



Chapter Three Inclusive Education

Inclusive education means that all students are welcomed into age-appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of school. Inclusive education is very important because it allows all children to be part of their community and develop a sense of belonging. They are able to take part in all activities and build relationships with their peers. Inclusion, not just in the schools but also in life, is incredibly important as it allows for the practice of acceptance of everyone. When inclusive classrooms are filled with diverse learners, children can explore how everyone learns in different ways and find that they have more in common with each other than they realized.

Becoming An Inclusive Education Advocate

Parents have been successful in working with schools to ensure their children have a fully inclusive education. They advocate within the education system for provincial and local policies that respect and promote inclusion. As a parent, you have the right to be included in the decisions that are made about your child's education.

3.1 Inclusive Curriculum

The goals of education should not be different for a child with an intellectual disability. The teaching method or pace may need to change, but the subjects should be the same. For most children, school is a place where they can learn and interact with other children and this should be no different for your child with an intellectual disability.

Tip: Sexuality and sexual development is another area that is essential to the education plan for children with disabilities. The more your child knows about relationships and their sexuality, the more likely they are to make good decisions. A lack of knowledge can leave adults with intellectual disabilities vulnerable to mistreatment and abuse. Knowing that they deserve to be respected in their social and sexual relationships will give them the power of knowledge and self-expression.

3.2 Inclusion And Intervention Plan

Students with disabilities in Saskatchewan are required to have a school-based team develop an annual individual instruction plan -- the schools call this plan an Inclusion and Intervention Plan (IIP). Parents should always be involved in developing the IIP for their child. If you are given an IIP to sign that you have not been involved in developing, you can tell them that you would like to be involved in the process. It is essential that parents be involved in the planning process since the IIP will have great impact on the student's success.

IIP Meetings

Think and talk to your child about what would be helpful for your child before you go into an IIP meeting. The IIP should focus on your child's strengths, goals and inclusion. Everyone there has the same goal: for your child to be successful and happy. The more you collaborate with the professionals at the table, the more beneficial the plan will be. Among other things, the IIP should include a plan for classroom participation and adaptations as well as identify who will carry out the tasks for the plan. Ensure the plan includes progress reports, as this will help you identify if something is not working and if adjustments are necessary. What works best for your child should always be the focus. Inclusion and Intervention Plan Guidelines are available from the Ministry of Education's website.



3.3 Challenging Behaviour

Every behaviour is a form of communication. Unique and/or challenging behaviours are reduced when your child has the opportunity to make choices, make friends, be a leader, be responsible for themselves, be respected, have their feelings respected, and have their frustrations heard.

If a child presents as having behaviours that are challenging to support, it is important to take time to determine what the child is trying to express and to develop a proper support plan. The child may be lonely and want attention from other children. They might be uncomfortable and may need to move around. They might be sad because they were not able to participate in an activity that all the other children were doing or it may not have been modified appropriately. They may not understand the task they were given or they may be bored and are simply tired of doing it. Feelings or events trigger behaviour. The behaviour may be a characteristic of the disability and is, therefore, part of who the child is and how they communicate. If this is the case, the child needs to be accepted as they are and not punished for how they exist in the environments where they are supported. They should feel a sense of contribution and be embraced for the value they add to the culture of their classroom.

Accommodations

If your child has a behaviour that is seen as challenging, work on a plan with the school. Ask if they have been able to identify your child's triggers (what is causing their behavior). Once triggers are identified, accommodations can be made in collaboration with parents such as modifying the environment, better adapting their work or changing the approach when working with the child. It's important to recognize that the child does not need to change but rather, adjustments may need to be made or approaches may need to change in order to meet the child's needs.

3.4 Educational Assistants

Some classrooms may have Educational Assistants (EA's) assigned to them. The teacher and the EA work together to ensure that the needs of the children in the classroom are being met. EA's are not able to educate in the same way as a teacher; however, they are able to provide support, helping children with disabilities to be included in the classroom and make connections with their peers. Often, an EA is assigned to a classroom because there is a pupil with a disability enrolled in the class, but the EA actually supports the entire class and assists as required. EA's also model how to interact with your child and demonstrate inclusion to other children in the classroom.

Tip: The EA's role is to support your child in the classroom but if the EA never leaves your child's side, then it can discourage other students and staff from getting to know them. When the only person that a child spends time with is the EA, the child may have a harder time making friends.

3.5 Addressing Problems

When navigating through the education system, there is a general procedure that must be followed when consulting with education professionals. The type of consultation and communication that occurs is largely dependent on the specific scenario and situation. If the situation or scenario is relatively minor (amounted to a misunderstanding) a simple phone call may be sufficient to resolve the issue. If the situation or scenario is seemingly more intense it might be more appropriate to request a meeting with the education professional.

There is a general order of operations when consulting with various levels of the education system. Typically, if a matter is not resolved at the lower level, consultation with a higher-level education professional may be necessary. The following provides a general guideline of the order in which these professionals should be contacted:

1. Teacher
2. Learning Resource Teacher / Student Support Teacher or other supports in the school
3. Principal of the School
4. The Superintendent for the school division

Tip: If you have done everything you can to work with the people most directly responsible for your child's education, and you still feel that your child's needs are not being met, reach out to Inclusion Saskatchewan for help with developing another strategy.

3.6 The School System

Schools, like any other bureaucracy, have a complicated structure and rules. Each school belongs to a school division and all school divisions receive funding and direction from the Ministry of Education. School divisions are still independent and each division attempts to deliver programs that reflect the needs of the people in its area.

School Boards

Each school division has an elected board of community members that make the decisions. The Board of Education (also known as a school board) makes all of the big financial and policy decisions for the schools in its division. Many board members are not professional educators so it is a good idea to get to know the board members for your school division and share your dreams and concerns with them. You could even become a school board member yourself and have direct influence. The school board's meetings are usually open to the public, unless there is a special issue. You can also receive a copy of the minutes from your school board's meetings. *The Education Act, 1995* section 85 describes the school board's duties as:

- To decide what school any child will attend in the division.
- To provide transportation to students.
- To pay for and provide education for children living in the school division.
- To suspend and expel students.
- To oversee home-schooling.
- To employ all the staff necessary to make sure the programs run smoothly.

Additionally, *The Education Act, 1995* section 103 requires that the school board prepare a manual that describes the program policies, educational goals and proper organization of the school division. Parents can ask to see both the school division's policy manual, and their child's official file (a cumulative file). It is a good idea to become familiar with the school board's policies on students with disabilities, discipline and behaviour management.



3.7 Provincial Education Law & Policies

The law that controls education is *The Education Act, 1995*. The Ministry of Education is the government ministry that develops education policy and guidelines, which are available on the Saskatchewan government website under Education. The Ministry of Education supports the vision of inclusive education in its policies and other documents. There is still work to be done to ensure that this vision is transferred to every school in Saskatchewan, but it is in the process of happening.

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code

All provincial laws are subject to the provisions of the *Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* which protects your child's right to an education. The Code states that access to a school cannot be restricted on any of the "prohibited grounds" which include, among other things, race, color, religion, and disability. Section 13(2) of the Code says that exceptions are made for specialized schools that enroll only students with a certain gender, belief system, religion, or disability. This allows segregated schools that are only for children with disabilities still to exist. However, according to the Code, a regular school in Saskatchewan is not allowed to refuse a child because they have a disability.

The Education Act, 1995, also allows a school board to remove a child from the classroom if the board feels that the child is not able to learn in a regular classroom setting or is disruptive to other students. Of course, this is a subjective judgment and could be challenged in court with a human rights complaint.

The Education Act and Education Regulations

While *The Education Act, 1995* is the law that defines what school boards can and cannot do, *The Education Regulations, 2019* (the Regulations) is the tool that interprets and more carefully defines what the Act means. We encourage you to look at the Act for yourself. If you do not have experience looking at legislation, it is helpful to begin with the table of contents and look for sections that seem relevant to your situation, and then look through those sections. If you are looking at the legislation online, use the search function to find key words that relate to your questions and interests.

The Right To An Education: Section 142 (1) of *The Education Act, 1995* says that "every person who has attained the age of six years but has not yet attained the age of 22 years has the right: (a) to attend school in the school division where that person or that person's parents or guardians reside; and (b) to receive instruction appropriate to that person's age and level of education achievement."

The Act also notes that this shall be provided at no cost to the student for tuition, transportation, etc. Under the regulations (s. 48(10)) of the Act, a student with a disability can begin school at age three upon the parents request. It is common for students with intellectual disabilities to stay in high school until they turn 22 to access transition planning and job readiness training. It is noteworthy that the right to an education includes the right to attend an education program offered by a board of education in the French language.

Assessment: Either the principal or the parents can request that an evaluation be done to see if a child needs a special program (s.178 (5), *The Education Act, 1995* and s.48 (3) *Regulations*).

Pupils With Intensive needs: The Act refers to students who have an intellectual disability as part of the larger classification of “Pupils with intensive needs” under section 178 (1). This section provides a definition of a “pupil with intensive needs” and talks about assessment and procedures for placement. On the topic of placement, section 178 (9) of the Act states: *“A board of education or the conseil scolaire, as the case may be, shall take steps to reasonably accommodate a pupil with intensive needs in the regular program of instruction.”*

However, section 178 (10) says: *“If, after taking the factors listed in subsection (11) into consideration, a board of education or the conseil scolaire determines that the learning needs of a pupil with intensive needs cannot be reasonably accommodated in the regular program of instruction, the board of education or conseil scolaire shall ensure the provision of educational services by means of a special program to meet the learning needs of the pupil.”*

The factors listed in section 11 are:

- Whether or not the pupil is medically fragile
- Whether or not the pupil poses a risk of harm to himself or herself or to others.
- The educational needs of all pupils.
- Cost of providing special educational services to accommodate the pupil in the regular program of instruction.

Section 10 has the potential to make inclusion difficult if the school does not feel that a child’s needs can be met within the classroom. In these situations, it is important to be clear that you would like to come up with a plan to ensure your child is reintegrated back into the classroom with their peers. These can often be challenging situations to navigate so you can reach out to INSK if you feel you need additional support.

Right of Appeal: Section 178.1 establishes the right of parents or guardians to appeal decisions made by the school board and explains in some detail how this can be done. Parents can ask for a review only about the results of their child’s assessment, about a lack of assessment, or about the services provided to their child as a pupil with intensive needs. Parents must first ask their principal to review the issue. If the issue is not resolved, then parents can request that the board of education review the issue. An impartial person acceptable to both the parents and board of education will review the issue and issue a written report. If there is still disagreement, parents can appeal. Involving a third party like Inclusion Saskatchewan can help here. Your school board’s review policy can provide some direction in this matter, so consult a copy of the local policy.

Other Ministry of Education Publications

The Ministry of Education has created a number of publications that modernize educational practices to focus on the needs of students experiencing disability rather than on their medical diagnoses, and to prioritize inclusive education. These documents, which include resources designed for teachers to help them make adaptations to the learning environment, are available on the Ministry of Education’s website under the heading, “Supporting Students with Additional Needs.” Parents are also encouraged to explore the Supporting All Learners online library of resources for supporting students using a needs-based approach. A link is available from the Ministry of Education’s website page.



3.8 Funding For Children With Disabilities

When a child with an intellectual disability is not included or accommodated in the schools, a common explanation that families hear is that there is a lack of funding. While this may be true in some cases, parents should not feel guilty asking the school to pay for a support that their child needs. School divisions receive funding intended to address the needs of students who require additional supports. It is up to the school board to worry about the funding and it is important that parents continue advocating for their child's needs, even if they are told there is a lack of funding.

A problem that is common to all school divisions is that they do not have access to enough occupational, physical, and speech/language therapists. Once children reach school age, the Health Authority will no longer provide these therapies, so the responsibility lies with the school. Sometimes there are not enough therapists, or sometimes the division feels it will not have the funding for that school year. It is important that parents continue advocating and reminding the Ministry of Education that these resources are important for their children.

3.9 Planning For Graduation And Life After High School

Most people with an intellectual disability can stay in school until they are 22 years old, but we recommend that you connect with resources and start planning for your child's future as early as possible. It is important to connect to services and resources and have a system of support to help create the life beyond high school that fits for your child.

Community Living Service Delivery and Assessments

Community Living Service Delivery (CLSD) is a part of the Ministry of Social Services that helps people with intellectual disabilities and their family to access necessary and person-centred services. Most CLSD services, except respite and case management, cannot be accessed until age 18, but it is important to connect with CLSD as soon as you are able. Getting an assessment done while your child is still school aged will ensure they have access to these essential services over their adult lifetime.

CLSD staff work to ensure that the physical, emotional and social needs of people experiencing intellectual disabilities are met and that they are able to live as independently as possible within their own communities. CLSD does not deliver programs themselves; rather, they fund a system of social, residential, and vocational programs and help individuals find the programs that are the best fit for them. CLSD offers case management, program development, individual support, crisis intervention, assessment of individual and family needs, family support services such as funding for respite, providing information and referrals, and working with service providers to ensure individuals' needs are being met. The CLSD Community Services Workers (CSWs) work with families directly as case managers and program development consultants.

If your child is eligible for support through CLSD, they will be assigned a CSW who can work on a transition plan with you while your child is still in high school. Since it can take time to set up residential support and community inclusion programs, we recommend that parents start these conversations with a CSW when the child is around the age of 15 in order to plan for the future. To qualify for CLSD's services, a person must have a formal psychological assessment completed with results that meet these criteria:

- The person has an intellectual disability, defined as approximately an IQ of 70 or below on standardized measures of intelligence. This upper limit is intended as a guideline; CLSD may support an individual with an IQ of 75 or more, depending on the reliability of the intelligence test used.
- The person has impairments in adaptive behavior, defined as significant limitations in an individual's effectiveness in meeting the standards of maturation, learning, personal independence, or social responsibility that are expected for his or her age level and cultural group.
- The person's disability manifested during the developmental period - between conception and the 18th birthday.
- The person is a resident of Saskatchewan.

It is common that children are not diagnosed formally until they reach school age, as psychologists want to be sure they are diagnosing appropriately. If the school does not suggest having an assessment completed, it is important for parents to know that they can request an assessment be done for their child. According to the Regulations, if parents believe that their child needs accommodations, they can ask the principal for an assessment, and that request should move forward to the director of the board of education and an assessment should be conducted. In the case of a student graduating without an assessment being completed, it can be very difficult to access services. If your child is still in the education system, the school should provide an assessment and should prioritize the student accordingly if they are almost out of school. Schools will shred files after a student has been out of school for 7 years so it is recommended that parents request a copy of this assessment and keep it somewhere safe.

If, for whatever reason, a former assessment can no longer be obtained or if someone never received an assessment in the education system, then CLSD may provide funding for an assessment. This process requires a written application, with documentation to substantiate that no assessment exists and it would be a financial hardship to pay for one. The individual or their circle of support would be responsible for finding a qualified practitioner to complete the assessment. If CLSD will not pay for the assessment, it is possible to apply to the Cognitive Disability Strategy for funding.

Tip: If you encounter difficulty getting an assessment done for your child as a minor or as an adult, contact Inclusion Saskatchewan

Person Centered Planning

Person-centered planning is a creative approach to the transition process. It is based on the principle that the student is central and the most important person in the process so their input is crucial. The focus of a person-centered planning meeting is on the goals, abilities and interests of your child. The process involves your child and those who care about them. The planning team explores your child's experiences, goals, gifts and abilities. Your child's goals and self-determination will determine the approach to planning, rather than being defined by available services and programs. The meeting promotes listening and valuing your child's dreams for their future and results in plans of action that are required to help make those dreams come true. There are a number of person-centered planning processes:



- **McGill Action Planning System (MAPS):** MAPS starts by looking at a person's hopes and dreams. Dreams motivate us and tell others who we are. A MAPS session has a trained facilitator who focuses on the gifts and strengths of your child. The people who are most important to them are invited to participate in the session and make up a circle of support. To ensure that dreams come true, the team makes specific plans and goals.
- **Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH):** Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope is similar to MAPS but has some important differences. PATH is a more personal process than MAPS because the person with the disability (often called the pathfinder) will speak for themselves. Your child will invite the people to the meeting and start it off by telling attendees about their dreams. This process can be much more intense and emotional than doing a MAP because it asks the hard questions about how the team will commit to the dream. It must be done in a safe environment, facilitated by individuals who have been trained in it. Assisted by the facilitators, your child will develop a plan that takes them from their dreams to very real actions that they can do to step toward those dreams.
- **Person-Centred Toolkit:** As a result of government and communities working together in Saskatchewan, a Person-Centred Toolkit has been developed to make available a variety of resources to offer choice in the planning process, each of which reflect the principles of the Comprehensive Planning and Support Policy (CPP&SP) — a policy framework that guides the work of service providers across Saskatchewan. You can access the Person-Centred Toolkit at www.personcentredsk.ca
- **Helen Sanderson & Associates:** This is a consulting group based in the United Kingdom but with Canadian associates, offers a variety of person-centred tools and practices available for download at <http://helensandersonassociates.co.uk/ca/>. Associates can also offer training to help organizations and teams achieve better outcomes for people in our communities.

Transition Planning Handbook

This handbook was developed in response to concerns of parents and educators about the lack of options open to young people with intellectual disabilities leaving the educational system. It is a useful guide for students and families as they move through school and into the adult world. Find the handbook on the Inclusion Saskatchewan website at www.inclusionsk.com/resources.