

How to Get Help For Students with Learning Disabilities

When a parent/guardian or teacher of a student recognizes that the student is not progressing and/or typically has a strong disparity between strengths and weaknesses of academic skills, the following steps or actions should be taken (see also NB Department of Education and Early Childhood Development web site document- *Guidelines and Standards for Educational Planning for Students with Exceptionalities, 2002*):

1. Basic achievement assessment to be done by school resource teacher.
2. Results are to be discussed by the school's School Based Student Services Team (teacher, resource teacher, principal) with school based implementation of appropriate suggested strategies, i.e. program modifications, a 4-6 week block or remediation by resource teacher and parent; perhaps paraprofessional time, if available in the school, volunteer helper etc.
3. If the teacher, School Based Student Services Team, parent/guardian (student) are not satisfied that the student is achieving improved progress, a referral to the District Student Services Team is made. The principal, teacher, resource teacher, and parent/guardian submit this referral by completing the appropriate forms.
4. Referral forms are reviewed by the District Student Services Team and may then be referred to one or more of the following specialists, depending upon the individual student needs:
 - a. Speech and Language Pathologists
 - b. Education Psychologists
 - c. Behavioral Psychologists
 - d. Support Services to Education, Dept. of Health and Community Services.
 - e. Other (1) Mental Health (2) Family Enrichment.

Typically, if a student is identified with difficulties after the first report card in November and all five intervention steps are followed, it may take 6 months or more in all to complete an assistance path for a student.

If a student has mild or moderate learning disabilities, short term remediation may be all that is required.

For a student with severe learning disabilities, it is more likely that the student shall require a **special education plan** for all of their school years.

*A **special education program** (plan of services) means an education program for an exceptional pupil that is based on the results of continuous assessment and evaluation and which includes a plan containing specific objectives and recommendations for education services that meet the needs of the pupil. (Education Act Section 1, Definitions)*

The responsibility of Parents:

1. Work collaboratively with school personnel to develop, implement and monitor the Special Education Plan for your child.

2. Participate in the implementation of the Special Education Plan by taking responsibility for various outcomes that can be worked on at home as well as at school.
3. Develop good communication with your child's classroom and resource teacher.
4. Participate in the evaluation of the outcomes of the Special Education Plan.
5. Continue to increase knowledge of the characteristics of your child's exceptionality and share this with school personnel.
6. Keep a file of all documentation regarding your child's education plan and strategies.

The cooperation of parents/guardians, teachers, resource teachers, principals, and district specialists can create a viable solution for a student who is not achieving his/her potential due to learning disabilities. The path is available to all students and we would encourage you to pursue this course if you feel there is a student in need of help.