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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
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A HANDBOOK TO FACILITATE THE UTILIZATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSESSMENT FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS WITHIN ALBERTA: A RESOURCE
FOR COUNSELLORS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS

BY

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A Final Project submitted to the
Campus Alberta Applied Psychology: Counselling Initiative
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF COUNSELLING

Alberta

December 2005

DEDICATION

With much love and appreciation, I dedicate this to my parents, Adeline and Len, who always encourage me to live life adventurously and not to limit myself. Their unshakable belief in my potential helps me believe it myself. I am...because they are.

**CAMPUS ALBERTA APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY:
COUNSELLING INITIATIVE**

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE PAGE

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certifies that she or he has read and recommends to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a final project entitled **A Handbook to Facilitate the Utilization of Psychological Assessment for Secondary Students within Alberta: A Resource for Counsellors and Psychologists** submitted by **Colleen L. Bratko** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Counselling**.



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COUNSELLING INITIATIVE**

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The undersigned certifies that she or he has read and recommends to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a final project entitled **A Handbook to Facilitate the Utilization of Psychological Assessment for Secondary Students within Alberta: A Resource for Counsellors and Psychologists** submitted by **Colleen L. Bratko** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Counselling**.



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ABSTRACT

This final project for Campus Alberta Masters of Counselling Program is a handbook that will help school counsellors and psychologists mediate and moderate an effective working alliance amongst the members of the Student Support Team (SST) when working with students in a secondary school setting (grades 7-12). Its purpose is to facilitate psycho-educational assessments for secondary school students by assimilating information from a variety of resources. The handbook contains a comprehensive literature review that discusses the factors that influence assessment within Alberta. It includes information pertinent to psycho-educational assessment for grade seven students with a reading disability such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-IV (WISC-IV), the Alberta curriculum for grade seven level English Language Arts class, working alliance skills, professional collaboration and information regarding adolescents with a reading learning disability. The aim of this project is to improve the quality of interaction between the members of the SST during the psychological assessment process and consequently improving the quality of the outcome resulting from the process and should reflect a “one-stop shop” for this specific population.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Why Produce a Handbook?

Authenticity and accountability are the foundations that our current education system is built upon. When working with children (and the people who are involved in their development), the ability to effectively influence positive change is motivation for continual professional growth. This theme of being accountable and authentic within education has been reinforced through reports, commissions, and various forms of research (Alberta's Commission on Learning, 2003; Alberta Learning, 1998, 2000, 2004; Alberta Teacher's Association [ATA], 1997, 2002a). Time again, educational stakeholders are encouraged to become creative and to work for students, keeping their needs in the forefront. In the past decade, this paradigm shift has resulted in Alberta making a commitment to create an education system that recognizes the needs of individual learners, and to provide services to meet those individual needs (Alberta's Commission on Learning).

Early identification of special needs is a priority within Alberta Learning (Alberta's Commission on Learning, 2003; Alberta Learning, 1998, 2000, 2004; ATA, 1997, 2002). There is commitment to identify and address students' learning challenges as early as possible (Alberta Learning, 1994, 1996b, 2004c; Gardner, 1999a), but the system of early identification is far from being perfect (ATA 1997, 2002a, 2002b). For various reasons, learning difficulties may not become apparent until a student has made a transition from elementary school to junior high school. Transitions such as a change in routine, school, home life, friendships and teachers can augment the appearance of learning difficulties and consequently begin the assessment process (Alberta Learning, 1996, 2002a).

In keeping with the philosophies of accountability and authenticity, a concentrated effort in providing consistent and reliable assessment procedures when identifying students with special learning has evolved. School boards are formalizing their use of intelligence tests (Alberta Learning, 2004), establishing a need for teachers, guidance counsellors, psychologists, resource teachers, etc., to work harmoniously to increase their effectiveness in helping students with academic difficulties (Alberta Learning, 1996, 1997; Alberta Teachers Association, 1999, Feldman & Kratochwill, 2003).

The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (4th Edition) [WISC-IV] (Wechsler, 2003a, 2003b) is a commonly used standardized assessment tool in Alberta. Full-scale and subtest scores are interpreted by a Level C professional (chartered psychologist), and based on the results of the assessment, students may be identified as having a learning disability (Alberta Learning, 1994; 2004; Wechsler, 2003b). Discussions regarding the recommendations and accommodations suggest by the psychologist are facilitated by the Student Support Team (SST). The SST is comprised of the stakeholders (parents, counsellor, psychologist, teachers, student, etc.) to ensure that the assessment process is meeting the educational needs of the student (Alberta Learning 1996, 1997, 1999). After the assessment is complete, a collaborative effort on behalf of all the stakeholders needs to occur to help the student in the classroom. Identification of special needs is only worthwhile if it is meaningful to the context in which it affects the students.

A Resource for Counsellors and Psychologists

Because Alberta Learning places much emphasis is upon the results of psycho-educational assessment (subsequent coding, labelling and development of an Individual Program Plan [IPP]) (Alberta Learning, 1996), this handbook is designed to help counsellors

and psychologists improve the quality of information provided to the SST so that a better working alliance can ensue (Hiebert, 2001). This resource addresses the need to assimilate the information set forth by Alberta Learning, the English Language Arts curriculum, and the developmental learning needs of grade seven students (11 – 13 years old) so that classroom appropriate accommodations and recommendations based upon students individual learning needs can be suggested.

This resource may help in programming choices. An example of such a choice would be when a student shows a low score in a WISC subtest, what could that score mean for them when translated in the classroom? What practical things can a teacher do to remediate without the child becoming frustrated and giving up? What are practical strategies for secondary teachers to use to benefit students within their class? The use of intelligence tests are ingrained within our system and is not going to change in the near future, therefore we need to adjust how we use the information and find a way to make it work (Alberta Learning, 2004).

The target group for this resource is grade seven students within the public school system. Separate and private schools can utilize this handbook, noting that the defining context for the resource includes guidelines set out by the Alberta Teachers Association and the Calgary Board of Education.

Grade seven is the beginning of secondary education and there is a fundamental switch in the delivery of education. Classes are typically larger (Alberta Learning, 2004) and students can have a different teacher for each subject. This results in teachers having less time to get to know the learning needs of the students. Therefore, this manual will include practical strategies for an inclusive educational delivery model as supported by Alberta

Education (Alberta Learning, ATA, 2002a, 2002b). This handbook may also serve as a framework for complete more manuals, for each subject, at each level addressing both verbal and non-verbal learning disabilities.

Structure of Project

The structure of this project is multi-dimensional. Literature will be utilized to describe the importance of developing a good working alliance, effective professional collaboration, and the issues regarding the use of psychological assessments. It will also be important to discuss what verbal learning disabilities are and how they affect adolescent learning. Lastly, it is helpful to understand the process of helping children with learning difficulties, as outlined by Alberta Learning (1996) and the structure of the curriculum. Within Canada, education is governed provincially, therefore, stakeholders should understand the major factors that will influence the assessment process within Alberta and realize the process can be different across the country.

The handbook will contain a set of tables and information sheets that will provide counsellors and psychologists with a complete picture of the factors influencing a student who may be having verbal learning difficulties. Users of this manual, such as counsellors and psychologists, will be provided the following resources: (a) an overview of the grade seven curriculum, a breakdown of the grade seven English languages arts curriculum; (b) a table that illustrate the relationship between verbal abilities and WISC subtests; (c) and a table which suggests some educational strategies (accommodations) for students who demonstrate a verbal learning disability in English Language Arts (Alberta, 1997). This table will also identify the support needed for the interventions so that counsellors and psychologists can ensure they are providing a variety of recommendations that can have *real* implications

within the classroom. Ultimately, as members of the SST, the common goal is to improve this mandated process so that it becomes meaningful and worthwhile for the students

Final Word before Getting Started

While the intent of this project is comprehensive, there is a realization that it is not exhaustive. As education evolves and we understand more about learning and how help our students, this resource can grow and evolve. It has the ability to be a working document designed to help professionals work in the best interest of their clients. Ultimately, it would be helpful to explore each grade level with each curriculum. This would be a large volume of work that could benefit many.

CHAPTER II

Procedures

Handbook Structure

The conceptualization of this project surfaced from a discussion regarding psychological testing and how to predict academic outcomes based upon WISC scores (Paul Jerry, personal communication, 2004). As an educator and a counsellor, I observed a need to develop a resource to fill an information gap between counselling/psychology and education/teaching. There are many educational resources, counselling resources and psychological resources; as a result, there is a need to assimilate the information. As a teacher, I was frustrated with the brevity of psychological assessments, as I would often look towards them to tell me what to do. As a counsellor, I was uncertain what my role was between teachers and psychologists. From my discussions with psychologists, I found they often felt discomfort in having to make educational recommendations. There are many excellent resources available to professionals associated with education, but the time required to sift through them is extensive.

The amount of literature required for this project literature review was challenging because there were so many topics within this subject. However, this is what makes this project worthy, because it is assimilating information from distinct professions to help improve the process of helping adolescents at a critical time in their development.

This project has two distinct sections. The first is the formal review of the literature and a discussion of the findings. The literature explored for this project was multi-dimensional. The purpose of the literature review was to provide the reader background

information regarding the topics that influence assessment when administering to grade seven students, and to provide background information as to the necessity of this handbook.

Literature Review: Sources of Information for this Handbook

Literature regarding the Alberta English Language Arts curriculum, Alberta Learning policies, school board policies, working alliance, professional collaboration, school counselling, school inclusion, verbal learning disabilities was explored. Remediation and accommodation strategies which can be connected to the subtests of the WISC-IV were also reviewed (Wechsler, 2003, 2004). As this project covers a wide scope of topics in order to provide an overview for counsellors and psychologists, the decision to make this Alberta based narrowed the range. It is important to note that target group to benefit from this handbook is grade seven junior high students within an English Language Arts classroom in Alberta.

Electronic databases (Academic Search Premiere, ERIC, PsycInfo, Questia Online Library and Psychology and Behavioural Sciences) were investigated using the following search terms: WISC IV; WISC IV + learning disabilities; reading disabi*; reading disabilities + adoles*; reading disabi* + young adult; transitions + adolescent + Alberta Learning; Alberta Learning + professional collaboration; Alberta Learning + learning disabi*; Alberta Learning + psychoeducational assessment; Alberta Learning + assessment; Alberta Education + psychoeducational assessment; Alberta Learning + curriculum; school psychologists + collaboration; psychological assessment + adolesces*; junior high transition; IPP + transition; intervention + adolesces* disabil*; educational strateg* + reading disab*; school counsel*; school counsel* + professional collabor*; school counsel* + duties; working alliance; intelligence test*; intelligence test* + learning disab*; intelligence test* +

pros; intelligence test* + cons; and professional collaboration + learning disab*. Websites for Alberta Learning, Alberta School Divisions and the Alberta Teachers Association were accessed to review educational resources found on these sites. Secondary resources from Athabasca University and University of Calgary were explored for the development of this handbook. To find websites of school divisions and government of Alberta websites, the search engines, Google and Metacrawler were utilized.

Information from Alberta Learning, the Calgary Board of Education and from the Alberta Teachers Association was gathered within the school where I work. The University of Calgary libraries that were explored were the APSY Library, MacKimmie Library, The Calgary Learning Centre and Doucette Library. Within Alberta Learning, the Learning Resource Centre was accessed to obtain journals, books and manuals.

During the eighties and nineties, a lot of educational and psychological literature was generated regarding special needs and assessment - which we are utilizing today. Alberta Learning has developed several resources, that are still considered the standard and will not be changed until the policies or system has evolved to necessitate a revision. Literature produces before 1980 was not used, unless warranted.

The completion of the literature review was challenging because of the scope of background information needed to educate professionals about this topic. Since professionals bring a multitude of various expertises, it was a concern that the literature review would be too basic for some, and too in-depth for others. The literature review is formatted with many headings so that a professional can skim to the areas that are of interest them.

The Handbook

The handbook itself is the second facet to this project. This handbook provides counsellors and psychologists a summary of the assessment process, as mandated by Alberta Learning (1997, 2000, 2002a, 2004a, 2004c, 2004d). This resource also includes suggestions for facilitating a collaborative SST, a reference list, a summary of the Alberta curriculum and English Language Arts (Alberta Learning, 2004b), and a data bank to combine WISC subtests with intervention strategies that are appropriate for grade seven English Language Art classrooms. It should reflect a “one-stop shop” for this specific population. The manual is organised with a busy professional in mind, utilizing tables, point form checklists and colours, as it is an effective way to organize visually the material, increasing user-friendliness.

What This Handbook is Not

This manual does not discuss the specific process of developing Individualized Program Plans (IPP’s), as that is well documented and is beyond the scope of this project. It will suggest resources to aid in the writing of IPP’s and will refer to the necessity of them. The etiological cause of learning disabilities is not discussed because of breadth of the topic and because it does not affect the educational impact in the classroom.

This manual is not intended to replace the original documents produced for this population, nor is the classroom interventions that were combined with the WISC subsets exhaustive. Empty charts for professionals to add their own interventions, which work within their educational environment and with their educators, can be used to add other ideas. Ultimately, with the design of a website or a CD (program), these interventions could be added to expand the database. The main purpose is to begin the process of creating a tool to combine the information and improve the quality of the process.

CHAPTER III

Theoretical Foundations: Literature Review

Examining the Pieces of the Big Picture

The motivation behind a project such as this is to combine information that is relevant to school counsellors and psychologists into one source; interpreting the separate pieces to facilitate a process in an effective, productive manner. To see the big picture, it is beneficial to understand the factors that affect educational assessment within Alberta.. Factors that influence the development of effective working alliances (such as professional collaboration, responsibilities of a school counsellor, knowledge of Alberta Learning policies regarding assessment, intelligence tests, visual learning disabilities, adolescents with learning disabilities and how adolescents can be helped within the secondary classroom), are considered.

School Counselling

Within the SST, a school counsellor plays an influential role. Their effectiveness in this role contributes to the efficacy of establishing a productive working alliance and making the assessment process valuable. Guidance or school counselling is described as, "...a variety of group-oriented activities designed to enhance students' attitudes and values and refer to an individualized, small-group or class process that assists students in overcoming specific personal/social issues and difficulties, and educational or career issues" (Alberta Government, 2003, p. 1). Every school should have a guidance counsellor as outlined by Alberta Learning (Alberta Learning, 1994a), although this is not always the case (Alberta's Commission on Learning, 2003; Alberta Teachers Association, 2002a, 2002b).

School counsellors have numerous responsibilities and are accountable to the educational process within Alberta (Alberta Education, 1990, 1995; Alberta Government, 2003). School counselling is different from the practice of general counselling or psychology because of the environment in which it takes place. School counsellors or guidance counsellors must answer to a variety of governing bodies, encompassing numerous responsibilities. There is a need to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct because of they are in working with children and are working from a position of power (Alberta Learning, 1994, 1997; ATA, 1995; Canadian Psychological Association, 2001).

In Alberta Learning's Policy Manual, Section 1.6.3, it states that school counsellors are responsible for coordinating services within the community on behalf of the school (Alberta Government, 2003). School counsellors also aid in the interpretation of assessments, program planning, facilitating transitions distributing information, acting on behalf of the school, completing referrals for assessment, facilitating the process of assessment and plan effective course selection (Alberta Education, 1990). Within the assessment process, the school counsellor advocates for the student within the educational setting.

Trained school counsellors are certified teachers, and possess training in assessment and program development, human development and current educational issues (Alberta Education, 1990). School counsellors are in a unique position because they are responsible to the student, the school and the parents/guardian of the minor who is receiving services (Alberta Government, 2003). It is a balancing act to ensure that all guidelines by the governing bodies are followed and to meet the needs of the student. If there is a clear understanding of the role counsellors' play within the assessment process, it helps focus and bring the process forward. An overview of what an "ideal" guidance program in a school can

be found in Alberta Learning's document, *From position to program: Building comprehensive school guidance and counselling program* (1994), and *Comprehensive school guidance and counselling programs and services – guidelines for practice*, (1997).

School Counselling and the Psycho-Educational Assessment Process

School counsellors must ensure that the guidelines set out by Alberta Learning's document, *Standards for Special Education*, (2004c) are being met. The psycho-educational process is a continuous push and pull between the needs set out by Alberta Learning, the teachers, the curriculum, policies and procedures, the curriculum and the student. It is a good idea for counsellors to understand the different layers of this process clearly, so that there is comprehension of expectations, requirements and needs. A metaphor for this process may be like climbing a mountain. At the base are the policies and procedures, as set out by Alberta Learning. The referral, assessment, identification, recommendations, remediation and classroom strategies cannot be considered without the base that Alberta Learning provides, including the appropriate curriculum that is designed for the age/grade level of the student.

The Alberta Learning document entitled *Standards for psycho-educational assessment* (1994b) remains the framework for current assessment practice in schools. School counsellors should be acquainted with this short, yet powerful document, that outlines the assessment process, the ethical principals that must be followed, and the expectations set out by Alberta Learning. Another invaluable guide that all school counsellors should comprehend and adhere to is, *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy: Guide to providing counselling services in school jurisdictions* (Alberta Government, 2003). This guide addresses the confidentiality issues while working with minors within educational institutions.

Alberta Learning Policies

Overview of Responsibility and Accountability for stakeholders

For Alberta Learning, accountability is a reoccurring theme that is prominent for special education. Alberta Learning has built into its policies a series of checks to ensure that programming is being provided to students with special needs. Schools need to provide measurements for student and program outcomes, and ensure that parents are involved in the decision making process (Alberta, 2000).

Formal psychological assessment is required for students to be identified with a learning disability. The purpose of the formal assessment is to identify learning difficulty, define appropriate educational goals and to determine programming support. Alberta Learning has ensured that assessments are conducted by trained professionals (psychologists) to ensure consistency and authenticity (Alberta, 2000). Schools are required to involve the different teachers involved with the student, family, community agencies and other professionals (such as counsellors and psychologists) in the IPP process (Alberta, 2000). To coordinate these services, it becomes the responsibility of the guidance counsellor, resource teacher or the administrators of the school.

Shaping the Future for Students with Special Needs reviews special education within Alberta and identifies several areas of concern regarding assessment and identification for students. Common assessment problems include inconsistency in efficient and functional testing, assessment being completed for funding purposes instead of developing adequate educational programs, and the cost of the process. The development of the *Handbook for the Identification and Review of Students with Severe Disabilities* was Alberta Education's response to addressing some of these concerns (Alberta, 2000).

In the report, *Falling Through the Cracks* (2002), a concern regarding the length of time it took to access to psychological testing and to receive the reports were expressed. In the recent document by Alberta Learning, *Standards for Special Education* (2004c), it addresses this concern by requiring assessments to be completed within an eight-week timeframe, except in extenuating circumstances.

Falling Through the Cracks also identified another concern regarding the interdependency of the funding in that funding is reliant on the coding process (Alberta Teachers Association, 2002). Once the identification of a learning difficulty occurs, there may be a lack of understanding of how this is actualized in the classroom, and what is required to help the student succeed (Alberta Teachers Association, 2002, 1997).

Intelligence Testing and the Identification of Learning Disabilities within Alberta *History of Intelligence Tests*

In the early 1900's, Alfred Binet began to use intelligence testing to identify children with learning disabilities. Since then, norm-references tests such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) or the Stanford-Binet have had the most significant impact on educational decisions (Laughon, 1990).

In North America, assessment of learning primarily relies upon the utilization of the WISC to provide IQ scores for many decisions regarding academic placement, funding, and labelling (Gardner, 1999a). While there are less biased and more accurate intelligence definitions and evaluations, the contextual models have not easily been converted into a measure of intelligence. Thus far, there have only been a handful of tests developed that consistently produce measurable qualities of intelligence (Stanford-Binet, WISC (Wechsler, 2003a), and the K-ABC (Kaufman & Kaufman, 1983) to name a few) (Gardner, 1999a;

Laughon, 1990). Many of the difficulties previously identified with assessment have been addressed and reduced through the publishing of new versions of standardized tests in the past several years. For example, Wechsler has released the fourth version of the WISC (2003) with many valid changes. A new version of Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale and the Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (K-ABC) has been released as well (Benson, 2003). The specific changes and the reasoning for the new versions of tests will not be discussed in this forum, as the topic is too large and is beyond the scope of this literature review. The general discussion of positive aspects of intelligence testing will remain the main focus.

The popularity of the WISC in North America has resulted in well-documented patterns and behaviours of learning (Waldron & Saphire, 2001). Some of these patterns have resulted in generalizations such as gifted students with learning disabilities tend to do more poorly on perceptual areas, visual and auditory discrimination, visual and auditory sequencing, visual-spatial skills and short term auditory memory. They were found to have a greater scatter on the verbal scale than the non-LD students, are more reliant on their strengths, have a lower spatial ability than verbal conceptualization and demonstrate more problems in rote auditory memory while relying more on visual skills (Waldron & Saphire,).

Waldron and Saphire's (2001) research also illustrates that gifted students typically will display strengths in verbal conceptualization and reasoning, identifying similarities; but tend to be deficit in identifying digit span. Students that have trouble with reading, tend to display strength with spatial categories and difficulty on sequencing skills. Overall, learning disabilities may to show weakness in proficiency in academic areas of reading, writing,

arithmetic and spelling, which suggests that these are also related to perceptual difficulties (Stevenson, 1980; Waldron & Saphire, 2001).

Frisby and Braden (1992) acknowledge that "...tests do not evaluate individuals. Rather, well-trained psychologists evaluate individuals. Any psychologist worthy of his or her title recognizes and properly documents the influence of "process" variables that may influence test performance" (p. 289). To administer an intelligence test within Alberta, the assessor needs to have a "Level C" classification, which requires a Masters Degree and must be eligible to register as a Chartered Psychologist (Alberta Learning, 2004). Psychologists are expected to gather information regarding the child's home life and previous functioning.

The best way to utilize intelligence testing is to combine the information with other methods of observation (informal and formal) to create a learning profile of the whole child. With proper training of the psychologist and collaboration with the educational team (parents, teachers and the child), intelligence testing has been relied upon because it is the best tool of providing a comprehensive evidence of learning ability of a child (Feldman & Kratochwill, 2003). The Kaufman's', having created alternatives to the WISC, believe that the Wechsler scores "were never intended to be used as a single, summed number. So the criticism of the discrepancy model is correct...but it misses the real issue: whether or not intelligence tests, when properly administered and interpreted, can be useful" (Benson, 2003, p. 3).

While there is much debate surrounding assessment, there remains a need for a diagnostic tool, such as IQ tests and performance tests, to aid in the identification and remediation of students who are experiencing difficulties within their educational programming. The question of what intelligence is and what needs to be assessed in schools

is tangled within a web of political, social and emotional reactions. Whether one believes the three levels of intelligence (biological, psychometric and social) as outlined by Feuerstein (Frisby & Braden, 1992), the nine intelligences proposed by Gardner (Gardner, 1999b), or any other theory; a responsible understanding of the measure of intelligence and how (and more importantly, why) our system is dependant on standardized testing is required. The long-term goal of re-examining the dependency of intelligence testing may lead to systematic reform, or at the very least, a model of applying the information in a meaningful manner (Feldman & Kratochwill, 2003).

Reasoning for understanding assessment

It is imperative for professionals who work with children to understand issues surrounding intelligence (i.e. what intelligence is, and to explore the current positive and negative aspects of intelligence testing with children) before utilizing the information that can be provided with intelligence testing (IQ testing). Professionals can ensure the responsible use of the IQ results by understanding the definition of intelligence; the success and the failure of measuring intelligence; and understanding how intelligence testing can be more meaningful when applied to the identification of a learning disabled adolescent.

Intelligence Testing Within Schools

When a student is not academically performing, teachers and parents, often with great concern and the best of intention, try to find some explanation for the enigmatic academic difficulty. It is mandated by Alberta Learning to investigate the possibility that a student has special needs, whether it is for giftedness, learning disability or a diagnosable disorder.

If a child is presenting a concern regarding their academic, social or emotional progress, they are referred to a psychologist for assessment (Turner, DeMers, Fox & Reed,

2001). Assessment is all the activities that a psychologist does to identify the area of difficulty and is typically used within education to classify, describe, predict, intervene, and to track (Turner et al.). If the psychologist can identify the student as meeting the criteria for a learning disability or with a physical, emotional or psychological diagnosis, then the student can be labelled and coded for special education funding. From there, an Individual Program Plan (IPP), also referred to as an Individual Education Plan (IEP), is created for the student and funding is provided to the school to provide resources to meet the needs of that student (Alberta Learning, 2004).

Alberta Learning, in its recent document, *Assessment and Identification of Students with Special Needs* (2004), updated its definition of intelligence and intelligence tests as the following:

Intelligence refers to general cognitive capability. It involves the ability to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, comprehend complex ideas, learn quickly and learn from experience. Intelligence tests include a sample of questions and activities that make it possible to compare individual responses to those of others of the same age. Intelligence scores may vary over time and across instruments. Intelligence scores are not fixed and do not measure an individual's potential, but are reliable predictors of achievement in school. Intelligence tests assume that students being tested have had similar experiences to students included in the norm group. Students whose language, culture and experiences are different will be at a disadvantage if similar students are not included in the norm group (p. 65).

The purpose of intelligence testing is to determine an “intelligence quotient,” more commonly known as an IQ. This number once referred to a ratio between a mental age and a chronological one but is now an age-stratified, norm-referenced metric using 100 as the midpoint and a standard deviation of 15 (Gardner, 1999a). By itself, the number that the IQ represents is meaningless (for example, it is not like percentile whereby there it suggests comparison to 99 other children), but the perceived power this number wields is incredible. The importance of the number associated with the IQ score has become great because of the decision-making, funding and political consequences that have resulted (Forness, Keogh, MacMillan, Kavale & Gresham, 1998).

Intelligence testing was developed as a method to identify a child’s “learning potential” within an academic setting (Frisby & Braden, 1992, p. 283). As seen by the Alberta Learning definition (2004), intelligence testing predicts the ability that a child can be successful in an academic setting. Identifying “potential” has been reconsidered because it is an impossible task from a scientific and empirical standpoint. Potential is something that is not measurable because it does not exist (Frisby & Braden, 1992).

Intelligence is not a static entity and there has been much debate regarding the changing nature of IQ, as reported by the tests themselves. Since IQ can change with natural development, test taking experience, assessors, education, etc., IQ testing is not indiscriminately administered to all students for educational program streaming. Intelligence tests by public schools in Alberta can only be administered to students who are presenting a problem (learning disability) or for program placement (Alberta Learning, 2004; Gardner, 1999a). Children are typically not tested before grade two, because of the developing nature of a child at this young age renders the IQ measurement as unreliable (Gardner, 1999). After

grade two, there is a correlation that if a child does well on an intelligence test, then typically they will do well in school and the results themselves are more reflective of the child's potential (Specht, 2004).

In Alberta, IQ is used as a determinant for coding, funding and the delivery of special programs. Typically, a child with an IQ lower than 75 ± 5 , is considered to be cognitively disabled and eligible for funding (Alberta Learning, 2004); and an IQ of 130 (± 5) can be considered as a candidate for gifted and talented coding and eligible for funding. (Each school district within Alberta has now been given leeway to establish their own criteria regarding giftedness (Alberta Learning, 2004), but within Calgary Board of Education the criteria still considers a WISC Full-Scale IQ score of 130 to be a requirement). If a child is to be labelled as "learning disabled," they need to have average intelligence and "perform poorly in school for reasons that are not related to sensory impairment, emotional disturbance or lack of stimulating environment (e.g., poverty, instability, violence, gaps in education because of illness or frequent family moves)" (Specht, 2004, p. 5). If this can be shown, they are also eligible for funding from Alberta Learning (Alberta Learning, 2004).

Intelligence Tests and the Identification of Learning Disabilities

With an increase in the identification of learning disabilities, the appropriateness of utilizing IQ testing to identify a delay or disability is questioned because it is suggested that an IQ test is not helpful in actually solving the learning difficulty (Gunderson & Siegel, 2001). Yet, the supporters of intelligence testing state that it can be useful to "differentially diagnose students with severe and chronic academic problems, as there may be some utility in determining whether the reason for an achievement problem is lowered general intellectual

ability (i.e. mental retardation) or the presence of a specific learning problem in the absence of lowered general intellectual ability (i.e., LD)” (Forness, et al., 1998, p. 321).

Learning disabilities are considered to result from a central nervous system dysfunction from genetic, neurobiological or injury (Alberta Learning, 2004c, 2004d, 2004e; Gunderson & Siegel, 2001) and can be with the individual for a lifetime, whereas IQ can change based upon the test administered and other extenuating factors. Learning disabilities are typically identified by the difficulty a student has in acquiring listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or math abilities (Alberta Learning, 2004e; Gunderson & Siegel, 2001). The primary cause of a learning disability should not be based upon hearing, vision, cultural, linguistic or socio-economic factors. Learning disabilities should not be based on lack of motivation or ineffective teaching, although all these factors can contribute to a child’s inability to learn (Alberta Learning, 2004e). Work completed by Bauer (cited by Waldron & Saphire, 2001) suggests students who are learning disabled may be experiencing difficulty with one or more of the four stages of processing: encoding, manipulation, response selection and response execution. Students having difficulties in long and short-term memory will have difficulty with learning and may be considered as learning disabled (Waldron & Saphire, 2001).

One of the difficulties resulting from the WISC arises from students who display a wide range of ability (typically a gifted-LD profile). A student may be gifted in one area and be learning disabled in another that would bring down their full-scale IQ score (similar to the effect of an outlying data point on a mean score). Their results may not be an accurate reflection of their true “potential” (Waldron & Saphire, 2001). In some cases, a wide

discrepancy may render the findings of the test to be invalid because of the inability to determine an accurate Full-Scale IQ.

In schools, learning disabilities have been identified consistently using the “IQ-Achievement Discrepancy Model” (Benson, 2003, p. 3), whereby students whose IQ does not reflect their achievement (i.e. illustrating an achievement score a standard deviation or more below their IQ) are identified as learning disabled, or by being 2 or more years below grade level). This discrepancy model is utilized within Alberta as part of their comprehensive plan to identify students with special needs (Alberta Learning, 2004). The identification of the discrepancy does not tell us what interventions would help children in school. Trained psychologists provide the missing link to the discrepancy model in that they provide their knowledge to fit the puzzle pieces together through formal and informal measures in order to create a snapshot of the child’s abilities (Benson, 2003; Turner et al., 2001).

Accusations of standardized tests being “product-orientated” and “static” refer to the interest in measuring prior knowledge and results rather than current learning ability (Frisby & Braden, 1992, p. 288). Although attempts to acknowledge “global intellectual deficiency” (Alberta Learning, 2004, p. 65), children have been diagnosed as being learning disabled instead of learning delayed from limited learning opportunities (Frisby & Braden, 1992). Many believe that the use of intelligence tests to identify learning disabilities needs to be discontinued, while some believe that there should be revision to the tests to make them more applicable (Benson, 2003 Pihl, Vrana & Nagy 1982).

The dependence on intelligence testing for learning disabilities is something that must be taken in stride. In a study completed by Kavale and Forness (1984), they found that the IQ of students with or without learning disabilities displays no significant differences on the full

scale, verbal and or performance IQ, on any of the IQ subtest profiles, patterns or factor clusters (cited by Forness et al., 1998). Specht (2004) refers to Linda Siegel's research which states that the traditional method of identifying children with a learning disability based on the gap between performance on achievement testing and potential found that "some children who have a learning disability do not show this gap, while others have the gap, but show no academic difficulties. Furthermore, IQ scores do not predict who will benefit from remediation and who will not" (Specht, 2004, p. 5). Waldron and Saphire (1990) illustrated that children with a large discrepancy between the WISC subscales do not necessarily have a learning disability, while children with a small discrepancy may be experiencing great academic difficulty. These studies are suggesting that in identifying learning disabilities, IQ testing is not consistent or reliable to be used in isolation.

Forness et al., (1998) further explored the classroom teachers' accuracy to assess their student's abilities for difficulties. These authors believe, based on their results, teachers do not need formal standardized testing to identify a learning disability, because through their experience and education, a teacher can discriminate students with learning problems with 95% accuracy (Forness, et al., 1998).

IQ test results should not be used independently to identify special education students; nor should poor results be associated with negative connotation (Forness, et al., 1998). The assessing psychologist should examine the whole child (social, emotional and physical) and all information gathered from assessment, observation and team input should be a part of the identification process. IQ scores should never be considered in isolation.

What Professionals Should Understand: The Intelligence Testing Debate

After the assessment is complete, teachers and parents can be frustrated with the lack of practical information given by the psychologist and be disappointed with the lack of progress through the creation of an IPP (Czubaj, 1996; Feldman & Kratochwill, 2003). In some cases, the delivery of education for an identified learning-disabled student has not changed; only the funding attached to the child has. It has been questioned at the school level whether testing should be discontinued, as it creates a two-tiered education system, is inconsistent within and between school boards and provides little helpful information regarding the remediation of the student's academic abilities. A highly emotional and political debate on labelling, identification of learning disabilities and funding ensues, of which intelligence testing is firmly placed in the middle of this controversy (Hess & Shipman, 2003; Piuck, 1975).

Negative Aspects of Intelligence Testing

Intelligence tests are market driven (Czubaj, 1996) and have been designed for a particular market because of the profit potential. The designers of the tests have "...been accused of unfairly stratifying test-takers by race, gender, class and culture; of minimizing the importance of creativity, character and practical know-how; and of propagating the idea that people are born with an unchangeable endowment of intellectual potential that determines their success in life" (Benson, 2003, p. 1). This belief has been attractive to feminists and emancipatory researchers in North America because of the obvious power differential it can create (Frisby & Braden, 1992). The suggestion that we are either "born with it (high IQ) or not" creates a sense of hopelessness in that not doing well on an IQ test will mean that they do not have the ability to be successful. Kaplan states (as quoted in Frisby & Braden's 1992 study),

Psychological tests are among the many practices that counteract the idea that all people are the same. Tests are designed to measure differences between people, and often the differences tests measured are in desirable personal characteristics such as intelligence and aptitude. Test scores that demonstrate differences between people may suggest to some that people are not created with the same basic capabilities. (p. 282)

A high IQ is greatly regarded and to be coded as “gifted and talented” is a socially acceptable label (as opposed to cognitively disabled, mentally retarded, handicapped, etc.). One of the greatest arguments noted in literature against intelligence testing revolves around the controversy of creating a society of elitism by the cliché of keeping the rich richer and the poor poorer (Hess and Shipman, 2003; Piuck, 1975).

The “haves” versus the “have nots.”

There are predictive measures for “culturally disadvantaged” populations concerning learning disabilities and intelligence testing. DeFilippis and Derby (1980) considered the effects of cultural deprivation on predictive measures of IQ testing and found that cultural factors can affect measures of intelligence, resulting in lower test scores and higher identification of learning disabilities. They suspect that neuropsychological factors, which are thought to be related to, or are the cause of, learning disabilities, are not reliable because that would indicate that children within a “culturally disadvantaged” population would have an overabundance of neuropsychological findings. DeFilippis and Derby’s study indicates that some testing may be identifying certain populations with certain disabilities based on culture and socio-economic status.

The influence of poverty and cultural status on poor IQ test results is the main argument against the use of intelligence testing. The makers of intelligence tests have had to ensure that minority groups and low socioeconomic status were part of the norm-referenced group to ensure better validity on these tests. The issue of poverty remains a concern because these children continue to do poorly on intelligence tests (Piuck, 1975). Hess and Shipman (2003) state,

Children from deprived backgrounds score well below middle-class children on standard individual and group measures of intelligence (a gap that increases with age), they come to school without the skills necessary for coping with first grade curricula, their language development, both written and spoken, is relatively poor, auditory and visual discrimination skills are not well developed, in scholastic achievement they are retarded an average of 2 years by grade 6 and almost 3 years by grade 8, they are more likely to drop out of school before completing a secondary education, and even when they have adequate ability are less likely to go to college. (p. 870)

Poverty can be considered to be a culture because it is institutional, generational and a part of daily life (Piuck, 1975). It is a system within a system, and can be further defined (Piuck, 1975). The “culture of poverty” is a way of life that is perpetuated regardless of actual wealth (i.e. is financially stable but “morally and emotionally bereft”). “Poverty” is because of a lack of income and goods, but it can also mean more than that. In Canada, there is no absolute definition for poverty because it is so difficult to define (Fellegi, 1997). There are no formalized guidelines within Canada as to what is “poor,” and government agencies make careful differentiation between “low income” and poverty (Fellegi, 1997).

Piuck (1975) further distinguishes the culture of poverty as “hardcore poverty,” “emotional poverty,” or “psychogenic poverty” because it is generational in nature due to child rearing patterns (p. 491). These types of poverty keep perpetuating themselves over and over, unless the childrearing pattern is broken. Generations of chronically poor have created a class of socially disabled, whereby there is “emotional and intellectual stunting” (p. 491). Children will develop different intelligences (i.e., from Gardner’s multiple intelligence theory) and may result in poorer performance on tests which predict the potential for academic success (Gardner, 1999b). How can children coming from a “culture of poverty” do well on an IQ test that will determine their educational placement?

Piuck (1975) and Hess and Shipman (2003) have described the correlation between high IQ with high verbal ability, which suggests that poor school achievement is not dependant on a lack of intelligence, but may be due to a lack of verbal development. Wechsler himself noted the verbal bias in his tests (Hess & Shipman, 2003). Culture (i.e. in communities and families), create a vocabulary of it own, which increases the need to develop verbal skills in order to overcome low IQ scores (Hess & Shipman, 2003).

Piuck (1975) cited a study by Saul Levine entitled, “The Inner City – Toronto” which examined the group of people that comprised the “poverty group” (p. 486). He found that it was not a minority group, but an uneducated, alienated, socially disrupted and predominately white group that are characterized by divorce, separation, alcoholism and violence. There are a disproportionate number of children in the poverty group that have manifested anti-social behaviours (such as those described by the current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (4th edition, text revision) including Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, etc.). It has been suggested that some students, who come from a culture of poverty, can have their

IQ score decline to an average of 20 points overall (approximately 1.25 standard deviations on the WISC), and as a result, the gap between the children living in poverty and the so-called middle class (Piuck, 1975).

If a child is coming from a background of poverty, then their ability to do well on intelligence tests may be impacted not by their potential, but by their culture Hess and Shipman (2003) present the theory that, "...the behaviour which leads to social, educational, and economic poverty is socialized in early childhood – that is, it is learned..."

(p.870)..Turheimer, Haley, Waldron, D'Onofrio and Gottesman (2003) completed a study on twins that illustrated that 60% of the variance of IQ is established by the environment. When children are poor, their IQ is more affected by their environment than by their genes; while in affluent families, IQ is more dependant on genes than environment. This study recognizes the difficulty of measuring socio-economic status and genetics, but suggests that the "...developmental forces at work in poor environments are qualitatively different from those at work in adequate ones" (p. 628). This study provides evidence to the idea that living in poverty, whether it is cultural or economic can play an important part in determining how well a child will do on an IQ test. Some children will do well on an IQ test because of genetics and natural ability, but their ability to perform to the best of their potential is influenced by their environment.

Positive Aspects of Intelligence Testing

If intelligence testing has been so bad, why is it the most utilized way to identify learning disabilities? In the past twenty years, the refinement of intelligence testing, increased knowledge, and stricter identification procedures (DSM-IV and educational policies) have resulted in the decline in the diagnosis of cognitive disabilities (Forness, et al.,

1998). Accurate labelling and remediation have resulted in programs and funding from provincial and federal governments. The psychological community is well aware of the drawbacks of psychological testing; consequently, they have been striving to improve the validity and functionality of the assessments in the past twenty years (Benson, 2003; Specht, 2004).

In the age of educational reform (which has been fuelled by a loss of funding), there is less time to complete the appropriate assessments. Typically, within three hours (1/2 day), an educational assessment is expected to be conducted and decisions are made regarding coding, funding, placement. Intelligence testing, for all of the negatives, is efficient, concrete and is still the best predictor of academic potential (Profiterea, Saklofske et al. 2005). Laughon (1990) found that research that has been centred on the technical aspects of intelligence and their potential for bias, as well as the reliability of intelligence tests are satisfactory. Assessment designers have ensured that the concurrent and predictive validity of the tests have been proven.

Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children

In 2003, the Psychological Corporation released the 4th edition of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-IV) (Wechsler, 2003a). This release was a comprehensive restructuring of this test which addressed many of the concerns that psychologists had expressed regarding the WISC-III. One of the most progressive changes that impacted Canadians was the release of a Canadian normed WISC-IV version, which base it's norms on Canadian population, therefore decreasing the amount of potential bias from utilizing an US normed assessment (Wechsler & Saklofske, 2004). The changes were a

result of several studies that illustrated that Canadian children scored higher on the WISC-III than American children (Wechsler & Saklofske, 2004).

The WISC IV measures intelligence through a full scale intelligence quotient (IQ) which is made up of four index scores (Verbal Comprehension Index (VCI), Perceptual Reasoning Index (PRI), Working Memory Index (WMI) and the Processing Speed Index (PSI). The index scores represent the “four-factor” structure that has been discussed, researched and debated since the early 1970’s (Profiterea, Saklofske, et al, 2005). This four factor structure was less apparent in the WISC III because of some of the Index scores contained subtests where speed was a factor in their completion. The WISC IV has eliminated speed as a factor on all subtests that do not have a direct contribution to the Processing Speed Index (Profiterea, Saklofske, et al, 2005).

The VCI subtests consist of Similarities, Vocabulary, and Comprehension, with Information and Word Reasoning used as supplemental subtests. The PRI subtests consist of Block Design, Picture Concepts, Matrix Reasoning, with Picture Completion used as a supplemental measure. The WMI subtests consist of Digit Span, Letter-Number Sequencing, with Arithmetic as a supplement. This change resolves the former controversy of using Arithmetic in the Freedom from Distraction index, the forerunner of the Working memory Index. Formerly, one was never clear if the subtest was tapping math or attention. The PSI subtests include Coding, Symbol Search with Cancellation used as a supplement (Wechsler & Saklofske, 2004).

Adolescent Learning Disabilities

In junior high, (normally in Alberta, grades 7, 8, 9 with children typically ranging from age 12 to age 15) learning becomes content based, with the assumption that the basic

concepts (e.g., reading, math) have been achieved in the primary grades. Learning in the middle years, moves away from basic rote information and begins to become more complex, requiring a higher order of thinking process. Curriculum is designed based on research and current knowledge, and incorporates the movement of a child's ability to learn developmentally. Bloom's Taxonomy of learning is a tool that educators within Alberta are familiar with and utilize to move students from basic knowledge acquisition to synthesis and evaluation (Alberta Learning, 2003). Junior High becomes content based as opposed to skills based learning (which reading and writing is an excellent example of). By the time a student reaches junior high, a teacher believes that a student knows how to read and write, and expects to help a student refine their abilities. There is no formal structure within the 50 – 80 minute school period for remediation of skills that may be missing.

Adolescent developmental theory is one way to explain a learning difficulty to a parent who does not understand why their child does not comprehend a simple concept. As teenagers enter adolescence, they begin to develop the ability for formal operational thought of building on former relationships and being able to shift cognition from concrete to abstract modes (Broderick & Blewitt, 2003). Adolescence is also a time when the ability for formulate ideals becomes developmentally appropriate and possible (Broderick & Blewitt, 2003). Higher cognitive skills such as verbal reasoning, comprehension of cause and effect, analogies, and summarization also have an impact on reading so that adolescents who lack metacognitive or metalinguistic skills also experience difficulty (Coleman, Levine & Sandler, 1991).

Reading and Writing Learning Difficulties

When a student experiences difficulties in Language Arts, they typically have difficulty with reading. A reading disability is often co-morbid with a writing disability because the neurological processes for these skills are shared (Alberta, 1997; Wechsler & Saklofske, 2004). Wechsler and Saklofske found that students that have a reading disability will often have a lower full-scale IQ because there is a relationship between reading skills and short-term working memory. Also, the supplemental subtests within Verbal Comprehension Index and the Working Memory Index illustrate reading disabilities will be indicated in letter-number sequencing, word reasoning, information and digit span (See Appendix C for details regarding each of these subtests). These subtests illustrate the function of working memory with relation to reading (Wechsler, 2003; Wechsler & Saklofske, 2004).

Reading involves decoding (interpretation of symbols) and comprehension (understanding and synthesizing what is read) (Coleman, Levine & Sandler, 1991). Reading is a developmental process and occurs in stages. Typically, by adolescence, a student has mastered decoding skills, but may have more difficulty with comprehension. Comprehension difficulties can result from weakness in oral expression, written language, and short term memory (Coleman, Levine & Sandler, 1991; Wechsler, 2003).

Writing is also a developmental process, whereby fluency and maturity are displayed both in content and ability. Writing disabilities are often comorbid with reading because of the similar processes (Coleman, Levine & Sandler, 1991; Wechsler, 2003). Memory difficulties impact writing by requiring “rapid, simultaneous and synchronized recall of letter formation, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization, combined with the recall of concepts and the logical flow of ideas (Coleman, Levine & Sandler, 1991). Higher thinking

skills that are required at a junior high level include ideation, abstract reasoning, elaboration, and synthesizing instruction to illustrate comprehension of material (Coleman, Levine & Sandler, 1991).

Teaching Adolescents Learning Disabilities

The Inclusive Junior High School

Adolescent students who experience learning disabilities have three choices of education – remedial, vocational and compensatory (Woodward & Peters, 1983).

Compensatory education is the most common avenue available to Albertans for cost and philosophical reasons. Compensatory education is based on the inclusive model in that it is based on the philosophy that classrooms continue with regular education for all students, circumventing a child's learning difficulty through modifications and adaptations (Woodward & Peters, 1983).

Thousand, Rosenberg, Bishop and Villa (1997) describe the typical junior high school as “teachers working alone in their content areas; a lockstep, grade-by-grade curriculum; an emphasis on individualistic and competitive student output and grading; classes scheduled in 50-minute time blocks; students tracked by academic ability; learning occurring only within the classroom walls for most students; and separation of special education students and teachers in their own tracks or classes” (p. 271).

Junior high schools are very challenging because of the clientele they serve and the unique difficulties they face. Students at this level must confront individual challenges and school-based challenges that elementary and secondary students do not encounter. The aim of junior high educators is to continue to support the educational needs of the student, within the parameters of a very different system.

Individual student challenges such as social structure, peer influence, hormones, maturity, self-esteem, self-awareness and physical development can often have an adverse affect for the students. For some students, these challenges are more influential than the educational process. In elementary school, students deal with these challenges on a smaller scale. At a secondary level, some of the focus returns to academics because achievement becomes more imperative to the student's success for post-secondary schooling or employment.

School-based challenges include a change in how the school day is organized (moving from class to class), and a change in the relationship with between students and teachers' become less important, as there is less time to bond. Special education becomes more difficult to deliver because of a greater diversity of needs that result from a larger population and from the complex demands of abstract-thinking adolescents. The student-teacher ratio is usually larger than elementary schools, and teachers have less time to deal with more students. As noted by Thousand, Rosenberg, & Villa (1997), in the "typical" junior high model, the schools are structurally different because school activities are not built into the daily schedule. Extra-curricular activities necessitate more staff support. Teachers are asked to be involved in school activities, and the students begin to have more choices and responsibility in their own educational success (Rimmer & Arico, 1997)

Literature regarding inclusion is widely available, but found to be very general and is geared towards elementary classes or towards the inclusion of severely handicapped students (Deno, Foegen, Robinson & Espin, 1996). The next section will relate this material to junior high students.

Challenges of Inclusion in Junior High Education

Very little literature regarding special needs within junior high is available. It is assumed that this discrepancy of information could be because of the assumption that inclusion should begin in the early grades, or that data is harder to collect as there is less time spent with the students. There has been some recent research on the success (and failure) of inclusion in junior high schools (see Din, 1996; Vaughn, 1998; Deno, et al. 1996), but there remains scarcity of material that is geared towards inclusion strategies and statistics for adolescents. Nonetheless, the statistics and research effectively show that there are many challenges that face junior high inclusive initiatives.

Junior high education seems to encounter more challenges implementing inclusion than elementary schools. Villa, Thousand, Meyers and Nevin (1996) stated that, “In a recent national study of teacher and administrator perceptions, results indicated that although educators with experience in inclusive schooling favoured education of children with disabilities in general education, middle and high school educators were less positive overall in their responses than their elementary-level counterparts (Thousand, Rosenberg, Bishop & Villa, 1997, p. 270).

It is understandable that junior high would have less of a positive response from teachers than an elementary school, because junior high teachers have less flexibility and less time with the students than elementary schools. Also, in the specialized setting of junior high schools, the educators lack knowledge of inclusion, there is less money in the system, and less money to implement new initiatives. Teachers have training in content and teaching of academically successful students, but more training is needed to teach educators on appropriate methods to adapt the curriculum to everyone. The curriculum difficulties

regarding achievement and academics have not been resolved, and therefore the results of inclusion have been mixed (Din, 1996).

Student reaction to inclusion

Student's reaction to inclusive settings has also been varied. Vaughn & Klingner (1998) discussed student perceptions of their placement in resource rooms. In a cross-study analysis of 442 students with learning disabilities which explored students' perception of special education they found that students in a secondary setting preferred to be pulled out of the regular class, rather than having assistance in the classroom because they perceived the resource room as a better place to work. The students who did prefer the inclusive model did so because they wanted to "avoid embarrassment," and felt that it was better for making friends (p. 85). It is an interesting thought that Vaughn & Klingner propose: We make changes in the education system, but often forget to ask students what they need. In a school where there is ownership and a community atmosphere, perhaps more input can be given to teachers, parents and administrators about what works for the students.

By asking students what they perceive to be working and not working, we truly begin to teach the *individual*. Martson (1996) feels that by teaching the *individual*, we are only then teaching in the "Least Restrictive Environment." "Each student should get what he or she needs to succeed in school, whether that is pull-out, inclusion, or a mixture of services" (Martson, p. 129). Martson notes that the data shows that the combined services model works better than inclusion only or pull-out only. Some students may need more specialized instruction in a specialized setting to meet the student's needs (Summey & Straham, 1997, Wong, 1996). By providing a range of services, we can better address the needs of all students.

The use of labels, cooperative learning, excellence vs. equity, emphasis on heterogeneity, general tension, funding, teacher education, classroom accommodations, low expectations, limited resources, curriculum challenges are issues that need to be addressed in junior high for all students (Tomlinson, 1995; Yewchuk, 1996). Inclusion, if implemented carefully and purposefully, can address the needs of most students because the paradigm shift is from ‘teaching the class’, to ‘teaching the student’.

Unfortunately, the data, although limited, is showing that inclusion in junior high is having only moderate success (Summey & Strahan, 1997). Committed support from administration, staff, students, parents are needed, but there needs to be more support from specialists for the students and classroom teacher, because of the lack of training and because the classroom planning and organization became much more labour intensive (Summey & Strahan, 1997). Smaller class sizes, resources and support staff became critical to the success of an inclusive program.

Students with learning disabilities experienced some success in inclusionary models. Students who were having motivational problems or behavioural difficulties showed very little improvement in an inclusive environment. Students with behavior disabilities continued to miss assignments, have more office referrals than their peers, had consistent incomplete homework, earned failing grades, had more bloc team concerns raised, and were unsuccessful co-teaching opportunities (Regnier, 1998, Din, 1996). Din, who followed thirteen students with severe behaviour disorders in a regular classroom with inclusive adaptations, found that “...this type of curriculum and instructional adaptations could not meet the intense needs of students with severe behavioural and learning problems...” (1996, p. 14). In the field test completed by Din, it was confirmed that inclusion “has a severe impact upon learning of

students without disabilities: The instructional plans could not be accomplished” (Din, 1996, p. 15; Elmore & Wisenbaker, 1996).

The challenges that face an inclusion program in a junior high school are unlimited. The challenges discussed in this paper are by no means a complete list of the difficulties that could arise. It is this author’s opinion that these challenges are some of the most common and most influential to educators who are trying to develop an inclusive program. By reviewing the challenges of junior high and inclusion, we can develop new strategies in the areas experiencing difficulty.

Structure of Secondary Programs

Secondary schooling within Alberta is an umbrella term that refers to grades seven to twelve. Junior high, which is similar to the structure of middle schools, are typically grades 7-9 while high school refers to grades 10-12.

At the junior high level, it is important not to confuse a student’s learning difficulty with their cognitive potential (Alberta Learning, 2002). Effective transition planning, meaningful parental involvement, self-advocacy, metacognitive skills, continued literacy development, appropriate instructional practices, effective, consistent accommodations, assessment and instruction are important for successful schooling (Alberta Learning, 2002).

Strategies for Learning in an Inclusive Secondary Junior High Setting

Many of the learning strategies that are available in literature regarding learning disabilities are not appropriate for a junior high level, because of the way a junior high is structured. When researching inclusion, several “levels of strategy” begin to emerge. System strategies (budgets, philosophy), school organizational strategies, school-wide inclusion

strategies, teaching strategies and classroom strategies are different ways to promote inclusion within a secondary school.

System Strategies

The system refers to all the stakeholders involved in providing the best education for the student. Thus, inclusion is something that everyone, including the school system, must buy into and develop in order for it to be truly successful. A serious commitment to schools regarding funding, resources and educational practices (such as achievement testing) must be made. Inclusion cannot truly be successful in a classroom or school that does not have support of its school board and the policy makers.

Funding has been a hot topic in education. “Coding for dollars” (i.e., seeking educational codes because of the money attached) is an issue that has become a ‘catch-22’ for the budget makers. Since funding is directly tied to the number of coded students in Alberta schools, there may be a significant conflict of interest. Students being identified and labelled equates to more money for the school and for resources, therefore it is in the best interest of the school to have students tested. On the other hand, schools are limited by budget constraints as to how many assessments can be allocated in a school year as testing is expensive.

School Organizational Strategies

A school that is choosing to be proactive in the implementation of inclusion will need to address different aspects of inclusion. Rimmer and Arico, (1977) state that there are five components to a successful inclusionary, multi-cultural school environment. The school must have the support of the administration; teachers, parents and students; they must build a policy of inclusion in the school philosophy; ownership must be given to the active

participants (teachers and students); expectations must be high for all students; and the curriculum must change to accommodate the inclusion model. (Rimmer & Arico, 1997)

Administrative support is paramount to the success of inclusion in a school (Rimmer & Arico, 1997) Administration should strongly encourage the educational movement towards inclusive education, and needs to back efforts to the students, staff, parents and community. Strong leadership sets the tone for change, and can be instrumental in the success of an initiative.

Administration should assume a leadership position in creating an inclusive program. The administration needs to respond to teacher concerns, they need to create a consensus, give appropriate information, help educate teachers, support teachers emotionally, allow teachers' time to grow, take an interest in the work the teachers do, develop guide lines to newly emerging job responsibilities. Instrumental supports such as materials, space, resources, time, substitutes, communication *and training* are paramount (Thousand, Rosenberg, Bishop & Villa, 1997). Deno, Foegen, Robinson & Espin, (1996) suggest that at least three to five years is needed to adopt and implement inclusion with heavy support from specialists.

Teachers, administrators, parents, students, support staff should have the opportunity to increase their education and awareness with inclusive practices (Arceneaux, 1993). In-services and training is essential to all shareholders of education. Training staff regarding curricular adaptations, collaborative teaching and planning skills, disabilities, inclusion philosophy, assessment and the impact of inclusion is also a requirement of administration. Expecting teaching staff to conform and commit to an idea that they will be ultimately responsible for, takes significant education (Thousand, Rosenberg, Bishop & Villa, 1997).

School-wide Inclusion Strategies

Schools, as a large and powerful unit, can work to promote integration and collaboration of learning disabled students. A strategy that a school could adopt to aid this process could be the use of school-wide themes. Themes are an excellent way to promote ownership and community spirit. Themes allow all students, all classes and subjects to become involved. Student Council can organize events for extra curricular activities; teachers can develop assignments that explore the themes in detail, while gaining skill acquisition. Motivational themes such as Leadership Month, Wellness Month and Heart Month can create a vast opportunity for development and growth (Rimmer & Arico, 1997).

Within the themes, the school can encourage community involvement (such as Adopt-a-Grandparent or Volunteering) where students go outside the school, or Career Planning, Conflict Resolution and Cooperative Strategies, whereby the community comes into the school. (Rimmer & Arico, 1997) This creates an integrated, inclusive environment where all members of a community can be involved. .

Schools have the ability to be very progressive and instrumental in the inclusion process. A school can be influential with its organization, and with the strategies that it chooses to implement in order to accommodate the process. Inclusion could not be successful without the support and leadership of the school. Although the school may be the most powerful unit of change, what occurs in the classroom is prevalent to the individualistic nature of inclusion. What occurs in a classroom determines the individual learning that the student will attain.

Inclusive Classroom Strategies

There are many different inclusive approaches within a classroom that a teacher can adopt that will help all the students collectively. Educators should encourage students to be the best they can, utilizing their strengths regardless if a student has been coded for a learning disability or not (Colman, Levine & Sandler, 1991). The subsequent handbook illustrates some of the intervention strategies that can be utilized for students, especially students who are experiencing a learning disability because they may need assistance and guidance in these areas (Colman, Levine & Sandler, 1991).

Some examples of other interventions within the classroom which help students are hands-on learning activities (such as manipulatives and role-plays) that promote active learning (Bishop & Villa, 1997; Elmore & Wisenbaker, 1996; Thousand, Rosenberg); Cooperative Learning; Class-wide Peer Tutoring (King-Sears & Cummings, 1996); Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory (1983) (Gardner, 1999b; Thousand, Rosenberg, Bishop & Villa, 1997; Summey & Strahan, 1997); and the Mindful Learning Approach (Summey & Strahan, 1997), which is based upon Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory (Gardner, 1999b)

These theories of education, combined with learning strategies, a typology of learner types and the learning preferences a student displays, are much more powerful and effective in the classroom, rather than the traditional lecture style of teaching, because they address the needs of the student as a unique learner.

In many inclusive classrooms, a majority of the strategies are, "largely *accommodations*, and this is particularly true with the growing emphasis on the implementation of inclusion in secondary classes" (Ellis, 1997). The most common adaptations are to read tests to students; allow extra time with tests and assignments; dictate

answers; base grade on effort rather than demonstrated learning. In a school where inclusion is just beginning, and there is not a lot of fundamental change with the structure, these are often the only strategies the classroom teacher can implement because of the challenges of managing a diverse classroom. These are necessary for any student who experiences difficulties with learning, not just students who have a psycho-educational assessment that codes a student.

When making these accommodations, and implementing different strategies, teachers are encouraged not to “water down” the curriculum in order to simply the process or content for students with disabilities because this gives students permission to “circumvent” their weaknesses (Ellis, 1997, p. 326). Having lower expectations for identified students with a learning disability promotes inequality, resentment, and greater experiences with educational failure (Ellis, 1997). “Watering up” the curriculum can occur by placing more emphasis on constructing knowledge; having more depth; less superficial coverage; placing emphasis on real world understanding; having students practice higher order thinking, information and learning strategies (Ellis, 1997).

Building in instructional time to teach learning strategies such as time management, organizational skills and study skills benefit all students, and parents perceive it as useful (Gibb, et al., 1997). It is a worthwhile effort that could have long-term effects on a child’s learning. Students’ need to be taught how to learn before they can begin the process of learning effectively

Assessment is an important tool for any classroom. Assessment will help determine what the students’ know, what they do not, how they will best learn and how to best use their information. Work samples and performances based assessments are better than tests that are

knowledge based. Grading rubrics can be made and applied to specific student goals, while IPP accomplishments can be assessed, rather than assessing grade level equivalencies. The different grading techniques that can be used in the classroom can include pass/fail, contracts, checklists, and portfolios (Thousand, Rosenberg, Bishop & Villa, 1997). Self-assessment, self-monitoring, self-reinforcement are the ultimate goals for students with learning or behavioural disabilities. These assessment techniques have been proven successful in improving the performance of learning disabled students (King-Sears & Cummings, (1996).

Teacher education is one of the most important agents of change. Quality professional development for teachers is needed to educate them on how to differentiate learning for their students. Members of SST need to understand how difficult it is to teach to such a diversity of learning needs and styles. Instruction regarding classroom management, metacognitive processes, cognitive processes are the three most influential aspects on students' learning (Wang, 1996). Using different strategies and guidelines (such as Peer Coaching) (Christen & Hasbrouck, 1995; King-Sears & Cummings, 1996) are ways that an educator can monitor their effectiveness within an inclusive classroom.

King-Sears & Cummings (1996) describe the basic elements of effective teaching as beginning a class with 5-8 minutes of review; providing a reminder of rules and procedures; clearly defining the goals and objectives of the lesson; allowing sufficient time to teach; relating new learning to previous learning; relating tests and assessments to the curriculum; allowing sufficient time to complete tasks; expecting reasonable outcomes for all students; giving tasks that result in a high measure of success to improve self-esteem and to promote motivation; closely monitoring and correcting work during independent time. Effective teachers help students move towards self-evaluation, provide guided and independent

practice with low and high order thinking questions, always closes a lesson, and checks to see it if the student achieved the expected goals.

Working Alliance

What is the working alliance?

The working alliance is a set of generic skills that can be utilized by professionals in many different fields and with many different theoretical perspectives (Meara & Patton, 1994). The most important aspect of these skills is to become competent with them, so that the use is intentional and the professional can self-monitor their skills (Hiebert, 2000). A working alliance can occur between a teacher and a student, like it does in a counsellor – client relationship (Meara & Patton, 1994).

The working alliance develops when there is an agreement between the counsellor and the client regarding the goal, the tasks and responsibilities of each. The development of mutual trust and respect that is developed is a precursor for success and is necessary for change (Bachelor, 1995; Hiebert, 2000; Gelso & Carter, 1994, Horvath & Symonds, 1991).

Under the current working alliance umbrella, the counsellor becomes an educator who teaches specifically to one student and the needs that they demonstrate (Hiebert, 2000). Because working alliance is client centered, it is the client's responsibility in determining the success of his or her own healing process. Some clients will have difficulty establishing relationships because of their ability and their motivation (Meara & Patton, 1994). Certain conditions must be evident before a working alliance can be established: a) aware of need for assistance, b) dissatisfaction, c) willingness to receive assistance, d) ability to form relationship with counsellor, e) ability to separate observation from experience and, f) willingness for self-exploration (Meara & Patton, 1994).

What does the Working Alliance Mean to School Counselling?

The concept of developing a working alliance works well in schools because of the desire to improve self-advocacy and personal responsibility. This concept fits well with professional collaboration and is evident in documentation regarding Individual Program Plan's (IPP's) or Individual Education Plan's (IEP's) within Alberta (Alberta Learning, 1996a, 1996b, 2004). For example, when developing a working alliance with a collaborative team, it is important to remember that each person in that team will bring in their own history, feelings, attitudes and behaviours based on their own experience with education. As counsellors and psychologists, we go into a Student Support Team Meeting (sometimes referred to as an "SRG" or Student Resource Group Meeting or perhaps with another acronym); we must also recognize what previous experience we have and how that affects the working alliance. Developing an effective working alliance for an SST will result in the ability of the school counsellor and psychologist to bring different people with different experiences and beliefs, working towards the best interests of a child.

Brief History of the Working Alliance

To understand the concept of developing of an effective working alliance, it is beneficial to understand how this concept has involved, so that we can integrate the concepts of education and psychology, and buy into the importance of doing this well. Developing an effective working alliance takes a conscious effort and can be time consuming. The responsibility of ensuring a working alliance is occurring is that of the professionals within the SST (Alberta Government, 2003; Alberta Learning, 1996a; Calgary Board of Education, 2003).

Early in the twentieth century, Freud recognized that within analytical theory, the

relationship between the counsellor and the client affected the success of the therapy (Horvath, 2000); the greater the relationship, the greater the success of the treatment. Because the task of psychoanalysis is to examine all forms of transference (Horvath, 2000), analytic counsellors, such as Freud, Greenson, Sterba, Zetzel, and Bordin have noted the importance of the working alliance in that it gives, “insight into and resolution of defences and transference” (as cited in Bachelor, 1995, p. 323). Gelso and Carter (1994), state that a component of the working alliance is client transference and therapist countertransference, in that each person brings their own histories, feelings, attitudes and behaviours into the relationship, which ultimately affect the outcome of the therapy.

These early analysts believed that the relationship between the therapist and the counsellor was not “real” because the “therapeutic alliance was based on projection, thus in the course of successful analysis, it was fated ultimately to dissolve” (Horvath, 2000, p. 28). While transference and countertransference does compel projections onto the client and the therapist, Gelso and Carter (1994), believe that the third component of a working alliance is the real relationship, which is composed of genuineness and realistic perceptions. “...All therapeutic encounters contain a real relationship component and this component affects process and outcome in all therapies in important ways” (Gelso & Carter, 1994, p. 297).

In 1951, Carl Rogers was the first therapist to suggest that the relationship that a counsellor creates with their client was more important than the therapeutic techniques. Since then, there have been many authors who have reinforced this notion (Gelso & Carter, 1994; Horvath, 2000; Horvath & Symonds, 1991; Meara & Patton, 1994; Rogers, 1957). The research that resulted from Hans Eysenck’s declaration that dynamic therapy may not be as effective as they thought it was, emphasized that different theories experienced much

success, but there was no theory that was better than another (Horvath, 2000).

Rogers stated that the counsellor is responsible for creating the environment for positive interaction (Horvath, 2000). Rogers places the responsibility onto the counsellor to relay through effective communication unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding. These factors must be in place for change to occur (Rogers, 1957). Rogers was instrumental in researching the relationships between the client and the counsellor and found that the relationship is crucial to the interaction, but the client's perception of these qualities was very important (Horvath, 2000).

The "working alliance" model, as we understand it, was developed by Greenson in 1967 (Horvath & Symonds, 1991). Greenson identified three interactive aspects in the counselling relationship; the real relationship, transference relationship and the working alliance. He identified the motivation to work purposefully (or what we would refer to as setting goals) as a pivotal part of the working alliance (Meara & Patton, 1994). This relates an expectation that the client will accept responsibility for applying what they have assimilated by changing their life or problem.

The current understanding of what the working alliance is strongly influenced by the work of Bordin (Horvath, 2000). In 1975, Bordin presented his work of "a pan-theoretical reformulation of the concept of the working alliance" (Horvath, 2000). He suggested that the working alliance is a generic set of skills that requires collaboration and agreement on the bonds, tasks, and goals (Horvath, 2000).

Meara and Patton (1994) noted Robbins work regarding the qualities that a counsellor needs to establish a working alliance with their client. The counsellor must be empathetic, consistent, organized and methodological. They must keep the client informed of what they

are doing in a language that they understand. The counsellor must be genuine, warm, natural, humorous and able to make the client feel supported.

Professional Collaboration

Key components to successful professional collaboration and coordination is effective leadership, inter-organizational support, commitment of group members, agreement on the need for action, involvement of stakeholders, clear goals, clear roles and shared responsibilities, open communication, democratic decision making process, all parties must gain, and positive, concrete results (Alberta Learning, 1993, 1996, 2002). The similarities of developing an effective working alliance and having a successful professional collaboration are evident.

Building a strong working alliance is imperative to creating a successful professional collaboration. Having a group who agree on the problem and who are working collaboratively towards a solution is cost effective, supportive and a powerful agent of change. Working within the parameters of the education system can sometimes be difficult at the best of times because of various hindrances (such as budgeting, changing administration, political change, etc.), but if accountability and responsibility are regulated through creating an effective working alliance by professionally collaborating, success can be experienced.

Summary and Conclusions

The business of delivering quality education becomes about establishing thoughtful processes that meets the needs of the clients. Being accountable and authentic to your professional organization, the government, the parents, and the students is necessary for a service to be of high quality (Alberta's Commission on Learning, 2003; Alberta Learning, 1998, 2000, 2004; Alberta Teacher's Association [ATA], 1997, 2002). The educational assessment of students is a volatile issue because of the demands that it places on all of the stakeholders (ATA 1997, 2002a, 2002b). Understanding the process, needs and outcomes is a step in being accountable and delivering a quality service that meets the philosophies of our helping professions (Alberta's Commission on Learning, 2003; Alberta Learning, 1998, 2000, 2004; ATA, 1997, 2002).

Factors regarding the development of effective working alliances such as professional collaboration, and responsibilities of a school counsellor, knowledge of Alberta Learning policies regarding assessment, intelligence tests, visual learning disabilities, adolescents with learning disabilities and how adolescents can be helped within the secondary classroom were considered to illustrate the inter-relatedness of the topics discussed in this literature review. The literature review illustrates how complex the issues facing education are, and how much time and effort people have put in trying to improve the quality and the accountability of the different processes put in place.

Procedures for assessment have (Alberta Learning, 1994, 1996b, 2004c) made tremendous gains (Alberta Learning, 1998, 2000, 2004; Wechsler, 2003a, 2003b), and students are getting the help that they require. How we view students who are experiencing academic difficulties has also changed and is evident in the structure of accountability that

has been put in place by Alberta Learning (Alberta Learning, 1996, 1997; Alberta Teachers Association, 1999). With continued effort in being accountable, school psychologists and counsellors have an opportunity to work effectively together to take a small piece of a student's educational journey, and make it a positive, life-changing experience.

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CHAPTER V

A Handbook to Facilitate the Utilization of Psychological Assessment for Secondary Students within Alberta

Chapter 5

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Introduction

When there is a team of people gathered together for one common goal, it can be the most powerful tool for lasting change. Helping future citizens become educated and be the best that they can be is the motivation of which many who work with school aged students aspire to. Education professionals (albeit school psychologists, counsellors, teachers, etc.) want to work with students of all ages to help them achieve their goals. It can be both a rewarding and frustrating experience; but one that many will gladly accept when considering the possibilities.

Within Alberta, many resources have been put into trying to make schools and teachers accountable to the different needs of their students (Alberta Learning, 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 2004). While conceptually, the systems of accountability make sense and are worthwhile; the practical constraints limit the amount of communication and time education professionals can spend regarding individual needs. Recognizing that not all children learn the same is difficult within a system whose structure of delivery is confined by set curriculum and costs.

In order to improve the quality of service and make the assessment process more meaningful, educational professionals involved with the assessment process need more integrated information that will benefit all of the stakeholders involved in teaching children. Psychologists have good information regarding assessment, but may not have the information on curriculum or classroom accommodations. Teachers may not have a resource teacher or counsellor available and may need to understand how to facilitate the assessment process on behalf of the school and the student. Counsellors may need more information from psychologists and teachers to facilitate the process, as this is directly associated with their

position (Alberta Government, 2003; Alberta Education, 1990, 1995; Alberta Learning, 1994, 1997; Alberta Teachers Association [ATA] 1995). The idea for this handbook is to provide as many tools to help facilitate the educational assessment process, so that when the Student Support Team (SST) gathers to discuss a student's learning needs, the process can become more meaningful and student focused, rather than relaying information about the system or the process.

The information provided in this book is based upon the experience of being involved in the process and recognizing the overlapping needs of psychologists, counsellors and teachers. Assessment, when utilized for a purpose, can be a worthwhile, exciting tool of change.

Overview of Handbook

A Handbook to Facilitate the Utilization of Psychological Assessment for Secondary Students within Alberta is intended for the use of educational professional, which has had training regarding educational pedagogy, adolescent development and educational assessment. This handbook also provides counsellors and psychologists a snapshot of the assessment process, as mandated by Alberta Learning (1997, 2000, 2002, 2004a, 2004c, 2004d).

Within the handbook, there are suggestions for facilitating a collaborative SST, a reference list, a summary of the Alberta curriculum and English Language Arts (Alberta Learning, 2004b), and a data bank which will combine WISC subtests with intervention strategies that are appropriate for grade seven English Language Art classrooms. It should reflect a “one-stop shop” for psychologists and counsellors working with this specific population. The manual is organised with a busy professional in mind, utilizing tables, point

form checklists, and colours, as it is an effective way to organize visually the material, increasing user-friendliness.

The handbook is organized into four sections: Assessment (process and coding), Reading Learning Disabilities, Curriculum and Resources, and Interventions and Accommodations. It is a compilation of materials that have been designed for this book, or have been taken from other sources, to facilitate the assessment process and provide the educational professional with the resources they need to improve the quality of the assessment process.

What This Handbook is not

This handbook does not discuss the specific process of developing Individualized Program Plans (IPP's), as that is well documented and is beyond the scope of this project. It will suggest resources to aid in the writing of IPP's and will refer to the necessity of them. The etiological cause of learning disabilities is not discussed because of breadth of the topic and because it does not affect the educational impact in the classroom.

This handbook is not intended to replace the original documents produced for this population, nor is the classroom interventions that were combined with the WISC subsets exhaustive. Empty charts for professionals to add their own interventions, which work within their educational environment and with their educators, can be used to add other ideas. It is recognized that there are a huge amount of valuable resources that are found to be helpful for this purpose. Many manuals regarding intervention strategies have provided excellent suggestions for classroom accommodations. It is recognized that there may be other resources that will also benefit the assessment process, and the use of those materials are

strongly encouraged. This handbook is intended for a specific population, within a specific demographic to improve the potential quality of the assessment process.

Working Alliance

Developing relationships between the stakeholders

Developing an Effective School Support Team

The School Support Team (SST) is comprised of all of the people who are involved in the education of a student. To organize and manage this number of people effectively, the following suggestions are made:

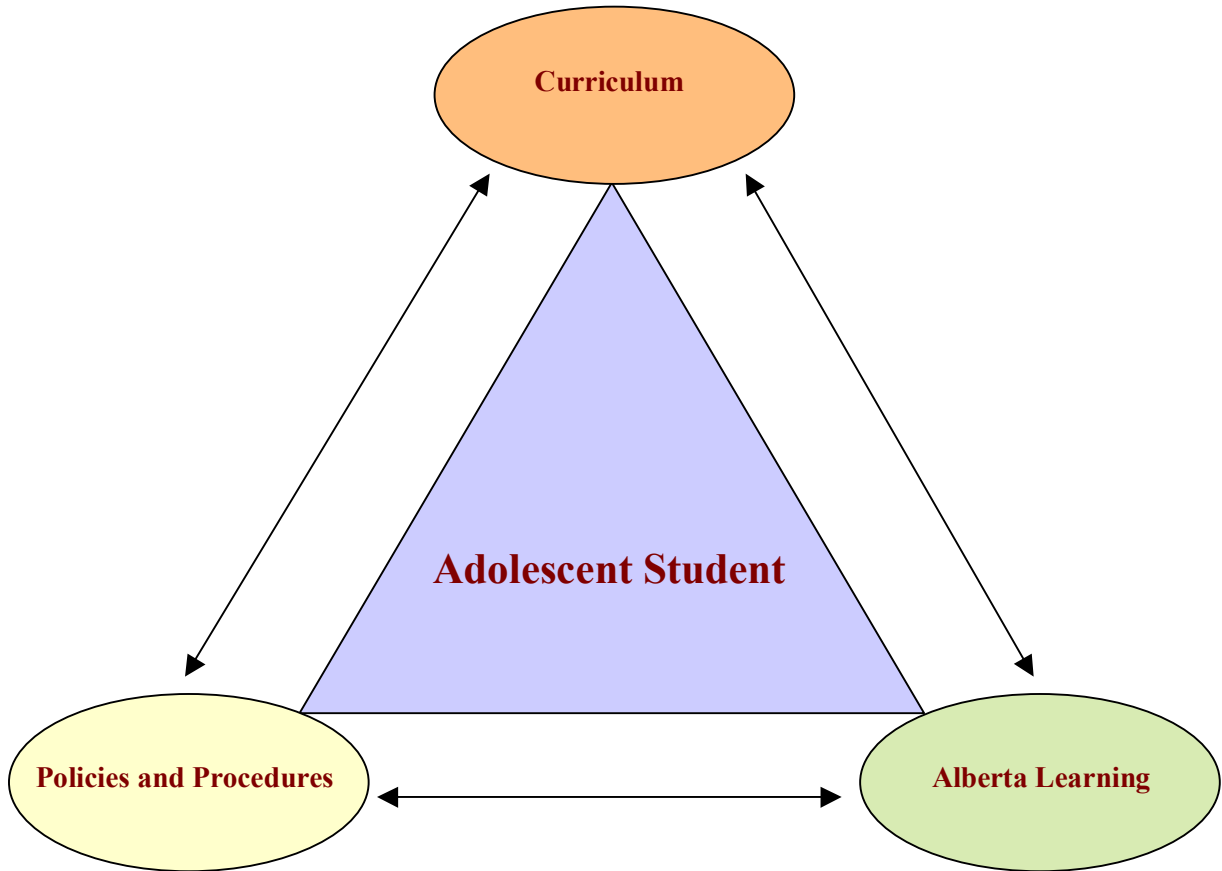
- √ Designate **one** school-based person to be organizing and collecting the data involved with the assessment. Ensure that members of the SST understand who the facilitator is.
- √ Ensure that an effective method of communication is set up. Have email addresses and phone numbers handy in the students cumulative file.
- √ Establish regular communication times in advance
- √ Encourage sharing of ideas and expertise
- √ Have clear process for meetings.
- √ Establish atmosphere of respect. All team members should feel safe and not under attack.
- √ The facilitator should establish boundaries about what is acceptable for the SST.
- √ Establish roles and responsibility
- √ Have flexible membership. As students change classes and teachers, the members of the SST will change.
- √ Respect the time demands of people with respect to meetings and work load.
- √ ASK the student. The student may feel confused by the attention, but can also have effective and valuable insight into their academic difficulties. Teaching the student self-advocacy is paramount at this age.
- √ Encourage all members to contribute, especially the student.
- √ Provide professional development for assistants, volunteers and peer tutors
- √ Provide resources to parents that will assist them to understand the process (see Parent Resources). Keep information regarding learning disabilities, learning strategies, learning supports within your geographical area, and practical strategies to help parents understand and help their child.

Taken from:

Alberta. Alberta Learning. Learning and Teaching Resources Branch. (2002). *Unlocking potential: Key components of programming for students with learning disabilities*. (ISBN 0-7785-2546-5) Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education. Pp. 6-8)

Assessment
The Process and Coding

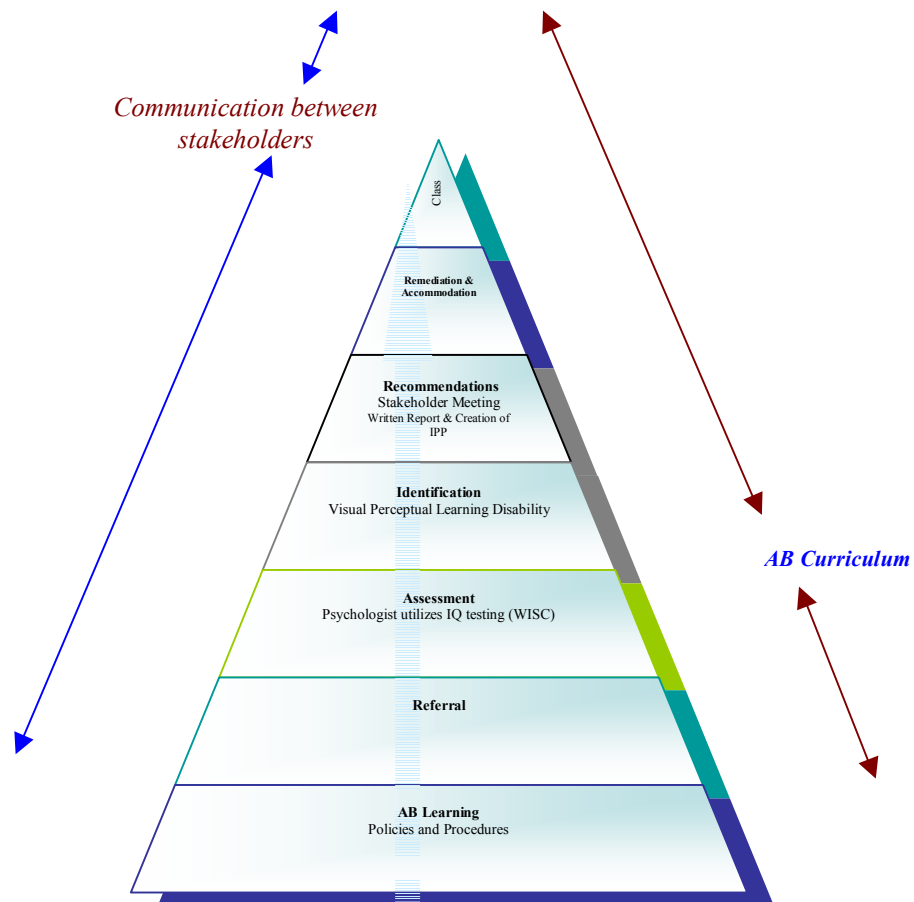
Interaction of Major Factors Affecting the Learning of an Adolescent Student



This chart illustrates that an adolescent student is affected by the curriculum for each grade level and subject, the policies and procedures set out by the governing school board, and the policies and procedure as set out by the provincial body (Alberta Learning), are all significant factors to a students learning.

Flowchart of action for diagnosing students with learning disabilities

This flow chart shows the process that is involved when diagnosing students with a learning disability. It moves from the general policies to the specific student outcomes.



Assessment Process for School Personnel

1. Classroom teachers make referral to counsellor after noticing signs indicative of a learning disability
2. Counsellors, teachers and psychologists needs to review the student file, noting history of difficulty with learning, noting, previous academic assessments and possible IPP's.
3. The counsellor, resource teacher and/or psychologist discuss the progress of the child with individual teachers. It is helpful to hold a Student Resource Group meeting (SRG) with the teachers to discuss possible ways of intervention, and to see how each teacher is approaching the student. The problem solving process begins.
4. The resource teacher, classroom teacher or guidance counsellor complete informal school assessments with the students in question to gain information. Gathering information through observation, discussing and testing with academic assessments (such as the WIAT, K-TEA, Woodcock Johnson, etc.) may be required. Confirm that any testing completed is compatible with what the psychologist will be doing, and is approved by your school board. Involve all members of the SST. See Alberta Education's, *Teaching student with learning disabilities: Programming for students with special needs: Book 6*, (LD. 58-69), for tips on assessment (formal and informal)
5. Counsellor contacts parents/guardians. Discuss academic concerns and the possibility of psychological assessment, explaining the assessment process in detail.
6. Obtain written permission and release of information from the parent/guardian. The Freedom of Information Privacy (FOIP) Act states that permission must be obtained before sharing personal information (Alberta Government, 2003).
7. The Guidance counsellor and/or resource teacher should facilitate opportunity for formal assessment to:
 - a. Ensure that consent forms have been sent to parents and returned. Give parents the name and phone number of the psychologist.
 - b. Set up meeting time with psychologist and student at the school.
 - c. Ensure that student and his/her teachers know of the meeting so they can plan accordingly.
 - d. Ensure a quiet, private space for assessment to be completed. Room should have comfortable lighting, heat, cleanliness and space.
 - e. Ensure that the student is comfortable an able to proceed with the assessment to the best of their ability (re: illness, hunger, breaks, time of day, special class events, etc.). Share any possible barriers to the assessment with the psychologist.
 - f. Have files, informal assessments, SRG notes and any other information pertinent to student ready for psychologist. Note any cultural, language, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic, geographic, personal, situational (i.e.

divorce), or medical factors that may be affecting the academic achievement of a student.

- g. Ensure that any assessments that need to be filled out by teachers or parents be explained and sent to the parents and the teachers. Return the forms in a timely manner for the psychologist.
8. Set up a time with all members of the SST for a debriefing. See Alberta Education, *Teaching student with learning disabilities: Programming for students with special needs: Book*, (LD. 49 to LD. 57 and Appendices 1-7 LD.238 to LD.246) for excellent guidelines to setting up and facilitating the SST meetings. Utilize the questions that pertain to your educational setting to help focus on ?
9. Ensure that the SST meeting space is private and free from interruptions. Make sure introductions are made and the environment is safe and positive for all members.
10. When the school receives a psychological assessment, it is up to the guidance counsellor and resource teacher to review it for mistakes in information (such as names, details, etc.) and ensure that there is a diagnosis if there is a learning disability. If coding is applied to students who have no diagnoses, important funding and help can be taken away from the school and the pupils when audited. Do not be afraid to ask questions or discuss the findings in a psychological assessment, as you are acting on behalf of the school and the student. The psychological assessment should consider the history of the student's family, schooling, development, health, academic skills and the student's intelligence quotient. Emotional and medical factors must be accounted for as they can contribute a situational disturbance to learning (Colman, Levine & Sandler, 1991).
11. After the debriefing, place a copy of the psychoeducational assessment in the student's file and provide a copy for the parents(Alberta Learning, 1994b). Give pertinent school information to all teachers (option and physical education teachers must be included), but ensure that all requirements of FOIP are being met.
12. Monitor progress of student. Stress that it is a process – not a “quick fix.” Adjust the IPP if needed. Continue to have regular meetings/updates for communication purposes.

Establishing School-based Support for Junior High Students with Learning Difficulties

- √ Ensure that transitions from elementary to junior high are efficient. Lessen anxiety of parents and students by establishing early communication and providing tours of school.
- √ Designate key contact on staff for the student and for the parents (i.e., the guidance counsellor or the IPP Key Contact).
- √ Regular information meetings regarding student progress needs to be solution focused (focus on solving problems)
- √ Employ members of staff to help with accommodations such as ordering tape books, setting up computers with voice recognition, etc.
- √ Adjust student's timetables to reflect their workload and areas of difficulty.
- √ Involve students in planning, acceptable accommodations and in assessment.
- √ Provide self advocacy training for all students (see Self-advocacy Checklist for Elementary/Middle School (Alberta Learning, 2002)
- √ Provide support in acquiring skills for technology (keyboarding and word processing)
- √ Check that coding procedures are done correctly and that the diagnosis is accurately and clearly labelled. Special Education definitions are found on the following link:

Alberta. Alberta Learning. Special Programs Branch. (2004). *Special Education Definitions 2003/04*. Retrieved March 1, 2005 from http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k%5F12/specialneeds/SpecialEd_def.pdf

- √ Ensure that all criteria for an audit are being met. Guidelines for file management and programming are found in the following resource:

Alberta. Alberta Learning. Special Programs. (2004). *Handbook for the identification and review of students with severe disabilities*. (ISBN 0-7785-3784-6). Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education.

Taken from: Alberta. Alberta Learning. Learning and Teaching Resources Branch. (2002). *Unlocking potential: Key components of programming for students with learning disabilities*. (ISBN 0-7785-2546-5) Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education.

Coding Overview

Please see Alberta Learning's, *Special Education Definitions 2004/05* for complete description of each code. This table is a summary of the Special Education Definitions (2004), to provide a quick overview of the codes and the labels. It is intended to be utilized by professionals who know and understand the use of these labels. These codes are consistent from Grades 1 – 12.

Mild / Moderate Conditions		
Code	Label	Brief Description
51	Mild Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ IQ in range of 50 to 75 (± 5) √ Mildly delayed level on adaptive behaviour scale √ Delay in most academic subjects and social behaviours
52	Moderate Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ IQ in range of 30 to 50 (± 5) √ Significant modification required for academics √ Moderate delay on adaptive behaviour scale
53	Emotional/Behavioural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Chronic and pervasive behaviours that interfere with learning and safety of the student and others √ Must be identified by psychologist
54	Learning Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Average intellectual abilities, but delayed one or more areas relating to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning √ Will affect academics mildly or significantly, depending on severity
55	Hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Hearing ability affects learning. Mild disability is considered to be 26-40 decibels of loss √ Moderate disability is 41-70 decibels of hearing loss
56	Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Vision impairs a student's ability to learn √ Student has less than 20/70 vision AFTER correction
57	Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Difficulty communicating with others because of expressive and/or receptive, and/or speech difficulties (including articulation, voice and fluency)
58	Physical or Medical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Physical, neurological or medical condition interferes with ability to learn. The condition must impact schooling
59	Multiple Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Two or more non-associated difficulties that have an impact on the student's ability to learn

(Coding overview continued)

Gifted and Talented		
80	Gifted and Talented	√ IQ is within the superior range (130 ±5) and display superior potential or performance in one of the intelligences

Severe Conditions		
Code	Label	Brief Description
41	Severe Cognitive	√ Requires supervision at all times √ Has a IQ range of 30 (±5) √ Profoundly delayed level on adaptive behaviour scale
42	Severe Emotional/Behavioural	√ Extreme behaviours that require special accommodation in educational setting √ A diagnosis that affects emotions/behaviour, such as conduct disorder, schizophrenia, bi-polar, obsessive/compulsive, clinical depression, oppositional defiant, etc. √ ADD and ADHD do not apply
43	Severe Multiple Disability	√ Two or more non-associated difficulties that have an impact on the student's ability to learn √ Requires special programming √ Mild/Moderate coding cannot be used to combine and qualify for a code 43
44	Severe Physical or Medical	√ Has a medical diagnosis that has a significant impact on a child's ability to learn √ This may include Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Autism
45	Deafness	√ Possess a hearing loss of 71 decibels or greater and loss interferes with oral language as primary form of communication
46	Blindness	√ Corrected vision affects ability to learn

Summarized from:

Alberta. Alberta Education. Special Education Branch. (1994b). *Standards for psycho-educational assessment*. (ISBN 0-7732-1372-4) Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education.

Reading Learning Disabilities

Diagnosing a Learning Disability in Reading

Berninger, Stage, Smith and Hildebrand (2001) developed a three-tier model for the remediation of reading and writing difficulty. When a student is referred for assessment by a psychologist, it is assumed that intervention and assessment has occurred within the classroom and the school by appropriate personnel (Tier 1 and 2). The 3rd tier in assessment is an in-depth assessment, which looks beyond classroom interventions, and considers educational programming. An in-depth assessment should be more than determining an ability-achievement discrepancy. An assessment should consider whether there is difficulty in the processes that is necessary to read and write. Berninger et al. suggest a multimodal assessment that includes interviewing parents, reviewing developmental records, as well as school records, family history, observation, review of student's work, interviews with stakeholders, parent/teacher/student rating scales, as well as standardized normed and criterion-referenced tests.

Axis 1 Development across multiple domains

Is the student developmentally delayed?

Is there a primary language disability?

Axis 2 Co-morbid Medical Conditions

Are there any neurological, developmental or physical difficulties that could be impeding learning?

Axis 3 Brain Functions

Axis 4 Academic Functioning in School

Educational History

Axis 5 Community, Family, School and Classroom Factors

DSM IV Diagnosis

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (4th Edition) [DSM IV] involves diagnosing on an axes system. Axis I is Clinical Disorders; Axis II is Personality Disorders/Mental Retardation; Axis III is General Medical Conditions; Axis IV is Psychosocial and Environmental Problems; and Axis V is Global Assessment of Functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p. 27). According to the DSM IV, to identify a learning disorder the following criteria needs to be apparent:

- Achievement is below what is expected (age, grade or intelligence)
- Substantially below expectations are two standard deviations between achievement and IQ (In some cases 1-2 standard deviations is acceptable.)
- Cannot be attributed to socioeconomic, poor educational opportunity or cultural factors.
- Cannot be attributed to physical disabilities (impaired vision or hearing)
- Cannot be attributed to low IQ (mental retardation).

Reading learning disabilities are rarely diagnosed before grade one.

DSM IV Diagnostic Criteria for a Reading Learning Disability

- Reading achievement (accuracy or comprehension) is substantially below age, IQ, or grade level.
- It is interfering with academic achievement
- Reading difficulties are more pronounced with a person who also experiences sensory deficits.

Taken from:

American Psychological Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (4th ed., text revision). Washington, DC: Author.

WISC Subtests that Correlate with Learning Disabilities in Reading

Scale Membership	WISC Subtest	Description
<i>Verbal Comprehension Subtests</i>	Word Reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ 24 questions that ask for a concept that is provided in a series of clues √ Measures verbal reasoning, verbal comprehension, analogical and general reasoning ability, verbal abstraction, domain knowledge, the ability to integrate and synthesize information
	Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ 21 questions that focus on understanding of general principles and social situations. √ Measures verbal reasoning, conceptualization, verbal comprehension and expression, evaluate and utilize previous experience √ Demonstrates knowledge of conventional standards of behaviour, social judgement, maturity and common sense
	Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ 33 questions that focus on a range of general knowledge questions √ Measures acquisition, retention and retrieval of factual knowledge √ Includes auditory perception, comprehension and verbal expressive ability
	Similarities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ 23 questions that present two words that represent a common concept or object √ Measures verbal comprehension by measuring verbal reasoning and concept formation by utilizing auditory comprehension, memory, verbal expression and distinction between nonessential and essential features
	Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ 36 questions which ask for identification and descriptions of words √ Measures work knowledge and verbal concept formation, general knowledge, learning ability, long-term memory and degree of language development. √ Includes testing of a child's auditory perception and comprehension, verbal conceptualization, abstract thinking and verbal expression.
<i>Working Memory Subtests</i>	Digit Span	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Subtest composed of two parts: Digit Span Forward and Digit Span Backward √ Measures short-term memory, sequencing skills, attention and concentration √ Digit Span Forward measures rote learning and short term memory, attention, encoding and

Scale Membership	WISC Subtest	Description
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ auditory processing. √ Digit Span Backward involves working memory, transformation of information, mental manipulation and visuospatial imaging.
	Letter-number Sequencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ 10 items – 3 trials each – to sequence letters and numbers in order. √ Measures sequencing, mental manipulation, attention, short term auditory memory, visual-spatial imaging and processing speed
	Arithmetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Supplemental test √ 34 oral questions that are timed √ Utilizes mental manipulation, concentration, attention, short and long term memory, numerical reasoning ability and mental alertness √ Also involves sequencing, fluid and logical reasoning

This table illustrates the two groups of subtests that have the most affect on an adolescent’s ability to read. In order to identify a learning disability, a psychologist must utilize WISC scores along with another assessment tool that measures the child’s achievement within that subject. The WIAT (Wechsler Individual Achievement Test-Second Edition) can be utilized with the WISC to measure achievement. Typically, psychologists choose between the predicted-difference method and the simple-difference method. The predicted-difference method is where the WISC score (ability) is used to predict the achievement score obtained from the WIAT.

When a child is diagnosed with a reading learning disability, all of their subtests are on average, lower than the matched control group. The largest effect size is for the WMI. Even though all scores were lower, the VCI, WMI and FSIQ were the most effected. The subtests that were identified as being the most effected were for vocabulary, letter-number sequencing, information and arithmetic (p. 83) (Wechsler, 2003b). This may reflect the

deficiency to gather information by reading materials. The low score in arithmetic is due to the working memory. A student who may have a reading and written expression disability has significantly lower scores in all of the composite scores. Especially affected are the WMI. The PSI distinguishes itself in the reading/written expression learning disabled group in that the score is much lower in the RWD group than the RD group. More research is needed for the similarities and differences between the different groups who have a learning disability.

Synthesized from:

Wechsler, D. (2003b). *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - 4th edition: Technical and Interpretive Manual*. San Antonio, TX: The Psychological Corporation

Wechsler, D., & Saklofske, D. (2004). *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - 4th edition: Canadian Manual*. Toronto, ON: Harcourt Assessment.

WISC Profile from Composite Scores in Relation to Reading Ability and Areas of Curriculum that could be Affected				
WISC Subtests	<i>Verbal Comprehension [VCI]</i>	<i>Perceptual Reasoning [POI]</i>	<i>Working Memory [WMI]</i>	<i>Processing Speed [PSI]</i>
Type 1	Low	Normal	Normal	Normal
Type 2	Normal	Low	Normal	Normal
Type 3	Normal	Normal	Low	Normal
Type 4	Normal	Normal	Normal	Low

(Please note: Type 1, 2, 3, and 4 are not a part of the WISC subtests, it was created here to refer to the WISC subtests utilized to identify VCI, POI, WMI and PSI. and to help clarify the following chart)

Composite Scores are derived from the 15 subtests in the WISC IV.

(To clarify the WISC subtests utilized for Type 1, 2, 3, and 4 – please refer to the preceding chart entitled, “WISC Profile from Composite Scores in Relation to Reading Ability and Areas of Curriculum that could be Affected”)

WISC Subtests	Composite Scores	How it affects Reading	How it would affect learning and other areas of curriculum
Type One	Low Verbal Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited vocabulary lessens the understanding and comprehension of words read • The ability to recall important information to demonstrate comprehension can be lost if words are not understood, or if there is poor recall. • The ability to assimilate the information into current knowledge base may be limited because of poor memory process. • The ability to comprehend and interpret information may be limited. • The ability to decode and infer meaning can be limited • Gathering information from reading may be hindered, lowering the ability to gain new knowledge • Poor auditory comprehension may lessen a child’s ability to understand material that is read aloud to them. • Ability to express ideas and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New vocabulary in subject areas can be intimidating and difficult • Gaining new information may be a slower process • Ability to interpret, dissimilate and apply new knowledge may be a longer process. Higher order thinking skills are affected if reading ability is affected • Comprehension of material will be limited. Short and long-term memory will be affected because of the lack of understanding of the vocabulary and/or the inability to decode.

WISC Subtests	Composite Scores	How it affects Reading	How it would affect learning and other areas of curriculum
		<p>knowledge pertaining to the materials read may be limited.</p>	
Type Two	Low Perceptual Reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual perception difficulties can affect reading by shortening the amount of time a student can focus when reading. • Difficulties with organization and simultaneous processing can affect reading by making it difficult for students to see patterns and symbols. The actual process of decoding may be affected. Words that are similar may be decoded wrong; making a sentence incomprehensible and therefore losing its meaning. • Skimming and scanning information can be reduced • Reading materials off of a chalk board, overhead, etc., would be difficult if there is not a place marker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading for information in other subjects will be limited. • Looking for patterns, skimming and scanning for information will be impeded. Processing time can be slowed because of the need to read word for word. • Writing may be very messy unless speed is significantly reduced. • Transferring knowledge into written work may be impacted because of the difficulty. • Note taking is frustrating and difficult in all classes
Type Three	Low Working Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to recall information from read materials is limited because the reader quickly “forgets” what is read. The student spends their cognitive energy on recalling information to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any information that is gathered from text will be limited • Activities that are simplified and broken into smaller steps will be more successful.

WISC Subtests	Composite Scores	How it affects Reading	How it would affect learning and other areas of curriculum
		<p>decode instead of comprehending what they are reading.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with low working memory have poor comprehension ability • Ability to focus or concentrate is impacted by working memory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention, focus and concentration will be impacted in all activities that require reading and working memory.
Type Four	Low Processing Speed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to process the information gained by reading will be impacted. • The ability to scan or skim for information can be weak • Poor visual perception can result in the mispronunciation or interpretation of words, especially when a child is rushing or trying to keep up with peers who do not have difficulties in this area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The time to complete tasks where there is reading and writing involved will be significantly increased.

Synthesized from:

Alberta. Alberta Learning. Curriculum Standards Branch. (2000d) *Program of studies: English Language Arts Curriculum K-9*. Retrieved April 16, 2005 from <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k%5F12/curriculum/bySubject/english/elaK-9.pdf>

Wechsler, D. (2003b). *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - 4th edition: Technical and Interpretive Manual*. San Antonio, TX: The Psychological Corporation

Wechsler, D., & Saklofske, D. (2004). *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - 4th edition: Canadian Manual*. Toronto, ON: Harcourt Assessment.

If a student demonstrates a weakness in the area of reading, as predicted by the WISC IV and identified utilizing the WIAT II; further investigation in where the specific deficits may lie is elaborated through the use of the Process Assessment of the Learner Test Battery for Reading and Writing [PAL] (Berninger, 1998). The WIAT and PAL measure different areas of reading. When completing an assessment, it is not helpful to state that a student has a learning disability in reading. A teacher referred the student to you for that reason. It is important to identify what area that the student is experiencing difficulty, as reading disability can be a generic term. By identifying the specific areas of reading that a student may be having difficulty in, a teacher, tutor, etc., can provide some remedial work, or extra support.

WIAT & PAL Subtests

Specific components of reading that are measured by each test

WIAT II Subtest	Measures	PAL Subtest	Measures
Word Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter identification • Phonological awareness • Letter sound awareness • Word recognition 	Text Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Story retelling ▸ Sentence Sense
Pseudo-word Decoding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phonological decoding • Accuracy of word attack 	Word Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ RAN Words ▸ RAN digits ▸ RAN Words and Digits ▸ Word Choice
Reading Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literal comprehension • Inferential comprehension • Lexical comprehension • Reading rate • Oral-reading accuracy • Oral-reading fluency • Oral-reading comprehension • Word recognition in context 	Subword Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Receptive Coding ▸ Expressive Coding ▸ RAN Letters ▸ Rhyming ▸ Syllables ▸ Phonemes ▸ Rimes ▸ Pseudo-word Decoding

Above is adapted from:

Smith, D.R. (2001). Wechsler Individual Achievement Test. In J.J.W. Andrews, D.H.Saklofske & H.L. Janzen (Eds.) *Handbook of Psychoeducational Assessment: Ability, Achievement, and Behavior in Children* (pp. 169-193). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

It should be noted that a reading learning disability is often co-morbid with a disorder of Written Expression as many of the same processes in reading and writing are used.

Reading Learning Disability Fact Sheet

Reading Weakness	Specific skills
Deficient Word Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor phonology awareness ▪ Poor phonologic memory ▪ Sequencing problems
Poor Sight Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor gestalt processing ▪ Problems with automatic retrieval
Comprehension Difficulty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Problems secondary to decoding weaknesses ▪ Poor verbal comprehension ▪ Memory disorders ▪ Higher cognitive defects

Adapted from:

Coleman, W.L., Levine, M.D., & Sandler, A.D. (1991). Learning Disabilities in Adolescents: Description, Assessment and Management. In R.M. Lerner, A.C. Petersen & J. Brooks-Gunn (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Adolescence* (pp. 580-590). New York, NY: Garland Publishing, Inc.

Writing Learning Disability Fact Sheet

Writing Weakness	Specific skills
Language Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited vocabulary ▪ Lack of experiential knowledge ▪ Frequent mechanical errors (punctuation) ▪ Syntax and grammar errors ▪ Poor narrative organization ▪ Difficulty to organize thoughts
Memory Weakness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retrieval difficulty ▪ Poor spelling (retrieval) ▪ Poor recall of words, letters formation, ideas, rules ▪ Poor recall ▪ Slow rate of writing
High Order Cognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor ideation ▪ Concrete thinker ▪ Difficulty with abstract cognition ▪ Difficulty expressing maturity in writing ▪ Processing thoughts to paper difficult ▪ Deficient language ability (meeting the needs of the audience)

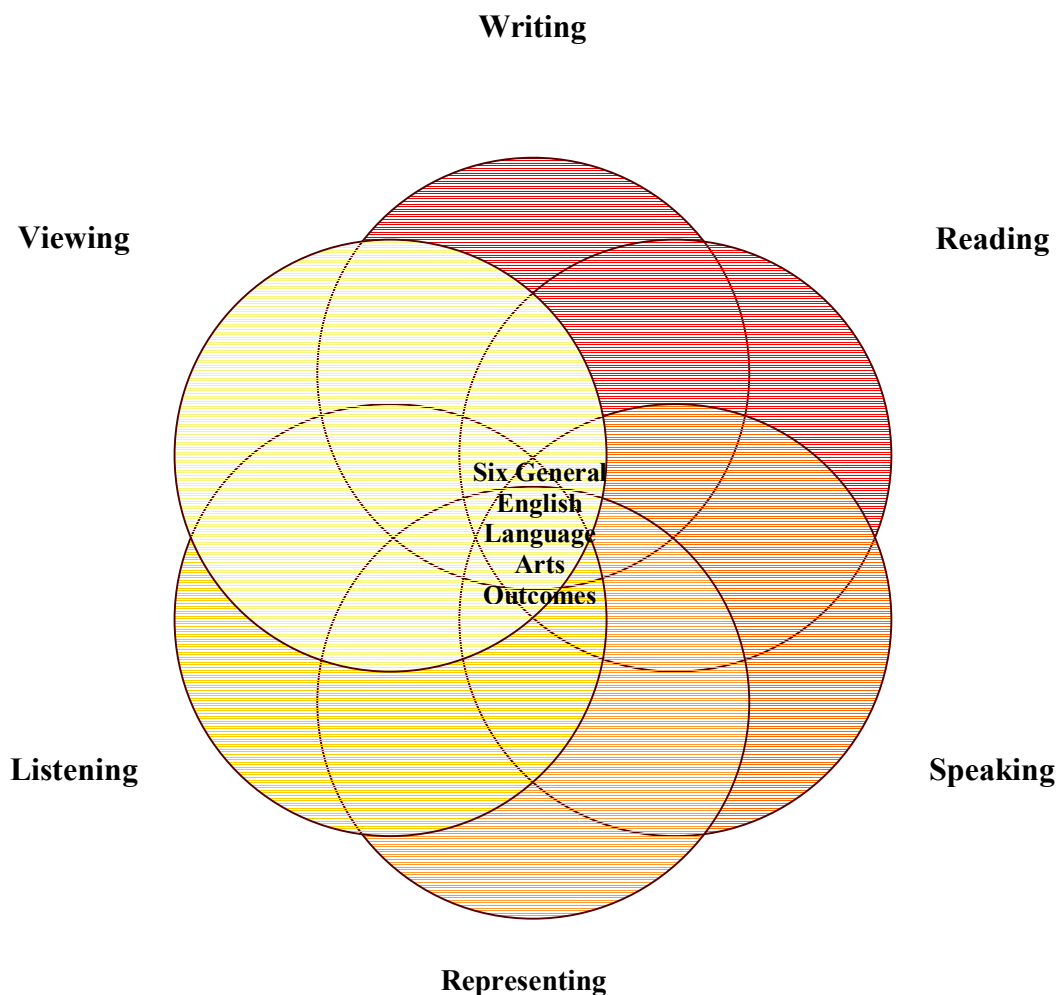
Adapted from:

Coleman, W.L., Levine, M.D., & Sandler, A.D. (1991). Learning Disabilities in Adolescents: Description, Assessment and Management. In R.M. Lerner, A.C. Petersen & J. Brooks-Gunn (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Adolescence* (pp. 580-590). New York, NY: Garland Publishing, Inc.

Curriculum and Resources

Understanding Alberta's English Language Arts Curriculum

Language acquisition, according to the documentation of Alberta Learning, occurs across subjects and skills. Alberta has identified six different strands (or skills) that are “inter-related and interdependent” for language acquisition. Through these strands, students meet the curriculum outcomes that will fulfill the requirements set out by Alberta Learning for the Grade Seven level.



Adapted from:

Alberta. Alberta Learning. Curriculum Standards Branch. (2000d) *Program of studies: English Language Arts Curriculum K-9*. Retrieved April 16, 2005 from <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k%5F12/curriculum/bySubject/english/elaK-9.pdf>

English Language Arts: The processes involved in learning “the Strands”

Strands	Description
Listening	Understanding oral language through stories, values, beliefs, and traditions. Students are to use listening skills to problem solve and to listen for a variety of purposes (formal and informal).
Speaking	Students develop the skills to express their ideas, thoughts, opinions, feelings, experiences, and knowledge to communicate stories, values and beliefs fluently. Students are to develop confidence and be able to adjust their speaking ability to suit both formal and informal situations.
Reading	Utilize reading skills (decoding and comprehension) to construct meaning, gain knowledge, information and to explore their own thoughts. Fluency, skill, and comprehension of read material should become more developed as the student becomes proficient at utilizing this means of communication.
Writing	Students develop writing abilities to communicate and investigate personal growth, critical interpretations and to communicate needs and wants to others. Writing should become more sophisticated and the mechanics should become more polished and complex. Confidence and skill should be apparent in the ability to communicate through writing.
Viewing	Attending and comprehending visual stimulus such as television, advertising, documentaries, films, diagrams, images, symbols, photographs, videos, drama, drawings, sculpture, paintings, etc. Viewing requires student to comprehend messages sent in forms other than (but including) traditional text. The comprehension processes includes previewing, predicting, and making inferences.
Representing	Communication of information and ideas through different mediums, such as video, computer, posters, diagrams, charts, art, drama, mime, models, etc. Students create different ways to express themselves.

Adapted from:

Alberta. Alberta Learning. Curriculum Standards Branch. (2000d) *Program of studies: English Language Arts Curriculum K-9*. Retrieved April 16, 2005 from <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k%5F12/curriculum/bySubject/english/elaK-9.pdf>

As students reach grade seven, their skills and abilities should be at the point of becoming more sophisticated so that students can utilize them to move to higher learning, as illustrated by Bloom’s Taxonomy (See pg. 120). If students missed gaining a skill, it is unlikely that their will be remedial instruction available in school in junior high, as the curriculum is concept based, rather than skill based.

Grade Seven English Language Arts Skills and Outcomes

How a reading disability can affect the different strands

Reading	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to explore thoughts, ideas and experiences may be lessened if comprehension is lost with difficulties in reading (whether it is decoding or comprehension). The ability understand the vocabulary used, or the ability to express thoughts, ideas and feelings may require more time to process and to respond. The time that it may take a student to explore through reading may be significantly increased, resulting in fatigue and frustration.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The time needed to complete these tasks will be greatly increased because of the processing time required. Reading new material with important content may be difficult, as all reading may seem overwhelming and discouraging. Students may say that reading is “easy,” but may show that their understanding of the read material is basic and spotty The ability to summarize read material will be impacted if the material was not understood. Picking out the main idea may be difficult, as it may be difficult to process and comprehend while decoding. Some students use their energy to read the words and can read beautifully, but do not understand or remember what they have read. Students may increase their comprehension if main points are given to them, or taught strategies to skim for important information. Comprehension can be significantly reduced if students have difficulty with print materials. New vocabulary may lessen comprehension. Auditory discrimination difficulty may decrease ability to comprehend to read material orally. Any written response may not reflect the student’s actual knowledge and ability within the subject area.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To manage ideas and information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There may be resistance to work with printed material Students may display poor organizational strategies, both with managing ideas and information. Students do not rely on print for reading or writing what they need to remember. Other strategies have been developed to manage information (such as memory), but may not be very effective.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading activities may be tiring, laborious and students may use avoidance strategies. Reading fluency may be impacted, thus making the reader uncomfortable, resistant and uncomfortable, especially with the idea of reading aloud to make their reading more sophisticated and accomplished. Students will not “see the point” of reading, and will view the activity as boring and/or useless. Clarity will be lessened if students are unable to comprehend read materials.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To represent, respect, support and collaborate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to become actively engaged in material is severely impacted if a student is unable to comprehend because of reading difficulty. Knowledge and ability may be under estimated, or poorly represented because difficulty to communicate using print material.
Writing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because of the associated skills between reading and writing, writing ability may be impacted. The ability to explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences may be significantly less than what the student could convey verbally.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The processing time could be impacted by reading difficulty. A student may need significantly more time to complete the same amount of work as a student who does not have a disability. Students may not be able to respond as fully because of missed concepts as a result of lowered comprehension. The length of the response may not illustrate the depth of the students understanding. The ability to respond may be limited because of weaker vocabulary skills, memory and skill. The use of reference materials may be impeded. Students may not check spelling or edit effectively.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To manage ideas and information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization skills can be impacted by the student's aversion to rely on printed material. They do not see the point in writing things down – especially if they do not like to read what they write.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing and reading sophistication will be impeded because of memory difficulties. Writing can be difficult if a student does not understand the reading process and why people would read. They do not have the same experience and do not enjoy the process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To represent, respect, support and collaborate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students would rather communicate orally than through reading and writing. Answers will be short. Collaboration will be impeded if student does pull their weight (which happens because of the increased need for time and less reliance on printed materials).
Viewing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences may be reduced if student's visual perceptual skills are posing difficulty for them. Their ability to "see" meaning in abstract may be reduced because of their inability to interpret or comprehend what they see. Visual materials may be excellent, but have little reliance on written word.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying previous knowledge, sight vocabulary, context clues, phonics, etc. can be difficult as the curriculum gets more advanced. Since the curriculum builds on previous skills, the process could be very frustrating and slow for the student. Comprehension to materials viewed may be limited by delays in knowledge and comprehension. Connections between characters and plot may not be obvious to student, as the process may not be multi-dimensional.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To manage ideas and information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to organize information may be impeded by reading ability. Student may have poor organization and would resist the process because of the association with reading.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student may do minimal work regarding the enhancement of clarity and artistry because of low vocabulary, poor organization, and a possible co-morbid writing disability. Student's ability to use reference materials would be impeded by reading achievement. Proof-reading and editing would be laborious and/or too difficult, as the concepts and skills may have not been learned or placed in working memory. Material requiring extended concentration may be affected by a student's fatigue that occurs when reading with poor visual perceptual ability.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To represent, respect, support and collaborate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student may demonstrate strengths to represent ideas visually, if the concepts are explained verbally. Materials viewed may produce various results (i.e. computer or television mediums may be more stimulating and have a greater effect on the memory of the student).
Speaking	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate terminology may not be used because of inability to recall new vocabulary or complex vocabulary. The depth of understanding may not be evident through verbal exchange Memory deficits may hinder ability to recall information to discuss. More time for processing (before speaking) may be needed. Preparation for speaking may be required, especially when recalling vocabulary, and concepts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may not be able to respond immediately to material presented auditory. Material (such as speeches or reading aloud) may be very difficult and may be magnified by the students' low confidence in their abilities. Refusal behaviours (avoidance, humour, forgetfulness, etc.) may become apparent.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To manage ideas and information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Material that needs to be read may not be conveyed through speech. Poor working memory would aid in the student forgetting items that were communicated. Speeches, reports, autobiographies, and presentations may be shorter and more simplistic if heavily influenced by read materials (i.e. research, reading and writing the speech, etc.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to present in a variety of manners may be hindered based upon a students' reading ability. Depending on the reading difficulty, the student will experience different problems that will affect their ability to present confidently.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To represent, respect, support and collaborate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may not be able to adjust their speech if they did not comprehend, because of decoding or comprehension difficulties caused by poor working memory, low verbal comprehension or perceptual ability.
Listening	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responses based on oral read material may be limited because of reduced ability to comprehend. Poor vocabulary, memory, auditory discrimination and processing may require more time, repetition and/or supplement with visual materials.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor auditory comprehension may affect the student's ability to understand, remember or pick up hidden meaning within read material. Low verbal comprehension would lessen a student's ability to critically respond to material.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To manage ideas and information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may not be able to distinguish between fact and fiction if they have low verbal comprehension. They may not be able to assimilate new information into current understanding, as poor memory makes it difficult to comprehend new information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A student's ability to listen and view attentively may be hindered – especially when carrying out multi-step tasks, as short-term memory difficulties may be present. The ability to use the correct subject verb agreement in compound subjects, as well as utilizing new vocabulary to express opinions, facts, information, etc., may be hindered by comprehension and decoding difficulty. Depending on how the information was relayed to the students, the ability to understand the whole picture may be more difficult because of missing previous knowledge and understanding.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To represent, respect, support and collaborate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may not fully engage, therefore, be unable to fully support and collaborate with others.
Representing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoidance of reading materials to represent may be lessened, therefore lessening the ability to respond appropriately. Poor vocabulary may affect ability to use appropriate terminology and to express one's thoughts and feelings. Reading and writing difficulties would lessen a student's ability to represent their feelings, reactions, thoughts and ideas that they may have been able to do otherwise.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All aspects of a student's ability to comprehend will affect how a student will represent and be able to respond. Depending on how the student gained the information, this may be an area of strength, with regards to comprehension. Because the student can utilize different methods to illustrate what they have learn, it is likely that a teacher would see more kinesthetic/musical/theatrical responses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To manage ideas and information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may represent ideas and information utilizing technology and other media with more confidence and enthusiasm, than traditional reading and writing activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to present, clarify, support and discuss ideas with details, visuals or media techniques may be either more impressive than just relying on printed word, or may be significantly lacking if a student does not have training with other mediums.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To represent, respect, support and collaborate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution of ideas may be significantly stronger than in other means. • Students may refrain from representing material that requires a great deal of reading (and/or writing). • Collaboration may be difficult if knowledge or comprehension of activity is hindered.
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This chart combines the Language Arts strands and how a reading disability can affect each strand. This work was created by the author based on understanding of the WISC IV subtests, Grade Seven Language Arts Curriculum, and reading disabilities.

Synthesized from:

Alberta. Alberta Learning. Curriculum Standards Branch. (2000d) *Program of studies: English Language Arts Curriculum K-9*. Retrieved April 16, 2005 from <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k%5F12/curriculum/bySubject/english/elaK-9.pdf>

Wechsler, D. (2003b). *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - 4th edition: Technical and Interpretive Manual*. San Antonio, TX: The Psychological Corporation

Wechsler, D., & Saklofske, D. (2004). *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - 4th edition: Canadian Manual*. Toronto, ON: Harcourt Assessment.

Explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences

- extend understanding of ideas and information by finding and exploring oral, print and other media texts on related topics and themes

- use appropriate terminology to discuss developing abilities in personal language learning and use

- listen and respond constructively to alternative ideas or opinions • use talk, writing and representing to examine, clarify and assess understanding of ideas, information and experiences

Comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts

- use expectations and preferences developed during previous reading experiences to select and read new texts with purpose

- identify, connect, and summarize in own words, the main ideas from two or more sources on the same topic

- apply, flexibly, knowledge of phonics, sight vocabulary, structural analysis, language and context clues, depending on the purpose and rate of reading

- analyze how plot develops; the connection between plot and subplot; and the interrelationship of plot, setting and characters

- discuss connections among plot and subplot, main and supporting characters, main idea and theme in a variety of

oral, print and other media texts

- create oral, print and other media texts that are unified by point of view, carefully developed plot and endings consistent with previous events

Manage ideas and information

- use note-taking, outlining or representing to summarize important

ideas and information in oral, print and other media texts

- discuss the types and sources of information appropriate for topic, audience, form, purpose and point of view

- distinguish between fact and opinion, and follow the development of argument and opinion

- make notes, using headings and subheadings or graphic organizers appropriate to a topic; reference sources

- communicate ideas and information in a variety of oral, print and other media texts, such as reports, autobiographies, brochures and video presentations

- identify strengths and areas for improvement in personal research skills

Enhance the clarity and artistry of communication

- revise introductions, conclusions and the order of ideas and information to add coherence and clarify meaning

- choose and use printing, cursive writing or word processing, depending on the task, audience and purpose

- identify how the format of documents enhances the presentation of content

- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects

- use reference materials to confirm spellings and to solve spelling problems when editing and proofreading

- present ideas and opinions confidently, but without dominating the discussion, during small group activities and short, whole class sessions

- clarify and support ideas or opinions with details, visuals or media techniques

- listen and view attentively to organize and classify information and to carry out multi-step instructions

Respect, support and collaborate with others

- identify and discuss recurring themes in oral, print and other media texts from diverse cultures and communities

- demonstrate respect for diverse ideas, cultures and traditions portrayed in oral, print and other media texts

- take responsibility for assuming a variety of roles in a group, depending on changing contexts and needs

- contribute ideas, knowledge and questions to establish an information base for research or investigations

- evaluate group process and personal contributions according to pre-established criteria to determine strengths and areas for improvement

Alberta Education Stakeholders Resource List

Resources for Parents

Alberta. Alberta Learning. Special Programs. (2004). Handbook for the identification and review of students with severe disabilities. (ISBN 0-7785-3784-6). Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education.

Alberta. Alberta Education. Special Education Branch. (1996). *Partners during changing times: an information booklet for parents of children with special needs*. (ISBN 0-7732-1835-1) Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education.

Alberta. Alberta Education. Learning and Teaching Resources Branch. (2003). *The learning team: A handbook for parents of children with special needs*. (ISBN 0-7785-2537-6) Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education.

Alberta. Alberta Learning. (2004a). *Curriculum handbook for parents (Grade 7)*. Retrieved on March 16, 2004 from <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/parents/handbooks/pub7.pdf>

Alberta. Alberta Learning. (2004b). *Curriculum handbook for parents (Grade 7) Summary*. Retrieved on March 16, 2004 from <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/parents/handbooks/summaries/7bro.pdf>

Resources for Counsellors, Psychologists and other School Professionals

- Alberta. Alberta Learning. Special Programs Branch. (2004). *Special Education Definitions 2003/04*. Retrieved March 1, 2005 from http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k%5F12/specialneeds/SpecialEd_def.pdf
- Alberta. Alberta Learning. Learning and Teaching Resources Branch. (2002). *Unlocking potential: Key components of programming for students with learning disabilities*. (ISBN 0-7785-2546-5) Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education.
- Alberta. Alberta Education. Special Education Branch. (1993). *The art of working together: A guide to interorganizational coordination in the community*. (ISBN 0-7732-1144-6) Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education.
- Alberta. Alberta Learning. (1998). *Our Students, our future*. Retrieved March 23, 2005 from <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/educationsystem/ourstudents/>
- Alberta. Alberta Learning. Curriculum Standards Branch. (2000) *Illustrative examples for English language arts, kindergarten to grade 9*. Retrieved April 16, 2005 from <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k%5F12/curriculum/bySubject/english/grade7.pdf>
- Alberta. Alberta Learning. Special Education Branch. (1996). *Teaching students with learning disabilities*. Book 6 of the *Programming for students with special needs*. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education.
- Alberta. Alberta Learning. Special Programs Branch (2004c). Standards for Special Education. Retrieved December 16, 2004 from http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k_12/specialneeds
- Alberta. Alberta Learning. Special Programs Branch. (2004d). Assessment and identification of students with special needs, Grades 1-12. Field Review Draft. Retrieved March 1, 2004 from http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k_12/specialneeds/AssessIDSpNeeds.pdf

Interventions and Accommodations

Educational strategies for Grade Seven	
English Language Arts Skills and Outcomes	
Reading	Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide extra time to read material (i.e., night before) Teach strategies for skimming, reflective reading and scanning Provide lists of new vocabulary ahead of time (e.g., flashcards). Whenever possible, order audiotapes of novels to be available for students to use when reading. Use techniques such as collaborative teaching/reading, so that the student can listen as well as read. Use assistive technology (computers and CD's) Explore the use of colour overlays, rulers, etc. Teach students how to find main ideas Teach students how to highlight and take notes Provide a distraction-free space Have ear plugs, so students can “hear themselves” read Encourage the use of appropriate music for concentration/memory. Music should not have words or an overly fast beat.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide extra time (less homework for assignments – more homework for class preparation) Provide new material ahead of time Preview material and cross out information that is not helpful to student. Review material in class orally. Review meanings in case a student missed important information. Students can read the material into a voice recorder, then listen to it for comprehension. Explore different ways to demonstrate comprehension. Over-reliance on worksheet and paper/pen tasks leaves some students unable to demonstrate knowledge. Increase the size of the print Provide vocabulary ahead of time Opportunities for students to hear, see, and experience the material should be provided. (Read, listen and watch) Provide opportunities for hands-on experiences to improve, increase comprehension of material. Use new vocabulary in lessons. Have visuals up to remind students of new words. Use of repetitive learning (present material in a variety of ways and have the student review the material on a daily basis). Assign homework to review the day material.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To manage ideas and information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize electronics. • Teach students, teachers, parents how to utilize technology. • Teach students memory strategies (mnemonics, numbering systems, mind mapping, note taking formats, etc.) Provide many opportunities to practice these strategies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chunking information and materials may help students feel less overwhelmed. • Allow students to practice before reading aloud. • Give cues to students when you will ask them a question, or when they will need to present to the class to give them opportunity to prepare answers and to practice. • Make connections of material to “real life” to illustrate why it would be important. Ask students to consider the connections. • Provide opportunities for students to master the task before moving to the next task.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To represent to respect, support and collaborate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure student comprehends information before placing them in a position of sharing information. • Provide opportunities for all students to experience success.
<p>Writing</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach students how to answer questions using succinct language. • Show student how to fulfill requirements of rubrics and assignment sheets. • Provide students with list of vocabulary words that can be used for assignment. • Decide if it is the knowledge that you will be marking, or the skill. Provide students the opportunity to use technology, such as a voice recorder, voice typing, and computers. Take oral answers if assessing for knowledge. • Give students training in keyboarding so that computer use is an option. • Allow students to refer to read material (i.e. their highlighting and notes). • Have visuals that will cue students how to write reflectively. • Allow for shorter written answers • Provide opportunities for extra time to complete written assignments. • Allow students to create information orally (by taping), and then translating the information into a written format.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modify the length of the required answer (but not the quality) Allow students opportunity to rethink, reread and evaluate their responses. If checking for knowledge, also complete an oral check and include that in the marking grid. Provide opportunity to use vocabulary lists The use of reference materials may be impeded. Students may not check spelling or edit effectively. Teach grammar and editing. Grade for one skill at a time (i.e. capitalization).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To manage ideas and information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore different ways to manage ideas. Teach students how to use techniques. Allow students time to practice and figure out if it will work for them. Create systems of success (i.e. take away binders and give students folders, filing cabinets, and other organizational strategies) Allow students to keep supplies, materials, resources in your room. Teach students how to utilize technology (reminders, calendars, etc.) for assignment completion. Teach chunking techniques. Work through the process with the students, so that they can see it working. Telling students and expecting them to follow through may be setting them up for failure. Establish a system of support (parents, friends, mentor, teachers), who will aid with a system of organization. Allow students to take ownership of their learning by providing them choice and control. Do not make organization become an issue of a power struggle.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide direct instruction to the student regarding reading and writing. Sit with students and review work orally. Ask students to critically look at assignment and their writing, and suggest improvements. Offer help with specific tasks. Do not correct everything – every time. Work on one skill at a time, which is predetermined. Illustrate, through examples, what you are looking for in responses. Demonstrate excitement, and energy for topics. Explain importance and orally discuss impact.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To represent to respect, support and collaborate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunity to respond orally and through writing Provide examples and illustrations of what your expectations are. Ensure that students comprehend meaning before placing them with their peers. Offer the student choice in groups, group work and tasks. Discuss with students, what expectations you have for the assignment. Provide rubrics and other means of checklists.
<p>Viewing</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend time discussing viewed materials. Check comprehension and create strategies to help the student remember their thoughts, ideas and experiences. • Utilize technology. Ensure that training for technology, as well as time to practice with technology is provided.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that a student has time to complete assignments before proceeding on the next. This may mean the length of the assignment may need to be modified. Modification does not mean that it is easier. Ensure that the integrity of the assignment is maintained. • Training for teachers regarding assignment modification needs to be provided. • Provide some background knowledge when presenting new ideas, concepts and skills. Students may need a review that will cue them • Discuss connections between characters and plot may not be obvious to student, as the process may not be multi-dimensional. • Provide visuals for students to see connections. • Teach mind mapping, chunking,
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To manage ideas and information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization strategies such a colour coding, using headings, italics and other visual indicators should be built into the program for all students to utilize. • Intentional teaching should be done to teach the strategies and to discuss why it is important, and how to use the strategies to improve organization and the management of ideas and information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach students appropriate computer skills (typing, word processing, electronic voice systems, electric dictionaries, computer software, etc.) to utilize when reading and writing. • Teach specific writing strategies that encourages answering questions and appropriate completion of the work. • Show students examples of work that is completed satisfactorily. • Allow technology to be utilized (such as spell check). • Encourage peer editing (students, parents, etc.), teach specific editing techniques. • Make sure that students eyes are tested by and ophthalmologist who understands reading disabilities. • Allow shorter assignments, but with higher quality. • Teach techniques of reading in short bursts – to find specific information. Strategies can include understanding text book layout, skimming, scanning, reading conclusions, etc.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To represent, respect, support and collaborate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may need concepts explained verbally with concrete examples. Allow students to listen to discussion before asking for comprehension. Reading and writing may be limited in this area. Allow opportunities for verbal responses to be assessed. The use of technology to help students manipulate the information. Teach specific strategies about previewing, predicting and making inferences. QAR (Question Answering Strategies, Reciprocal Teaching Strategy, and Self Questioning Strategies are all excellent ways to help a student gather and organize information) (Alberta Education, 1996).
Speaking	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach specific vocabulary, and provide opportunities to use the vocabulary (such as word searches, treasure hunts, reward for using words, etc.). Model how words are used. Allow extra time before asking students to respond to questions. Ask the question and queue the child that you would like their response, give them time to find the answer and come back. Teach public speaking skills and specific strategies to answer questions. Allow students to practice formal speeches before presenting. When reading aloud, always provide passages ahead of time for students to practice.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow extra time for students to prepare. Provide reading passages ahead so that students can pre-read and practice. Provide opportunities for discussion, verbal instruction, and auditory presentations (such as book tapes), to allow for other methods of comprehension to occur. Create structured lessons regarding expectations regarding skills that need to be acquired.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To manage ideas and information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create visual cues to manage information and ideas. Teach note taking strategies such as mind mapping to manage new material. Create visual cues, memory systems, to do list, etc., to help working memory. Utilize technology (tape recorders, computers) to record ideas. Discuss length criteria of assignments so that quality work is created. Utilize repetition and rehearsal strategies on a daily basis

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow students to watch other presentation styles and ideas first, before having to present to class. Meet with student's often to discuss plan, and to offer suggestions. Encourage the use of technology (such as PowerPoint), to improve the opportunity to enhance clarity and artistry of communication. Provide opportunity to practice before having to present publicly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To represent, respect, support and collaborate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively teach new vocabulary, reinforcing and review vocabulary on a regular bases. Teach strategies for students to ask question when they don't understand. Strategies for poor working memory can be utilized to encourage collaboration. Use of technology (voice recorders) can allow students to reflect and organize own thoughts for collaboration. Listening techniques can be taught in collaboration with reading comprehension techniques. Active teaching on how to utilize the strategies is needed.
Listening	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach comprehension strategies to help students actively listen for specific answers. Provide and review questions before listening activity to focus student attention. Provide and discuss new vocabulary prior to activity. Supplement materials with visual cues. Ensure that material presented is loud enough for students to hear effortlessly. Encourage students to sit where they can see, hear and feel comfortable.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide extra time for student to review thoughts and formulate responses. Provide opportunity for student to listen to lesson again (either through tape recording or taped books). Review and discuss material using reflective questioning techniques that encourage students to formulate opinions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To manage ideas and information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the differences between fact and fiction. Provide information that illustrates how we can tell the differences. Create a system of organizing new words learned. Utilize electronic dictionaries, text dictionaries and other resources to improve vocabulary. Utilize mnemonics, songs, linking, etc. to help students learn new information. Use plays, skits, role-playing, etc. of new information to help with memory and comprehension.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present short segments of material, and then check for comprehension. Provide background material verbally and through text. Teach comprehension strategies that will improve listening skill. Utilizing retelling and paraphrasing strategies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To represent to respect, support and collaborate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for students to feel safe and to contribute to a group environment. Collaborative learning strategies that focus of strengths are helpful.
Representing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities to utilize technology to have materials read (either through readers, computer software, books on tapes, etc.). Utilize a number of different genres, technologies and mediums to allow students to explore their strengths and weaknesses. Provide examples of different ways to represent responses to materials. Create assessment that illustrates student's thoughts, ideas and feelings, rather than mechanics of writing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create opportunity for students to respond to oral, print, and other text, that may be different that traditional reading and writing. Teach comprehension strategies and communication strategies for students to represent what they comprehend. See Alberta Education, 1996, <i>Teaching students with learning disabilities</i>, for specific strategies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To manage ideas and information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize technology (voice recorders, computer programs, handheld devices, dictionaries, etc.) to organize ideas. Webbing, mapping, etc. strategies for organizing materials. Teach different ways to manage material and information. Cut and paste, filing systems, outlines, and portfolios help students keep organize and keep information. Teach specific strategies to manage information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing training for teachers and students with different software and mediums to communicate. Create opportunities to integrate other subject areas (such as art, music, drama, physical education, etc.). Give students choice in choosing mode of communication. Allow extra time to review and produce products. Modify length of assignments to reflect quality. Create assessment that is multi-functioning. Do not make assessment on based on one skill.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To represent to respect, support and collaborate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative learning opportunities, small and large group discussions allow students to learn different ways to represent. Provide students with different roles, strategies and presentation ideas.

This work was created by the author based on understanding of the WISC IV subtests, Grade Seven Language Arts Curriculum, and reading disabilities. These are educational strategies that teachers can utilize with a learning disabled child in their class. Specific remediation is individualized and should be taught based on the needs of the student. It is recognized that remediation of specific skills is to improve skill and not content acquisition. It may be necessary for families to seek out remediation outside of school at this level of learning, as the structure of school does not support remediation.

Synthesized from:

Alberta. Alberta Learning. Special Education Branch. (1996). *Teaching students with learning disabilities*. Book 6 of the *Programming for students with special needs*. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education.

Alberta. Alberta Learning. Curriculum Standards Branch. (2000d) *Program of studies: English Language Arts Curriculum K-9*. Retrieved April 16, 2005 from <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k%5F12/curriculum/bySubject/english/elaK-9.pdf>

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Wechsler, D. & Saklofske, D. (2004). *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - 4th edition: Canadian Manual*. Toronto, ON: Harcourt Assessment.

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Educational strategies Grade Seven	
English Language Arts Skills and Outcomes	
Reading	Strategy
• To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.	•
• To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts.	•
• To manage ideas and information.	•
• To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.	•
• To represent to respect, support and collaborate with others.	•
Writing	
• To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.	•
• To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts.	•
• To manage ideas and information.	•
• To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.	•
• To represent to respect, support and collaborate with others.	•
Viewing	
• To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.	•
• To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts.	•
• To manage ideas and information.	•
• To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.	•
• To represent to respect, support and collaborate with others.	•
Speaking	
• To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.	•
• To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts.	•
• To manage ideas and information.	•

• To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.	•
• To represent to respect, support and collaborate with others.	•
Listening	
• To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.	•
• To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts.	•
• To manage ideas and information.	•
• To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.	•
• To represent to respect, support and collaborate with others.	•
Representing	
• To explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.	•
• To comprehend and respond personally and critically to oral, print and other media texts.	•
• To manage ideas and information.	•
• To enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.	•
• To represent to respect, support and collaborate with others.	•

Accommodations suitable for Junior High Secondary School Classrooms

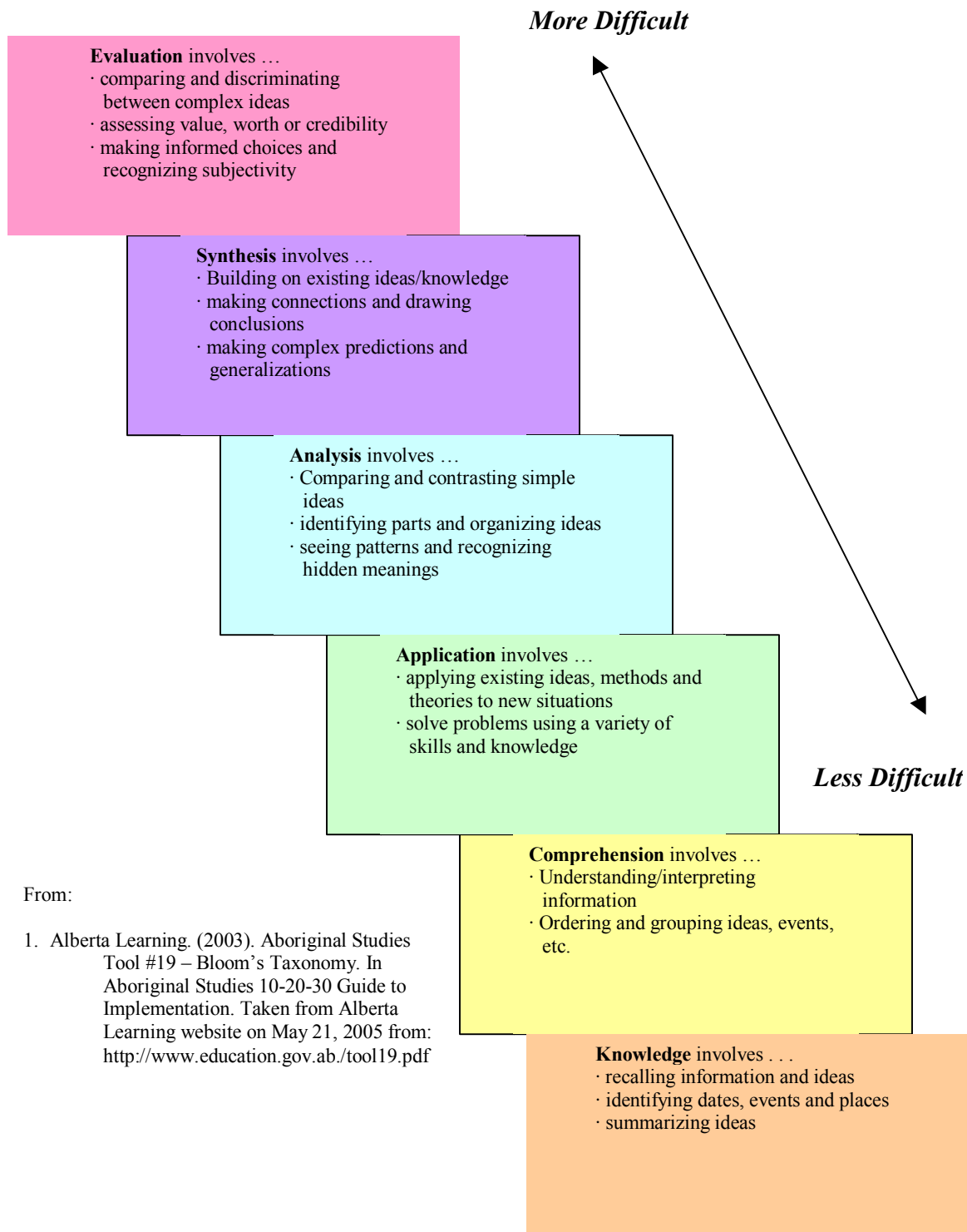
Reading difficulty

- √ Reduce amount of reading required
- √ Allow students to tape lessons, lectures and class discussions
- √ Allow other methods to collect data (i.e. interviews, tape recorders, discussion)
- √ Set time limits for task completion
- √ Enlarge text
- √ Extend time to complete tests and task completion
- √ Read directions out loud to students
- √ Read standard directions several times at the start of exams.
- √ Record directions on audio cassette.
- √ Provide written directions for exams ahead of time.
- √ Use assistive technology such as books on tape, screen readers, CD's, etc. Equipment and training must be provided for parents, teachers and the student.
- √ Ensure there is reading material available for all levels of readers
- √ Modify materials

Taken from:

Alberta. Alberta Learning. Learning and Teaching Resources Branch. (2002c). *Unlocking potential: Key components of programming for students with learning disabilities*. (ISBN 0-7785-2546-5). Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education.

Bloom's Taxonomy



From:

1. Alberta Learning. (2003). Aboriginal Studies Tool #19 – Bloom's Taxonomy. In Aboriginal Studies 10-20-30 Guide to Implementation. Taken from Alberta Learning website on May 21, 2005 from: <http://www.education.gov.ab./tool19.pdf>

Verbs for Blooms Taxonomy

From:

Alberta Learning. (2003). Aboriginal Studies Tool #19 – Bloom’s Taxonomy. In Aboriginal Studies 10-20-30 Guide to Implementation. Taken from Alberta Learning website on May 21, 2005 from:
<http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/resources/calls/rfp/abor/tool19.pdf>

Verbs associated with knowledge questions/tasks:			Verbs associated with comprehension questions/tasks:		
Count Define Describe Draw Find Identify Know Label	List Match Name Quote Recall Recite Record	Repeat Reproduce Select Sequence State/Tell View Write	Classify Conclude Convert Describe Discuss Estimate Explain Generalize	Give examples Illustrate Interpret Locate Paraphrase Predict Recognize Report	Restate Retell Review Summarize Trace Translate Understand
Verbs associated with application questions/tasks:			Verbs associated with analysis questions/tasks:		
Apply Assess Change Chart Choose Collect Compute Construct Demonstrate Determine Develop	Discover Dramatize Illustrate Imitate Implement Interview Inform Instruct Predict	Prepare Produce Relate Report Select Show Simulate Solve Transfer Use	Break down Characterize Classify Compare Contrast Correlate Debate Diagram	Differentiate Discriminate Distinguish Examine Focus Illustrate Infer Interpret Investigate	Outline Prioritize Research Relate Separate Subdivide
Verbs associated with synthesis questions/tasks:			Verbs associated with evaluation questions/tasks:		
Adapt Categorize Collaborate Combine Compile Compose Construct Create Design	Develop Generate Hypothesize Integrate Invent Make Model Modify Organize	Plan Pretend Propose Rearrange Reinforce Substitute Validate	Appraise Argue Assess Choose Compare Contrast Criticize Decide Defend	Determine Evaluate Interpret Judge Justify Measure Predict Prioritize	Prove Rank Rate Revise Recommend Select Support

Intervention Components

Adapted from:

Coleman, W.L., Levine, M.D. & Sandler, A.D. (1991). Learning Disabilities in Adolescents: Description, Assessment and Management. In R.M. Lerner, A.C. Petersen & J. Brooks-Gunn (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Adolescence* (pp. 580-590). New York, NY: Garland Publishing, Inc.



FILE CHECKLIST

STUDENT NAME: _____ Alberta Learning Code : _____

- 1. Student Monitoring Form, current year (OPTIONAL) ** _____
- 2. Diagnosis (Psychiatric or Psychological or Medical) **
(Request DSM IV five axis format when possible and as appropriate) _____
- 3. Current signed and/or initialed IPP (see IPP Checklist, page 3) _____
- 4. Supporting Documentation
 - Medical reports _____
 - Cognitive assessment _____
 - Academic assessment _____
 - Behaviour checklist for 53's, 42's and some 44's (i.e. Autism) (pgs 7-9) _____
 - Specific behaviour support plan _____
 - Description of behaviours (see pages 10-13) _____
- 5. Historical Information
 - Assessment reports _____
 - IPPs _____
 - Report cards _____
 - Work samples _____
 - Agency reports _____
- 6. Medical _____
- 7. Parental Authorizations _____

Date Completed: _____ Completed by: _____

****for students with severe disabilities only**

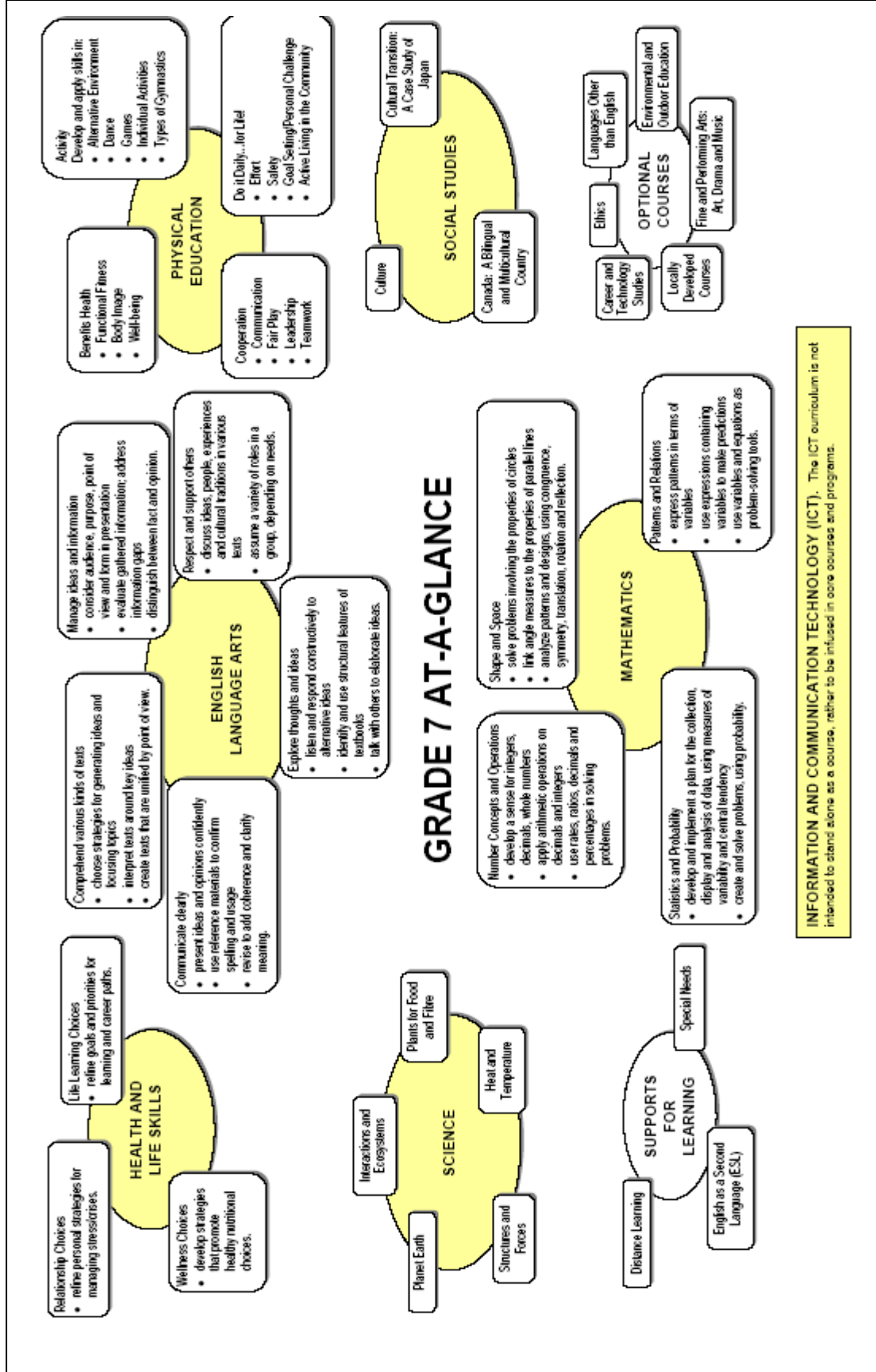
Taken from Calgary Board of Education Web site on April 28, 2005 > Staff Intranet > Public Folders>Information interface>Education Resources>Student Services>Programming Standards Review Information>Review Pkg. 2004-2005

IPP Checklist

* Alberta Learning's checklist used in the review process is on pages 5 and 6 as an alternative

- _____ IPP reflects current school year; evidence that the IPP process has been adhered to: i.e. parents initialed and dated the IPP at each reporting period for this school year.
- _____ Previous IPPs also in student's file (see file management section).
- _____ "Current Functioning Levels" section includes current academic achievement. Include behaviour assessment information for this school year for students identified under the categories 42 and 53.
- _____ Recommendations from assessment and diagnostic information are reflected in the long-term goals; (psychiatric/medical/educational).
- _____ Long term goals give highest priority to the student's identified special needs.
- _____ Short-term objectives (STO) are framed in observable and measurable terms.
- _____ STO's evaluation procedure clearly notes progress. It would be helpful when evaluating progress toward behaviour goals if timed observations or the Guide for Anecdotal Information (Antecedent/Behaviour/Consequences) were used rather than daybooks. See pages 7-8
- _____ Strategies include, as appropriate, detailed safety and/or behaviour support plans, which will be implemented when/if difficulties occur.
- _____ Strategies include explicit descriptions of intervention support; who is doing what, how many times/per week, when (e.g. "sees counselor 3 times/week, anger management 2 times/week for 1 hour.) Student / staff ratio should be clearly stated. Use Support Services / Specialized Interventions Checklist (see pages 17 - 18)
- _____ Evidence that short-term objectives evaluation procedures are being used to monitor progress, that modifications are being made and that contact is kept with the parents.
- _____ Goals and objectives are reviewed each reporting period with teachers, parents, and students, and are initialed and dated (document if parents chose not to be involved). An anecdotal record of attempts to involve parents should also be recorded - e.g. telephoned Sept. 9/04.
- _____ Changes and modifications can be handwritten.
- _____ Results of evaluations are recorded each period, include the report period date, achievement level on short-term objectives and comments of teachers, parents, and students. If objectives are not being met, adjustments need to be made i.e., revisions to objectives, strategies or evaluation procedures.
- _____ Transition planning is an on-going process. The parents, students, and teachers sign year-end transition plan (including goals to carry over and placement recommendations) in June.

Taken from Calgary Board of Education Web site on April 28, 2005 > Staff Intranet > Public Folders>Information interface>Education Resources>Student Services>Programming Standards Review Information>Review Pkg. 2004-2005



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