Standards for Special Education

Amended June 2004

Essential Components

OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

for

Students with Behaviour Disabilities

ACCESS

APPROPRIATENESS

ACCOUNTABILITY

APPEALS

4 A's

Alberta EDUCATION

This document applies to grades 1–12 special education in public and separate school boards, including Francophone education regional authorities, but excluding charter schools, and is intended for:

Teachers	✓
Administrators	✓
Parents	✓
General Public	✓
Other	✓

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Introduction

Foreword

Essential Components of Educational Programming for Students with Behaviour Disabilities is intended for classroom teachers, resource personnel, administrators and parents. It is one of a series of documents developed to facilitate programming for students in grades 1 to 12 who have special education needs. Other topics in the series include programming for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, programming for students who are blind or visually impaired, and programming for students with autism spectrum disorders.

Essential Components
The six essential components listed in this document are contained in *Standards for Special Education, Amended June 2004* and are therefore mandated by Alberta Education. Each component is considered essential to the provision of a comprehensive program. However, the manner in which the components are implemented may be affected by such practical considerations as availability of resources and needs of the particular student.

Sample Indicators of Effective Programming
The sample indicators are examples of effective practices that illustrate the implementation of the essential component. The indicators will vary because of the unique strengths and needs of individual students. It is not the intent to list all possible indicators or to require all listed indicators for every student.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to:
* identify the essential components of appropriate programming that are mandated by Alberta Education for students with special education needs
* provide examples of effective practices
* establish a common understanding of the terminology associated with this specialized field
* clarify the meaning of *appropriateness*, taking into account what is reasonable for educational programming for students with behaviour disabilities.

Links to *Standards for Special Education, Amended June 2004*

Standards for Special Education, Amended June 2004 requires school boards to identify students with special education needs in grades 1 to 12 and deliver effective programming for them. These standards promote consistent, high quality educational practices within Alberta.

The *Essential Components* series is directly linked to the appropriateness section of *Standards for Special Education, Amended June 2004* in order to ensure appropriate programming related to professional standards, individualized program planning, implementation, evaluation, and parent involvement in decision making. *Appropriateness* means that "educational programming and services are designed around the assessed needs of the student and are provided by qualified staff who are knowledgeable and skilled" (*Standards for Special Education, Amended June 2004*, page 2).

Guiding Principles

The essential components of programming for students with behaviour disabilities are guided by the following principles.
- Programming is an active process that is based on the student's assessed abilities and needs and is continuously monitored and adjusted.
- Students with behaviour disabilities should participate in the regular curriculum to the fullest extent possible.
- The essential components of educational programming overlap; they are processes that work together.
- Meaningful parent and family involvement is intrinsic to all of the essential components.
- Staff and students should have access to specialists and resources that support the educational program.

The Students and Their Unique Educational Needs

Students with behaviour disabilities exhibit chronic and pervasive behaviours that are so maladaptive that they interfere with the learning and safety of the student and other students. Typically, behaviour disabilities are characterized by a number of observable maladaptive behaviours including:
- inability to maintain satisfactory relationships with peers or adults
- inappropriate behaviours or feelings under ordinary conditions
- difficulty accepting the realities of personal responsibility and accountability
- physical violence toward other people and/or physical destructiveness to the environment.

To fully access their educational programs, students with behaviour disabilities need support from rehabilitation, mental health and/or education professionals who have disability-specific knowledge and skills. Adults who have frequent interactions with the student are critical members of the learning team. Successful learning teams often comprise the people who know the student best, including the student, the family, school personnel and community members who have frequent interactions with the student. Community members may include employers, mentors and elders. The learning team focuses on the needs and unique circumstances of the student and family and develops a practical, outcome-based intervention plan as part of the student's individualized program plan. The success of the intervention plan depends on the support and participation of the student, the family, school personnel and community members.

Essential Components

1. Knowledgeable Staff
(*Standards for Special Education Amended June 2004*, pages 9, 10)

Staff serving students with behaviour disabilities should have knowledge of and experience with the behavioural and cognitive strategies typically used to ensure student safety and success, although they may not always have specialized training in behaviour disabilities. Staff should have access to learning opportunities, resources and classroom support.

Sample Indicators of Effective Programming
- Staff demonstrate competencies in identifying and implementing positive behavioural interventions and in the use of data to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and make ongoing programming adjustments.
- Staff are knowledgeable about the behaviours associated with particular disabilities and consider this information when making programming decisions.
- Staff have the skills required to prevent problem behaviours and to respond appropriately when acting out behaviours occur.
- Staff have opportunities to participate in ongoing professional growth activities related to programming for students with behavioural and emotional disabilities.

2. Learning Team
(*Standards for Special Education, Amended June 2004*, pages 4, 8, 10)

All students with behaviour disabilities should have learning teams who work together to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate programming and services. A certificated teacher must direct and lead the learning team in developing goals and objectives that are educationally relevant.

Sample Indicators of Effective Programming
- The learning team may consist of the classroom teacher, parents, student (where appropriate), other school and jurisdiction staff aware of the student's needs, and other adults who have frequent interactions with the student.
- The learning team works collaboratively with other teachers, assistants, specialized teachers, behaviour specialists and mental health professionals to meet individual student needs.
- The learning team develops goals and objectives for the student at the beginning of each school year. The goals and objectives are linked to assessment results and progress is routinely monitored and evaluated. Changes to the student's individualized program plan (IPP) are made in response to student progress throughout the academic year.
- When required, coaches and facilitators with expertise in behavioural assessment and interventions are part of the team.
- Learning team members have frequent informal communications regarding student progress, which help to ensure successful programming strategies are identified and adjusted when necessary.

3. Meaningful Parent and Family Involvement

(*Standards for Special Education, Amended June 2004*, pages 3, 5, 6–10, 12, 14)

Student achievement, attitudes and behaviour all improve when parents and other family members are involved. Working in partnership, the adults in a student's life may wrap around (See Glossary) a student and develop effective programming and interventions.

Sample Indicators of Effective Programming
- Under the direction of the teacher, learning team members engage in ongoing, frequent communications with parents in a variety of ways, depending on the strengths and needs of a particular family.
- Parents have opportunities to participate in the IPP development and review process. In addition to academic and social needs, unique cultural needs are considered in the IPP and day-to-day programming.
- Parents know what acceptable behaviours in the school and classroom look like and sound like.
- School personnel work collaboratively and share strategies for dealing with inappropriate behaviours and uncomfortable situations with parents and family members.

4. Individualized Program Plan (IPP)

(*Standards for Special Education Amended*, June 2004, pages 4, 7, 10–11)

An IPP is required for each student coded for special education needs. The IPP includes essential information for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the student's educational program. IPPs are working documents for learning teams to use throughout the year.

Sample Indicators of Effective Programming
- IPPs are the result of a collaborative process involving all members of the learning team.
- The learning team gathers information from current assessments and uses this information to develop an IPP that meets the student's needs.
- IPPs include goals and objectives specific to each student's unique learning needs, accommodations required to access the curriculum, and individualized programming required to address other disability-specific needs (e.g., the development of social skills, the use of strategies required to manage expressions of anger, the use of respectful language).
- IPPs are monitored and evaluated throughout the year and are modified to ensure appropriate programming for the student and continued support of the learning team for the programming goals, objectives, adaptations and possible modifications.

5. Educational Programming and Services
(*Standards for Special Education, Amended June 2004*, pages 3, 4, 9–10)

Students with behaviour disabilities have a range of strengths and needs and require an array of services and supports to meet their educational goals. The supports identified below are not all appropriate for every student. The learning team reviews and defines the supports and services appropriate to the student. Specialists in behaviour management, rehabilitation and mental health can provide expertise in the areas identified.

a) Flexible Programming

Positive behaviour programming focuses on the variables that adults control or adjust to prevent unacceptable behaviours and encourage positive behaviours. As students with behaviour disabilities gain the skills required for social and academic success, problem behaviours decrease.

Sample Indicators of Effective Programming
- Students are provided with opportunities to learn, practise and generalize social behaviours.
- Targeted social skills are linked to assessment data and observations of social needs across settings and are stated in measurable, observable terms. When addressing objectives in the social domain, students with behaviour disabilities usually require direct instruction in the classroom, followed by opportunities to practise skills in the school and community.
- Adjustments to the instructional process, materials, schedules and environment are made as required.
- The majority of time in the classroom is spent on instruction and learning activities.
- Instruction involves active academic engagement, which results in high rates of student success.
- Instructional activities are linked to measurable objectives from the appropriate provincial programs of study.

b) Management of the Environment

While clear communication and expectations are required in any learning setting, it is imperative that students with behaviour disabilities have opportunities to learn in highly structured, well-managed learning environments. In structured learning environments, routines, procedures, expectations and schedules are predictable and clearly articulated.

Sample Indicators of Effective Programming
- The classroom is a positive learning environment.
- Classroom rules, expectations and routines are taught, practised and positively reinforced.
- Efficient transition procedures are taught, practised and positively reinforced.
- Routine cues are employed to initiate and end typical classroom routines.
- Adults model and reinforce respectful and responsible behaviours.
- Students are engaged in learning.
- Continuous, active supervision occurs across all settings and activities.
- Minor problem behaviours are managed positively and in a timely manner.
- Chronic problem behaviour is anticipated and plans are in place for prevention.

c) School-wide Systems of Behavioural Support

Schools should have collaboratively developed plans that support school-wide behaviour change.

Sample Indicators of Effective Programming
- Three to five school-wide, clearly defined behavioural expectations are established, articulated and posted in all classrooms. An overall school rule such as "Respect yourself, respect others and respect property" guides the conduct of all students and adults in the school. Some other examples of school-wide rules are:
    - *All students will arrive on time and be prepared for class.*
    - *All students will respect personal space and property.*
    - *All students and staff will use respectful language in the school.*

    The school-wide rules may change over time and reflect the priority needs of a particular school community.
- A school-wide system exists for acknowledging students for their acceptable behaviours. The frequency and timing of reinforcement will influence results. A high frequency of reinforcement, combined with clear links to specific behaviours, is more likely to result in behaviour change.
- Clearly defined and consistent consequences and procedures for responding to problem behaviours are developed and communicated to students, staff and parents.
- Behavioural achievements are communicated and celebrated. Many school teams publicly acknowledge progress toward the realization of school-wide goals in weekly gatherings. Developmentally appropriate acknowledgements are advised. For example, adolescents appreciate teacher praise but respond best when the teacher delivers words of encouragement individually and quietly.

d) Incentives and Consequences

A menu of reinforcers or incentives may be used to encourage positive behaviour and discourage negative behaviour. Social praise is an effective natural reinforcer. Specific verbal praise improves task engagement and behaviour. However, it is often necessary to pair social praise with activity, privilege or material reinforcers. Reinforcement or reward systems must be connected to IPP goals and objectives.

Sample Indicators of Effective Programming
- Classroom personnel deliver a four-to-one ratio of positive to negative interactions.
- By building positive relationships with students, staff establish themselves as generalized reinforcers.
- Building professional capacity to use data to assess the realization of goals and objectives is ongoing.
- Reinforcement and consequence procedures are outlined in IPPs and communicated to staff, students, parents and administrators.
- When targeted behaviours do not change within a reasonable time, adjustments are made to programming.

e) Behaviour Support Plans

Behaviour support plans are working documents that describe the specific steps the learning team will take to change targeted behaviours. They are linked to the assessment data, goals, objectives, transition plans and results documented in IPPs. A sample template for the development of a behaviour support plan can be found in *Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders*, Book 9 of the *Programming for Students with Special Needs* series.

Sample Indicators of Effective Programming
- Staff establish behaviour support plans collaboratively and outline the behaviours the learning team will engage in to prompt changes in student behaviour.
- Observations, assessments, and previous and current IPPs are used to shape behaviour support plans, and adults demonstrate a working knowledge of the plans for students.

f) Analysis of the Purpose and Patterns of Problem Behaviour

Learning team members use functional behavioural analysis (See Glossary) to analyze student behaviour. This analysis is used to guide the development of effective behaviour plans.

Sample Indicators of Effective Programming
- Classroom and school personnel recognize that human behaviour can be shaped and modified.
- Even when behaviour is difficult to explain, collaborative efforts are made to identify the variables that may have prompted and/or maintained the problem behaviour.
- The learning team routinely pays attention to events that occur before and after behaviours and to the effects of imposed consequences. The information gathered from this attention provides insight for creating and modifying behaviour plans.
- The learning team recognizes behaviour patterns and uses this information to intervene early and prevent serious problem behaviours.
- The learning team makes an ongoing effort to understand the purpose and patterns of individual student behaviours. The team uses this information to guide the selection of interventions most likely to result in achievement of IPP goals and objectives.

g) Data Collection and Use

In order to develop meaningful plans, it is important to collect, analyze and use baseline, intervention and post-intervention data. IPPs should document observed changes in targeted behaviours. Systematic observations and documentation should be completed for both academic and behavioural goals and objectives included in IPPs. With the establishment of specific, measurable goals and objectives and a day-to-day working knowledge of those goals and objectives for individual students, evaluation results are evident and can be readily communicated to learning team members. Formative assessment occurs daily and is used to inform programming.

Sample Indicators of Effective Programming
- Discipline data are routinely gathered, summarized and reported.
- Data are analyzed and used to develop and modify programs for students.

- Manageable data collection and analysis systems are developed and refined on an ongoing basis.
- Staff collect data on the academic and behavioural goals and objectives included in students' IPPs. They use this data to communicate progress to members of learning teams and to guide programming decisions.
- Data are gathered from a variety of sources including personal communications, observations, checklists, anecdotal records, and video and audio recordings.

6. Planning for Transition
(*Standards for Special Education, Amended June 2004*, pages 4, 5)

Planning is necessary when students with behaviour disabilities transition from one setting to another, be it classroom to classroom, school to school, or into post-secondary education or work. The receiving staff benefit from an understanding of the student's strengths and needs so they can best prepare programming and environments that support the student.

Sample Indicators of Effective Programming
- IPPs identify transition plans specific to the students' needs and the new environment to which they will move.
- The learning team identifies planning-for-transition goals early in the year and works with students until these goals are achieved.
- Members of the learning team communicate information to the staff in the receiving environment.
- Staff and students are prepared when the transition to the new environment occurs.

Additional Resources

For more information and sample strategies, refer to the following Alberta Education resources. Unless otherwise indicated, you may download resources at no cost from www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/specialneeds, or purchase print copies from the Learning Resources Centre at www.lrc.education.gov.ab.ca or telephone (780) 427-5775, toll free in Alberta by first dialing 310-0000.

Essential and Supportive Skills (1995), Book 2 of the *Programming for Students with Special Needs* series (Order from LRC)

Individualized Program Planning: ECS to Grade 12 (2006), Book 3 of the *Programming for Students with Special Needs* series

The Learning Team: A Handbook for Parents of Children with Special Needs (2003)

Make School Work for You (2001) (Order from LRC)

Special Education Coding Criteria

Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (2003), Book 9 of the *Programming for Students with Special Needs* series

Teaching Students with Emotional Disorders and/or Mental Illness (2000), Book 8 of the *Programming for Students with Special Needs* series

Glossary of Key Terms

Access – Students with special needs are entitled to have access in a school year to an education program in accordance with the *School Act*. Students with special needs receive adapted/modified programs that enable and improve learning.

Adapted program retains the learning outcomes of the prescribed curriculum and adjustments to the instructional process are made to address the special needs of the student.

Direct instruction is a form of systematic teaching involving the establishment of optimum learning conditions, careful definition of the learning outcome and the timely delivery of appropriate consequences (e.g., feedback, social praise, tangible reinforcement). Direct instruction often requires that the learning outcome be analyzed into, and then taught as, component skills or tasks.

Effective Behaviour Supports is a system of school-wide processes and individualized instruction designed to prevent or decrease problem behaviour and to increase and maintain appropriate behaviour.

Emotional disability is included in Alberta Education's definition of behaviour disability. Terms used elsewhere for similar conditions include mental health problems, mental illnesses, psychiatric disorders and emotional disorders.

Engagement refers to the amount of time students spend interacting with adults and peers and/or learning materials in a manner appropriate to their developmental level and the context of activities.

Functional behavioural analysis (FBA) is a process used by learning teams to target and eliminate undesirable behaviour. The team forms a hypothesis regarding the function or purpose of the maladaptive behaviour and then uses this information to develop effective alternatives to the undesirable behaviour. FBA is one tool the learning team may use to better understand and respond to challenging behaviours. FBA is based on the premise that challenging behaviours are usually meaningful, have a purpose and serve a function for students. The function may be to gain social, tangible or sensory rewards, or to avoid aversive conditions. The functional analysis cycle involves identifying a behaviour targeted for change and hypothesizing about the possible function of the behaviour. The possible function then guides programming decisions. For example, if the function of verbal acting-out behaviour is to avoid tasks a student finds difficult, the instructional processes may be adjusted so that the student only engages in the task at optimal times of the day for limited time durations with privilege or activity rewards for participation. The task itself may be structured so the student experiences success initially with a few familiar items, then moves on to more challenging items.

Generalized reinforcer is a conditioned reinforcer that is effective for a wide range of behaviours as a result of having been paired with a variety of previously established reinforcers. Money, for example, is a generalized reinforcer.

Intervention means a planned action that is implemented with the expectation that it will influence a specified behaviour or outcome in a predictable and desired manner.

Learning team refers to a team that consults and shares information relevant to the individual student's education, and plans special education programming and services as required. Under the direction of a certificated teacher, the team may consist of parents, the student (where appropriate), other school jurisdiction or program staff, and others as required.

Modified program has learning outcomes that are significantly different from the provincial curriculum and are specifically selected to meet the student's special needs.

Positive Behaviour Supports is another term for Effective Behaviour Supports.

Specialized teacher is a qualified teacher who has additional training in the area of teaching students with a specific disability.

Wrap-around process involves family members, school personnel and community agents who wrap around or have direct personal involvement with the student requiring individual support. The wrap-around team focuses on typical needs in life domain areas that all persons have. These life domains include family, living situation, financial, educational/vocational, social/recreational, behavioural/emotional, psychological, health, legal, cultural and safety. Services and supports are culturally competent and tailored to the unique values and cultural needs of the child, family, and the culture with which the family identifies.

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