



Handbook for Parents



of

Children with Student Education Services Needs

PREAMBLE

A farmer had some puppies he needed to sell. He painted a sign advertising the four pups, and set about nailing it to a post on the edge of his yard. As he was driving the last nail into the post, he felt a tug on his overalls. He looked down into the eyes of a little boy. "Mister," he said, "I want to buy one of your puppies."

"Well," said the farmer, as he rubbed the sweat off the back of his neck, "These puppies come from fine parents and cost a good deal of money." The boy dropped his head for a moment. Then reaching deep into his pocket, he pulled out a handful of change and held it up to the farmer. "I've got thirty-nine cents. Is that enough to take a look?"

"Sure," said the farmer. And with that he let out a whistle. "Here, Dolly!" he called. Out from the doghouse and down the ramp ran Dolly followed by four little balls of fur. The little boy pressed his face against the chain link fence. His eyes danced with delight. As the dogs made their way to the fence, the little boy noticed something else stirring inside the doghouse. Slowly another little ball appeared, this one noticeably smaller. Down the ramp it slid. Then in a somewhat awkward manner, the little pup began hobbling toward the others, doing its best to catch up....

"I want that one," the little boy said, pointing to the runt. The farmer knelt down at the boy's side and said, "Son, you don't want that puppy. He will never be able to run and play with you like these dogs would." With that the little boy stepped back from the fence, reached down, and began rolling up one leg of his trousers. In doing so he revealed a steel brace running down both sides of his leg attaching itself to a specially made shoe. Looking back up at the farmer, he said, "You see sir, I don't run too well myself, and he will need someone who understands." With tears in his eyes, the farmer reached down and picked up the little pup. Holding it carefully he handed it to the little boy. "How much?" asked the little boy. "No charge," answered the farmer, "There's no charge for love."

The world is full of people who need someone who understands.

This is the reason why we do the things we do.

Author: Unknown

PREFACE

Buffalo Trail Public Schools recognizes the need and the obligation to provide student education services programs for students with learning difficulties. It is recognized that there are categories of student services that are generally accepted and used for administrative and funding purposes. Therefore, the policies included in this portion of the handbook represent the goals and beliefs of the schools represented in Buffalo Trail Public Schools.

Please note that this is a summary of the beliefs, policies, and procedures held by Buffalo Trail Public Schools, in some cases procedures are school specific, and therefore for further detailed information please consult with the Director of Student Education Services.

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

Buffalo Trail Public Schools provides assistance to students in the most enabling environment using all available resources. The collaboratively developed student programs are ongoing throughout the student's educational process with planning for transitions throughout the various grade levels, school locations and into the adult community. An effort is made to provide a full range of educational programs within the context of a regular classroom. Pullout support is available as the need arises.

STUDENT EDUCATION SERVICES AND THE STUDENT WITH SPECIAL

Students with student education services needs are identified using the current Alberta Education eligibility criteria. Programs and services must address the needs of the students who are eligible for special provision(s) under the Alberta Education criteria. Where possible, schools will provide support to other students who may not meet eligibility requirements.

A Student Education Services program:

- Is based on an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) (Alberta Education *Binder-Programming for Students with Special Needs Series*) which specifies goals and objectives and outlines services to meet the identified educational needs of individual students with special needs.
- may be provided in a variety of settings including the regular classroom
- is modified based on the results of continuous assessment and evaluation
- provides for instruction appropriate to the student's individual learning level
- prepares and plans for student transitions.

Students with special needs are those who require changes to any or all of the following:

- regular curriculum
- staffing
- instructional and evaluation strategies
- materials or resources
- facilities or equipment
- and may require specialized health care services.

PROGRAM PLACEMENT

Students are placed in programs where their learning needs are adequately and appropriately met. School authorities will:

- establish a process for determining the most appropriate and enabling program placement for a student with special needs
- in consultation with parents, determine the most appropriate program placement in a manner consistent with the Buffalo Trail Public Schools' Special Education Policies.

For more information on the above Policies and Administrative Procedures please use the BTPS web link:

For Policies:

<http://www.btps.ca/board/policies/>

For Administrative Procedures:

<http://www.btps.ca/board/admin-procedures/>

The Board recognizes the need to provide programs and services appropriate to the educational requirements of students with special needs. The Board believes it is essential to provide these programs and services to students in the most enabling environment making the best possible use of available resources.

GUIDELINE:

- Schools shall provide a full range of educational programs within the regular classroom; where necessary pullout program support will be provided.
- Individual Program Plans shall be utilized to outline the program and services required by a student.
- Individual Program Plans must be developed collaboratively with parents; the Individual Program Plan must take into consideration the educational transitions, which occur throughout the student's educational career.
- An Individual Program Plan is a concise plan of action, designed to address the student's special needs. An Individual Program Plan is developed from all available sources of information. All students deemed to be in need of special programming by the school's Student Education Services team, the parents, outside agencies and/or the Director of Student Education Services, shall have an Individual Program Plan.
- School personnel responsible for the development of the Individual Program Plan shall follow the guidelines outlined in the Alberta Education document entitled, Programming for Students with Special Needs, and the Division's Student Education Services Handbook.

INTRODUCTION

As the parent of a student who may be entitled to student education services you have certain rights. These rights are guaranteed by the School Act, Section 44. The School Act protects the rights of children with disabilities and their parents.

To be eligible for student education services:

- A student must experience one or more of the following disabilities listed below.
- The student's educational performance must be negatively impacted.
- The student must need specially designed instruction and related services.

Alberta Education defines the following disabilities:

Severe Disabilities	Mild and Moderate Disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Severe Cognitive Disability• Severe Emotional/Behavioral Disability• Severe Multiple Disability• Severe Medical or Physical Disability• Severe Hearing Disability• Blindness• Severe Communications Disorder (ECS only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gifted and Talented• Mild Cognitive Disability• Moderate Cognitive Disability• Emotional Behavioral Disability• Learning Disability• Hearing Disability• Visual Disability• Communications Disability• Physical or Medical Disability• Multiple Disability

Schools can provide parents with additional information regarding the eligibility requirements for each disability.

REFERRING A STUDENT

A parent, teacher, and with parental consent a doctor, social worker, speech-language pathologist, etc., and/or counselor may refer a student to the school's Student Education Services team if they have a concern and/or believe that the student may be experiencing a disabling condition that may be impacting their education program. Schools in BTPS have a clear protocol for addressing referrals.

A student may have difficulty in more than one area at the same time.

When a student is referred for an assessment, the school must consult and obtain informed written consent from the parents before any assessment is pursued. Qualified staff will complete the assessments discussed. Assessment results and recommendations will be discussed with parents as soon as possible. Parents are an extremely important part of the special education program and are encouraged to talk openly about their concerns with their student's teacher and the Student Education Services staff at the school.

If the outcome of the assessment results in a recommendation(s) for changes to the student's program the parents must provide informed written consent prior to any program changes being implemented. The changes will be documented in the student's IPP.

ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

Assessment is the process of testing and observing the student in order to understand the learning styles, learning preferences, and abilities of the student. The information is used to help make decisions about the kind of educational programming required for the student.

The assessments will be administered by qualified staff as determined by Buffalo Trail Public Schools and/or Alberta Education.

More than one procedure may be used to assess the student. They may be informal and formal assessments, behavioral observations, parental input and classroom work samples.

Once the assessment information is available, the school's Student Education Services team will review the information. This information will then be shared with parents and recommendations made.

If the team decides the student requires Student Education Services, the team must develop an Individualized Program Plan (IPP). The primary responsibility for developing the IPP may be with the classroom teacher, and/or the Student Educational Services teacher, depending on the program and/or services required.

Parent input into the IPP is very important and schools will make every effort to involve the parents in their development. Parents must provide written consent to the goals and objectives outlined in the IPP before it can be implemented. The IPP is a living document and may require changes from time to time. Parent input/consent will be needed when changes are required.

INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAM PLANS (IPP)

Every student with a disability and/or who requires Student Education Services programming must have a written Individualized Program Plan (IPP). The IPP describes all the services needed for the student's special education program.

IPP meetings will be arranged to give parents and other caregivers the opportunity to meet with school's Student Education Services staff to discuss, share and develop the IPP for the student. In many cases the IPP may be drafted prior to an IPP meeting to expedite the process. The IPP team should include:

- one or both of the student's parents
- the student's regular education teacher
- at least one student education services teacher and/or service provider (speech language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, etc.) of the student, if possible.

Parents and/or the school may invite to the meeting others who are involved and/or may be able to assist with the student's program.

The schools must ensure that one or both parents are at each meeting or are given the chance to be at the meeting. Parents must have enough time to plan to be at the meeting. If parents cannot be at the meeting, the school must allow them to share their ideas/concerns on the phone, in a letter, or reschedule the meeting if needed.

If the parents choose not to come to the IPP meeting, the meeting can be held without the parents. The school records must show that the school made multiple attempts to have the parents at the meeting.

The school must be sure that the parents understand the IPP and agree with its contents before it can be implemented. Parental signatures are required. A copy of the IPP may be given to the parents and the master copy placed in the student's file and a working copy kept in the classroom as a reference.

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INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM PLANS REQUIRED INFORMATION

All IPP's must be written in accordance with Alberta Education's guidelines and in the standardized Buffalo Trail Public Schools IPP format. "Each student identified as having special education needs must have an IPP. Students with special education needs, as described in section 44 of the *School Act*, are those students who are in need of special education programming because of their behavioral, communicational, intellectual, learning or physical characteristics, or a combination of those characteristics." **Alberta Education: Programming for Students with Special Needs Book 3 Individualized Program Planning (2006), Chapter One page 3.**

The IPP acknowledges the student's strengths and needs and explains how the school's programming will address those areas. Development of the IPP is intended to foster a team approach. The educational growth of a student is best accomplished through the mutual efforts of, and close communication among, the student, the family, the school, the community and other professionals involved with the student.

Students with special needs may require changes to the regular curriculum, staffing, instructional and evaluation strategies, materials and resources, facilities or equipment. The school's Student Education Services team, in consultation with the parents/guardians or others as determined, determine when the modifications of the regular program are extensive enough to require an IPP. **Alberta Education: Programming for Students with Special Needs Book 3 Individualized Program Planning (1995) p. IPP.1.**

Alberta Education: Programming for Students with Special Needs Book 3 Individualized Program Planning (2006), Chapter One page 3 indicates "an IPP is a written commitment of intent by the learning team to ensure appropriate planning for students with special education needs. It is a working document and a record of student progress that contributes to a common understanding and coordination of efforts. The Standards for Special Education, Amended June 2004 defines an individualized program plan as: 'a concise plan of action designed to address students' special education needs, and is based on diagnostic information which provides the basis for intervention strategies...'(p.4). Students with special education needs will benefit from a coordinated team approach in the development and implementation of their IPP processes."

IPPs may reflect strategies to assist in the development of academic, social, physical, or behavioral skills. The IPP will contain the following essential information:

- current level of performance and achievement.
- diagnostic assessment data used to determine special education needs. Level of achievement related to Program of Studies, where appropriate and/or developmental level.
- strengths and areas of need. These are based on assessments and from information gathered from various sources.
- long-term goals and short-term objectives that are measurable and observable. Goals are aligned with assessed needs and include criteria for success and target date for achievement.

- procedures for evaluating student progress are recorded. Assessment procedures must be identified such as observations, work samples, diagnostic tests, developmental assessments, standardized tests, rubrics, checklists and anecdotal records.
- special education and related services to be provided. Coordinated support services are recorded. Include TA time and other supports and/or written procedures for the provision of health-related support services when appropriate, and/or reference to specialized assessments.
- formal review of student's progress is documented at regularly scheduled reporting periods.
- relevant medical information
- required classroom accommodations (any changes to instructional strategies, assessment procedures, materials, resources, facilities or equipment).
- transition plans are recorded.
- a provision is made for reporting the year-end summary.
- parental signature or documented attempt is recorded.

OTHER IPP FACTS

The IPP cycle is from November 1 of one school year to October 31 of the next. This cycle allows the receiving teacher to use the IPP from the previous year to continue programming for the student while they become familiar with the student's work habits and educational needs. During this transition period the teacher can be evaluating the student's current performance and begin to make adjustments to the IPP in terms of goals and objectives that will allow the student to continue to grow.

For students who transfer in to a school after the cycle has begun, the IPP must be written within 30 days of the IPP team deciding that a student requires Student Education Service programming.

Before an IPP can be implemented, an IPP meeting must be scheduled to give the parents an opportunity to tell the school what they think is important for their student. A draft of the IPP may be prepared by the school, but it must remain open to input from the parents. Parents can prepare for the meeting by reviewing their copies of education and medical records and sharing these with the team. Parents may invite someone to go to the meeting with them for support and encouragement, and to share more information about the student. As a courtesy, parents should give the Student Education Services Staff notice if someone will be accompanying them to ensure all information is available and the meeting room is sufficient for space.

IPPs will be formally reviewed with parents, staff, other professionals and the student (where appropriate), at each reporting period and prior to the formulation of the year end recommendations. The IPP must be changed to show the progress the student has demonstrated during the year.

Parents have the right to request an IPP meeting to discuss the IPP or any concerns. This may be done any time during the year. The student's teacher and other school personnel also have the right to request an IPP planning meeting.

ADAPTATIONS / ACCOMODATIONS / ADAPTED and MODIFIED PROGRAMS

Adaptations refer to ongoing, instructional support that may be either planned or informal, and are generally not recorded in the IPP. Adapted programming may be developed and used to support an individual student or a group of students in a specialized class. Ability, learning preferences, strengths and interest vary between students and even within an individual over time. When adapted programming is used to differentiate instruction, all students have equally engaging learning tasks.

An *accommodation* is a change or alteration in the regular way a student is expected to learn, complete assignments or participate in classroom activities. Accommodations include special teaching or assessment strategies, equipment or other supports that remove, or at least lessen, the impact of a student's special needs. The goal of accommodations is to give students with special needs the same opportunity to succeed as other students. Any accommodations provided for a student must be included on the student's IPP to ensure that the student has access to these accommodations on an ongoing basis and that he or she will be eligible to receive these same accommodations during provincial assessments. Accommodations described in the IPP should include only strategies and supports that differ from what is normally provided in the classroom. Accommodations are essentially any changes to instructional strategies, assessment procedures, materials, resources, facilities or equipment.

Adapted programming (sometimes known as modified programming in BTPS) retains the learning outcomes of Program of Studies and where adjustments to the instructional process are provided to address the special education needs of the student. Special education students receiving adapted programming are usually working toward the Alberta programs of study although often at a grade level that is different than their enrolled grade, in one or more subjects. Accommodations can also be provided so the student can participate actively.

Some students may not be able to work at grade level or pass the required courses for graduation. These students may require a *modified program (sometimes known as alternate programming in BTPS)* to meet their educational needs. A modified program has learning outcomes that are significantly different from the provincial programs of study and are specifically selected to meet the student's special needs. Changes to the outcomes are designed to provide the student the opportunity to participate meaningfully and productively across a variety of learning experiences and environments. Modifications may include changes in instruction level, content and/or performance criteria.

PLACEMENT IN THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT

The school's Student Education Services team decides which services the student will require. The team must consider:

- Parent input
- Test results
- Teacher recommendations
- Physical conditions
- Social background
- Adaptive behavior

The school may have choices available for the student's placement or location for where student education services are to be provided. These locations may include:

- Regular classroom with additional support services i.e. teacher's aide
- Regular classroom with direct services from special education personnel
- Regular classroom with itinerant or resource support
- Regular classroom with self-contained classroom support
- Part time instruction in a student education service room (concept reinforcement or whole program)

TRANSITION PLANS

Transition plans help a student to move successfully from grade to grade or from school to school. Transition planning within the school should occur minimally at the end of the year with grade level teachers meeting to ensure a smooth transition from one grade level to the next. The sending teacher can provide important information about accommodations, modifications, physical placement, etc. that are most effective for the student. The receiving teacher benefits from this input by being able to expedite the implementation of strategies and methods that are beneficial to the student right away. Depending on the student's needs transition planning may begin early in the year. The transition plan is equally important for students moving from one school to another. The transition plan should include:

- Instruction
- Related services
- Daily living skills (if appropriate)
- Program description
- Recommended placement
- Recommended/required support services/referrals.
- Medication/Medical assistance instructions

RELATED SERVICES

Support/Related services are services that may be necessary for the student to benefit from Student Education Services programming. These may include:

- Psychological Services
- Speech Language Pathology
- Physical Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Recreation
- Counseling
- Adaptive Physical Education
- Audiology Services
- Vision Services
- Orientation and Mobility Services
- Family
- Transportation

GRADE LEVEL ACHIEVEMENT FOR STUDENTS ON AN IPP

The Assessment as the Basis for Communicating Individual Student Achievement requirement in the Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12 states that parents must be informed about a student's grade level of achievement. "Principal to determine how to implement this provision in consultation with teachers, parents and school councils and in a manner consistent with any related school jurisdiction policies. The communication can take place in a wide variety of ways, including parent-teacher conferences, assessment portfolios, progress reports, or student work samples. An individual program plan (IPP) is a method often used by teachers when there is a significant gap between a student's level of achievement and the student's grade placement."

- Source: Student Assessment ECS to Grade 9 (Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12) September 2005 @ Alberta Education. Alberta, Canada

Effective communication of learning requires timely communication to parents that encourages and supports student development and learning. Information about student achievement, communicated in a constructive manner through grade level of achievement, enables students to direct their energies effectively. Provides parents with information that they can use to assist their students and helps teachers, and others who work with students to plan and implement further opportunities to learn.

Grade Level of Achievement for Students who have an Individual Program Plan (IPP)?

- Taken from GLA Handbook 2006 pages 28-29.

When reporting grade level of achievement for students who have an IPP there are essentially two categories of students; those on an **adapted program** and those on a **modified program**. The vast majority of students with special education needs are on an adapted program.

Special education students receiving **adapted programming** are working toward the learner outcomes of the Alberta programs of study although often at a grade level that is different than their enrolled grade, in one or more subject areas. Accommodations are provided so the student can participate actively. These accommodations may include:

- Alternative formats for resources (e.g., Braille, books-on-tape)
- Instructional strategies (e.g., use of interpreters, visual cues, learning aids)
- Assessment procedures (e.g., oral exams, additional time, scribes)
- Skill sequencing and pacing
- Instructional materials
- Assistive technology and specialized equipment
- Supplementary services
- Change of setting

The student's IPP must reflect these accommodations. Students receiving adapted programming are assessed using the curriculum standard, although they may require access to assessment accommodations to demonstrate their level of skills and knowledge. **Through assessment, teachers will report grade level of achievement for students on an adapted program based on the learner outcomes for the grade level identified for programming in the IPP.** The grade level at which programming is delivered to these students should be identified on the IPP under "current level of performance and achievement."

Gifted students usually receive some form of adapted programming. These students work on the graded programs of study but may be significantly advanced in one or more areas when compared with their peers. Adaptations may include faster pacing, greater emphasis on higher cognitive processes, independent research, access to mentors and resources not available or appropriate to most students.

Students receiving **modified programming** are **not on graded programs of study** but receive programming that focuses on life skills, foundation skills and academic readiness skills and this is reflected in their IPP. Modified programming has learner outcomes that are specifically selected to meet the student's special education needs. For example, a student in a grade five language arts classroom may be working on recognizing common signs or using the telephone, and a student in a grade nine mathematics classroom may be learning to make change or how to budget his/her allowance. Students receiving modified programming may also have access to alternative formats, specialized equipment and other services and supports as required. A student on a modified program is assessed in relation to the goals and objectives established in the student's IPP.

What about students not on graded programs of study?

A small number of students with special education needs may not be following the graded programs of study. These students will not be given a grade level of achievement for any course of study. In these instances, **what will be reported to Alberta Education is student achievement of goals specific to:**

Life Skills – skills that will assist the student in developing independence in the home, school and community.

Foundational Skills – refers to communication, classroom behavior, gross motor and fine motor skills.

Academic Readiness Skills – refers to readiness skills to prepare the student for learner outcomes in the programs of study in Grade 1 and subsequent grade levels.

For each of the three skill areas, teachers will indicate the degree to which the student has met the goals and objectives in his/her IPP, i.e., whether **all, most, some or none** of the goals have been met. If there have been no goals set for one or more of the skill areas, teachers will indicate "not applicable" for those areas.

STUDENT RECORD ACCESS

School teaching staff will have access to the Student Record Portfolio, as well as the Student Education Services teacher/staff, school principal and school counselor. The Student Education Services Director may also see the file when consulting with a school.

Any agency that receives written parental/guardian consent may see the file. This typically includes consultants who will be assessing the student.

The Student Record Portfolio file contains current educational information, such as attendance, report cards, standardized test results, IPPs, confidential test results, letters of administrative action, etc.

Parents/guardians, as well as their student have the right to request to view the file. The request must be made at the school level and school personnel must be present: no items may be removed from the cumulative file unless a written request is made by a parent and the principal deems that removal is appropriate.

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APPEAL PROCESS

Parents and schools are working together to educate the student. If the parents have concerns, they and the teacher(s) should talk openly about the issues. Parents should be actively involved in the development of their student's IPP.

At times parents may disagree with the school's educational decisions. Every attempt should be made to resolve these differences as soon as they arise. If they cannot be resolved, there are procedures to follow. Parents are encouraged to direct their concerns to the teachers, however should issues remain unresolved at the teacher level; the following order of process must be followed:

- contact the principal
- request the district's Director of Student Services to review the program being offered to their student
- contact the Superintendent
- initiate a formal written appeal to the School Board

- initiate a formal written appeal to the Minister of Education.

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FAMILY SCHOOL LIAISON PROGRAM (FSL)

The Family School Liaison Program provides free confidential counseling services to students and their families over a ten-month period. The services are considered short term and counseling does not tend to exceed ten sessions. If mental health services and/or drug /alcohol treatments are deemed necessary FSL staff will assist the student and family in accessing those required services. They provide direct counseling services to students and their families to address such issues as: anger management, body image, bullying issues, divorce and separation issues, grief and loss issues, life skills, self-esteem issues, peer pressure, stress, etc. The Counselors may run student group sessions to address issues. They provide resources on various issues, provide referrals to various agencies, work with parents on parenting issues, advocate for students and their families, and assist students in addressing school related issues. FSL counselors work with the students and/or families who agree to receive services. In order for students to receive services, the student's parent(s) or guardian must provide written authorized consent. All information volunteered during sessions is treated as confidential. Specific information will be provided to persons outside of the family only when written authorization has been provided by a parent or guardian, except in circumstances where the FSL Counselor is legally required to report information.

The FSL Program has a resource library for students, parents and community members in Wainwright, Vermilion, Provost and Kitscoty. The resources cover various social and school issues. These resources can be borrowed for a two-week period by contacting the FSL counselor in the school or by calling the main office at 853-4164.