



ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINE

Title: Early Identification Program

Effective Date: February 10, 2000

Responsibility: Superintendent of
Program and Schools

1.0 RATIONALE:

The 1999 “Early Years Study - Reversing the Real Brain Drain” by Dr. Fraser Mustard and The Hon. Margaret McCain, emphasize the critical importance of the early years in the development of children. The Near North District School Board and several community partners began an early identification initiative in 1996. Its goals were to develop a cumulative database for all children, to measure the readiness of children to learn, to analyze the effectiveness of intervention services in the community, to identify gaps in services, to provide strong support for the students and their parents, and to ensure effective early intervention to address the identified needs of children. This initiative is keeping the Near North District School Board and its community partners on the leading edge of meeting the needs of young children and preparing them for the future.

2.0 PARTNERS

Three area committees within the Board oversee the implementation of the early identification project.

The project partners on the west committee include the Near North District School Board, the Child and Family Centre, the Children’s Aid Society, the Community Care Access Centre, Integrated Support Services, Public Health and Integrated Services for Northern Children. Each partner provides some financial support as well as a representative to serve on the steering committee. The west committee which began its work in 1996 also has a working relationship with the Canadian Centre for Studies of Children at Risk in a pilot project entitled “School Readiness to Learn Project” headed by Dr. Offord and Dr. Janus. Participation in this McMaster University initiative brings even greater recognition for the Board’s early identification project and will lead to a sharing of general conclusions about young learners and their needs. The west committee has also sought federal and provincial funding. The provincial government has indicated that financial support will be forthcoming for the Near North Board’s project.

This money will be used to conduct research. The expectations for the research are:

- 2.1 To describe the existing level of services currently being provided to special needs children;
- 2.2 To keep a central database on all identified children;
- 2.3 To track the type and duration of services received by children;
- 2.4 To determine if an assessment and/or treatment plan was completed and shared;
- 2.5 To evaluate the effectiveness of the services from the perspective of parents and teachers; and
- 2.6 To collect and evaluate the data from the grade two (2) re-assessment to determine longer term effects.

The east committee has developed community partnerships and initiated the early identification project in schools in the 1999 – 2000 school year. The east committee partners include Almaguin Highlands Community Living; Parry Sound District Child Care Resources; Integrated Services for Northern Children; Child and Family Centre; Nipissing and Parry Sound Districts Children's Aid Society; North Bay and District Health Unit; Muskoka-Parry Sound Health Unit; Muskoka-East Parry Sound Community Care Access Centre; and Near North Community Care Access Centre.

As well, a north committee began forming in the 1999 – 2000 school year. A pilot project was established in one school with the goal that more, if not all, north elementary schools would adopt the project in the next school year.

3.0 ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION PROCEDURES

This early identification and intervention program utilizes the "First Step Screening Test for Evaluating Preschoolers" and an assessment of articulation skills. This tool generates a profile of each four-year old child in the domains of cognitive functioning, language, speech, social-emotional development, and physical maturation as well as a composite score. The individual screening generally occurs in January during the junior kindergarten year. Parents are asked to complete questionnaires regarding the child's behavior as well as social and emotional development. Data collected from both sources are then analyzed with parents to determine if the individual child requires intervention and support from service providers in the community. The child's registration form is used by the partner agencies as a common intake form so referrals for service are expedited very efficiently. Among the variety of intervention strategies used by service providers are direct therapy, parent/teacher training, resource teaching, mediator training and counselling.

4.0 GRADE 2 FOLLOW-UP

Students who had needs identified in one or more areas during the JK screening and were referred for intervention are re-assessed in grade 2 using equivalent but age-specific measures. This assessment requires some release time for the teacher to conduct individual screenings. Once the data are analyzed, teachers meet with the parents to review the profile and to assist in expediting appropriate interventions as needed.

5.0 COSTS FOR THE PROJECT

The schools will be responsible for the costs of implementing the early identification project. These costs include kits, consumables and supply teachers.