

What is a Learning Disability?

The Ministry of Education defines *learning disability* as one of a number of neurodevelopmental disorders that persistently and significantly has an impact on the ability to learn and use academic and other skills and that:

- affects the ability to perceive or process verbal or non-verbal information in an effective and accurate manner in students who have assessed intellectual abilities that are *at least* in the average range;
 - results in (a) academic underachievement that is inconsistent with the intellectual abilities of the student (which are at least in the average range) and/or (b) academic achievement that can be maintained by the student only with extremely high levels of effort and/or with additional support;
 - results in difficulties in the development and use of skills in one or more of the following areas: reading, writing, mathematics, and work habits and learning skills;
 - may typically be associated with difficulties in one or more cognitive processes, such as phonological processing; memory and attention; processing speed; perceptual-motor processing; visual-spatial processing; executive functions);
 - may be associated with difficulties in social interaction; with various other conditions or disorders, diagnosed or undiagnosed; or with other exceptionalities;
 - is *not* the result of a lack of acuity in hearing and/or vision that has not been corrected; intellectual disabilities; socio-economic factors; cultural differences; lack of proficiency in the language of instruction; lack of motivation or effort; gaps in school attendance or inadequate opportunity to benefit from instruction.
- At TCDSB, the **diagnosis of Learning Disability** is used to describe the LD learning profile, which is based on the LD definition by the LDAO.

Some of program resources used in LD ISPs:

Empower Reading (Decoding/Spelling, and Comprehension/Vocabulary): intervention for struggling readers with LD

JUMP Math: intervention to address math difficulties.

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 Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) as an "exceptional" student with LD.

Community Support:

INTEGRA- provides social-emotional support services to children/adolescents with Learning Disabilities <http://www.integra.on.ca/>

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario: <http://www.ldao.ca/> and

Learning Disabilities Association of Toronto District <http://www.ldatd.on.ca/>
LD@School: www.ldatschool.ca

Trillium Demonstration School for Students with Learning Disabilities
<http://www.psbnet.ca/eng/schools/trillium/index.html>

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INTENSIVE SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES



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* Described in *Policy and Program Memorandum 8, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014*

What is the Learning Disabilities Intensive Support Program?

The Learning Disabilities Intensive Support Program (ISP) offers specialized programming for students who have been diagnosed with a moderate/severe Learning Disability and require intensive individualized support.

The Learning Disabilities Intensive Support Program requires “placement in a special education class for at least 50% of the school day, and integration in a regular class for the remainder of the day”. * ISP is available in elementary schools for students at the primary, junior and intermediate levels. Students may need to leave their local school to participate in such a program, and in most instances will be transported to the location of the ISP.

The goals of the LD ISP are

- to provide intensive, individualized education programming for students with moderate/severe LD in their areas of need, as well as
- to provide full access to the Ontario curriculum through the application of appropriate accommodations.

It aims to maximize learning by addressing the students' needs, as well as by building on their strengths and abilities, and by promoting the development of a healthy self-concept. Specialized instruction is delivered by the LD ISP Special Education Teacher. 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, modifications and alternative programming are documented in the Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Who is the Learning Disabilities Intensive Support Program for?

For students who demonstrate all of the following:

- Have a moderate/severe Learning Disability, diagnosed by a Psychologist or Psychological Associate, as their primary area of need (the student may have additional diagnoses, e.g., ADHD)
- Have received a period of withdrawal support from a special education teacher in a smaller class setting and have shown insufficient response to intervention (documented in the IEP)
- Have a significant need for support in developing organizational/study skills, self advocacy and social skills
- Experience significant difficulty with the regular classroom curriculum and require intensive support to access several curriculum areas
- Have academic skill levels in reading, language, writing and/or mathematics that are deemed well below expectations (i.e. in the Low to Very Low range)

A transition plan is outlined in the IEP, as per Ministry direction, to ensure appropriate programming, placement and supports between all, but especially between elementary and secondary transitions. All students identified with a Learning Disability are discussed at an exchange of information meeting between personnel of the elementary and secondary panels. Transition plans may support / supplement IPRC recommendations.

** Definition by the Ministry of Education*

How are students admitted to the Learning Disabilities Intensive Support Program?

STEP 1

Where the need for more intensive support is evident, discussion with the appropriate SBSLT members is necessary. The recommendation for more intensive support is based on: psychological assessment indicating an LD diagnosis; other assessments as available; evidence regarding the student's response to previous instruction and interventions; parent and student input.

STEP 2

Psychology staff who completed the assessment (assessor) communicates with the appropriate psychology staff overseeing LD ISP in the region to determine placement availability.

STEP 3

If there is space for placement available, the assessor communicates with the LD ISP teacher in question about the placement. If the placement is appropriate, a visit for parents and student can be arranged.

STEP 4

If the placement is appropriate and is confirmed, the assessor informs the home school Principal to request an IPRC meeting for the placement.

STEP 5

The home school Principal requests an IPRC meeting; the receiving school's Principal and/or ISP Teacher are invited. There is formal identification and placement in LD ISP by IPRC.

STEP 6

Transition to the placement in ISP involves the exchange of information between the sending and receiving schools' appropriate SBSLT members (including the LD ISP teacher), coordinated by sending and receiving School Principals or designates.