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Ministry of Education

Special Education Policy Statement

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Special Education Principles, Guidelines and Procedures

The following guidelines and procedures are articulated in support of The National Policy Statement on Education, adopted September, 1999. In that statement (section 5.0), four specific directions were stated:

- 5.1. Educational programmes shall be designed and offered to children with special needs such as physical disabilities, visual and auditory impairment, mental disabilities, social and behavioural problems as well as gifted children.
- 5.2. The Ministry of Education shall facilitate access to education for all learners with disabilities by improving the infrastructure to make it user-friendly from basic through tertiary level.
- 5.3. The Ministry of Education shall support integration and inclusion of children with special learning needs in the Education System.
- 5.4. Special facilities for gifted children shall be made available in learning institutions.

Principles

Every child of school going age is entitled to have access to an education programme.

A student requiring a special education programme is entitled to a programme appropriate for the student's needs, age and level of educational achievement.

Schools are responsible for educating all students, including those with special needs.

Parents are an integral part of their child's education and must be involved in education decisions affecting their children.

Students where appropriate, must be involved in decisions affecting their education.

Guidelines and Procedures

1. School authorities, only after assessment procedures have been followed, and determining that a student could benefit best from placement in a special school setting, may enter into agreement with special education school (i.e. Ekwetsembeni School for The Mentally Handicapped, Siteki School for the Deaf, St. Joseph School for the Blind) to provide an education programme. Such agreement must be in writing and copied to the Ministry of Education (attention: office of the Coordinator, Special Education Services).
2. A parent of a student can enroll a student in a special school or school programme if there are sufficient resources and facilities available to accommodate the student.
3. School authorities are responsible for determining that a student is in need of a special education programme. A school through its headmaster and education team, may determine that a student is, by virtue of the student's behavioural, communicational, intellectual learning or physical characteristics, or a combination of those characteristics, in need of a special education programme.
4. Schools will utilize qualified persons (specially trained educators, psychological, medical or health personnel) to identify students for whom a special education programme is necessary.
5. Schools will provide access to special education programme for students determined to be in need of a special education programme.
6. School authorities will consult with parents, and where appropriate, the student, before placing the student in a special education programme.
7. If parents feel that an appropriate programme is not being provided by a school for their child, they may initiate an appeal in writing to the Coordinator of Special Education Services. Such appeals shall be investigated by the Special Education Unit in collaboration with the appropriate REO.
8. A special education programme:

- Is based on an individualized programme plan (IPP); all students with special needs, including students who are gifted and talented, require IPPs
- May be provided in variety of settings, including the regular classroom
- Is based on and modified by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation
- Provides for instruction appropriate to the student's individual learning level

9. Students with special needs may require changes to:

- The regular curriculum
- Staffing
- Instructional and evaluation strategies
- Materials and resources
- Facilities or equipment

10. In addition, some students may require specialized health care services.

J.P.P. Process Indicators:

- I.P.P. development involves those individuals who have knowledge of the student; (parents, regular and special educators, and in some cases the student, as well as administrators and specialists, as appropriate).
- Team meetings are held to review all evaluation data and to develop or revise an I.P.P. for each student.

- Parents are invited and encouraged to attend meetings and to participate as equal members.
- Team meetings may include a special education teacher, regular education teacher(s), parents, administrators, the student when appropriate and any other individuals at the discretion of the parent or school.
- The I.P.P. development process is co-ordinated and conducted in a well-organised, professional manner.
- A copy of the I.P.P. is given to parents and a copy is available to those teachers who are directly involved in the education of the exceptional student.
- Those individuals who have had involvement in its development sign the I.P.P.
- There is a notation of the availability of the I.P.P. in the student record portfolio.

J.P.P. Component Indicators:

- The I.P.P. contains a description of the current level of the student's performance for each area of educational content in which a special education need has been verified.
- The description of current levels of performance is understandable to all members of the I.P.P. team.
- The descriptions are specific. Sufficient detail is available for an assigned teacher to plan instruction without requiring for further testing.
- The I.P.P. contains a statement of annual goals that describes the educational performance that the student is expected to achieve by the end of the school year.

- The annual goals are consistent with the educational needs of the student and the current level of performance statement.
- The amount of student progress anticipated in the annual goals is justified by the time remaining to achieve them.
- The I.P.P. contains a statement of objectives that are measurable intermediate steps between the present level of educational performance and the annual goals.
- The objectives are understandable to all members of the I.P.P. team.
- Each objective consistent with the annual goals to which it is referenced.
- The objectives contain the following information:
 - The specific behaviours (academic, social, etc.) the student is expected to perform.
 - The date by which the student is expected to have achieved the objective.
 - The criteria for judging whether the student has achieved the objective.
- The I.P.P. includes an identification of the specialized resources and personnel necessary to meet the students' educational needs.
- The I.P.P. specifies the amount of time the student will spend in the general education environment.
- The I.P.P. includes a statement of the students' identified areas of need and strengths.
- The I.P.P. contains a schedule for measuring student performance and progress against the short-term objectives (review dates).
- The I.P.P. lists the evaluation strategies to be employed for each short-term objective.

- The I.P.P. includes a statement of any relevant medical information.

J.P.P. Implementation Indicators

- A variety of placement, instructional programme, and related service options are available to implement each student's I.P.P.
- Related services are integrated into all special education service delivery options.
- Student records, including current individual programme plans (I.P.P.) and related evaluation data and progress reports are transmitted in an appropriate and timely manner prior to the students' placement in another classroom, programme, building, or school system.
- Parents, school staff, and as appropriate students, fully understand the programme, goals, and specific objectives in the I.P.P.s
- Specialised materials, equipment and other resources, required to implement each student's I.P.P. are provided.
- Regular education teachers provide appropriate support for students with handicaps and adjust the regular education programme, as needed; adaptations of regular academic and vocational programmes are implemented as specified in I.P.P.s.
- Parents are assisted and encouraged to participate in the implementation of their children's I.P.P.s by supplementing school instruction with supportive home activities.
- School staff monitor I.P.P. implementation on an ongoing basis.
- A variety of instructional methods, materials, activities, adaptive equipment, and evaluation methods are used to assist individual students with disabilities in meeting the goals and objectives specified in the I.P.P.s

- Materials, activities and equipment used to implement the curriculum instruction specified in I.P.P.'s are appropriate to age, skills, and development levels of students.
- Special education teachers use the I.P.P. as a guide for daily lesson plans and instruction for students with handicaps.

J.P.P. General Attitudes:

- All portions of the I.P.P. are complete and readable.
- If this is the first I.P.P. for the student, it provides information that is responsive to the concerns expressed in the referral.
- The I.P.P. is reviewed within one year of the date on which it was developed.

Curriculum

(Students with special education needs often require specialized curriculum. The recently completed pre-vocational curricula for Forms 4 and 5 developed through the Education 1 Project – ADB, provides an excellent source of information. Other curricula will need to be adapted to address the special needs of the student. For students with severe handicapping conditions a focus on appropriate skill development is essential. For students identified as gifted and talented, every opportunity should be found to provide an enriching and stimulating curricular focus.)

Curriculum Indicator;

- Programmes for students with mental handicaps are based on the Swaziland Ministry of Education Programme of Studies and the appropriate curriculum

Organisational Practices

(During school site visits conducted in September 1999, various organizational practices were noted. It is important that organisational practices are consistent and designed to meet optimal learning requirements of students with special needs. The following indicators are presented to discussion by school administrators and their education teams.)

Organisational Practices Indicators

- The school day, classes and other activities start and end on time, and begin and end at the same time for all students.
- The school day for students with handicaps who are in specially designed education programmes is organized into reasonable, flexible blocks of time that allow for effective instruction.
- There are smooth and efficient classroom routines. Student are taught and required to bring the materials they need to class. Teachers have assignments and materials ready for students, and classes start on time and purposefully.
- Instructional approaches, curriculum content, and materials of supplementary instructional services are co-ordinated with classroom programmes.
- Teachers effectively co-ordinate the services of volunteers (and others) in the implementation of various phases of the classroom programme.

Instructional Practices

(Instructional Practices should be based on the “Best-Practices” model. Schools should be encouraged to document the best practices used in their respective programmes and to share those practices with other teachers working with children with special needs throughout Swaziland. The Ministry of Special Education unit is developing a newsletter as one vehicle for the sharing of this type of information. Special Educators in

Swaziland are encouraged to send along their information to the office of the Co-coordinator, Special Education Services.)

Instructional Indicators:

- Teachers use a variety of alternative instructional approaches appropriate to the varied developmental levels, learning styles, and current levels of performance of students.
- Lesson plans are developed prior to instruction, are based on logical sequential elements of instruction, and include resources and teaching activities matched to student learning objectives.

Student Evaluation Practices

(Continuous Assessment procedures are being adopted throughout Swaziland. The following student evaluation indicators are presented to discussion purposes only and are intended to compliment existing assessment and evaluation procedures presently used throughout Swaziland.)

Student Evaluation Indicators:

- Progress is evaluated with respect to the objectives specified in the I.P.P., using measurement techniques that are valid and appropriate for the objectives being measured, including a wide range of techniques such as formal and/or informal pre-and post-evaluations, personal observations, review of representative samples of each student's work, and interviews with students, teachers, parents, and others.
- Annual programme reviews are effectively co-ordinated in accordance with local policies and procedures.
- Results of annual I.P.P. reviews are reported to and discussed with parents, school personnel, and other service providers as necessary.
- Results of student evaluations, I.P.P. reviews, and teacher reports are used to make decisions regarding students' continuing

- eligibility and need for special education, appropriateness of placement and related services, and need for changes in instructional services.
- Grades and promotions are based on students' achievement of goals and objectives (academic, vocational, social, self-help) specified in their individual I.P.P.s.

Instructional Resources

(Students in need of special education services may require a number of specific instructional resources depending on their handicap and learning style. A totally blind student requires Braille or an equivalent source of material) (audiotapes) while a student with a visual impairment may be able to achieve scholastic success with large print material or the use of magnifying device. Computer technology, although initially costly, may present the most economical and efficient instructional resource over a longer period of time for students with learning disabilities and for students identified as academically gifted.)

Instructional Resources Indicators:

- Instructional staff participate in the selection and use of appropriate materials, equipment, supplies, and other resources needed in the effective practice of their profession.
- The allocation of staffing resources is based on staff qualifications, the characteristic of the population being served (age, nature/severity of disability), and on student/staff ratios, which increase the potential for student success..
- Materials, supplies, and equipment used with students with handicaps are:
 - appropriate to age, skills and developmental levels of students
 - available in sufficient quantities and are accessible
 - sufficient to take care of the personal needs of the students
 - maintained in a good state of repair.

Facilities

- Classrooms are an appropriate size for the instruction being provided and the number and characteristics of students in the programme, allowing for flexible grouping, varied activities, equipment, and use of aides/volunteers.
- Classrooms are adequately lighted and ventilated.
- Instructional areas are appropriately furnished and equipped to meet the needs of students being served, and have sufficient storage and display space.

Staff Resources

(Students in need of special education services often require the attention of specialized staff. It is important that the allocation of resources, time and location be considered in relation to the needs of the students. The following indicators are presented as guidelines for school administrators allocating staff resources in specialized schools and in programmes for special needs students in the regular school system.)

Staff Resource Indicators:

- Staff/student ratios are manageable for all academic and non-academic programmes and services.
- Class sizes and caseloads allow staff to meet the individual instructional and other needs of students with disabilities.
- Staff time is scheduled to enhance staff productivity and increase student contact hours.
- The allocation of staffing resources is based on staff qualifications, the characteristics of the population being served (age, nature/severity of disability), and on student/staff ratios, which increase the potential for student success.

Staff Development

(Professional Development of staff is key to the growth of any educational enterprise. Time and costs associated with this development must be taken into consideration at the commencement of the school year. Many education systems around the world have adopted the practice of continuous quality improvement for staff to the degree of mandating that teachers and all educators develop individual professional

improvement plans in consultation with school authorities at the beginning of each year. The headmaster works closely with the teacher in developing, encouraging and monitoring the continuous improvement process. This concept will be discussed further in regional workshops. Indicators presented here are to stimulate discussion at the school level.)

Staff Development Indicators:

- Sufficient time and other resources are provided for in-service training of all personnel responsible for special education programming.
- Staff development needs of school staff, parents and volunteers are assessed regularly, and in-service programmes are planned in response to assessed needs, interests, and strengths of participants.

Quality Indicators In Special Education

Introduction

In order to address the needs of a special education programme, it is necessary to establish a frame of reference with accepted expectations and measurable outcome indicators. As such, the following Special Education Quality Indicators are presented for discussion by the Special Education Panel, The Special Education Advisory Committee, Ministry of Education Officials, School Authorities, Parents and other Education Stakeholders. In September 1999, a draft document entitled: Special Education Policy Statement – Swaziland, was articulated. This document therefore becomes a companion document for further refinement and discussion.

Student Referral

Students in need of special education services may be referred from a number of sources including teachers, health units, parents and education and health specialists. The procedures suggested here are recommended for consideration in all referral circumstances.

Student Referral Indicators

- Referral procedures are specific and are disseminated to all personnel.
- Referral procedures follow a written format that includes reasons for referral and questions to be answered through evaluation.
- Referral procedures assign specific responsibilities for each student's evaluation, case management, and/or follow up.
- The evaluation process includes an explanation to parents of tests and testing procedures in conjunction with request for parental consent obtained prior to the evaluation of each referred student.

- The evaluation process includes the collection of background information from parents, teacher and other personnel and written formal and informal description(s) of student performance (educational, behavioural and social) in school and at home.
- The evaluation process includes a comprehensive assessment of each referred student.
- The evaluation process includes the observation by staff of students with whom they will be working and observations of proposed placements for the student by staff and parents.
- The evaluation procedures include a variety of assessment methods and measures in addition to tests (observation, review of student history, conferences, etc).
- The evaluation procedures provide for assessing the range of behaviours and cognition targeted in the referral or the student's IPP.
- The evaluation results are adequately supported by tests or observations and are summarized in clear, concise language that a student's parents and teachers can read and understand.
- The evaluation results provide adequate information to allow the team to make decisions about placement and programme development.
- The evaluation results are explained to school personnel, parents and implications of such action are explained to parents.

Student Placements

The best student placement is achieved as a result of adequate testing and extensive collaborating with educators, parents, specialists and the student. The emphasis is on the individual learning needs of each student taking into consideration the availability of appropriate educational resources in an optimal learning environment. The following indicators are suggested as benchmarks for school authorities, teachers and parents and are presented here for further discussion.

Student Placement Indicators

Placements and assignment of students to classes and teachers reflects an assessment of each student's needs and each teachers's skills.

Placements are based on educational needs of students with disabilities, rather than on programme availability.

Student placement decisions take into consideration the abilities and needs of the student and the numbers and characteristics of other students in the alternative placements being considered.

Individual Programme Plans

The foundation for programme success is based on the development of accurate IPP material. A template for the development of an IPP is available through the MOE. Instruction on the use of the template, developed and revised in September 1999, will be available through regional workshops that are being planned throughout Swaziland over the next 24 months. Please refer to the articulated Special Education Policy Statement – Swaziland (First Draft – September 1999) as the basis for development).