



MINISTRY OF  
EDUCATION

# POLICY ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

ACCESS, EQUITY AND RELEVANCE

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Ministry of Education  
Kingston, Jamaica

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**DEFINITIONS OF AREAS OF EXCEPTIONALITY  
OR  
DISABLING CONDITIONS**

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## **DEFINITIONS OF AREAS OF EXCEPTIONALITY AND DISABILING CONDITIONS**

### Autism (AU)

A developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines; and unusual responses to sensory experiences.

### Deaf-blindness (DB)

Concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of these impairments causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that the child cannot be accommodated in special education programmes solely for children with deafness, or children with blindness.

### Deafness (HH)

A hearing impairment that is so severe that with or without amplification (hearing aids), the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, to the extent that the child's educational performance is adversely affected.

### Developmental Delay (DD)

Delay of developmental milestones in the areas of physical, cognitive, communication, social, emotional, or adaptive development. Such delays are confirmed in a child aged 3 through 9 whose functioning is measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures.

### Emotional Disturbance (ED)

A condition featuring one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time, and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance (the term includes schizophrenia but does not apply to children who display socially maladaptive or maladjusted behaviours):

- a. An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.

- b. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- c. Inappropriate types of behaviour or feelings under normal circumstances.
- d. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- e. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

### Hearing Impairment (HI)

A permanent or fluctuating impairment in hearing that adversely affects a child's educational performance. (Not to be confused with the definition of deafness).

### Intellectual Disability (formerly Mental Retardation - MR)

Significantly sub-average general limitations in intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behaviour (which covers many everyday social and practical skills). This condition is manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects a child's educational performance, usually before the age of 18.

### Multiple Disabilities (MD)

Concomitant impairments (such as mental retardation-blindness, mental retardation-orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairment. The term does not include deaf-blindness.

### Physical or Motor Impairment (PI)

The term includes impairments caused by congenital anomaly (birth defects), impairments caused by disease, and impairments from other causes; or  
a severe orthopedic impairment that affects a child's educational performance significantly.

### Other Health Impairments (OHI)

Limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli (triggers), that result in limited alertness in the education environment and affects a child's educational performance adversely. Examples of OHI are:

- a) chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, or sickle cell anemia.

### Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of mental emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

### Speech or Language Impairment (SL)

A communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

### Talented and Gifted (TAG)

This category relates to demonstrated achievement or potential ability in any of the following areas, individually or in combination: general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, leadership ability, visual and performing arts.

Talented and gifted children are those who by virtue of their outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children whose potentialities require differentiated education programs and/or services beyond those normally provided for the child of *'typical'* functioning.

Therefore, gifted and talented students are those for whom a traditional educational program is not always sufficient, requiring a different approach for meeting their educational needs.



## Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

An acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairment in one or more areas, such as cognition; language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem-solving sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities, psychosocial behaviour, physical functions, information processing, and speech. The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

## Visual Impairment (VI)

This refers to impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

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**GLOSSARY**

## Glossary

**Accommodation:** The provision made to allow a student to access and demonstrate learning. *Accommodations* do not change instructional level, content or performance criteria substantially. *Accommodations* are *adaptations* made to the learning environment or testing situation in order to provide a student equal access to learning, and equal opportunity to demonstrate skill, knowledge, and competence.

**Adaptation:** The changes made to the environment, curriculum, instruction and/or assessment practices in order to allow a student maximum opportunity for successful performance or outcomes. *Adaptations* include *accommodations* and *modifications*.

**Assessment:** A continuous process by which qualified professionals use standardized tests or observation to examine all areas of a child's development. *Assessment* provides information to analyze and determine student-performance to confirm and improve teaching or learning. *Assessment* provides information about a student's special learning needs, strengths, and interests. The assessment process uses collective information from academic or behavioural tests, student-records, student-observation, as well as interviews with student and/parents to verify appropriate instructional programmes and placement decisions.

**Coordinating Officer:** Introduced formerly as the Regional Special Needs Coordinator (RSNCo), the Coordinating Officer assists school leadership in the identification and referral process for students needing special intervention in mainstream settings. The Coordinating Officer helps to develop efficient ways to ensure consistent planning and delivery of intervention programmes; and

monitors the success of educational programmes designed for students with exceptionalities in primary and secondary mainstream settings.

**Disability:** A physical, sensory, cognitive, intellectual, mental illness or psychological condition, or various types of chronic disease that interferes with an individual's ability to develop normally, learn or relate to others. The term *disability* defines a restriction in an individual's ability to perform a normal activity of daily living at the same level or competence as someone of the same age. A *disability* may affect organs or body parts; or a person's participation in areas of life. (*Disability; exceptionality; are used interchangeably with special needs.*

**Early Intervention:** The range of programmes or services designed to enhance the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities; or at risk of developmental delay. These services should be offered, to the maximum extent possible, in a natural environment, such as the home or in community settings, in which children without disabilities participate.

**Evaluation Procedures:** Steps to determine the level of functioning of an individual, the type of disability or special need; and the nature of the special education and related services required.

**Exceptional Child:** The child identified as talented and gifted, or a child with a *disability* or *special need*, requiring special education services.

**Individualized Intervention Plan (IIP):** A written statement for providing special education services to a student with exceptionalities that includes the student's present levels of educational/behavioural/social performance, the annual goals, and short-term objectives for evaluating progress toward those goals; and the specific special education and related services to be provided.

**Integration:** The desegregation, organization or combination of groups of students with and without exceptionalities in the mainstream educational setting.

**Intervention:** A method or strategy designed and focused to correct or change an individual's functional, behavioural, medical, or health status.

**Itinerant teacher:** A teacher who travels from school-to-school to provide support, or consult with other teachers to provide special instruction for students with exceptionalities. (Itinerant teacher may also be referred to as *visiting* or *peripathetic* (teacher)).

**Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** The educational setting or programme which promotes non-discrimination and allows the exceptional learner to develop and learn in an environment best suited to his/her ability, in the same setting as peers without exceptionalities.

**Mainstreaming:** Placing students with exceptionalities in general education classes while meeting their individual needs.

**Modifications:** Substantial changes in what a student is expected to learn and/or demonstrate. Changes may be made in the instructional level, content or criteria. Such changes are made to provide a student with meaningful and productive learning experiences, environments, and assessments based on individual needs and ability.

**Multi-disciplinary Teams:** Multidisciplinary teams are groups of professionals from diverse disciplines who collaborate to provide comprehensive assessment, consultation and support for students with exceptionalities. The teams may provide expert guidance on matters of placement, accommodation and other

support services needed by the student and family to ensure positive educational and life outcomes.

**Pathway Coach:** The Pathway Coach is a special educator assigned to work collaboratively with subject and grade level teachers. The Pathway Coach is responsible for the development of the student's Individual Intervention Plan (IIP) and guiding its implementation.

**Resource Room:** A separate or self-contained classroom in which students with exceptionalities are 'pulled out' from their assigned class to receive specialized individual or small-group instruction for short periods of time during the school day.

**Resource Room Teacher:** A teacher trained in special education who provides instructional services to students with exceptionalities in a Resource Room or similar setting.

**School-based Special Needs Coordinator:** The School-based Special Needs Coordinator (SBSCo) is a trained special educator who works closely with the Special Education Officer responsible for coordinating the strategic support for school-based intervention programmes and services, and needs of students involved in such programmes.

**School-to-Work Transition:** The preparation for life beyond secondary school. It involves collaboration and established linkages among student, family, school, community and service providers to develop and meet the long term needs for post-school activities and independent functioning for the student with exceptionalities.

**Special Education:** The educational provision for children whose functioning levels deviate from the established norm, to the extent that specially designed educational programmes are necessary to facilitate or foster optimum learning.

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## **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

During their educational experience, students are faced with multiple challenges, many of which are linked to difficulties in learning. Research indicates that up to 20% of children in school will need special educational intervention at some point in their school life (Gymreig, 2001). This statistical reference is supported by the annual reports from the World Health Organization (WHO); including their 2012 Status of the World's Children and the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The Ministry of Education's (MoEYI) National Assessment Programme (NAP) evaluates student-performance against key indicators as identified in the national curricula. The Student Assessment Unit (SAU) of the Ministry also reports student-performance below the expected levels of mastery on national examinations for Grades 1 to 9. If the necessary corrective measures are not effected, students experiencing academic or social challenges could continue on a path of underachievement, thus hampering their further educational growth and social development.

As parents and other stakeholders become more aware of the educational possibilities available, there is increased demand on the system to respond with timely and appropriate measures to the educational needs of the nation's children. There is also growing concern among practitioners regarding the prevalence and diversity of learning challenges experienced by students in the mainstream<sup>1</sup>, and the increasing levels of disaffection and student-disengagement. In addition, the system recognizes that practitioners are not sufficiently prepared to address the range of educational needs found in the classroom. The education system is called upon to provide equitable access to educational programmes and services; and opportunities that would facilitate increased competencies for practitioners.

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<sup>1</sup> Regular or general education setting



The Government of Jamaica is committed to providing quality education for all children. This commitment must apply to the estimated twenty per cent (20%) of children with exceptionalities who may require some form of special educational services during their school years (WHO, 2007; 2012). Such children, they suggest, would experience challenges in the classroom, thereby requiring special provision beyond that which is normally given in a general education setting.

According to the British Special Needs Code of Practice (2001), children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty that requires special educational provision to be made for them. The Code further states that children have a learning difficulty if they:

- i. have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age; or
- ii. have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age.

The Code defines special educational provision as additional or different educational services provided for children, than is usually provided for their age or grade counterparts; other than that made for the child in mainstream schools. ***Children are served in special education programmes because they require remedial or enrichment support in cognitive, sensory, emotional, behavioural, or physical functioning and development. The range of special education provision includes intervention for children identified as talented and gifted, to those with severe functioning deficits.***

In its White Paper published 2001, the Ministry of Education and Youth<sup>2</sup> identifies our human resources as the primary tools for personal, social and economic development and endorses education as a human right. The mission of the MoEY summarized in the 2001 White Paper, is to achieve the effective integration of educational and cultural resources. In order to meet the 2001 objectives the MoEY sought to provide a system which secured quality education and training for all persons in Jamaica. The guiding philosophy of the national shared vision for education in Jamaica is captured in the motto: 'Each child can learn ... Every child must learn'; a statement with which the Task Force on Education Reform (2004) concurred. For this to be realized, all students must be treated as learners having potential for further development. Provision must, therefore, be made for access to educational programmes at all levels of the system to allow students to maximize their potential.

In transforming the education system, educators are faced with the unique opportunity of influencing its direction and development while sustaining the practice and programmes characteristic of an inclusive education system. This influence extends to communities, guiding them into becoming groups of citizens who are more caring and more informed and socially aware. Increased awareness among communities creates an important catalyst through which the desired improved and evolved educational and social development may be effected. The collective effort of communities in supporting the implementation of policy goals will create sustained focus for quality educational outcomes for all students.

## **2.0 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS**

Census figures for the 2016 academic year from the Planning and Development Division of the MoEYI indicated that there were 454 teachers

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<sup>2</sup> Listed and named as Ministry of Youth and Culture in 2001

employed in special education institutions. Of this number, 150 were trained special educators. The overall teacher-complement comprised Graduate-trained and College-trained special educators, as well as those who were untrained in the area of special education. The 2016 census further indicated an enrolment of 3,963 students with diagnosed and categorized special needs served in 66 locations across the island. The reported figures include students with: (a) Autism, (b) Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); (c) Learning Disabilities, (d) Intellectual Disability (formerly Mental Retardation); (e) Multiple Disabilities; (f) Speech/Language Disorders; (g) Physical Disabilities; those who are (h) Blind or Visually Impaired, and (i) Deaf or Hard of Hearing; as well as others with unspecified disabilities.

Students are served in approximately 47 recognized independent and government facilities (inclusive of satellites) at the pre-school, primary and secondary levels across the island. There is one post-secondary vocational training facility serving youth and adults with special needs. Despite the educational provision at present, the demand for special education services far outweighs the system's ability to provide for the myriad administrative, instructional, corrective, therapeutic, and professional needs.

## **2.1 Historical Framework**

Formal education for children with disabilities<sup>3</sup> in Jamaica was introduced by parents and educators in the 1950s<sup>4</sup>, out of their concerns for the limited options to meet the educational needs of their children. This initiative attracted interest groups and later resulted in the formation of Non-governmental Organizations

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<sup>3</sup> The terms 'exceptionalities' or 'special needs' are also used in this document. The interchangeable references relate to the descriptors used by the supporting literature at particular periods of time,

<sup>4</sup> Randolph Lopez (1956); Rev. Lister Mair and John Gilby (1966)

(NGOs) which became advocates for the cause of equitable and accessible education to establish and maintain their affiliate-schools<sup>5</sup>.

In 1973 the Government of Jamaica introduced free education for all, which had implications for the education of children with disabilities. In view of this new direction, NGOs were empowered, and increased their advocacy to ensure the inclusion of children with special needs as beneficiaries of free education.

In 1974, the Government of Jamaica agreed to undertake responsibility for the recurrent costs of NGO-affiliated schools, including the payment of teachers' salaries; while the organizations would continue to own and operate the schools. The government further pledged its support in providing financial assistance for children with disabilities who might benefit from instruction in the mainstream.

Assistance to establish a programme of special education was provided through a Co-operation Agreement between the Government of Jamaica (GoJ) and the Netherlands Government in 1975. This agreement resulted in the establishment of a formalized programme to organize and deliver special education in Jamaica.

The following were implemented on a phased basis as part of the agreement:

- i. Training of teachers in special education at the Mico Teachers' College
- ii. The establishment of the Mico Child Assessment and Research in Education (C.A.R.E.) Centre to undertake research and provide diagnostic and therapeutic services for children in the Caribbean region
- iii. Extension of the physical facilities of the St. Christopher's School for the Deaf

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<sup>5</sup> For example: Jamaica Association for the Deaf and its affiliate school – Lister/Mair-Gilby School for the Deaf

- iv. The introduction of a Bachelor's degree in Special Education delivered jointly by the Mico Teachers' College<sup>6</sup> and the University of the West Indies
- v. The building of six (6) Special Education Units attached to regular Primary and All/Age schools. These Units were built to facilitate the concept and practice of mainstreaming, providing students with special educational needs access to learning in the least restrictive environment<sup>7</sup>. Students with varying disabilities within the mild to moderate levels of cognitive functioning were taught in these settings, with opportunity to integrate with their peers in the general school population.

The Special Education Administrative Unit was established in the Ministry of Education in 1986, with its main function being the supervision of special education programmes island-wide. The Unit's mandate, at its inception, was to secure appropriate educational opportunities for students with special needs in the mainstream, as well as in special/segregated schools.

In 1989 a module in special education was introduced in all Teachers' Colleges to provide teachers-in-training with an understanding of the needs of the exceptional learner; and to equip them with strategies for working with students with special educational needs. The Mico University College and Sam Sharpe Teachers' College historically, have offered full certification in special education. Over time, other tertiary institutions began to offer selected courses in the area.

The UN<sup>8</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the UNESCO<sup>9</sup> Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994) recognize the rights of

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<sup>6</sup> Renamed the Mico University College in 2011

<sup>7</sup> LRE; the most appropriate educational environment, which facilitates maximum development for the student (Further details at Section 9.5)

<sup>8</sup> United Nations

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

all children to quality education. As outlined in these agreements, the State must take responsibility for the provision of financial and other resources to effect the right to education for every child.

Education, in whatever setting, should be consistent with the full range of the rights of the child, according to the CRC. The UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action further posits that education should aim to develop the child's personality, talents, mental and physical abilities to the fullest extent, and that education should prepare the child for active adult life. The Jamaican government was signatory to both agreements, and the CRC was ratified by the Jamaican Government in 1991. As signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), the Government of Jamaica further articulated the commitment to provide improved access and equity in the provision of educational opportunities for students with exceptionalities. The various policy-related recommendations are supported by the following statement published by the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (1996).

**“Education influences the realization of all human rights – economic, social, cultural, civil and political and is therefore the key to children’s present and future life experiences”.**

The Five Year Plan (1990-1995) developed by the then Ministry of Education and Youth included a commitment to provide *one special educator to every 480 students* in the regular school. This process began with the establishment of a limited number of Resource Rooms in Primary, All-Age, Junior High and Secondary Schools, and the assignment of teachers to serve students in those settings. It was intended that the commitment continue until *all schools* provide a programme for students needing special intervention. In anticipation of this provision, the Special Education Administrative Unit began training teachers island-wide in assessment procedures and in the establishment of Resource

Rooms for pull-out intervention. A manual was developed to guide teachers in the establishment and operation of Resource Room services.

It is anticipated that the special education efforts under the transformation agenda will advance the adoption of the Resource Room<sup>10</sup> concept being applied broadly, in all schools.

### **3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Irrespective of the level of severity of exceptionality, individuals with special needs are marginalized, often with limited access to equitable educational provisions at all levels of the education system. Many parents lack awareness and knowledge regarding the needs of their children with exceptionalities. Limited awareness, knowledge and training on the part of educators, administrators, advocates, medical personnel, and other service providers, have significant negative impact on the overall growth and development of persons with exceptionalities. In addition, resources to address the needs of students appropriately are often insufficient, frustrating practitioners, and impeding positive learner-outcomes. The inadequacy of qualified persons with the specialized skills to support students in mainstream settings, as well as the scarcity of affordable assessment facilities, militate against the effective planning and implementation of programmes for students with exceptionalities. These negative factors undermine the optimal functioning of teachers and students. for

Another negative factor affecting equitable access to educational opportunities in mainstream settings, relates to reported cases of reluctance of some principals to accept students with specific disabilities. At the time of

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<sup>10</sup>In the context of special education, Resource Room services are provided to meet the needs of children identified as needing special intervention, and who required additional intensive instructional support for learning and behaviour management.

submission of this document, there was no local published research on the attitude of school administrators and teachers toward students with disabilities in the mainstream. Practitioners have, however, examined the occurrence, and shared their findings in local conferences. Teacher-attitude towards students with specific disabilities in mainstream is of interest in the global field of special education because it is seen as discriminatory. Attention to the matter was brought into focus as early as 1998 when studies were presented at the Sixth International Congress on the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities.

Reluctance on the part of school leadership is often an expression of anxiety, misunderstanding, and fear of over-burdening or overloading the classroom. The reluctance relates also to the perceived demand placed on staff, who have limited or no experience or resources to implement any special intervention.

Within the context of a society that is incompatible with their individual needs, interests, and abilities, individuals with exceptionalities are not accorded much respect. The capacity for self-determination and more positive outcomes for this population are further impeded by a limited range of opportunities. Educational services provided by the government must not only be accessible, but must also be sufficient to enable the learner reasonable opportunity for self-fulfillment.

The Ministry of Education Youth and Information (MoEYI) is concerned about students not meeting key performance standards. Although showing improvement, national scores on the Grade 4 Literacy Test (2012) indicated a 74% mastery attainment in literacy, compared to the reported 68% mastery level in 2010. Tireless efforts in training and instruction resulted in the attainment of the targeted 85% in 2015. Underperformance is evident at the secondary level, in Mathematics and English Language, based on the results of the Caribbean Secondary Examination (CSEC). The reported underperformance among students sitting these examinations as well as tests on the National Assessment Programme (NAP), may result from unidentified learning difficulties,



although these students are in the mainstream. Gifted students, many of whom have been labeled as 'disruptive' or 'misfits' may often be found among underperformers.

In many cases, teachers in our classrooms are not equipped to cater to students with exceptionalities. As a consequence, instructional strategies are ineffective, and students are not given the opportunity to maximize their potential.

In the absence of legislation, few changes are likely to occur in the school system, thereby allowing principals and teachers to perpetuate the violation of the rights of the child through intentional discrimination. Efforts must be made for equitable distribution of resources. Special consideration must also be given to the provision of enrichment or remedial programmes across the system to meet the educational needs of students requiring such services.

Post-secondary opportunities for students with exceptionalities are limited. This may be due to the limited scope or support to facilitate preparation for life beyond school, at the higher levels of the education system. It is because of these variables presented that it became necessary to develop a policy to guide the effective delivery and practice of special education services in Jamaica.

#### **4 PHILOSOPHY**

This policy acknowledges that education is a fundamental right of every child, giving every child, including those with special needs, an equal opportunity to acquire an appropriate education. In this context, all children are recognized as unique individuals and as such, are valued equally. Value should not be determined by a student's ability or disability. Every child is entitled to publicly-funded tuition in a public education institution at the primary level (Charter of Rights, [2011]).

*Children identified as having special learning needs shall be provided with appropriate special education in the least restrictive public education*

*environment. To the maximum extent possible, expectations must aim to include students with exceptionalities at all levels, with appropriate support systems, in regular education programmes* (National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, 2000; UN CPD, 2006).

Individual intervention programmes must be developed on the basis of information gathered from multiple sources, by regular and special educators, parents, the student, and other involved persons as appropriate. Individual intervention programmes must portray a comprehensive and accurate view of the student, and his or her learning needs and abilities. Implementing these programmes may require environmental or instructional accommodations in regular classrooms, through the provision of appropriate support for students and teachers. Early identification and intervention are critical in addressing the academic, behavioural, physical, and social needs of students with exceptionalities. The educational programmes, interventions and needs for students with exceptionalities are most effective when provided on a continuum of service delivery. In our educational context, students are served from age three (3) through age eighteen (18) years old.

The policy provides for the delivery of educational services from early childhood to age twenty-one (21) years old. The age of provision is extended to accommodate the disparity between the individual's functional needs and chronological age, often resulting from the severity of a disability or disabling condition.

Provision for students with special educational needs is a matter for the school as a whole. Principals have the main responsibility to ensure that all members of staff participate fully in the delivery and implementation of special education services and accommodations. All teachers are likely to encounter students in the classroom, with some form of special educational need. Teaching is a *whole-school* responsibility, requiring a *whole-school* response. The way in which this responsibility is exercised in practice, must ensure the meeting of some minimal standards, with consideration for the school's circumstances. A

continuous cycle of planning, teaching, assessment and evaluation that considers the students' wide range of abilities, aptitudes and interests, must be a central feature in instructional planning.

Comprehensive student-centered services require cooperative efforts of educational and other service providers, as well as families. Positive educational outcomes essentially require the continued involvement of the family. Educational provision for children with special needs, or those needing special intervention, will be delivered on a cooperative and collaborative model. Such a model will engage the skills of regular and special education staff, so that each student benefits from instruction in the mainstream educational setting.

## **5 POLICY GOALS**

1. To promote equity and access to educational opportunities for children and youth with special needs at all levels of the education system.
2. To promote a system of inclusive education where possible, recognizing that some children may be best served in segregated facilities or home-based programmes.

## **6 POLICY OBJECTIVES**

1. To afford students at every level (early childhood, to tertiary, where possible) the opportunity to access appropriate education and accommodation<sup>11</sup> relevant to their identified needs and abilities
2. To facilitate access to appropriate educational programmes and services through the process of early identification and referral
3. To preserve the rights of the child with exceptionalities, and protect against discrimination in educational settings
4. To institute a consistent, relevant, inter-sector, collaborative, and sustainable

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<sup>11</sup> Accommodation, in these circumstances, refers to adjustment in the learning environment, delivery of instruction, mode of assessment, and other support services

- framework to support the educational and developmental needs of students with exceptionalities
5. To promote public awareness of each student's right to quality education
  6. To improve the management of special education services to meet strategic development goals through a structured monitoring system
  7. To foster partnerships with parent-serving agencies to augment and support parent education and understanding of their children with exceptionalities
  8. To create opportunities to facilitate continuous professional development for special education practitioners
  9. To encourage continuous research that will inform strategic planning and systemic improvement.
  10. To advocate for technical and budgetary provision to support special education programmes endorsed by the MoEYI

## **7 THE VISION STATEMENT**

The Special Education policy is introduced to support the MoEYI's commitment to universal education, summarized in the motto: '*Every child can learn...every child must learn*'. This commitment to inclusive focus in educational provision is consistent with the goals of the Vision 2030 Plan for the attainment of educational system, accessible to all students. It further acknowledges that all students are entitled to a broad-based, relevant, and appropriate education. To accomplish this, a flexible process in delivering structured educational programmes is required. The policy will determine the direction and framework for collaboration in order to form or solidify stakeholder partnerships; strengthening the interrelatedness of various service components for a cohesive model of service delivery.

The policy reflects the government's commitment to meet the educational needs of all children. In conjunction with the strategic plans for the transformation of the education system, the policy will ensure that reforms within the system reflect provisions for students with special needs.

The policy will promote equal opportunities for students considered vulnerable or disadvantaged, and will provide a secure structure of support to allow students with a range of exceptionalities to maximize their potential. It will further acknowledge and enforce the fundamental rights of all children to quality education.

In addition, the policy will guide the development of programmes for young children who may be denied entry into regular schools because of severely disabling conditions which may, or may not be complicated by co-existing cognitive deficits. Although community-based rehabilitation programmes provide services for such children, they do not necessarily provide them with formal education.

## **8 COMPONENTS OF THE POLICY**

### **8.1 Provision for Early Childhood**

Early childhood education is the foundation stage of education for children birth to eight (8) years old. This is a critical stage in a child's life, as it is during this time that children experience rapid physical, emotional, intellectual and social growth. It is also a crucial period for children with exceptionalities, as it is important that the exceptionalities be identified early, with the provision of appropriate intervention to help the child achieve his/her full potential.

### **8.2 Definition of Early Childhood Development**

Early childhood development lays the foundation for future learning. It is defined as the range of expected developmental milestones and skills for children in their formative years. "Early Childhood Education" refers to the organized programmes designed for the child, birth to eight (8) years old, to foster growth and development in the following areas:

- i. Personal, social, and emotional development
- ii. Communication, and language development
- iii. Mathematical skill development
- iv. Knowledge and understanding of the world
- v. Physical development
- vi. Creative development
- vii. Independent skills<sup>12</sup>

### **8.3 Provisions for Children at the Early Childhood Level**

- i. Recognize the parental duty to secure education for the child with special needs, by ensuring that he or she is enrolled and attending school on the same basis as his or her age peers (Section 28; Child Care and Protection Act).
- ii. Establish 'least restrictive environment' placement practice, affording every child the opportunity to receive an appropriate education.
- iii. Provide professional development opportunities to equip educators with the skills and confidence to serve young children
- iv. Facilitate access to support personnel for schools providing special educational services for children birth to eight (8) years old.
- v. Provide and facilitate professional development activities for the school community including school boards.
- vi. Provide holistic developmental curricula guides to be used in special education programmes for children birth to eight (8)

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<sup>12</sup> 'Independent Skills', in these circumstances, refers to age-appropriate, adaptive life skills e.g. personal hygiene, feeding one's self etc.

years old for physical, social, intellectual, and emotional growth.

- vii. Provide a curriculum inclusive of appropriate educational goals and developmental expectations, as well as experiences that will promote high interest and positive values for all students.
- viii. Institute regularly scheduled Individual Intervention Plan (IIP) conferences at least once a year; at which the participation of parents/guardians is expected.

### **8.3.1 Support for Children**

- i. Provide quality early childhood special education programmes.
- ii. In collaboration with relevant MDAs, the private and voluntary sectors, provide services to ensure the earliest possible identification and support for young children with special needs.
- iii. Establish appropriate time-lines within which identification, referral, and assessments must be completed to provide appropriate intervention.
- iv. Collaborate with relevant MDAs to establish standards for early stimulation services for children who are developmentally delayed or at risk for developing disabling conditions.
- v. On the basis of a means test and evidence of special educational need, provide placement assistance for students in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

### **8.3.2 Support for Parents/Guardians/Caregivers**

Through collaboration with the National Parenting Support Commission, an agency of the Ministry of Education:

- i. Promote parental involvement in the education of their children.
- ii. Provide information on available educational opportunities and services for children with specific disabilities during the early years.
- iii. Provide access to information and counseling programmes to families to enable them to make appropriate choices for their child's social and educational well-being.
- iv. Facilitate the co-ordination of parent support organizations/associations, activities and services to benefit the special needs community.

## **9 SPECIAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL**

### **9.1 Introduction**

In the Jamaican Education System, most of our students entering the primary level would have had exposure to early childhood education, through private or government institutions. There are others who enter the primary level directly without any early formal preparation.

The introduction of the Child Health and Development Passport (CHDP; Ministry of Health) and the continued work of the Early Stimulation Programme (ESP; Ministry of Labour and Social Security) will contribute to early screening or early identification of children with special needs. These services should eliminate the previously limited identification of children with visible signs of exceptionalities.

In 1991 the Ministry of Education introduced the Grade One Readiness Inventory (GRI), and was re-designed in 2006 as the Grade One Individual Learning Profile. This mandatory screening instrument is administered to all



students before they enter Grade 1 to evaluate their readiness and prerequisite skills required to enter the formal education system.

Other critical stages to evaluate attainment of educational standards through the National Assessment Programme (NAP), are at the end of Grades 2, 4 and 6<sup>13</sup>. At each stage, the student is assessed against the National Standards Curriculum (NSC), to determine levels of attainment according to age, grade, and national norms. The NAP is used to assess students' attainment of established benchmarks on the NSC at the primary and secondary levels. Performance on the NAP will identify those who: (a) exceed expectations (b) meet expectations, and (c) fall below expectations for age, grade, and national norms.

It is the prerogative of the education system to ensure that the needs of the exceptional learner are met both at the local (school) and national levels. Consequently, all stakeholders – the State, the school principal, the school board, and all other members of staff have important responsibilities, in their day-to-day functions to ensure the needs of students are addressed. ***All teachers are teachers of children with special educational needs.*** Teaching children who function above or below the established performance norms is, therefore, the responsibility of the whole school.

The National Standards Curriculum (NSC) programmes of study set out the knowledge, skills attitudes and values to be acquired by students in different age groups. Teachers are expected to plan from the NSC accordingly, making the necessary adjustments to suit the demonstrated learning needs observed among students.

At every level of the system, there must be measures in place to cater to the learning, behavioural and emotional needs of students identified or diagnosed with exceptionalities. Students whose functioning levels deviate from the

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<sup>13</sup> Grade Two Diagnostic (to replace the Grade Three Diagnostic Test); Grade Four Literacy/Numeracy Tests; and the Grade Six Achievement Test, to be replaced by the Primary Exit Examination (2014)

established functioning norms are likely candidates for special education services. A major issue in the system is that children who start primary school with learning problems are likely to be classified erroneously as being Intellectually Disabled (Mentally Retarded). This error is due largely to lack of early or appropriate identification procedures. It is imperative that the system has a mechanism which facilitates early identification and referral to ensure appropriate classification of special needs and provision of necessary intervention options.

The evaluation process should, therefore, be fourfold: focusing on the student's (a) learning characteristics, (b) the learning environment, (c) instructional tasks and, (d) the teaching styles to which the student is exposed. Some educational and attitudinal challenges experienced by the student may be caused or exacerbated by adult-child relationships; as well as factors affecting the student's learning or living environment. In order to allow the student to learn effectively, (a) teacher-competence, attitude, and style, (b) classroom environment, (c) instructional materials, and (d) methodologies, should be carefully examined.

## **9.2 Entry Requirement**

On entering the primary level of the education system each child must complete a National Registration Form., Records providing the student's previous educational history should be submitted as part of the admission documentation. In addition to the birth certificate, immunization records, *which are mandatory*, information on comprehensive medical examinations or any special medical conditions that may affect the student's education should be included<sup>14</sup>. Students entering segregated facilities will require a medical and/or psycho-educational report indicating the documented disability and recommended services. These records will provide the receiving school with valuable information with which to

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<sup>14</sup> National Child Health Development Passport (NCHDP)

start the process of determining appropriate placement or services for the student.

### **9.2.1 Procedure**

If a student has an identified special educational need when he/she starts primary school, collective action of the principal, the Special Education Unit's Coordinating Officer in mainstream, (See 9.3), and the student's class teacher should:

- i. use information from the student's previous educational experience and the Grade One Individual Learning Profile (GOILP) to identify starting points for the development of an Individual Individual Plan (IIP), to guide skill improvement for the student.
- ii. identify and focus attention on the student's skills and highlight areas for in-class support;
- iii. use the curriculum and the GOILP, or other relevant performance data from the NAP to determine the student's present level of academic functioning;
- iv. ensure that the results from baseline assessment and continuous assessment form the basis for instructional planning and future instruction;
- v. communicate assessment results to the relevant resource personnel<sup>15</sup>, and parents/guardian;
- vi. involve parents/guardians in developing and implementing a joint learning approach for home and school.

Information gleaned from the four critical points of the NAP (Grades 1, 2, 4 and 6),<sup>16</sup> must be used for instructional and programme planning.

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<sup>15</sup> Education Officer; or Special Needs Coordinator

Principals at the primary level must be sensitized to the importance, and process, of early identification, assessment, and instructional planning for students with exceptionalities.

### **9.3 Proficiency Pathway**

The Proficiency Pathway (PPw) is a multi-step guide for the management of instruction and intervention decisions for students at primary and secondary levels. The Proficiency Pathway acknowledges that students are likely to function with little or no need for additional instructional support, and, therefore, deemed '*Ready*' to access the curriculum. Two other functioning levels may also be observed, namely, '*Almost Ready*', with such students requiring moderate or short-term intervention; and '*Not Ready*' or showing need for intensive support because of and diagnosed special need. The awareness of these differentiated needs continues into the secondary level through the Alternative Pathways to Secondary Education (APSE).

The process begins at the point of entry into school, with the results of the GOILP being used to determine the student's level of readiness for formal education. The PPw provides a guide to instructional leaders to align students on the pathway best suited to their demonstrated competence. The PPw allows for instruction that meets the diverse needs of the learner. The approach is consistent with the learner-centred philosophy.

The Proficiency Pathway directs school leadership through the process of identification, observation, referral, intervention, formal evaluation, support, alternative placement, or handover, to determine the most appropriate decisions for instruction and intervention.

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<sup>16</sup> Grade One Individual Learning Profile; Grade Two Diagnostic Test; Grade Four Literacy or Numeracy Test; The Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) will be replaced by a primary exit examination.

## **9.4 STAFFING**

The officer corps of the Special Education Unit will include officers specially assigned to provide coordinating support in mainstream settings. This group of Special Education Officers will be responsible to guide the development, implementation, and monitoring of special education programmes in mainstream schools.

### **9.4.1 The Role of the Mainstream Coordinating Officer**

With the decentralizing of the Special Education Unit, and expansion of its functions to all Regional Offices, support will be more available to schools across the regions. These officers will play a key role in determining the strategic development of programmes and services schools require to address educational provision for students with exceptionalities.

The Mainstream Coordinating Officer will:

- i. work closely with the school and other MoEYI personnel to ensure that the policy of the MoEYI regarding the education of students with exceptionalities is implemented in daily practice;
- ii. ensure that each student with a documented disability, or identified as needing special education support has an Individual Intervention Plan (IIP);
- iii. work closely with the Student Support Team (SST)<sup>17</sup>, to ensure that the IIP is implemented as stated;
- iv. monitor the implementation of intervention programmes, methods of assessment, and standards of student-achievement used in school-based intervention programmes.

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<sup>17</sup> Student Support Teams may include: parents, students, representatives from the staff, relevant agencies; or specialists providing support or services

The coordinating functions of these officers are to ensure efficient ways to ensure consistent planning and delivery of programme goals are developed and monitored for successful outcomes. Their specially-focused support will enable teachers to overcome barriers to effective teaching and learning (See 8.3, Language Education Policy Guidelines; See Assessment, Section 12.00).

Their functions will also include collaboration with principals, grade coordinators/supervisors, or Pathway Coaches to ensure that students are given equal priority, and that available resources are used to maximum effect.

Key responsibilities include supporting the work of other Education Officers within the regions through the following:

- i. Oversee the implementation of the MoEYI's policy on special education, in daily practice.
- ii. Coordinate assessment and educational provision for students with special educational needs.
- iii. Oversee the implementation of standards for special education services for students receiving support.
- iv. Liaise with, and advise schools personnel on special education issues.
- v. Liaise with parents/guardians of students with special educational needs regarding support and service-provision.
- vi. Liaise with and support the functions of other Education Officers
  - a. regarding the progress of school-based support programmes;
  - b. students identified for assessment, support or other placement;
  - c. formulation of Multi-disciplinary Teams or other support services; and
  - d. organize, and/or conduct in-service training activities.

- vii. Liaise with external agencies (educational assessment agencies, health and social services, as well as voluntary bodies) to determine the inter-agency or inter-sector support services to be provided for students based on assessment or observed needs for special intervention.

In order to ensure a fluid and strong structure for special education support, special educators will be assigned to function as cluster-based or School-based Special Needs Coordinators.

#### **9.4.1.1 Role and Function of School-Based Special Needs Coordinators**

The School-based Special Needs Coordinator (SBSCo) is a trained teacher and qualified special educator employed to the school, who works closely with the Special Education Team of the MoEYI to coordinate the strategic support for school-based intervention programmes and services, for students with special needs, as well as those requiring special intervention. Their main responsibilities include:

- i. Collaborating with school leadership and instructional staff to establish intervention programmes
- ii. Consulting with referring school personnel on student-related matters to ensure appropriate support or services
- iii. Providing support to fellow teachers on special education issues
- iv. Assisting in the process of identification and referral for assessment, or decisions for placement or related services for students needing special intervention
- v. Ensuring that the protocol<sup>18</sup> for Individual Intervention Plans (IIPs) is observed; and IIPs are implemented as stated.

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<sup>18</sup> Refer to Guidelines for Identification and Referral: A Handbook for Principals and Teachers (2011, MoE)

- vi. Collaborating with teachers or others providing intervention services to ensure the effectiveness of prescribed strategies being used
- vii. Participating in in-service programmes, seminars, for teachers; and sensitization for public education for school and community

## **9.5 PLACEMENT AND PROVISION**

### **Placement**

- i. Every effort should be made to place students receiving special education services in the **least restrictive environment (LRE)**; thereby allowing them access to educational opportunities and experiences to continue their development without bias or prejudice.
- ii. Students with documented disabilities, but who are able to be educated in the mainstream, will receive the necessary support intervention services to aid their continued development.
- iii. Students are placed in a Special Class based on documented proof of their need for specialized instruction and support.
- iv. Students placed in a Special Class may be transitioned into the mainstream or alternative opportunities for learning as their observed performance dictates.
- v. Students at the primary level identified through assessment as Talented and Gifted (TAG) should be placed in accelerated or enrichment programmes to facilitate their learning. Based on readiness, and where appropriate, provision should be made in the regulations to permit students so identified to sit the primary exit examination at an earlier age.
- vi. Parents/Guardians/Caregivers will be notified and given opportunity to respond to a proposal for placement, prior to any decision being taken; or before implementing programmes or accommodations for their child/ward.



- vii. Parents/guardians/caregivers will be informed through parent conferences and other sensitization sessions to ensure they understand the decisions for placement or educational services made for their child/ward.
- viii. Parents/Guardians/Caregivers will have the right to examine or query records relating to student-placement or educational intervention.

### **Provision**

- i. Parents/Guardians/Caregivers seeking special education services or intervention for students with exceptionalities must present documented proof of diagnosed disability or condition, with the recommended accommodations. In the case of students transitioning across educational levels (early childhood to primary; primary to secondary, e.g.) documented proof of prior services or accommodations must be presented to ensure continuity of service or accommodations.
- ii. Resource Rooms and other special education programmes must be staffed with a qualified special educator, trained to provide the specialized instructional support required by students.
- iii. Where the Special Class placement option is used, the class size must reflect suitable teacher:pupil ratios, with provision for teaching support, and relevant instructional materials (See Section 13.00 for Teacher:Pupil ratio).
- iv. Each student in a special education programme must have an IIP written to address the identified goals for knowledge, skill or behaviour. The SST developing the student's IIP should include, but not be limited to the SBSCo, grade coordinator, special educator, class teacher, and parents/guardians.
- v. The IIP must be evaluated at least twice per year to:

- a) determine the achievement of stated goals;
  - b) address adjustments to ensure optimum delivery of instruction and services; and
  - c) inform future planning
- vi. Children with physical impairment or disabilities must not be denied access to the mainstream solely on the basis of their physical condition.
- vii. Schools should encourage flexible arrangements to enable students identified as Talented and Gifted to access instruction at their actual functioning levels in recommended subject areas or programmes.

## **9.6 ACCOMMODATION**

In this Policy, the term *accommodation* refers to compensatory education and modifications in any of the following: the instructional environment, delivery of instruction, performance expectations and student assessment and evaluations (e.g. NAP). Accommodation should be informed by recommendations from formal assessment, or advanced screening, and should be integral to the enhancement of the student's general learning experience.

Students identified as needing accommodation to facilitate their best performance in an examination should be allowed the recommended accommodation. The MoEYI<sup>19</sup> must review the recommended accommodations and approve such, within its available resources.

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<sup>19</sup> Student Assessment Unit (SAU) and Special Education Unit (SEU)

## **9.7 INFRASTRUCTURE**

All new school buildings must be designed to accommodate accessibility features<sup>20</sup> to provide seamless physical access. Where possible, existing facilities should be modified accordingly, and be equipped to facilitate the use of various assistive and technological devices.

## **9.8 THE TALENTED AND GIFTED (TAG)**

Jamaica is moving towards creating a world-class inclusive education system that provides learning opportunities of ready access and equity for all children of school age.

Children with special education needs must have the same rights to quality education as their age-peers. Recognizing and nurturing giftedness often present challenges to educators. Schools must respond to the educational needs of such children before their abilities diminish or become less recognizable.

Gifted students are identified as those demonstrating exceptionally high levels of abilities whether across a range of endeavours or in a specific skill area or field of studies. Gifted students may also be those whose potential for excellence has not been recognized by standardized tests or experts. The innate or latent potential can only develop into exceptionally high achievement in enriching learning environments and programmes with appropriate materials, resources and other provision meant to foster maximum achievement.

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<sup>20</sup>Accessibility features include: ramps, rails, lowered lab tables, basins, water fountains, wider bathroom stalls, sloped and textured walkways, for example.

## 9.9 PROVISIONS FOR THE TALENTED AND GIFTED

The focus of special education at the primary and secondary levels is to identify, plan and meet the individual learning and developmental needs of all students who require such consideration, therefore:

- i. Students exhibiting giftedness, must be identified and referred at earliest grade level possible, to allow t appropriate planning and support services to meet their needs.
- ii. Children assessed at the primary and secondary levels as gifted, are to be granted the instructional support needed to enrich and enhance their development.
- iii. Schools and agencies must adapt programmes and/or curricula to ensure that the academic and developmental needs of students identified as TAG are met.
- iv. Schools must allow flexibility in accessing instruction for students, , such as: instruction at higher grade levels, or independent learning opportunities, for example
- v. The necessary documentation informing educational adaptations and accommodations must be presented to allow the smooth admission and transition process for students moving across educational levels.
- vi. Flexible programming and special activities (skill camps, for example) must be organized to promote opportunities for skill enrichment and excellence among students identified as TAG.
- vii. Mainstream teachers, special educators and school boards must engage in sensitization activities, promoting increased awareness of educational and developmental needs of students identified as TAG.
- viii. Professional development activities for teachers must include appropriate skills and strategies to improve instructional competencies to facilitate the TAG student's development.

- ix. Identify and nurture the characteristics and traits in teachers that pre-dispose them to effective, nurturing interaction with the TAG student.

## **10.0 IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT AND PROVISION AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL**

### **10.1 Provision in the Mainstream**

The cumulative primary school records of all students with exceptionalities should accompany them to the secondary level. The primary school records bearing the student's educational and service history will inform programme planning and the necessary educational accommodation required by the student, thus rendering smoother transition into the secondary level. As obtains for students who may have been identified with a documented disability prior to entering the primary level, the specialized service would continue at the secondary level..

Students with exceptionalities experience a continuum of needs that may change over time. The crucial period of transfer and adjustment to a new school, may present particular challenges for students with special educational needs. Students entering the secondary level may have special educational needs that might not have been identified previously.

The student at the secondary level, who is newly identified or diagnosed, should be allowed access to a programme most suitable to his/her educational needs to ensure positive and meaningful educational outcomes. The provisions of the Alternative Pathways to Secondary Education ensure that students are aligned to a programme of instruction, based on demonstrated competencies. The performance data from the NAP, or advanced screening, or psycho-educational evaluation are used to determine the instructional support the student will need while pursuing secondary education.

## **10.2 The Role of the Mainstream Coordinating Officer at the Secondary Level**

Education Officers in the regions will ensure that the MoEYI's policy to support APSE is implemented in daily practice. The coordinating Special Education Officer, while providing support in mainstream settings, will work closely to support the Pathway Coaches<sup>21</sup>, ensuring that: (a) required instructional support is provided for subject or grade teachers; (b) accommodations or modifications needed by students are implemented, as is required by Individual Intervention Plans (IIPs) or Group Intervention Plans (GIPs).

At the secondary level, the Coordinating Officer plays an integral role in determining the strategic development of programmes and service provision to address the educational needs of students on Secondary Pathways II and III (SP II; SP III). Other duties include:

- i. ensuring that an Individual Intervention Plan (IIP) is developed for each student identified with an area of exceptionality or documented disability; or identified as needing special education support has
- ii. working closely with the Student Support Team, and related school personnel to ensure that the IIPs or GIPs are implemented as stated; and
- iii. monitoring the implementation of support programmes, instructional accommodations, methods of assessment, and standards of student-achievement used in school-based intervention programmes.

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<sup>21</sup> See 11.2.1

## **10.2.1 Provision at the Secondary Level**

The supportive functions of the Pathway Coach enable subject teachers to plan and deliver instruction more suited to learner diversity and differentiated needs; as well as engage in collaborative monitoring of the success of intervention programmes (Language Education Policy; See Assessment, Section 15.00).

### **10.2.1.1 The Pathway Coach:**

The Pathway Coach is a special educator assigned to work with students at the secondary level. S/he works collaboratively with teachers to provide appropriate educational support for students requiring instructional accommodation or curriculum adaptation. S/he is responsible for the development and monitoring of the intervention programme for students being instructed on SP II or SP III.

The Pathway Coach's functions include:

- i. working with the Student Support Team to implement recommended intervention(s);
- ii. identifying and focusing attention on the student's area of strength, and highlight areas for early action to support the student *within* the class;
- iii. ensuring that feedback to teachers and parents about the student's achievement and experiences is based on continuous observation and assessment;
- iv. using outcomes of such assessment to inform the progression of instructional planning for the student;
- v. involving the student in planning the programme and educational

- targets to meet specific needs; and
- vi. involving parents/guardians/caregivers in developing and implementing a joint support plan to address common educational goals for home and school.

### **10.3 Referral and Re-evaluation**

Schools should use data from screening, continuous assessment and the NAP to assist in referral and re-evaluation (Language Education Policy, 2001). Re-evaluation must be scheduled and conducted regularly to determine the student's response to intervention. Data from scheduled NAP and continuous assessment must be used to determine student-progress, which may be measured by referring to:

- i. evidence from teacher observation and assessment;
- ii. comparative performance against curricula standards for primary or secondary levels;
- iii. standardized screening or assessment tools; and
- iv. information from parent/caregiver regarding learning or other difficulties; or student self-disclosure or self-identification, or learning preferences.

Parents/caregivers or students may raise concerns about progress, performance and placement. These concerns should be treated seriously and investigated urgently for appropriate and conclusive action.

### **10.4 Transitioning Across Educational Levels**

The movement across educational levels presents challenges of increased educational activities and expectations for all students. In the case of students with exceptionalities this period may present additional challenges. Students re-



entering the mainstream setting after a period of special education intervention, or those from a mainstream setting entering a special education setting or programme also encounter adjustment challenges. In the case of the transition from primary to secondary settings, for example, the student leaves the relatively stable and sheltered setting of a Resource Room or Special Class at the primary level, to face the challenges of navigating a more complex secondary school environment.

The challenges for transitioning into the secondary level can be very stressful, and even more complicated because the student might not have been prepared for the transition. Parents are valued stakeholders in educational decisions for their children. The collaboration between home and school is integral to successful educational outcomes planning for students with exceptionalities.

Efforts to provide easier transition across levels should take place in orientation sessions organized at the secondary level, and should include:

1. Sensitization activities for students, parents, teachers, student council representatives, and other key school personnel; and
2. Initial and continuing counseling support for students.

Accommodations or educational services received by students at the primary level will continue at the secondary level, as dictated by assessment reports (See Section 12.00).

## **10.5 School-to-Work Transition Planning**

School-to-Work Transition (STWT) planning is an ongoing process that is focused on creating collaborative links among student, families, schools and community service-providers. The effectiveness of transition services will be anchored in a service delivery model that promotes an efficient inter-sector and

multidisciplinary collaboration to provide coordinated and sustained access to available support-services. As a deliberate policy of MoEYI, schools are to begin the STWT process through the pre-Career Advancement Programme (CAP) or an alternative job-preparation programme, at the upper secondary level. Students will, therefore, transition into post- secondary training programmes or into the world-of-work, having been certified in some skill area.

The continuity of service provision for individuals with exceptionalities requires the added component of preparation for life beyond school. Educational services for adolescents and youth with exceptionalities will be extended to include School-to-work Transition planning. Individual Intervention Plans (IIPs) will include a statement of the transition services required by the student. The transition plan must be individualized and based on the student's expressed needs, preferences, and interests. To ensure adequate scope of preparation activities and programmes, the transition planning process will begin at Grade 8.

Transition planning will include the collaborative efforts of a multi-disciplinary Student Support Team. The team will determine the instructional and educational experiences needed to prepare the student for a productive life after school. Transition activities may include work experience, vocational evaluation and participation in community experiences aimed at preparing the student for employment and independent living. Transition service provision includes the following areas:

- i. instruction (including skills/vocational training and counseling in preparation for options to engage in tertiary or other postsecondary pursuits or the world of work);
- ii. assistance in accessing related support services from independent providers;
- iii. promotion of independence, community integration, employment and other adult roles and responsibilities; and

- iv. training in daily living skills, and a functional vocational evaluation<sup>22</sup>.

The success of the School-to-work Transition (STWT) programme will depend largely on the involvement of public and private sector agencies offering and providing access to work-experience opportunities through the apprenticeship programme or some other similarly structured programme. Students will leave STWT programmes having received training in functional skills that will prepare them for community integration and independent living. The work-experience, skill-preparation, and certification should equip them with skills for entry into competitive employment.

### **11.1 The National Standards Curriculum**

It is proposed that the National Standards Curriculum (NSC), as well as, the Secondary Pathways II & III Curricula<sup>23</sup>, will be statutory requirements for all schools, setting out the areas and content of learning for students. Teachers should deliver the relevant curriculum at the primary or secondary levels, making adaptations to address the particular learning requirements of their students, where necessary.

Differentiation and accommodation in instructional delivery and application of knowledge within the framework of the prescribed curricula will help schools meet the learning needs of all students. In order to address the range of identified learner needs, school communities will need to be informed and knowledgeable of standards and policy provisions for daily implementation and practice. Where applicable, the prescribed curricula may require adaptation to cater to the needs of children operating above or below the required performance standards.

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<sup>22</sup> The evaluation referred will be a modification of the existing vocational qualification administered annually.

<sup>23</sup> These curricula are designed to guide instruction for students identified as having special learning needs at the secondary level.

For students identified as gifted or talented, supplemental curriculum material may be used to provide additional instructional strategies or content..

Teachers should use the prescribed curricula to teach knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, using a variety of methods and strategies that are appropriate to the abilities of individual students.

## **12.0 Record Keeping**

Agreed programmes of intervention for students identified as requiring special educational services must be documented by the special educator, pathway coach or person charged with such responsibility by the school. A detailed cumulative report outlining the programme's objectives, the students' individual targets and related progress should be maintained and available to be viewed by Education Officer or Regional Special Needs Coordinator.

## **13.0 Monitoring Student-Progress**

In the secondary school setting, the school's ability and efforts to cater to the needs of the student-population in general, will have direct bearing on the nature and frequency of support the school is able to provide for students with exceptionalities. The key to positive teaching and learning experiences lies in the teacher's knowledge of each student's skills or abilities, and the teacher's ability to address these learning needs.

Schools at the secondary level should make use of continuous assessment across all subject areas. Expectations regarding behaviour, work-output and presentation, as well as schools' policies on assessment should be consistent across all student-groups, and communicated clearly to students.

Within the expectations set by the MoEYI, individual schools will implement the programmes and measures to address the needs of all students. Established guidelines should be used also to determine procedures for observation and

progress assessment (Language Education Policy, 2001). Educational accommodation made available to a student must be carefully determined according to MoE guidelines. Agreed procedures must be carefully managed and monitored through efficient and effective internal communication and cooperation among staff.

Education Officers in the Regional Offices will oversee the schools' implementation of the established systems for identification, referral and progress-monitoring through continuous assessment, and intervention programmes<sup>24</sup>. Intervention strategies and systems must be reviewed thoroughly at least annually for further development or variations to ensure that the most suitable measures to reflect improved performance outcomes and student-support are applied.

#### **14.0 Individual Intervention Plans (IIP)**

An *Individual Intervention Plan (IIP)* is a detailed plan of educational goals and targets for a student with exceptionalities. The strategies employed in an IIP enable students' progress in any identified area of need (cognitive, physical, sensory, emotional or behavioural) and should include information about:

- i. present level of functioning
- ii. the agreed short-term targets set for or with the student
- iii. the method of intervention to be used
- iv. the accommodation provision to be implemented
- v. set dates for review; and
- vi. success and or exit criteria

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<sup>24</sup> The Proficiency Pathway, for example

The provisions to be included in the IIP are those which are additional to, or different from those provided for students in the *general education* cohort. The IIP should be written succinctly and clearly. The areas of focus for the IIPs should include individual targets, chosen from the related key areas of Communication, Language and Mathematics, and, where necessary, behaviour and social skills, appropriate to the student's needs. Intervention may be cross-curricular or subject-specific.

IIPs should be written for all students with exceptionalities, including those identified as talented and gifted. To guarantee that all parties are informed of the educational goals, the IIP must be discussed with the student, parents/guardians/caregivers, and teacher(s) and support personnel involved in delivering the student's educational programme. IIPs should be reviewed at least twice per year. Some students with more intensive instructional programmes may require more than two reviews per year. All reviews must be scheduled with at least three (3) weeks' advanced notice.

The IIP review is a collaborative effort and must allow all participants (parents/guardians, students, administrators, teachers, and support personnel) to voice their suggestions and concerns for the student's educational development.

#### ***14.1 Response to Emotional/Behavioural Disorders***

School administrators and teachers should possess the necessary skills, or have access to the systems required to create and maintain an orderly, safe and disciplined learning environment.

Disruptive behaviours of most students with exceptionalities are often similar to those displayed by their peers. The same disciplinary practices used to manage disruptive behaviours, in general, may be used effectively with most students with exceptionalities. When selecting behavior interventions for

students with exceptionalities, teachers should ensure that the strategies are developmentally appropriate.

For students with exceptionalities, disciplinary intervention must be informed by the nature and severity of the student's condition. It should be noted that the MoEYI does not sanction the use of corporal punishment. A balanced approach to discipline focuses on the need to protect the rights and dignity of children in accordance with established school rules, government regulations and international conventions (Sections 9(1); 9(2), The Child Care and Protection Act (2004); Regulation 29 and 30(7), The Education Regulations, 1980).

A student exhibiting inappropriate, self-defeating and/or maladaptive behaviours will require a Behaviour Intervention Plan (BIP) to address his or her needs. It is crucial to have knowledge of the general characteristics of students with exceptionalities, particularly the learning, behavioral, social/emotional, physical challenges, and other associated behaviours.

In the case of disruptive behaviour, it is very important to determine the underlying causes, the conditions, variables or circumstances that contribute to such behaviour.

The teacher should do the following:

- i. clarify the behaviour that is causing concern;
- ii. specify why that behaviour is inappropriate;
- iii. clarify how the behaviour differs from the expected norm;
- iv. observe the student in a variety of settings and note the behaviour of concern;
- v. decide what action should be taken to address the behaviour; and
- vi. specify the desired or target behaviour for intervention.

In order for any behaviour management programme to be successful it must have the full support of all stakeholders, (administrators, teachers, students,

counselors and others). The following steps must be taken by the teacher before implementing a Behaviour Intervention Plan (BIP):

- ii. Record the type and frequency of observed behaviours in various settings.
- iii. Arrange an independent observation of behaviour by other school personnel (Guidance Counselor, Vice Principal or Nurse, for example) to validate the concern for further professional evaluation.
- iv. Invite the parents, in writing, to a conference with the relevant school personnel, to address the issue of concern.
- v. Develop BIP using recommendations emerging from the meeting. Team members developing the plan may include, but not be limited to: student, parents or caregivers, Special Needs Coordinator, Guidance Counselor, and other support personnel.
- vi. Provide a copy of the final BIP to the parents or caregivers of the student, and where applicable, the student, ensuring that the procedure and intervention being implemented are understood clearly.

If parents refuse to cooperate with the school's efforts for further intervention; and the child continues to display the behaviour of concern; the school reserves the right to refer the case to the relevant state agency for further action (Sections 28(1); 28(2), The Child Care and Protection Act (2004); Regulation 30(5) and (6), The Education Regulations, 1980).

A student whose behaviour threatens his/her safety or well-being, or that of the general school population, may warrant temporary removal from the school setting while the case is being reviewed for appropriate intervention. (See Regulations 30(6) and 30(7), The Education Regulations, 1980). This removal is neither intended to be, nor regarded as a disciplinary sanction, but as an interim measure to facilitate appropriate action.

A student who requires services beyond the capabilities or capacity of the MoE, must be referred for collaborative intervention involving the parents,



MoEYI, external service providers or where necessary, the relevant government agency.

## **15.0 ASSESSMENT**

Assessment is a process used to gather information about a student's performance, learning needs or strengths, and interests. The process requires the use of observation in a variety of settings, administration of standardized tests by qualified professionals, and the involvement of families in evaluating all aspects of the student's development such as sensory, neurological, motor, physical, language, intellectual, socio-emotional, health and self-help skills.

### ***15.1 Assessment Standards and Procedures***

1. The literature promotes a system of universal screening<sup>25</sup> as important to support early identification and continuous assessment. It provides the benefit of multiple assessment opportunities to inform appropriate and effective intervention.
2. The MoEYI's National Assessment Programme (NAP) administered at key levels of the school system (that is, Grades 1, 2, 4 and 6 at primary; and Grade 9 at secondary) already provides a framework for systematic assessments of what students should know, and be able to do, at age-appropriate levels.
3. 3. Wherever a consistent pattern of underperformance emerges, the student should be identified and referred for further assessment, in the first instance to the team of clinical/assessment specialists engaged by the MoEYI

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<sup>25</sup> Universal Screening: common evaluation to determine instructional and intervention needs for a group of students; usually across grades, and at the beginning of the year. In the Jamaican context, the Grade 1 individual learning profile, although not a screening instrument, may be used for this purpose.

4. As informed by the data, further screening should be done to identify students requiring special educational services. This process should use varied forms of assessment to create a realistic and composite profile of the student.
5. Guidelines for the standardization of assessment procedures for students with exceptionalities throughout the education system must be established, relative to test administration, interpretation and reporting of findings throughout the system.
6. The procedure must follow the guidelines established at Section 11 (Behavioural Disorders) herein.

## **16.2 Private Assessment Agencies**

7. Where the use of private assessments is required, the MoEYI's standards for reporting and guidelines must be applied. These standards include:
  - a) Possessing suitable certification and qualification to administer the type of assessment or evaluation conducted (certified clinical credentials, e.g.,)
  - b) Ensuring that the assessment process is conducted under generally acceptable professional standards (appropriate age for assessment, best interest of the student, consideration of family, biological and environmental variables which may affect assessment, etc.,)
  - c) Ensuring accurate analysis, interpretation, and reporting of the student's observed performance and functioning level
  - d) Ensuring the report provides clear details regarding the findings, observations, and proposed recommendations
  - e) Ensuring proposed recommendations may be translated into actionable learning objectives by school and family; or appropriate provision of accommodations for student

### **16.3 Placement, Accommodation and Re-evaluation**

8. Ensure appropriate placement of students with exceptionalities based on assessment findings and recommendations.
9. Provide accommodation for instruction or examination for students with exceptionalities, based on assessment recommendations.
10. Establish a system of reassessment, with assessments typically being conducted at maximum two-year (2) intervals. Cases requiring early reassessment may be scheduled as needed.
11. Develop and articulate appropriate exit standards from intervention and/or school programmes, based on IIP goals.

### **17.0 Regional Assessment Centres and Multi-Disciplinary Teams**

12. Establish MoEYI-aligned diagnostic, educational assessment centres in each educational region.
13. Equip Regional Offices with the services of multi-disciplinary teams (Clinical Psychologists, Educational Psychologists, Educational Diagnosticians, Guidance Counselors, Social Workers, for example,) whose services may be shared in clusters).

*These services may be engaged as needed, or through other arrangements made by the MoEYI.*

14. Pursue partnerships with relevant MDAs to provide for access to professional and technical services and support, where the MoEYI's resources do not include the resources or capacity.

## 18.0 SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The MoEYI undertakes the following considerations for equitable and quality educational services within available resources:

1. Appropriate provision of educational services to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities at the primary and secondary levels.
2. Provision of an appeal process to allow parents/guardians/caregivers access to due process to address grievances or concerns regarding services or other decisions on behalf of their child/ward.
3. Development, monitoring, and/or adaptation of curricula by the MoEYI for use by students in special educational programmes.
4. Work towards achieving the following internationally recommended teacher:pupil ratios for segregated settings in keeping with 2030 Vision targets:

Blind/Visually Impaired	1:8
Deaf/Hearing Impaired	1:8
Learning Disabilities	1:16
Emotional/Behavioural Disorder	1:8
Severe Emotional/Behavioural Disorder	1:3
Intellectual Disability	1:12
Multiple Disabilities	1:5
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	1:3
Autism	1:3

5. Provision of teachers' aides or caregivers to assist in the efficient delivery of instructional programmes and services in segregated facilities.

6. In partnership with other relevant MDAs, provide access to advisory and technical support for home-based and community-based programmes which fall under the purview of the MoEYI, via various modalities such as public seminars, web-enabled platforms, public broadcasting and educational materials produced by the MoEYI
7. To recognize and appropriately classify institutions serving the educational needs of students with exceptionalities in segregated settings to reflect programme levels; and ensure access to related benefits.
8. To facilitate and support collaborative arrangements for schools offering vocational training to students with exceptionalities in shared facilities or service clusters.
9. To verify the authenticity of documented disabilities to facilitate requests for accommodation.
10. To provide recommended accommodation to promote optimal performance in examination conditions.
11. Provide for flexibility in the minimum age eligibility requirements for students assessed as talented and gifted to sit examinations; and to access secondary or tertiary education although they may be under the prescribed age requirements (See Section 38.0, Education Regulations, 1980).

### **19.0 Considerations for Post-Secondary and Higher Education**

It is recognized that a diagnosis of exceptionality or a disabling condition continues throughout the individual's educational development. The need for educational support and services continues into the post-secondary years. The provisions for consideration for students pursuing post-secondary or higher education should focus on the continuity of services to support equitable access

to education, providing the students qualifies and matriculates within similar processes and procedures as his or her peers. To this end:

1. Students suitably qualified to enter a post-secondary institution, or institution of higher education should not be excluded because of a documented disability (See National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, Section IV.2).
2. Post-secondary institutions or institutions of higher learning should provide opportunity for voluntary self-disclosure of a disability or special educational need. Disclosure statements are to be treated with strict confidentiality.
3. Students may disclose a disability or special educational need to receive reasonable accommodations to facilitate optimal performance within the context of fair play and equity.
4. Institutions should employ reasonable efforts to ensure that students are not excluded from a course of study for which they are qualified because of a disability.
5. Students with exceptionalities should not be assessed or evaluated for progress using modes that adversely discriminate against them.
6. Support at the post-secondary or tertiary level for students with exceptionalities should be provided through the institution's student-service programmes.

## **20.0 SUPPORT**

1. The Department of School Services (DSS) shall have responsibility to monitor the implementation of policies in daily practice:

- a. Provide support for teachers and parents of students with exceptionalities<sup>26</sup>.
  - b. Provide equitable distribution of educational support, services and resources across educational regions.
  - c. Establish and expand the provision of accommodation services for students with varying exceptionalities throughout the education system.
2. Pursue inter-sector and interagency linkages to support students and families with exceptionalities.
  3. Accommodate the use by parents of para-professionals (trained caregivers/aides) for classes for students with more complex and involved diagnoses (severe behavioural disorders, autism, multiple disabilities, and moderate-to-severe conditions, e.g.).

## **21.0 EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

The following provisions are intended to facilitate continued commitment to professional development for practitioners; and to ensure that appropriate quality educational services are provided for students with exceptionalities.

### **21.1 *In-Service Training***

1. Teachers serving students with exceptionalities must complete a minimum of fifteen (15) hours professional development in special education, each three (3) year period.
2. Teachers serving students with exceptionalities must be certified in the areas of special education relevant to the population with which they work.
3. Teachers, particularly at the primary level, must engage in professional development and supplemental training activities to

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<sup>26</sup> (In collaboration with National Parenting Support Commission)

increase their skill-sets and competencies to plan, implement and monitor programmes for students with a variety of learning needs.

4. Teachers with the requisite special education training should be engaged in organized support activities (interventionists, resource personnel, e.g.) in general education settings across the system.
5. School personnel should be trained in appropriate behaviour management strategies to establish clear guidelines for students identified as having special educational needs.

### **21.2**      **Curriculum Development**

6. Provide curricula to prepare students with exceptionalities for life beyond school through school-to-work transition and vocational training.
7. Collaborate in the design and implementation of programmes to address the development of personal, emotional, social and independent living skills for students with exceptionalities through the relevant units or departments of the MoEYI.

### **21.3**      **Parent Support**

8. Provide access to counseling and other support to promote the well-being and mental health of parents/guardians/caregivers of students with exceptionalities; as well as other para-professionals in the field.

### **21.4**      **Pre-Service Training**

9. Collaborate with tertiary institutions to design and implement a mandatory course in special education to prepare all teachers-in-



training to address the diverse needs of learners with exceptionalities.

## **22.0 PARTNERSHIPS**

The MoEYI has been working in partnership with families, other government agencies, and private organizations to provide and deliver special education programmes and services. To ensure that all children with exceptionalities perform to their maximum potential, it is envisioned that all students, families, schools, government agencies, non-government agencies, private voluntary organizations and private institutions work collaboratively. To this end, the MoEYI will promote and maintain partnerships with current and potential stakeholders, to optimize learning outcomes and enhance the delivery of special education programmes and services. The MoEYI will, therefore, encourage and seek to formalize the following:

1. Increased involvement and partnerships with parents in the education of their children.
2. Strengthened existing collaboration with Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs); and establishing new stakeholder relationships.
3. Strengthened collaboration with internal units and departments of the MoEYI and external agencies to facilitate an efficient identification and intervention process for students considered at-risk for developing disabling conditions.
4. Increased empowerment and education for parents through parent support activities to aid understanding of their children's needs for early stimulation and diagnostic or therapeutic services.
5. Collaboration with agencies or other private entities which provide specialized services to access critical services for students with exceptionalities.

6. Multi-sectoral collaboration with other Government of Jamaica (GoJ) agencies to ensure access to appropriate services, placement and/or educational provision for students with exceptionalities.
7. Institutionalization of an extensive and continuous public education programme on special education issues through the relevant department of the MoEYI.

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