



Department: Programs and Services
Section: Special Education

Scope	This administrative procedure applies to all members of any Program Planning Team, the Coordinator of Student Services, the Regional Leadership Team and the Board.
Responsibility	It is the responsibility of the Director of Programs and Services to ensure that this administrative procedure is implemented.
Implementation	This procedure will be implemented by school principals, assisted as needed by appropriate school staff, and by the Coordinator of Student Services, assisted as needed by regional Student Services staff, and members of the Regional Leadership Team.
Procedures	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Superintendent of Schools shall ensure that current or proposed programs for students with severe learning disabilities are consistent with Board policies, by-laws, and contractual agreements.2. <ol style="list-style-type: none">(a) The Director of Finance and Operations shall ensure that appropriate financial accounts are established and maintained to receive and transfer funds to support the Severe Learning Disabilities program.(b) The Director of Finance and Operations shall ensure that administrative and other outside costs are not charged to budgets that support the Severe Learning Disabled program.3. <ol style="list-style-type: none">(a) The Coordinator of Student Services shall determine what programs and services under these funding guidelines will best support students with severe learning disabilities.(b) The Coordinator of Student Services shall determine whether there is a need for the development of a new program or service under these guidelines, and shall call upon a school, a combination of schools, and/or school board staff to develop the program or service.(c) The Coordinator of Student Services shall support and assist program development.(d) The Coordinator of Student Services shall receive reports from sites and prepare annually a summary report for submission by the School Board to the Department of Education.(e) The Coordinator of Student Services shall include in the annual report the following information:<ol style="list-style-type: none">i) an overview of services providedii) degree of success in meeting program objectivesiii) a financial statement of the previous yeariv) plans for the forthcoming year.

4. (a) The Coordinator of Student Services shall establish a Regional Severe Learning Disabilities (SLD) Steering Committee to represent and serve the region, giving consideration to establishing a balance of gender, ethnic/cultural, minority, and geographic representation.
 - (b) The Coordinator of Student Services shall ensure that the Regional SLD Steering Committee shall establish, from its membership:
 - i) a Regional SLD Selection Committee, and
 - ii) a Regional SLD Appeals Committee.
 - (c) The Coordinator of Student Services shall ensure that individuals who have the potential to receive direct financial benefits from membership on any of the SLD committees are not appointed to, or permitted to continue on, the committee.
 - (d) The Coordinator of Students Services, when establishing the Regional SLD Steering Committee, shall stagger terms of appointment from one to three years, so that approximately one-third of members shall be renewed or replaced each year.
5. (a) The Coordinator of Student Services shall ensure that the Regional SLD Steering Committee consists of at least seven persons, five of whom collectively represent the following:
 - i) a school board supervisory staff member with experience and training in the area of learning disabilities
 - ii) a resource teacher with experience serving the learning disabled
 - iii) a classroom teacher with a demonstrated interest in learning disabilities
 - iv) a legal guardian(s) of a child with learning disabilities
 - v) a person selected by the Learning Disabilities Association of Nova Scotia (LDANS), and,
 - vi) when possible, two persons who collectively represent the following:
 - (b) a professional (such as a university professor, psychologist, or medical doctor) from outside the public school system with training and experience helping, treating, or teaching in the field of learning disabilities
 - (c) a person with learning disabilities who is a current student or recent graduate of a college or university
 - (d) If it is not possible to identify persons who meet the criteria for any of the roles above (i – vii), the Coordinator of Student Services shall fill the vacancy with the one-year appointment of an individual who has a demonstrated knowledge of and interest in learning disabilities. The Regional SLD Steering Committee may decide to increase the number of representatives on the

Committee who meet the above criteria.

6. The Coordinator of Student Services shall ensure that principals understand the nature of the Severe Learning Disabilities program, including completion and submission of Form AP403.j - Request for Severe Learning Disabilities Program on behalf of a student who may qualify for service.
7. The Coordinator of Student Services shall submit all completed applications of Form AP403.j - Request for Severe Learning Disabilities Program to the Regional SLD Selection Committee for consideration.
8. The members of the Regional SLD Steering Committee shall:
 - i) select a chairperson and secretary
 - ii) follow accepted practices for discussion and decision-making
 - iii) monitor programs and services for students with severe learning disabilities and recommend any needed changes or enhancements to the Regional Leadership Team
 - iv) consider proposals for services for students with severe learning disabilities and make recommendations to the Regional Leadership Team for funding
 - v) ensure that each program for students with severe learning disabilities provides details which describe appropriate screening and identification procedures, professional development, legal guardian(s) involvement, evaluation of student progress, and program evaluation according to guidelines provided by the Department of Education
 - vi) maintain and disseminate minutes which confirm terms of appointment and which reflect responsible operating procedures
 - vii) receive and evaluate site reports regarding their success in meeting targeted outcomes for students, and forward such reports to the Coordinator of Student Services for collation in the annual report, and to the Regional Leadership Team
 - viii) declare a conflict of interest which may exist regarding any specific proposal, and abstain from the decision-making for that proposal.
9. After reviewing recommendations from the Regional SLD Steering Committee with regard to programs or funding for SLD programs, the Regional Leadership Team shall decide to accept, modify, or reject the program and shall inform the Coordinator of Student Services of the decision.
10. (a) The Coordinator of Student Services shall inform affected parties of all decisions regarding SLD programs, and shall act appropriately to implement programs that have been approved.
 - (b) For those programs not approved, the Coordinator shall inform the affected parties of the appeal process (see BP 403.19 and

AP403.19 – Students With Severe Learning Disabilities Appeal Process).

11. (a) The Coordinator of Student Services shall ensure that all principals, resource teachers, and regional Student Services staff understand that the SLD program is restricted to students who:
- i) are of average or above-average cognitive ability and
 - ii) experience unexpectedly poor school performance and
 - iii) have severe deficits in one or more areas of basic literacy, and
 - iv) have made minimal progress despite intensive efforts to support literacy development at the school level over a two to three year period.
- (b) For purposes of clarity, key concepts of the preceding paragraph are explained as follows:
- i) poor academic performance should be evident through a significant delay in overall achievement of at least three years and determined through multi-disciplinary investigation not to be primarily the result of other factors, such as cultural differences, social/ emotional/behavioural problems, general cognitive impairment, family dysfunction, or sensory or physical disability
 - ii) cognitive ability should be determined on the basis of a comprehensive psycho-educational assessment, with observation, student work samples, and legal guardian(s)/teacher reports being considered along with standardized measures of cognitive ability; further, the selection, administration, and interpretation of assessment materials must be free of bias due to gender, language differences, culture or race, and should ensure equitable access to services
 - iii) basic literacy should be defined as the broad understanding and use of language which manifests in the ability to listen, speak, read, write, and do mathematics
 - iv) intensive efforts should be characterized by:
 - a) evidence that school-level personnel recognized the student's unique learning needs for several years prior to referral, and attempted to respond by provision of a wide variety of classroom experiences in which the student had opportunities to learn through hands-on explorations, talk, the arts, and written language
 - b) provision by classroom teachers of focused instruction, such as reading/writing strategies, phonological awareness, problem-solving strategies, or oral language development, in possible areas of need
 - c) evidence that the expertise of resource teachers was drawn upon to carry out additional assessment and focused instruction in collaboration with the classroom teacher, including evidence of the use of the services of other professionals such as speech-language pathologists

- and/or school psychologists to provide additional insights into the student's strengths and needs
- d) evidence of assistance from school board and/or community medical and mental health professionals to investigate how such factors as underlying health problems or social-emotional difficulties may be impeding the student's learning
 - e) evidence of ongoing communication and involvement with the student's family in order to create the best possible working partnership, including attempts to address complicating family problems through the use of all available community resources
 - f) a copy of the student's Individual Program Plan to document in writing the specific interventions and human and material resources which the school and the school system have employed on behalf of the student.
12. (a) The Coordinator of Student Services shall ensure that the Regional SLD Annual Report and the annual SLD Program Proposal indicates the degree to which the school board will provide direct service to students, enter into joint service agreements, or contract for services using the funding for severe learning disabilities,
- (b) The Coordinator of Student Services shall ensure that each student case reviewed by the Severe Learning Disabilities committee is assessed in terms of the following guidelines:
- i) the student meets the criteria for eligibility and the primary focus of the program is direct instruction by qualified personnel
 - ii) programs include professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators in order to provide greater understanding of student needs and maximize long term benefits
 - iii) legal guardian(s) involvement is encouraged
 - iv) transition planning is included to support the student through predictable changes in grade, school, program, or service format
 - v) the cost effectiveness of the program is considered in terms of numbers of students served, outcomes expected and achieved, and the cost of delivering the service
 - vi) multiple means for evaluating student success, including such elements as standardized tests, work samples, and efficacy as perceived by students themselves, legal guardian(s), and teachers.

Related Guidelines The Education Act
 Regulations Under the Education Act
 Department of Education Guidelines for Accessing Funds for Students with Severe Learning Disabilities (Revised, March 1999)
 AVRSB Student Services Manual on Policies, Practices and Procedures

Associated Forms Form AP403.j - Request for Severe Learning Disabilities Program

Monitoring Procedure

It is the responsibility of the Director of Programs and Services (or his/her designate) to have this administrative procedure reviewed on an annual basis.

The AVRSB Education Committee, Board Members, principals, classroom and resource teachers, parental organizations and other appropriate groups/individual(s) will be consulted when revisions of major significance are made to this policy and administrative procedure.

Sufficient time will be provided to ensure that persons, as above, have appropriate opportunity to react to such recommended revisions.

The Director of Programs and Services shall ensure the results of the monitoring of the policy and administrative procedures are recorded, in writing, and forwarded to the Superintendent of Schools for review.

It is the responsibility of the Superintendent of Schools to report results of the monitoring process to the Board.

This Administrative Procedure will be monitored on an annually.

Superintendent Approved: March 28/02

Ref: BP 403.9, Appendices Form: AP403.j

Monitoring Date:

Revised: