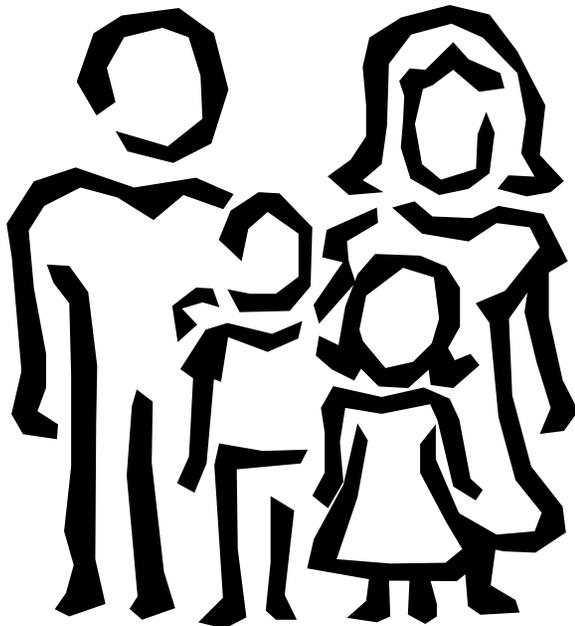


**Support Services For Students
With Academic, Communication,
Behaviour &/or Emotional Needs**

A PARENT HANDBOOK

**School District No. 48
(Sea to Sky)**



Roles and Relationships

“It’s a funny thing about life; If you refuse to accept anything but the best, you often get it.”

Somerset Maugham

Parents

Parents play a key role in their child’s education. From the early encouragement of a child’s natural curiosity to their ongoing attitudes toward learning, families affect their children’s educational progress. Parents’ collective voices have brought about major changes in the educational system over the years, and on behalf of their children they will undoubtedly shape it for years to come. They will continue to play an important and significant role in the educational process as partners with educators and as advocates for their children.

The demands of parental involvement with children in general are considerable but, for parents of children with learning difficulties, and/or disabilities, involvement in their children’s educational progress is often even more demanding. This may mean trying to comprehend and influence a complex system comprised of people, schedules, protocols, laws, budgets, and priorities. Parents have an important role because of their deep commitment to their children and their education. They are also the most knowledgeable about their child and that is why they play such a key role.

(Adapted from Inclusive Education; A Parent Handbook, 1993)

In the spirit of collaboration, this handbook was designed to enable parents to better understand the services available in the Sea to Sky School District and how additional child services at the school and district levels may be accessed when needed.

Students with Academic, Communication, Behaviour, and/or Emotional Support Needs

What should parents do if they are concerned about their child's academic, social, and /or emotional well being at school?

1. The first step is to talk with your child's teacher. Teachers are professional educators who have the privileged position of observing a wide range of children. A teacher's classroom includes a normal distribution of children with below average, average, and above average academic, social, and emotional abilities and skills. The classroom teacher can provide a parent with useful insight into the strengths and weaknesses their child presents in an academic setting, as well as suggest initial interventions and strategies to give appropriate support.
2. If additional support is required after parent/teacher interventions have been implemented, the classroom teacher may wish to discuss your child with the **School Based Team** which typically consists of the school administrator, school counsellor, special education teachers, and district support staff as requested (eg, speech and language pathologist, school psychologist). At this point, interventions are suggested based on the information presented regarding the child's area of strength and/or need.
3. If these strategies are not enough, consultation with relevant **District Specialist** staff and the School Based Team or a designated member should occur. At this point, school based standardized testing, consultation with community agencies, and/or the creation of additional goals and strategies may occur.
4. If further support is considered necessary the School Based Team or a designated member should generate a **District Special Services Referral**. This must be signed by the appropriate district staff member and sent home for parents' input and signature. The District Specialist staff assigned would then assess/consult and report findings and recommendations to the parents, teachers, and school based team.
5. The recommendations for educational planning are reviewed and a plan with school staff is developed. This may include therapy (eg. Speech-Language or Occupational Therapy.), recommendations for an **Individual Education Plan**, and/or a **Behaviour Support Plan** which is monitored and documented.

6. If the Plan is not successful, follow-up consultation with District Staff regarding *alternate programming, or a referral to other agencies* may be considered.

Recommended Process For Student Support

Parent/Teacher Conference



School-Based Team

(consultation regarding learning difficulties, previous interventions, previous psychoeducational and medical assessments and appropriate strategies)



School Based Team Consultation & Review with District Specialist

- ⇒ Collect more information
- ⇒ Strategies
- ⇒ Standardized Testing



District Special Services Referral

- ⇒ Completion of a District Referral by case manager including the appropriate signatures



District Specialist

- ⇒ Assessment, Intervention



Information Shared

- ⇒ Planning Conference Meeting (Parents, Teachers, Teaching Assistant, Case Manager, District Specialist, Administrative Officer)



Alternate Program Referrals to Other Agencies

(e.g. Children's Hospital, Provincial Programs)

Many of the terms used by educators in order to describe educational practice are new to parents when they are seeking help for their child. Therefore a description of common educational terms has been created for your understanding.

◆ ***Intervention:***

Is a formal or informal plan designed by the class teacher and parent, and/or the School Based Team in order to improve a student's academic or social problem.

◆ ***School Based Team:***

Is an ongoing team of school based personnel which has a formal role to play as a problem-solving unit. It assists classroom teachers to develop and implement instructional and/or management strategies and to coordinate support resources for students with special needs within the school.

◆ ***District Specialist:***

Is an individual with specialized training who works as support staff for schools to help in the assessment and planning for children with special needs. (e.g. School Psychologist; Speech/Language Pathologist)

◆ ***Standardized Testing:***

Is a formal assessment method using tests that allow us to compare an individual child's academic, social or emotional performance with thousands of others in terms of what's normal.

◆ ***District Special Services Referral:***

Is a document requesting formal specialist support with regard to a particular student. Information by the school and parent, as well as signatures from the School Based Team and parents are required.

◆ ***Individual Education Plan (IEP):***

Is a written plan developed for a student with special needs. It describes the educational program modifications and/or adaptations for the student, and the services that are to be provided.

◆ ***Behaviour Support Plan:***

Is a written plan developed for a student with social/emotional and/or behavioural needs which describes the behaviour plan and supports for the student.

◆ ***Psychoeducational Assessment***

Is an assessment conducted by the school psychologist incorporating information from a number of sources (e.g. health, social-emotional, school history, intellectual functioning, school achievement). These are complex assessments required for a small percentage of children to aid in the process of educational planning.

Many types of support are available for children with Academic/Communication/Behaviour/Emotional needs. Some services are school based, while others are services provided by district specialists.

In order to further help parents understand the services available we have described the Role and Responsibilities of School Services and District Services.

Responsibilities

Each of these services is available to children through the School Based Team based on the needs of the individual student.

Description of Roles

School:

- ⇒ Learning Assistance
- ⇒ Resource Room
- ⇒ Secondary Counselling
- ⇒ Hospital/Homebound
- ⇒ High School Alternate Program

District:

- ⇒ School Psychologist
- ⇒ Speech/Language Pathologist
- ⇒ Hearing Resource Teacher
- ⇒ Elementary Counsellor
- ⇒ Vision Impairment
- ⇒ Occupational/Physical Therapist
- ⇒ Low Incidence Support Team
- ⇒ Youth Care Worker
- ⇒ Critical Incidents Team/Tragic Events Team

Description of Roles

Learning Assistance

The services of Learning Assistance Teachers are available in each school. Students not achieving to potential remain enrolled in their regular classroom and visit the Learning Assistance Centre for short periods of instruction on a regular basis or receive direct support within their classrooms. Individualized programs are established, based upon each student's identified strengths and weaknesses. Most programs involve carefully sequenced reading instruction, but help may also be provided in other areas such as spelling or mathematics.

Resource Room Program:

This program is available for elementary/high school students who meet the Ministry of Education criteria as a student with special needs:

- 1 Severe Learning Disabilities in listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities.
- 2 Integration disabilities
- 3 Physical handicaps/Chronic health
- 4 Dependent handicaps
- 5 Gifted
- 6 Behaviour difficulties
- 7 Autism
- 8 Moderate to severe intellectual disabilities

Students who receive resource room support work on Individualized Education Plans designed to enhance school success.

Counsellor:

Schools have counsellors assigned on staff for varying time periods. Counsellors address the educational, social and emotional needs of students. Counselling duties often involve contact with community agencies, parents, and other educational institutions. At the secondary level, the orientation of elementary school students to secondary schools is part of the late spring and early fall counselling program as is vocational and career counselling.

School Psychologist:

Every school in the District has access via the established district wide referral procedure to psychoeducational assessment services for those students who have already received school based assessment but require more detailed, individualized testing. In addition to providing individualized assessment the School Psychologist provides a range of direct and consultative services to students, parents and educators. Close liaison is maintained with other social agencies concerned with the physical, social and emotional well being of students.

Speech/Language Pathologist:

Speech/Language Pathologists provide a range of direct and consultative services to students, teachers and parents. The principal focus is to provide remediation for children found to have a communication problem. This may be in the area of speech (pronunciation of sounds, voice problems, stuttering) or language (processing or expressing ideas). These communication difficulties can significantly affect educational and social success. The remedial program, designed by speech/language pathologists, is implemented through coordination and cooperation with teachers, parents, trained paraprofessionals, and special education staff. Other functions fulfilled by Speech/Language Pathologists include: inservice training, curriculum design, and consultation with other community agencies.

Hospital/Homebound Instruction:

Hospital-Homebound Teachers provide instruction for elementary and secondary students who are unable to attend school because of extended physical or in some cases, psychological impairment. Instruction is undertaken in consultation with the classroom teacher, and is provided in regular subject areas at the student's home or within the local hospital.

Vision Impairment:

These services are an indirect school service contracted by the school. Children with visual conditions that impair their ability to function in the school system may require the direct services, or indirect support of a Teacher of the Visually Impaired. This service provides liaison between home and school in order to facilitate integration. The vision teachers offer support for the visually impaired student, they provide support to the classroom teacher, principal, and other school personnel through consultation and the provision of information.

Alternate Program:

The Alternate Education program offers opportunities for secondary students who have been unsuccessful in regular school programs primarily because of emotional or behavioural difficulties. The primary goal of the program is to provide students with an educationally sound experience in a flexible, challenging, success-oriented learning environment to enable them to acquire the skills to become positive, contributing members of the community.

Hearing Resource Teacher:

These services are available to any student who has a diagnosed hearing loss requiring supportive services. These teachers consult with classroom teachers on the modifications and teaching strategies which are required for students with a hearing handicap. This service is intended to facilitate the student's acquisition of learning skills within the context of regular education in their neighbourhood schools. Students will be monitored by the Itinerant Teacher. Referrals are received at any time. Hearing impaired students are also served through elementary and secondary resource programs.

Occupational/Physical Therapist:

This is an indirect service contracted by the School District. Occupational therapist services are available to special needs students in regular and special education classrooms. Occupational therapy combines medical and behavioural training with educational needs to provide direct assessment and therapy programs and indirect consultation. The occupational therapist works as part of a multidisciplinary team with other educational personnel, family, and health-related professionals in the community. Areas of service may include:

- ◆ Self-help skills
- ◆ Fine-motor skills
- ◆ Sensory-motor functioning
- ◆ Gross-motor skills
- ◆ Visual-motor skills
- ◆ Physical functioning (range of motion, strength, endurance, etc.)
- ◆ Personal and social skills as related to the above.

Low Incidence Support Team:

Supports the staff serving students with Low Incidence Disorders or developmental delays. They liaise with other support services that may be involved.

Low Incidence Disorders include:

- ◆ Autism
- ◆ Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified
- ◆ Asperger Syndrome
- ◆ Tourette Syndrome
- ◆ Fragile X
- ◆ Other Genetic & Chronic Health Impairments
- ◆ Moderate to Severe Intellectual Disability

Critical Incident/Tragic Events Team:

One of the initial responsibilities of the District Critical Incident Response Team is to develop a protocol for the district. Once the plans are in place, the team's role is to ensure that all members are familiar with the protocol and clear about their duties should there be a need to act.

The District Team can provide several different types of support to the schools, for example:

- ◆ Assisting in developing school level teams and reviewing school-based plans.
- ◆ Supporting training for school level teams.
- ◆ Collaborating with the principal and school critical incident team to determine whether other district or community agency help is required.
- ◆ Providing links to established community agencies such as mental health services, victim services, police, or community-based critical incident teams.
- ◆ Managing media inquiries and handling communication issues with the community at large.
- ◆ Contacting the other schools in the district that might have students or staff that could be affected by the critical incident.
- ◆ Developing a contact list of people and agencies which is current and accessible to all schools in an emergency.
- ◆ Working out of the school which has experienced a critical incident, if needed, and/or
- ◆ Arranging for stress debriefing for staff in the school.

“The ultimate goal of Student Services in the Sea to Sky School District is to work towards achieving the goal of educational success for students, enhance independence, and develop life long learners. We hope this handbook may provide some information useful for students and parents. *Working together for all children*”.