7. CATEGORIES and DEFINITIONS of EXCEPTIONALITIES

Purpose of the standard

To provide the ministry with details of the categories and definitions of exceptionalities available to the public, including parents and community associations.

The board has produced a document "Criteria for the Identification and Placement of Exceptional Students" which lists the ministry's categories and definitions and describes the ways in which the board's IPRC applies them in making decisions on identification and placement. This is included.
CRITERIA FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS

Ministry Categories and Definitions, January 1999

The revisions to the Categories and Definitions, MOET, January 1999, provide IPRCs with the range of descriptions to enable students with exceptional learning conditions to be so identified. This document provides further detail to the categories and definitions provided by the Ministry, and guides IPRCs in interpreting these categories to make appropriate identification and placement decisions.

An IPRC may identify students under the following categories and definitions:

1. Behaviour
2. Communication
   - Learning Disabled
   - Autistic
   - Language Impairment
   - Speech Impairment
   - Hard of Hearing
3. Intellectual
   - Gifted
   - Mild Intellectual Disability
   - Developmental Disability
4. Physical
   - Blind-Low Vision
   - Physical Disability
5. Multiple

Exceptional with more than one specific exceptionality

Students are usually identified according to the primary need. Occasionally, a student meets the criteria for identification for more than one exceptionality. In such cases the IPRC may identify both exceptionalities. Students identified under any single category of exceptionality may require placement in more than one special education program.

For example:

- A student identified as Exceptional Intellectual-Gifted who has a learning disability may require placement in both an Enhanced Learning Class and the In-School Support Program.

- A student identified as Exceptional Communication who has a physical disability may require placement in a Communication Class along with service from an itinerant teacher.
BEHAVIOUR

A learning disorder characterized by specific behaviour problems over such a period of time, and to such a marked degree, and of such a nature, as to adversely affect educational performance and that may be accompanied by one or more of the following:

(a) Inability to build or maintain interpersonal relationships
(b) Excessive fears or anxieties
(c) Tendency to compulsive reaction
(d) The inability to learn which cannot be traced to intellectual, sensory, or other health factors, or any combination thereof

Ministry Category and Definition: (Ministry of Education – January 1999)

Guidelines for Identification, Placement and Review Committees

- Focus the discussion on the student’s strengths and needs.
- Consider assessment information from a variety of sources, including specific psychological assessments relating to adaptive behaviour (see Appendix J), social interaction, emotional well-being, cognitive and academic functioning. If the student is already Exceptional, review the current IEP. Review completed Appendix L.
- Decisions regarding identification and placement should be deferred if more information is required.
- The IPRC secretary will manage the follow-up communication and record-keeping.

Referral Process

- Relevant and accurate information should be entered into the Special Education Module so that a meaningful student profile can be used by the IPRC.
- Elementary schools make referrals to the North or South Behaviour IPRC for identification and placement. Complete Appendix L for IPRC presentation.
- Secondary schools refer students to their own in-school IPRC for identification and placement. Complete Appendix L for IPRC presentation.
- If the student is already Exceptional, the IEP should be made available to the IPRC for review.
- The student’s behaviour management plan should be made available to the IPRC.
- Parents should always be well informed of the IPRC process, its purpose, and possible outcomes before proceeding with a referral.
- The IPRC may defer making identification or placement decisions if it feels that more information is needed.
- Representatives from the referring school will manage the pre-meeting communication and record-keeping.
AUTISM

A severe learning disorder that is characterized by:

a) disturbances in:
   - rate of educational development
   - ability to relate to the environment
   - mobility
   - perception, speech, and language

b) lack of representational symbolic behaviour that precedes language

Ministry Category and Definition: (Ministry of Education – January 1999)

Guidelines for Identification, Placement and Review Committees

- Focus the discussion on the student’s strengths and needs.
- Consider assessment information from a variety of sources, including specific assessments relating to adaptive behaviour (*Appendix J*), social interaction, academic achievement, including a diagnosis of Pervasive Developmental Disorder
- If the student is already Exceptional, review the current IEP.
- Decisions regarding identification and placement should be deferred if more information is required.
- The IPRC secretary will manage the follow-up communication and record-keeping.

Referral Process

- Relevant and accurate information should be entered into the Special Education Module so that a meaningful student profile can be used by the IPRC.
- Elementary schools make referrals to the Field Office or Regional Special Programs IPRC for identification and placement.
- Secondary schools refer students to their own in-school IPRC for identification and placement.
- If the student is already Exceptional, the IEP should be made available to the IPRC for review.
- Parents should always be well informed of the IPRC process, its purpose, and possible outcomes before proceeding with a referral.
- The IPRC may defer making identification or placement decisions if it feels that more information is needed.
- Representatives from the referring school will manage the pre-meeting communication and record-keeping.
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
An impairment characterized by deficits in language and speech development because of a diminished or non-existent auditory response to sound.

Ministry Category and Definition: (Ministry of Education – January 1999)

Guidelines for Identification, Placement and Review Committees

- Focus the discussion on the student’s strengths and needs.
- Consider assessment information from a variety of sources, including specific assessments relating to the results of an audiological assessment, including information regarding a cochlear implant and evidence of delayed language.
- If the student is already Exceptional, review the current IEP.
- Decisions regarding identification and placement should be deferred if more information is required.
- The IPRC secretary will manage the follow-up communication and record-keeping.

Referral Process

- Relevant and accurate information should be entered into the Special Education Module so that a meaningful student profile can be used by the IPRC.
- All schools make referrals to the Regional Special Programs IPRC for identification and placement.
- If the student is already Exceptional, the IEP should be made available to the IPRC for review.
- Parents should always be well informed of the IPRC process, its purpose, and possible outcomes before proceeding with a referral.
- The IPRC may defer making identification or placement decisions if it feels that more information is needed.
- Representatives from the referring school will manage the pre-meeting communication and record-keeping.
COMMUNICATION

LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT

A learning disorder characterized by an impairment in comprehension and/or use of verbal communication or the written or other symbol system of communication, which may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors, and which may:

a) Involve one or more of the form, content, and function of language in communication and

b) Include one or more of the following:
   • Language delay
   • Dysfluency
   • Voice and articulation development which may or may not be organically or functionally based

Ministry Category and Definition: (Ministry of Education – January 1999)

Guidelines for Identification, Placement and Review Committees

- Focus the discussion on the student’s strengths and needs.
- Consider assessment information from a variety of sources, including assessments relating to one or more of the following which interferes with communication:
  - mild to severe deficits or delays in the comprehension and/or use of oral language
  - mild to severe deficits or delays in the comprehension and/or use of written language (reading and writing)
  - significant deficits or delays in phonemic awareness skills which directly contribute to difficulties in reading and writing development
- If the student is already Exceptional, review the current IEP.
- Decisions regarding identification and placement should be deferred if more information is required.
- The IPRC secretary will manage the follow-up communication and record-keeping.

Referral Process

- Relevant and accurate information should be entered into the Special Education Module so that a meaningful student profile can be used by the IPRC.
- Elementary schools make referrals to the Field Office IPRC or their In-School IPRC for identification and placement.
- Secondary schools refer students to their own in-school IPRC for identification and placement.
- If the student is already Exceptional, the IEP should be made available to the IPRC for review.
- Parents should always be well informed of the IPRC process, its purpose, and possible outcomes before proceeding with a referral.
- The IPRC may defer making identification or placement decisions if it feels that more information is needed.
Representatives from the referring school will manage the pre-meeting communication and record-keeping.

NOTE: A clinical diagnosis of a Language Impairment by a qualified practitioner is not required before an IPRC can identify a student under this category.
COMMUNICATION

SPEECH IMPAIRMENT

A disorder in language formulation that may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors, that involves perceptual motor aspects of transmitting oral messages, and that may be characterized by impairment in articulation, rhythm, and stress.

Ministry Category and Definition: (Ministry of Education – January 1999)

Guidelines for Identification, Placement and Review Committees

- Focus the discussion on the student’s strengths and needs.
- Consider assessment information from a variety of sources, including specific speech assessments relating to one or more of the following which interferes with expressive communication:
  - mild to severe deficits or delays in articulation (e.g. pronunciation, oral motor functioning)
  - mild to severe difficulties with speech fluency (e.g. stuttering)
  - mild to severe voice difficulties (e.g. pitch, rate, quality)
- If the student is already Exceptional, review the current IEP.
- Decisions regarding identification and placement should be deferred if more information is required.
- The IPRC secretary will manage the follow-up communication and record-keeping.

Referral Process

- Relevant and accurate information should be entered into the Special Education Module so that a meaningful student profile can be used by the IPRC.
- Elementary schools make referrals to the Field Office IPRC for identification and placement.
- Secondary schools refer students to their own in-school IPRC for identification and placement.
- If the student is already Exceptional, the IEP should be made available to the IPRC for review.
- Parents should always be well informed of the IPRC process, its purpose, and possible outcomes before proceeding with a referral.
- The IPRC may defer making identification or placement decisions if it feels that more information is needed.
- Representatives from the referring school will manage the pre-meeting communication and record-keeping.
LEARNING DISABILITY

A learning disorder evident in both academic and social situations that involves one or more of the processes necessary for the proper use of spoken language or the symbols of communication, and that is characterized by a condition that:

a) is not primarily the result of:
   • impairment of vision;
   • impairment of hearing;
   • physical disability;
   • primary emotional disturbance;
   • cultural difference;
   • developmental disability

and

b) results in a significant discrepancy between academic achievement and assessed intellectual ability, with deficits in one or more of the following:
   • receptive language (listening, reading);
   • language processing (thinking, conceptualizing, integrating);
   • expressive language (talking, spelling, writing);
   • mathematical computations;

c) may be associated with one or more conditions diagnosed as:
   • a perceptual handicap;
   • a brain injury;
   • minimal brain dysfunction;
   • dyslexia;
   • developmental aphasia;

Ministry Category and Definition: (Ministry of Education – January 1999

Guidelines for Identification, Placement and Review Committees

- Focus the discussion on the student’s strengths and needs.
- Consider assessment information from a variety of sources, including specific assessments relating to adaptive behaviour (see Appendix J), cognitive ability, academic achievement.
- If the student is already Exceptional, review the current IEP.
- Decisions regarding identification and placement should be deferred if more information is required.
- The IPRC secretary will manage the follow-up communication and record-keeping.
COMMUNICATION

LEARNING DISABILITY (continued)

Referral Process

- Relevant and accurate information should be entered into the Special Education Module so that a meaningful student profile can be used by the IPRC.
- Elementary schools make referrals to the Field Office IPRC or their In-School IPRC for identification and placement.
- Secondary schools refer students to their own in-school IPRC for identification and placement.
- If the student is already Exceptional, the IEP should be made available to the IPRC for review.
- Parents should always be well informed of the IPRC process, its purpose, and possible outcomes before proceeding with a referral.
- The IPRC may defer making identification or placement decisions if it feels that more information is needed.
- Representatives from the referring school will manage the pre-meeting communication and record-keeping.

NOTE: A clinical diagnosis of a Learning Disability by a qualified practitioner is not required before an IPRC can identify a student under this category.
Categories of Exceptionality and Definitions

INTELLECTUAL

GIFTEDNESS

An unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated.

Ministry Category and Definition: (Ministry of Education – January 1999)

Guidelines for Identification, Placement and Review Committees

- Focus the discussion on the student’s strengths and needs.
- Consider assessment information from a variety of sources, including specific assessments where students obtain aptitude scores in the Very Superior range as assessed using a psychoeducational assessment, or scores at or above the 97th percentile using the Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test-Revised (see Appendices B and C for more details). Review completed Appendix D.
- If the student is already Exceptional, review the current IEP.
- Decisions regarding identification and placement should be deferred if more information is required.
- The IPRC secretary will manage the follow-up communication and record-keeping.

Referral Process

- Relevant and accurate information should be entered into the Special Education Module so that a meaningful student profile can be used by the IPRC.
- Elementary schools make referrals to their In-School IPRC for identification and placement, or to the Field Office IPRC if placement in an Enhanced Learning Class is being considered. Secondary schools refer students to an IPRC at one of the Regional Enhanced Learning Centres for identification and placement.
- If the student is already Exceptional, the IEP should be made available to the IPRC for review.
- Parents should always be well informed of the IPRC process, its purpose, and possible outcomes before proceeding with a referral.
- The IPRC may defer making identification or placement decisions if it feels that more information is needed.
- Representatives from the referring school will manage the pre-meeting communication and record-keeping.
INTELLECTUAL

MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

A learning disorder characterized by:

a) an ability to profit educationally within a regular class with the aid of considerable
curriculum modification and supportive service;
b) an inability to profit educationally within a regular class because of slow intellectual
development;
c) a potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment and economic self-
support.

Ministry Category and Definition: (Ministry of Education – January 1999)

Guidelines for Identification, Placement and Review Committees

- Focus the discussion on the student's strengths and needs.
- Consider assessment information from a variety of sources, including specific
  assessments which show:
  - mild cognitive disability, and
  - mild to significant delays in adaptive behaviour (see Appendix J)
- If the student is already Exceptional, review the current IEP.
- Decisions regarding identification and placement should be deferred if more
  information is required.
- The IPRC secretary will manage the follow-up communication and record-keeping.

Referral Process

- Relevant and accurate information should be entered into the Special Education
  Module so that a meaningful student profile can be used by the IPRC.
- Elementary schools make referrals to the Field Office IPRC or their In-School IPRC
  for identification and placement.
- Secondary schools refer students to their In-School IPRC for identification and
  placement.
- If the student is already Exceptional, the IEP should be made available to the IPRC
  for review.
- Parents should always be well informed of the IPRC process, its purpose, and
  possible outcomes before proceeding with a referral.
- The IPRC may defer making identification or placement decisions if it feels that more
  information is needed.
- Representatives from the referring school will manage the pre-meeting
  communication and record-keeping.
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY

A severe learning disorder characterized by:

a) an inability to profit from a special education program for students with mild intellectual disabilities because of slow intellectual development
b) an ability to profit from a special education program that is designed to accommodate slow intellectual development
c) a limited potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support

Ministry Category and Definition: (Ministry of Education – January 1999)

Guidelines for Identification, Placement and Review Committees

- Focus the discussion on the student’s strengths and needs.
- Consider assessment information from a variety of sources, including specific assessments which show:
  - moderate to profound cognitive disability, and
  - mild to significant delays in adaptive behaviour (see Appendix J)
  - the need for an alternate curriculum which focuses on the development of communication, independence, and sensory skills
- If the student is already Exceptional, review the current IEP.
- Decisions regarding identification and placement should be deferred if more information is required.
- The IPRC secretary will manage the follow-up communication and record-keeping.

Referral Process

- Relevant and accurate information should be entered into the Special Education Module so that a meaningful student profile can be used by the IPRC.
- Schools make referrals to the Regional Special Programs IPRC for identification and placement.
- If the student is already Exceptional, the IEP should be made available to the IPRC for review.
- Parents should always be well informed of the IPRC process, its purpose, and possible outcomes before proceeding with a referral.
- The IPRC may defer making identification or placement decisions if it feels that more information is needed.
- Representatives from the referring school will manage the pre-meeting communication and record-keeping.
Categories of Exceptionality and Definitions

PHYSICAL

PHYSICAL DISABILITY

A condition of such severe physical limitation or deficiency as to require special assistance in learning situations to provide the opportunity for educational achievement equivalent to that of pupils without exceptionalities who are of the same age or developmental level.

Ministry Category and Definition: (Ministry of Education – January 1999)

Guidelines for Identification, Placement and Review Committees

- Focus the discussion on the student’s strengths and needs.
- Consider assessment information from a variety of sources, including specific assessments relating to the student’s physical or medical condition, adaptive behaviour (see Appendix J), academic achievement.
- If the student is already Exceptional, review the current IEP.
- Decisions regarding identification and placement should be deferred if more information is required.
- The IPRC secretary will manage the follow-up communication and record-keeping.

Referral Process

- Relevant and accurate information should be entered into the Special Education Module so that a meaningful student profile can be used by the IPRC.
- Schools make referrals to the Regional Special Programs IPRC for identification and placement.
- If the student is already Exceptional, the IEP should be made available to the IPRC for review.
- Parents should always be well informed of the IPRC process, its purpose, and possible outcomes before proceeding with a referral.
- The IPRC may defer making identification or placement decisions if it feels that more information is needed.
- Representatives from the referring school will manage the pre-meeting communication and record-keeping.
Categories of Exceptionality and Definitions

PHYSICAL

BLIND AND LOW VISION

A condition of partial or total impairment of sight or vision that even with correction affects educational performance adversely.

Ministry Category and Definition: (Ministry of Education – January 1999)

Guidelines for Identification, Placement and Review Committees

- Focus the discussion on the student’s strengths and needs.
- Consider assessment information from a variety of sources, including specific assessments relating to the student’s vision impairment, academic achievement, adaptive behaviour (see Appendix J).
- If the student is already Exceptional, review the current IEP.
- Decisions regarding identification and placement should be deferred if more information is required.
- The IPRC secretary will manage the follow-up communication and record-keeping.

Referral Process

- Relevant and accurate information should be entered into the Special Education Module so that a meaningful student profile can be used by the IPRC.
- Schools make referrals to the Regional Special Programs IPRC for identification and placement.
- If the student is already Exceptional, the IEP should be made available to the IPRC for review.
- Parents should always be well informed of the IPRC process, its purpose, and possible outcomes before proceeding with a referral.
- The IPRC may defer making identification or placement decisions if it feels that more information is needed.
- Representatives from the referring school will manage the pre-meeting communication and record-keeping.
MULTIPLE

MULTIPLE EXCEPTIONALITIES

A combination of learning or other disorders, impairments, or physical disabilities, that is of such nature as to require, for educational achievement, the services of one or more teachers holding qualifications in special education and the provision of support services appropriate for such disorders, impairments, or disabilities.

Ministry Category and Definition: (Ministry of Education – January 1999)

Guidelines for Identification, Placement and Review Committees

- Focus the discussion on the student's strengths and needs.
- Consider assessment information from a variety of sources, including specific assessments relating to adaptive behaviour (see Appendix J), cognitive ability, academic achievement, physical and/or medical conditions, sensory impairments, social-emotional well-being.
- If the student is already Exceptional, review the current IEP.
- Decisions regarding identification and placement should be deferred if more information is required.
- The IPRC secretary will manage the follow-up communication and record-keeping.

Referral Process

- Relevant and accurate information should be entered into the Special Education Module so that a meaningful student profile can be used by the IPRC.
- Schools make referrals to the Regional Special Programs IPRC, or the Field Office IPRC for identification and placement.
- If the student is already Exceptional, the IEP should be made available to the IPRC for review.
- Parents should always be well informed of the IPRC process, its purpose, and possible outcomes before proceeding with a referral.
- The IPRC may defer making identification or placement decisions if it feels that more information is needed.
- Representatives from the referring school will manage the pre-meeting communication and record-keeping.

NOTE: In Peel, IPRCs may continue to identify students using 2 specific categories and definitions where appropriate (e.g. Intellectual-Gifted; Behaviour). Only when students’ complex needs include a significant degree of developmental, physical or sensory impairment would the category Exceptional-Multiple be used.