

Most parents want their children to succeed at school; in fact, most parents would like their children to do better than they themselves did. Whatever their own experience in school, parents are in a unique position to judge how their children are doing and to take action to enhance learning. This guide describes the sources of help available in our school system.

#1 YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER

The teacher is the most important source of information and is directly responsible for your child's education from day to day. By *comparing notes regularly*, parents and teachers can offer each other valuable feedback. This information can lead to minor "course corrections" at home and at school and early identification of more significant problems.

What are some things that might prompt you and the teacher to reconsider your child's needs and abilities?

- * *Your child doesn't want to go to school.*
- * *Your child says, "I'm stupid. I just can't do this."*
- * *Your child frequently gets into trouble.*
- * *Your child is bored*

Whether you think that there is a learning problem, a problem between your child and another child, or a problem between your child and the teacher, **talk to the teacher first.**

You, your child, and the classroom teacher all have direct access to the help of the student services teacher and the principal; they are usually able to provide consultation or direct support.

#2 THE SCHOOL TEAM

If the steps that you and the teacher have taken do not seem to be solving the problem in a reasonable amount of time, you may request that the teacher schedule a meeting with the School Team. (The request should be in writing)

The School Team (see description of membership below) brings you together with the student services teacher, the principal, plus some others to help problem-solve. The School Team may recommend evaluation and testing to get some information about the problem or may develop methods for solving the problem.

At the end of a School Team meeting, **be sure that**

TALK TO THE TEACHER:

Make an appointment so that you both have enough time to talk without distractions.

Be ready to state your concern clearly. Write down your observations before the meeting, this will help you clarify your thinking. Perhaps you should develop a list of concerns over a period of time before the meeting. Be specific.

Have confidence in your observations-you know your child best.

Approach the teacher as your partner in education.

Plan to follow-up. Make another appointment within 3-4 weeks to follow up: What did the teacher do? What happened at home? How did your child respond? What else could be done? What should be done next? When should it happen?

there is a plan for a follow-up meeting. Making a plan of action is not enough: you want to know if progress is being made! Within 14 days of the team meeting, you should receive the recommendations in writing. Be reasonable about how quickly you expect changes to occur.

#3 IDENTIFICATION, PLACEMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE (IPRC)

When your child has characteristics such as learning disabilities, giftedness, and hearing impairment, characteristics which require ongoing attention over a number of years, s/he may benefit from being identified formally as a child with special needs. This identification is accomplished by an IPRC (Identification, Placement, and Review Committee) which consists of principals, psychologists, and other experts who are not usually affiliated with your child's school, but are employees of the Board.

The task of the IPRC is to discuss with you the needs of your child and how and in what setting those needs might be best met. To ensure continuity and accountability, a plan of action must be devised and regularly reviewed for a child with special needs. To initiate the identification process, **make a written request to the principal for your child to be considered by an IPRC.**

WHO IS ON THE SCHOOL TEAM?

Always included are

- **parent(s)**, who may also bring advocates and reports from outside consultants.
- **child's teacher**
- **principal** and/or vice-principal
- **in-school support personnel, student services teacher or special education resource teacher**
- **counsellor** (intermediate and secondary students)

Included *with your consent* are the

- **school psychologist**—who can offer advice on learning and behavioural issues. Having the school psychologist at a team meeting does not mean that anyone thinks your child is crazy! If testing or interviewing your child might be helpful, permission will be sought and the results will be shared with you.
- **social worker**— who helps students enhance their individual and collective well-being, supporting them in resolving problems through the use of their own resources and those of the community. Social work includes assessment, diagnosis, treatment and evaluation of individual, interpersonal, group, family and community problems and concerns.
- **speech and language pathologist**—who can offer advice and help in providing remedial speech and language development services.
- **itinerant teachers for the hearing impaired and vision impaired**—who have special training and experience in teaching children with these impairments and can offer advice on these matters.

If referral or evaluation through any of these experts would be helpful, your permission will be sought; the results will be shared with you.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND ADVOCACY GROUPS

Learning more about your child's particular needs is an excellent step in helping your child.

Many advocacy groups can provide you with information as well as moral support. Chances are that *someone* has had a problem similar to yours before! The following is a partial listing of places where you could get help:

- Public Libraries
- Association for Bright Children (ABC)
- Learning Disabilities Association
- Community Living
- Voice for Hearing Impaired Children
- Views for the Visually Impaired

Library Information Services can give you the contact person for these groups or may be able to suggest a group that may better fit your needs.

For more information about the IPRC and exceptionalities, refer to " Parent Guide to Special Education " and " Parent Guide to Identification Placement and Review " which you can obtain at your school.

This brochure was developed by the Peel Chapter of the Association of Bright Children, based on resources from the London-Middlesex Chapter of ABC. It may be copied in its entirety, or modified for your locale. Please give credit to ABC when doing so.

Making The Most Of School

Sources of Help for You and Your Child



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