

Stakeholder Consultation on Education for All (K – 12)

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

June 20, 2008

What should be included in an introduction?

- Statement that the goal of education is to prepare students for success in life. Success for each individual student means to reach his/her own potential, in all domains – home school, workplace.
- Explanation that universal design and differentiated instruction are useful for all students, but students with special education needs require an individualized instructional approach.
- Acknowledgement that principles of universal design and differentiated instruction apply to both elementary and secondary levels, but there may be some differences in how they are implemented – perhaps have a separate chapter on applying the principles in secondary settings.

References

There should be references to websites where teachers can get more information on evidence-based approaches, e.g.:

What Works Clearinghouse: <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>.

Best Evidence Encyclopedia: www.bestevidence.org/

Reference should be made to the (soon to be updated) *Special Education Companion*. The updated document should include information gathered for the exceptionality-specific standards, as well as results of more recent research.

Recommended changes and additions

- Enhanced chapter on assessment, referencing the work of the OPA Project and the importance of aligning recommendations from professional assessments with individualized instructional approaches
- Expanded section on formative assessment, in line with the writings of Anne Davies, *Making Classroom Assessment Work*.
- Expanded chapter on assistive technology, including how to integrate use of technology into classroom settings, how to train students on use of technology
- Specific section on development of executive function skills and strategies
- Section on developing student awareness and understanding of their own learning profile, and on developing self-advocacy skills
- Discussion (with examples) of how to apply the principles of universal design and differentiated instruction in different kinds of secondary settings, including locally developed courses, applied and academic courses, and co-op (planning for appropriate co-op placements and working with co-op settings to help them understand and apply the principles).
- Information on using the material in *Education for All* to write effective IEPs

Precise Strategies for LDs

For students with learning disabilities, instruction needs to be specifically differentiated to their profile of abilities and needs as documented in a psychological assessment.

The following is a summary of research on evidence-based approaches from *Learning Disabilities: From Identification to Intervention* by Jack M. Fletcher et al, The Guilford Press, 2007.

The strongest point is that students with LDs need to have “intensive specialized remediation” whereas “remedial instruction is frequently carried out in larger groups that make it difficult to ensure the level of intensity needed to accelerate growth in academic skills.” (p. 264).

The authors point out that students with LDs often have complex, multifaceted problems that affect more than one academic domain, so classroom-based programs, even those that research has shown to be effective, may not be enough (p.265).

After studying the research, the authors conclude that “students with LDs require and instructional approach that is explicit, well organized, and routinely provides opportunity for cumulative review of previously mastered content.” (p. 272) They point out that academic content needs to be explicitly taught in each academic domain, since little transfer occurs (p.273), but also that foundational skills can be taught simultaneously with higher level skills (e.g. decoding skills at the same time as text comprehension strategies).

The bottom line is that universal instructional design and differentiated instruction in the regular classroom are important but not sufficient to meet the needs of students with LDs.