ACTUALIZING A NEEDS-BASED MODEL TO SUPPORT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

A Journey of Transformation
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Context

The mandate of the Ministry of Education is to provide leadership and direction to the early learning and child care, Kindergarten through Grade 12 education, literacy, and library sectors. The Ministry supports these sectors through funding, governance, and accountability with a focus on improving student achievement. The Ministry is committed to improving the learning success and well being of all Saskatchewan children and youth, as well as enhancing literacy for all Saskatchewan people.

This document is intended to serve the following purposes:

- to provide pertinent information relative to a needs-based service delivery model;
- to outline the Ministry’s philosophical ideals and guiding principles; and
- to reflect the provincial spirit of continuous improvement.

“The year has not been without its difficulties but the staff always met with us and rather than focusing on the issues and deficits, we focused on solutions and unlearned skills/unmet needs. My husband and I have learned a lot and while we considered ourselves fairly well versed in inclusion before we started this journey, the school has shown us what inclusion really means. The fact that our child has real friends and has learned many academic skills…”

– Parent of a student with intensive needs

A Journey of Transformation in Support of All Learners

The Ministry of Education, in partnership with stakeholders including school divisions, schools, parents/caregivers, inter-ministry groups, students, and human service agencies, continues the journey towards the actualization of a needs-based model of identifying and providing supports for students. The intent of this process is to ensure that:

- students are provided with supports in the development and attainment of competencies and independence;
- students have access to appropriate learning opportunities, resources, and supports;
- students are supported through differentiated and responsive instruction; and
- students are provided with inclusive opportunities to reach their potential.

A number of significant shifts in practice that characterize the continuing journey to-date include:

- creating positive, welcoming, and responsive learning environments;
- differentiating instruction;
- nurturing student independence;
- screening and early intervention;
- involving collaborative, interprofessional teams;
- engaging parents and caregivers; and,
- building partnerships within the community and other agencies.

The needs-based model focuses on developing and implementing procedures and practices to support all learners. This is supported by three-tiers of responsive instruction and interventions including: classroom-based, school-wide interventions; targeted and/or group interventions; and intensive individual interventions. While we recognize that universal classroom practices will meet the needs of most students, some students will require short-term targeted supports in order to be successful. In addition, a small number of students will require a personal program plan that is specific to their learning needs.
Classroom-Based, School-Wide Interventions

- Differentiated Instruction
- Learning Environment
- Inclusive Practices
- Parental/Caregiver Involvement
- Fostering Independence
- Assessment
- Team Meetings

Targeted/Group Interventions

- Record of Adaptations
- Parental/Caregiver Engagement
- Assistive Technology
- Multi-Disciplinary Team /Inter-Agency:
  - Direct Services
  - Intensive Individual Interventions

Assessed Areas of Needs
Priority Areas of Impact
Supports to Address Needs
Personal Program Plan
“His peers have embraced him as a ‘fellow’ student, and his outbursts are very infrequent. He is viewed in the middle school as a student, just like the others, and he is responding accordingly. The progress, in moving from treating him as a ‘medical model’ student to treating him as one of the crowd, with his needs in mind, has been significant.”

– Parent of a student with intensive needs

A Framework for a Needs-Based Service Delivery Model

Historically, a medical model influenced our thinking and guided our practice for educating students with intensive needs. This model focused on diagnosing students’ disabilities or impairments with the purpose of curing or medically managing the problem so that students could fit within the normal environment. While the importance of medical science in the lives of children with intensive needs is acknowledged, the application of the medical model has also resulted in a limiting view of student potential, as well as barriers to accessing services.

The basic premise underlying a needs-based service delivery model is that the needs of students are more important in determining programming and essential supports than are the categorical labels of disabilities. A needs-based model is based on the concept that students receive appropriate services, not just the services for which they qualify. This approach recognizes that students have different needs and that such needs can and do change over time. Accordingly, students require individualized, flexible, and responsive supports to meet their particular needs and to enhance the continued growth of their individual strengths and abilities. A needs-based approach involves a comprehensive evaluation of the holistic needs of individual students and their families, the identification of concerns and priorities, and the coordination of appropriate supports through an efficient use of resources.

Three key principles form the framework for a needs-based service delivery model: a) inclusionary philosophies & beliefs, b) intervention planning, and c) interprofessional collaboration.
Key Principles of a Needs-Based Service Delivery Model

Inclusionary Philosophy & Beliefs
- Differentiated Instruction
- Parental/Caregiver Engagement
- Fostering Independence
- Assistive Technology

Intervention Planning
- Referral Process
- Personal Program Plans
- Transition Planning
- Service Coordination

Interprofessional Collaboration
- Qualified Staffing
- Inservice Training
- School Team Collaboration
- Engagement of Agencies

As the evolution from a medical model to a needs-based model of service provision continues, student support services in Saskatchewan is experiencing a philosophic shift, with a heightened focus on student success within each of the key principle areas. The following table illustrates the differences between these two models:
### Comparison of Medical and Needs-Based Models

#### Inclusionary Philosophy & Beliefs

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<tr>
<th>Medical Model</th>
<th>Needs-Based Model</th>
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<tr>
<td>from a focus on the diagnosis and/or the categorical label of the student’s disability</td>
<td>to a focus on the needs, strengths, and abilities of the student</td>
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<tr>
<td>from an emphasis on the “problems” or deficits of the student that need to be “cured” or managed</td>
<td>to an emphasis on the supports that the student requires and the elimination of barriers that obstruct access</td>
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<tr>
<td>from an approach that fosters dependence by sheltering and protecting the student</td>
<td>to an approach that nurtures independence/interdependence by providing opportunities that promote the development of personal empowerment and self-determination</td>
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<td>from a view that the student will benefit best by functioning in specialized environments in relative seclusion from others</td>
<td>to a view that the student will benefit best by functioning within the immediate community and wider society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from an unchanged society that expects the student to adapt to the environment in order to be included</td>
<td>to an evolving society that believes that all students belong and are valued members of a diverse society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from an attitude of pity and charity towards those with disabilities</td>
<td>to an attitude of respect and appreciation for diversity</td>
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#### Intervention Planning

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<tr>
<th>Medical Model</th>
<th>Needs-Based Model</th>
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<td>from a prescriptive and predetermined approach</td>
<td>to an outcomes-based approach based on the impact of services intended to meet the needs of the student</td>
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<td>from a reliance on norm-referenced assessment methods</td>
<td>to the incorporation of authentic assessment approaches that are used to inform instructional practices and programming interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from an emphasis on special therapies and medical treatments from a clinical perspective</td>
<td>to an emphasis on using natural supports and adapting structures within the environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from assuming long-term service provision</td>
<td>to providing services for only as long as required by the student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from determining programs and services based on categories of disabilities</td>
<td>to providing flexible services and differentiated programming tailored to the student’s unique needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from an emphasis on designing and delivering a different curriculum</td>
<td>to an emphasis on providing access to the regular curriculum and adapting instruction with the use of evidence-based practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from a progression of congregated classrooms and pull-out settings</td>
<td>to inclusive classroom settings</td>
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#### Interprofessional Collaboration

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical Model</th>
<th>Needs-Based Model</th>
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<tr>
<td>from an approach that is specialist/expert-directed</td>
<td>to a collaborative culture of shared responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>from segregated service delivery by various professional agencies/personnel</td>
<td>to integrated and multi-disciplinary approaches to service delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from an authoritative expert stance</td>
<td>to a reflective and holistic approach that is responsive to students’ needs</td>
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Collaboration – The Key to Effective Implementation of a Needs-Based Model

No one professional has all the knowledge and skills required to successfully meet the range of diverse student needs in today’s classrooms. Thus, collaboration among teachers, parents, supporting professionals, educational assistants, human service agencies, and community organizations is seen as central to student success within inclusive settings. Collaboration is a dynamic interactive process, where there is genuine shared ownership for decision-making, action taking, and outcomes. It recognizes that shared goals can be better achieved by working together in an interdependent and reciprocal manner.

A collaborative approach creates a forum for discussing ideas, reflecting on interventions, and sharing expertise and perspectives. Team members work together to identify needs, develop plans, coordinate services, and provide each other with support. Collaboration involves structural and attitudinal changes which will improve services, personalize solutions to learning at the micro or school/classroom level, and transform whole-service sectors at the macro or government/community level.

The benefits associated with the collaborative approach include improved information sharing, problem solving, and student outcomes. Collaborative teams plan interventions that address learning needs, as well as impeding factors that impact students’ well-being. Collaboration requires an investment in the development of trusting relationships that contribute to effective teamwork. In addition, effective collaboration requires:

- professional development and training in collaborative processes for all team members;
- new systems and structures that support improved service delivery models;
- clarity of purpose, roles, and accountability;
- commitment and shared expectations;
- communication networks that support open, trusting, and respectful dialogue; and
- leadership committed to building and fostering a collaborative culture.

Collaboration moves professionals beyond traditional and isolated roles to the creation of educational partnerships or teams that are open to new ways of delivering service. For example, classroom teachers work collaboratively with other team members to develop and monitor intervention plans for students. Educational assistants participate in collaborative team meetings to share their ideas and perspectives, and to learn how they can support the team’s decisions. Student support services teachers perform an array of collaborative roles, such as those identified below, in order to provide assistance to classroom teachers and instructional support to students.
Student Support Services Teachers and Their Collaborative Roles

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<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>A Learning Support Coach</td>
<td>Provides indirect support to targeted students through direct consultation with the classroom teacher.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Co-Teacher</td>
<td>Co-plans and co-teaches with the classroom teacher in a classroom context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Peer Collaborator</td>
<td>Works together with the classroom teacher to solve a problem or develop a plan of support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Supportive Teacher</td>
<td>Provides direct instruction or support to an individual student or group of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Interventionist</td>
<td>Works within school-wide models (e.g., Response to Intervention and/or Instruction; School-Wide Positive Behavioural Supports) to provide support at multiple levels and across multiple settings.</td>
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“Increasing professional supports and developing a strong parent-school team that assist both my son’s teacher and my son has made a world of difference in his progress at school and in my confidence that his educational needs are finally being met and will continue to be met.”

– Parent of a student with intensive needs

Collaboration has the potential of enriching learning experiences and outcomes for students. Collaborative team members share knowledge, develop skills, enrich problem solving, and gain insights as they work together on behalf of students. A true learning community evolves when school personnel, parents, and supporting professionals and agencies invest in collaborative relationships and professional growth, while supporting each other in the achievement of common goals.

“Key changes I’ve observed over the past couple of years include a more focused team approach to William’s program planning and an increased emphasis on supporting, monitoring and achieving the goals and objectives set in his Personal Program Plan (PPP). The biggest difference is the involvement of professional staff from the school division working as a team with the school staff and parents. This shift has created a team that feels confident in our ability to collaborate and support each other to develop and implement William’s PPP each year. Together we are more innovative and creative in solving problems or tackling challenges. My son is meeting his goals and achieving his objectives. More importantly we are raising the bar in terms of our expectations for him, and everyone on the team feels a part of William’s plan and is accountable for his success.”

– Parent of a student with intensive needs
From Continuous Improvement to Actualizing a Needs-Based Service Delivery Model

The Ministry has developed service delivery rubrics that outline the components of effective practice associated with student support services. All school divisions are invited to participate in the Student Support Services Delivery Model Review and Improvement Process as part of our province’s commitment to continuous improvement. The review process involves school divisions taking the following key steps:

- selecting priority area(s) from the rubrics as focus areas for continued development;
- compiling school division data; and
- fostering common understandings and mentoring of partners.

Other components of the review process include: a) strategic discussions between school divisions and the Ministry of Education, b) alignment of the review process with the strategic priorities of the Ministry, and c) the option of inviting partners to school division review meetings. The service delivery rubrics and the review process provide direction and guidance towards an accountability framework that supports continuous improvement and ultimately leads to improved student achievement for all Saskatchewan children and youth.

“The Ministry has provided us with a rubric of what effective practices might look like in providing services to students with intensive needs. The rubric has caused our school division to revisit, refine and change some of our practices and will continue to cause us to improve our current practices in a number of areas. It is unlikely that we would have considered as many alternative practices without the ‘beacon’ that was provided by the rubric. The student support services service delivery model stretched our thinking; we were allowed to question the validity of the changes and we were given meaningful input into sharing each initiative. That process has allowed our school division to acquire ownership of our service delivery model”

–School Division Superintendent