

What is a Learning Disability (LD)?

Ministry of Education Definition: 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; developmental disability; primary emotional disturbance; cultural difference, 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 of the following conditions diagnosed as: a perceptual handicap; a brain injury; minimal brain dysfunction; dyslexia; developmental aphasia.

In general terms, "learning disabilities" refers to a range of difficulties that affect how easily someone can take in, retain, understand, organize, or use information. These difficulties result from having impairments in one or more psychological processes, alongside otherwise average to above average intellectual abilities. A comprehensive psychological assessment indicating a Learning Disability diagnosis is necessary to confirm that a student has LD and can be identified by IPRC as an "exceptional" student with LD.

How are the social-emotional needs of students with LD supported?

Many students with LD require support in understanding their own learning style, in acquiring self-advocacy skills and social skills. Such supports may be available from TCDSB psychology and social work staff through individual or small group intervention, as well as from teachers and other school staff. Needs and programming in this area are documented in the IEP as alternative programming.

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PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

*Working Together to Educate All
Special Services*



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Superintendent, Special Services

Dr. Maria Kokai
Chief Psychologist

Catholic Education Centre
(416) 222-8282, Ext. 2626

How are the needs of students with Learning Disabilities met at TCDSB?

Range of Placement Options and Program Resources Available:

Elementary Placements

- **Regular class with indirect support:** regular class is the first option considered for students with Learning Disabilities (LD), with accommodations and modifications (if required) documented in the Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- **Regular class with resource support** in the home school: students with LD access specialized support in and outside of the regular class as required. Accommodations and modifications are documented in the IEP.
- **Regular class with withdrawal support** in a Special Education class in the home school: students with LD leave the regular class for a period of time to receive specialized and/or parallel programming to meet their needs usually in Language Arts or Mathematics. Accommodations for other subjects are provided in the regular classroom. These accommodations and any modifications are documented in the IEP.
- **Learning Disabilities Intensive Support Program (ISP)** with partial integration in the regular class: students with a moderate to severe LD who require specialized support spend 50% or more of the school day receiving an intensive individualized education program.

Students may leave the school within their community to participate in such a programming, and in most instances will be transported to the location of the Intensive Support Program. Integration for the remainder of the day is scheduled in a collaborative manner with the regular classroom teacher so that each student can benefit from the regular classroom program and from contact with peers. Accommodations for other subjects are provided in the regular classroom as documented in the IEP.

Program Resources

- **Remedial programming** for struggling readers with special education needs: the Empower Reading program (developed by the Hospital For Sick Children Learning Disabilities Research Program) is used in close to 50 TCDSB elementary schools.

Secondary Placements

- **Regular class with resource support:** for secondary school students with LD, the main focus is on accumulation of credits necessary for a secondary school diploma, therefore the emphasis is on resource support, the use of assistive technology and implementation of appropriate accommodations. Collaborative and ongoing communication between the subject specific teachers and Special Education teacher ensures that the student's needs are met through a consultative model. The subject specific teachers deliver accommodations and/or modifications as documented in the IEP. Students are encouraged to understand their strengths and needs as learners, to advocate for themselves and take responsibility for their own learning.

- **Learning Disabilities Intensive Support Program (ISP)** has been developed and implemented at Don Bosco Secondary School.

Program Resources

- **Remedial programming** for struggling readers with special education needs: the PHAST PACES research program developed by the Learning Disabilities Research Program of the Hospital for Sick Children is used in a number of TCDSB secondary schools. Students with learning disabilities participate in a phonemic awareness and strategy-training program to improve their reading skills.

How do students access these programs?

The programs for students with learning disabilities are designed for students who meet criteria for the Ministry definition of a learning disability, confirmed by a comprehensive assessment and a diagnosis of a learning disability. The IEP for each student reflects the specific needs of students with this exceptionality.

If required, the student is referred to an IPRC by the principal or at the request of the parent. The IPRC considers information from the school about the student's history as a learner, all available assessment reports, and information that the parent and student wish to provide. Admission to Intensive Support Programs for students with learning disabilities is through identification and placement by IPRC.

The IPRC will:

- Consider an educational assessment;
- Consider a psychological and other assessments as needed
- Consider any information that the parent or student submits.