and suggestions. Please continue to tell us what you think!

The newsletter is also available online at:
www.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/index.html



Update on Inclusion

Inclusion itinerant teachers, inclusion steering committee members and lead teachers from pilot and partner schools for inclusion attended a three day session on differentiated instruction with Canadian author and clinician Gayle Gregory on May 5, 6 and 7, 2009. Since our last issue, another pilot school has been added to the program - Queen of Peace Middle School in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

The complete list of schools involved is:

Pilot Schools

Western District
Viking Trail Academy
Presentation Jr. High
Stephenville Primary
Piccadilly Central High

Nova Central District
Memorial Academy
Millcrest Academy
William Mercer Academy
Lewisporte Collegiate

Eastern

Holy Trinity Elementary Torbay
Coley's Point Primary Coley's Point
Clarenville Middle School Clarenville
Holy Name of Mary Academy Lawn

Conseil Scolaire Francophone Grands-Vents

Partner Schools

Western

St. Thomas Aquinas	Port au Port East
St. Michael's Elementary	Stephenville Crossing
G.C. Rowe Jr. High	Corner Brook
Canon Richards High School	Flower's Cove

Nova Central	
Baie Verte High	Baie Verte
St. Paul's Intermediate	Gander
Bay D'Espoir Academy	Milltown
Lewisporte Academy	Lewisporte

Eastern	Marystown
Sacred Heart Academy	Blaketown
Crescent Collegiate	King's Cove
St. Mark's School	Mount Pearl
Mount Pearl Intermediate	



In October 2009, the Atlantic Canada Connected Community is hosting Jay McTighe, well-known educator and researcher in the field of instructional strategies, curriculum models, and assessment procedures for improving the quality of student thinking. Teachers from the pilot schools will attend his two-day presentation on differentiation and understanding by design.

Pre-referral and Pathway 2

The pre-referral stage allows a teacher or teachers to try a variety of strategies to help identify, define, or address an area of concern for an individual student. Observations, informal classroom assessments and interventions, as well as contact with parents/guardians and other educational personnel are documented.

At this stage, the teacher may try various Pathway 2 accommodations. As part of this informal assessment process, interventions and results will be documented. If these interventions have been successful and have been deemed necessary only in the short-term, then no further action is required. If these interventions have been unsuccessful or are deemed necessary for the long-term, then the student's file should be referred to the student support services team for further assessment. Pathway 2 accommodations may only be implemented long-term with the identification of an exceptionality. The pre-referral stage is an important component of the assessment process.

Referral Tracking System

The new Referral Tracking System (RTS) is in the final phase of piloting in 16 schools. The RTS provides real-time information to district and school personnel concerning the status of any student assessment referrals in the province. This new system is beginning a provincial rollout in June starting with registration of principals. All other users will register in the coming weeks and early September. Training schedules have been arranged for all guidance counsellors and special education teachers involved in assessment and they will be contacted in September about times and dates. Educational psychologists have been trained and sessions with speech language pathologists will be completed in June. This new Internet based application will support schools in managing their assessment waitlists.

Department of Education Website

Please note that curriculum outcome templates have been returned to the department's website in PDF format as a link from the curriculum section at: www.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/curriculum/cots_curriculum_outcome_templates.html

This listing includes the templates currently available. It will be expanded as new implementations proceed and other highly subscribed courses are converted to this format. 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.

IEP and ISSP

The provincial and regional teams responsible for the management of the Model for the Coordination of Services for Children and Youth and the ISSP have met frequently throughout this school year to review the recommendations of the ISSP and Pathways report. Recommendations on how to proceed with the model and the ISSP have been forwarded to the four partner departments.

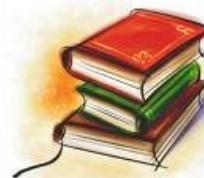
At present, the coordination of services for children and youth should continue. Students receiving services outside of education should have an ISSP.

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is an education document. It records the educational programming decisions for a particular student. All students receiving Pathways 3, 4, or 5 programming should have an IEP. The form outlining the IEP is available on the department website at: www.gov.nl.ca/edu/forms/studentsupport/pathways.html

Should the involvement and collaboration of outside agencies be required, the IEP is the educational component of the ISSP to be contributed to the joint meeting (upon approval by the parents/guardians to share such information).

Gifted and Talented

A provincial working group has reviewed the definition of this exceptionality and is currently compiling suggested resources for identification of students in a variety of domains. This should be compiled and available during the next school year. The ongoing work of the online Pathway 4 resource committee is also being expanded to include possible outcomes for Pathway 4 programming for gifted and talented learners.



Latest Professional Resources

A resource binder from Alberta entitled *Teaching Students Who are Gifted and Talented* has been forwarded to each school and district office. A copy in French has been supplied to each school in the Conseil scolaire francophone and to each school which offers French immersion programming. Please note that the content regarding Individual Program Plans reflects Alberta's system and is not meant to replace our current practices regarding IEPs and Pathways to Programming. However, the strategies and reference material contained in this binder are a welcome resource for teachers of very able students. Such material was identified by educators in last fall's needs assessment as information necessary to better address the needs of high ability learners.

Strategy Corner

One of the most accessible strategies for addressing the needs of gifted and talented learners is curriculum compacting. It is often also applicable to students who are high achievers. It attempts to eliminate or streamline curriculum content material. The three steps are:

Name It

Identify areas where a student excels or shows exceptional interest and ability where compacting may be considered.

Prove It

Before a unit of work is started, the student(s) is pre-assessed on the outcomes to be presented. If a student demonstrates mastery (generally 85%) of a particular outcome, he or she is excused from that instruction and related practice.

Change It

The student then completes alternate content during the time the class is involved in the prescribed material. Depending on the amount mastered before instruction, the student may "buy time" to pursue other learning such as deeper investigation into the topic at hand, or an independent study on a topic of interest to the student – subject to the working conditions outlined by the teacher. It is not intended as a time for remediation of deficits or "catch up" in weaker areas.

Many teachers find curriculum compacting a wonderful tool particularly suited to mathematics. Compacting in content areas such as social studies or English language arts may also involve streamlining the pace at which new material is encountered. Some teachers offer their students the option of working on learning contracts which specify the core areas of a subject and a variety of ways to demonstrate their learning. Many offer options which take the student beyond textbooks to primary sources or real world audiences. For further information, consult: www.gifted.uconn.edu/nrcgt/newsletter/fall99/fall996.html

or Susan Winebrenner's Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom (Free Spirit Press, 1992) which presents other easy to use strategies. One such strategy, Most Difficult First, offers students the five most challenging problems of an assignment. If a student is able to solve these correctly on the first try, he or she is not required to complete the remaining practice questions but may instead be presented with an activity more appropriate to his or her learning needs.

Differentiated Instruction (DI)

Differentiated instruction is simply responsive teaching. A responsive teacher knows the strengths and needs of all learners in the classroom and plans lessons and activities to meet many different learning styles and needs. To be successful with differentiated instruction, a teacher must be well versed in the scope and sequence of the curriculum he or she is delivering.

Some Key Components of Differentiated Instruction:

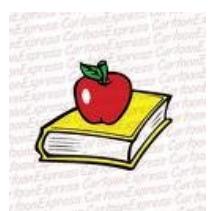
1. Provide a classroom climate that is safe, encourages risk-taking and is inclusive, stimulating and challenging.
2. Know the learning styles of each learner. (Is the student a visual, auditory or kinesthetic learner or a combination?) Use checklists, observation sheets, journals and/or recording logs to track each learner's style.
3. Assess, Assess, Assess. This is very important. Assess before you teach, during your teaching and after your teaching. Use written pre-tests, journaling surveys or graffiti facts to determine what they already know about a concept before you teach. Use rubrics, teacher-made tests, checklists or question techniques during teaching. Use post tests, portfolios, reflections and / or conversations after you teach.
4. Adjust the assignments you give to your students based on their learning styles and needs. One assignment does not fit all. Look at the various ways a student or a group of students can demonstrate learning. Give choices in the type of assignments they can complete.
5. Consider your instructional strategies. Are you using effective methods to help your students remember and recall concepts? Are the activities you provide meaningful and related to the concepts taught? Are you providing graphic organizers to help map out their learning? Are your groupings flexible and effective?
6. Curriculum approaches: You can vary the way you deliver curriculum through learning centres, projects, problem based learning and the inquiry model approach.

(Adapted from Differentiated Instructional Strategies: One Size Doesn't Fit All Gregory/Chapman, 2003)

Links for helpful information/strategies to use in your classroom:

www.corwinpress.com/upm-data/12841 Gregory Chapter 1.pdf

www.frsd.k12.nj.us/rfmslibrarylab/di/differentiated_instruction.htm





DI Strategy: "Graffiti Facts" for Pre-assessment

Introduce the topic/concept and give each student a Post-it note. Ask him or her to write or draw a picture of what he or she knows about the topic. Have each student place his or her fact on the board. You may have each child pick a Post- it note different from their own and read aloud or you can simply scan the notes for your own information. This will help you gauge where each child is in their understanding of the topic/concept. Plan your lesson based on the information provided to you by your students.

Look for more DI strategies in our next issue.

News Flash!

Assistive Technology - A number of department consultants and teachers have been test driving various software packages and devices in an effort to identify those which are most appropriate for provincial use. This will result in more standardization when students and/or teachers transition from school to school and less frustration in having to repeatedly learn a new program or system. The decisions of this group will also impact on the future development of the alternate format materials web site.



Student Diabetes Information

Is there a student with diabetes in your school?

Would you like to learn more about diabetes?

The Department of Education recently provided schools with a copy of the Kids with Diabetes in Your Care resource kit. You can also access this resource through the following link:
http://www.diabetes.ca/Files/KidsWithDiabetes_complete.pdf

Speech Language Materials

The Department of Education recently provided all speech-language pathologists in the education system with a GOTALK1 and EXPRESSONE. These inexpensive message talkers are simple to use and are a great way to introduce a child with significant communication difficulties to a voice output device. Please contact your school SLP if you would like additional information.



In Process

Alternate Format Resources - The Department of Education is in the process of upgrading the alternate format materials web site and working to improve upon the quantity and quality of authorized curriculum materials that are available to students with print disabilities. Various divisions within the Department of Education will be involved in this project.



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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