

**SERVING ALL CHILDREN WELL**  
A Framework for Educational Support Services

**PARENT HANDBOOK**

**ACS**

**e**  **ploring**  
with a purpose

## **Contents**

INTRODUCTION .....	- 3 -
Who is served by Educational Support Services? .....	- 3 -
What are the goals of Educational Support Services? .....	- 3 -
ROLE OF PARENTS .....	- 4 -
TEAM PARTICIPATION .....	- 5 -
CONSIDERATION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS .....	- 5 -
LEARNING AT HOME .....	- 6 -
GENERAL INFORMATION.....	- 7 -
TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS .....	- 8 -
RESOURCES.....	- 10 -

## INTRODUCTION

As Christians, we recognize that each child is a unique human being, a special gift from the Lord. We seek to nurture and teach each child according to the way they learn best. In the Educational Support Services (ESS) Program, we view the child as a whole human being in order to help the child succeed in growing to maturity.

Abbotsford Christian School's Vision Statement in regards to Education states: "All ACS students will achieve maximum potential through a learning process that is appropriate to the students' abilities. Each student will feel valued, secure and challenged to explore God, His creation and their place in it."

Who is served by Educational Support Services?

### **Learning Assistance:**

- students who have difficulty receiving, comprehending or expressing of information
- students with a learning disability
- students who have social or emotional difficulties

### **English Language Learning (ELL):**

- students for whom English is a new language (ELL) and are experiencing academic and/or social difficulties in school because English is a new language

### **Special Education:**

- students who have special emotional, social and/or intellectual needs
- students who receive some amount of government funding for a variety of physical, behavioral and/or learning needs

What are the goals of Educational Support Services?

- for each student to experience greater success in their learning within the classroom setting, alongside their peers
- to enable the student to be a functioning member of the classroom and school
- to improve the student's self-concept
- to improve the student's relationship with teachers and classmates
- to provide individualized equipment (bathroom facilities, sound systems etc.) and necessary services (OT, PT etc.) for students who require them
- to challenge students appropriately

## ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents bear the ultimate responsibility for providing for their children's education. This is a God-given task and parents are vitally important in their children's educational progress. Parental support is key to building an effective, inclusive community. Parents work in partnership with the school personnel in educating their child. As parents, you are encouraged to:

- **Parents need to become informed about their child's learning needs.** It is important for parents to be aware of the various strategies and classroom modifications/ adaptations that have been put in place to support their child's learning. This information can then be passed on to future teachers in order to make transitions go more smoothly.
- **Parents need to be their child's advocate and teach their child to advocate for him/herself.** Parents need to inform the school about their child's needs and be active in ensuring that their child's learning needs are being met.
- **Parents need to be positive reinforcers.** Parents play a crucial role in encouraging their child's gifts and abilities and in helping their child identify and celebrate these gifts. A child who has learning needs may feel frustrated and discouraged.
- **Parents need to be alert to significant behaviour changes.** Being aware of significant behaviour changes which could indicate progress or problems is vital. Parents need to observe their child in his or her social relationships, free time, work habits etc.
- **Parents need to have realistic expectations and goals for their child.** Parents need to come to terms with who their child is and what he or she can do. Unrealistic expectations and unattainable standards can be harmful to the self-esteem of even the most intellectually capable child.
- **Parents need to be aware of some basic views about how children learn.** Parents should understand a few key facts about child development so that they can interpret their child's progress. Understanding involves having accurate knowledge about the way children learn. (See Resources at the end of this section for a list of websites and books with information on this topic.)

### *Educational Support is more about*

<i>people</i>	than programs
<i>capacities, gifts</i>	than deficiencies, needs
<i>providing hope</i>	than providing programs
<i>empowering people</i>	than controlling people
<i>interdependence</i>	than dependence
<i>flexible responses</i>	than set-in-stone plans
<i>relationships</i>	than forms, tests & grants
<i>building gifts and connections</i>	than one person do-it-all

adapted from R. Koole, SCSBC, January 1996

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## TEAM PARTICIPATION

Since both the parents and the classroom teacher share responsibility for the child's education, Educational Support Services personnel will work with them as closely as possible. Children will benefit if parents and teachers forge strong, supporting relationships. The development of these relationships should be a priority. This can happen in many different ways, including the following:

- providing support at home (see 'Learning at Home' p. 5)
- participating in team conferences and in the development of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or Student Plans
- ensuring that recommendations as agreed to at a team meeting are implemented (i.e. assessments, home support)
- providing the school with any current and historical documentation related to the student's needs
- if possible, spending time offering support in the student's classroom
- maintaining regular communication with teachers and support personnel
- informing the school regarding any change in custody, or other events that may affect a child's performance and behaviour at school.

## CONSIDERATION FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Parents of students needing support with special needs will often access **community based support services and programs** that may work in conjunction with school based programs. It is important for parents to be aware of the resources available, tax credits etc., so that the best possible planning can be done. Parents should consider the following:

- Tax credits
- Disability pensions
- Resources available through the Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Social worker involvement
- Funding for equipment
- At-home program
- Autism Funding
- Telephone helpline, such as abuse, suicide prevention (local, provincial)
- Public services: Handi-Dart, ferry, campgrounds etc.
- Parent advocacy groups
- Transitioning students with special needs from school to community living
- Community Living British Columbia
- Assessment requirements

## LEARNING AT HOME

It is important that the learning which takes place at school is supported at home. The following are **examples** of ways that parents can do this.

- **Parents can carry out recommendations as agreed to in consultants' reports, team meetings etc.** It is important to a child's well-being that any exercises, activities or appointments that parents have been encouraged to pursue be taken seriously and that parents make every effort to follow through on these. Parents need to provide a copy for the school when reports are given to them.
- **Parents should read to their child on a regular basis.** By reading regularly at home, parents will model fluency and expression. It can also help instill within a child a love for books.
- **Parents should interact and dialogue before, during and after reading.** Parents can have their child predict what the story may be about, make predictions during reading and discuss whether those predictions came true. Parents should have their child retell and sequence the events in the story.
- **Parents can practice math facts with their child.** Flashcards for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division can be easily made or inexpensively purchased.
- **Parents can review sight words and terminology.** Parents can ask their child's teacher for a list of sight words/terms that can be practiced at home. This will help improve reading and writing skills.
- **Visit the public library.** Librarians are a wealth of knowledge and can recommend appropriate books for individual children. Libraries also provide a variety of programs in which children can participate.
- **Parents need to be aware of what their child's homework assignments are.** Parents need to keep in contact with their child and his or her teachers to be aware of any due dates for assignments and projects. Parents should set aside time to help their child study for tests.
- **Parents need to be involved in their child's education.** Parents can participate in school events, field trips, volunteering, attending school functions, etc. When parents are involved in their child's school experience, it shows that they care, that school is important, and that their child's learning has value.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**School Requirements:** There are specific graduation requirements for Grades 10 – 12. Parents should find out what their school expects and investigate possibilities that match their son/ daughter's gifts. See the BC government website for further information [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/graduation/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/graduation/).

As students progress through the school system, their programs may be **adapted or modified** as needed. **Adaptations** may include adapting the environment, using different teaching strategies, or adjusting assessment procedures. A student on an adapted program will achieve the same learning outcomes as his/her classmates but receives additional support to do so. A **modified program** indicates that a student's learning outcomes are significantly different from his/her peers. A single subject area or an entire program may be modified depending on the needs of the child. Modification needs to be determined carefully with parental input. An IEP should be developed to ensure the student's uniquely designed program is well planned and reported.

Modification impacts the direction of a student's education, as it may determine which courses he/she chooses in high school, as well as what type of graduation he/she may receive (Dogwood Diploma or School Completion Certificate).

Students will be on one of two graduation programs:

### **H.S. Diploma (Dogwood)**

Students begin working on their graduation requirements in Grade 10. In order to graduate, they must complete specified courses and write five provincial exams (currently these exams include English 10, Math 10, Science 10, Social Studies 11 and English 12). Students have choice and flexibility in how they meet the remaining requirements. See the BC government website for further information: [www.bced.gov.bc.ca/graduation](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/graduation).

### **School Completion Certificate Program**

This certificate program is for students who cannot meet the course requirements for a HS diploma (Dogwood) at a minimum level C-/50% or above **and** are recognized as having extra learning needs that are supported by an IEP. These students will have one or more modified courses in Grades 10 through 12.

### **Provincial exams and adjudication:**

Students with identified special needs may be entitled to adaptations to provincial exam conditions that assist the student in demonstrating his or her knowledge. Adaptations to exam conditions usually include the use of various technologies, as well as extra time. These adaptations, referred to as adjudication, must be applied using strict Ministry of Education criteria. The Ministry must be informed of all adapted exam conditions with the exception of extra time.

**Workshops and Seminars:** Many schools and connected organizations offer workshops and seminars that would be helpful to parents. Parents can contact their local library, child development centre, disability association, or school district for current information. Parents may also contact the school's administrator about attending any school professional development days that may be helpful to you.

## TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

**Adapted program:** an educational program that retains the learning outcomes of the prescribed curriculum but adjusts things such as time, teaching methods, assessments, etc. The students participate in the program, learn the material and graduate with a Dogwood Diploma.

**Differentiated Instruction:** designing curriculum and instruction so that the needs of all students are met and individual students are challenged appropriately.

**English Language Learning (ELL):** assists students for whom English is a new language and who are experiencing academic and/or social difficulties in school because English is a new language.

**Inclusion:** describes the principle that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education. The practice of inclusion is not necessarily synonymous with integration and goes beyond placement to include meaningful participation and the promotion of interaction with others. Special Education Students are not guests in the classroom. Rather, they are important members of the learning community.

**Individualized Education Plan (IEP):** a written plan developed for each student with special needs or a modified program. This plan describes the educational program, modifications and/or adaptations for the student, and the services to be provided in order to meet the student's annual goals and objectives. Progress based on these goals is reported to parents at each reporting period.

**Integration:** is one of the major strategies used to achieve inclusion. With integration, students with special needs are included in educational settings with their peers who do not have special needs, and provided with the necessary accommodations, determined on an individual basis, to enable them to be successful there. The principle of "placement in the most enabling learning environment" applies when decisions are made about the extent to which an individual student is placed in regular classrooms, or assigned to an alternate placement.

**Language Development:** assistance to develop an organized vocabulary of objects, events and relationships.

**Learning Assistance:** involves providing support for non-funded students who have learning difficulties within the classroom setting. These students should have a student learning support plan/IEP in place that indicates any adaptations to the learning process and/or modifications that have been made to the learning outcomes.

**Modified program:** an educational program with learning outcomes that are substantially different from the prescribed curriculum, and specifically selected to meet the student's special needs. Students receive achievement indicators based on their own learning outcomes.

**Occupational Therapist (OT):** assists students to improve their ability to perform tasks in their daily living and working environments. OT's work with individuals who have conditions that are mentally, physically, developmentally, or emotionally disabling.

**Physiotherapist (PT):** focuses treatment on improving gross motor skills, balance and coordination, strength and endurance as well as cognitive and sensory processing/integration.

**Psycho-Educational Assessment:** a comprehensive assessment and diagnostic service carried out by an Educational Psychologist to determine the causes and characteristics of a student's learning challenges. It may offer specific recommendations for instruction and support. If parents have extended medical insurance, they may be asked to cover some of the cost of this assessment.

**SET-BC (Special Education Technology – BC):** a Ministry of Education program established to assist schools in educating students whose access to the curriculum is restricted primarily due to physical disability, visual impairment, and autism. The program lends assistive technologies (i.e. computers) and assists in training the students and educators.

**Special Education:** involves developing programs and services that enable students with special needs, often physical, mental and/or emotional, to meet the goals of Christian education. These students generally receive some amount of government funding in order to support these programs. They will have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

**Speech and Language Pathologist:** a specialist in the assessment, treatment and prevention of communication disorders.

**Speech Therapy:** assistance to improve speech sound production and articulation.

**Student Plan/Learning Support Plan:** a form that indicates what learning supports have been made available for a child who does not receive any government funding and is not on a modified program, but who needs extra supports in the classroom. These may include students who receive ELL, enrichment activities, speech and/or language development, and Learning Assistance.

**Transition:** planning the passage of a student from one environment to another at key points in his or her development from childhood to adulthood.

## RESOURCES

### *Websites*

[www.fvcdc.org/](http://www.fvcdc.org/) website of the Fraser Valley Child Development Centre

[www.gov.bc.ca/mcf](http://www.gov.bc.ca/mcf) website for Ministry of Children and Family Development

[www.ldsucceess.org](http://www.ldsucceess.org) a parent guide for children with learning disabilities

[www.communitylivingbc.ca](http://www.communitylivingbc.ca) for support of adults with disabilities

[www.bced.gov.bc.ca/graduation/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/graduation/) BC Ministry of Education graduation requirements

[www.kidsareworthit.com/](http://www.kidsareworthit.com/) Barbara Coloroso's website with various resources on parenting

### *Books*

Faber, A. and Mazlish, E. ,(1999). *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk*. Toronto: Harper Collins Canada. ISBN: 0380811960

Coloroso, B. (2002). *Kids are worth it: giving your child the gift of inner discipline*, revised edition. New York: Harper Collins. ISBN: 0-14-029367-1

Davis, Ronald B., (1997). *The Gift of Dyslexia*. Perigee Books. ISBN: 0-399-52293-X.

Levine, Dr. M. (1992). *All kinds of minds: a young student's book about learning abilities and learning disorders*. Cambridge, MA: Educators Publishing Service. ISBN: 0838820905

Tobias, C. (1999). *Every child can succeed*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House. ISBN: 1-56179-708-1