

GUIDELINES

**FOR EFFECTIVE
PARTNERSHIPS**





November, 2015

INTRODUCTION

This document has been prepared to help foster effective partnerships among school staff, support staff and other partners through shared understandings of roles, relationships and responsibilities. By describing the roles and responsibilities of various education partners it is hoped that services to students will be enhanced.

THE BRITISH COLUMBIA CONTEXT

The foundational values, beliefs and intents which guide practice in British Columbia are framed around three key areas: **Inclusion**, **Collaboration** and the **Centrality of the Classroom Teacher**.

Inclusion, as a philosophy, emphasizes the valuing of differences and the building of communities that acknowledge and support those differences. As defined by the Ministry of Education's *Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines* (2013):

Inclusion describes the principle that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education. The practice of inclusion is not necessarily synonymous with integration and goes beyond placement to include meaningful participation and the promotion of interaction with others.

(http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/special_ed_policy_manual.pdf)

Collaboration involves working together in ways that combine the unique perspectives, understandings and skills of two or more people to accomplish a goal, which neither could accomplish on his/her own. In an organization that frames itself as a community

rather than as a hierarchy, collaboration implies an intentional overlap of tasks and closer working relationships and becomes critical in the development and implementation of common goals.

The notion of **centrality of the classroom teacher** means that the classroom teacher is the person with central responsibility for designing, implementing and evaluating the student's education program. The classroom teacher may ask others to participate in any aspect of the child's program, including both consultative support and direct services, but these individuals do not displace the classroom teacher as the person with overall responsibility for each student's education program. In supporting all students classroom teachers employ the three principles of learning identified in the Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Plan:

- learning requires the active participation of the learner
- people learn in a variety of ways and at different rates
- learning is both an individual and a group process.



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In respecting these principles, it is important to acknowledge and clarify the roles and responsibilities of classroom teachers, and those who support them in providing an appropriate education program for students.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

School Administrators

The powers and duties of the principal are set out in Section 5 of the Regulations of the *School Act* (http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/96412_00).

With respect to accommodating students with special needs, principals:

- facilitate communication and collaboration among staff, parents and students
- ensure that decisions made for the student's care reflect the responsibility the school bears as "In Loco Parentis" when the child is in the school setting
- ensure that procedures are carried out in a manner that does not put students or staff at risk
- ensure that staff have information they need to work with students with special needs.

Teachers

Each school has resource teacher(s) who assist in supporting students with special needs. These teachers are usually assigned as the case manager for students with special needs and are responsible for developing the student's IEP, in collaboration with the school team and family.

Teachers are responsible for the educational program of all students, including those with special needs. Classroom teachers work in collaboration with resource teachers to support students with special needs. Together they design the instructional program, plan for assessment, evaluate student progress and report to parents.

Teachers have professional autonomy meaning they are responsible for the decisions regarding:

- the selection of curriculum materials
- presentation of curriculum materials
- modifying and adapting materials to meet student needs
- determining effective teaching strategies and practices
- determining methods of evaluating progress and reporting achievement.



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Parents

Parents play a key role in the education of their child. They are active partners in planning and reviewing their child's educational program. All parents have the right to provide input into the decisions about the education of their child.

The school system cannot always meet the expectations of parents; the human and material resources of the school system are sometimes limited and have great demands placed on them. In such cases it is important to engage in open, honest communication in order to reconcile the discrepancy between the parents' expectations and the limitations of the school or District. Every effort should be made to ensure that parents understand the impact of educational decisions made for their child. When parents are dissatisfied with a particular decision that significantly impacts the health, welfare and education of their child, they should bring it to the attention of the appropriate school personnel in order to seek resolution. Should a satisfactory outcome not result, parents have the right to an appeal the decision of an employee.

Special Education Assistant/Youth Care Worker

Special Education Assistants/Youth Care Worker (S.E.A.s/Y.C.W.s) support teachers in providing an appropriate education program for students with special needs. S.E.A.s can play a variety of roles in supporting the classroom teacher and in responding to the needs of the students, but at no time should they replace the teacher. S.E.A.s/Y.C.W.s work collaboratively with the team to develop and implement programs in response to student needs. S.E.A.s/Y.C.W.s work under the supervision of an administrator and under the general direction of a teacher.

EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Some students will require services and supports provided by agencies in the community. For example, some students may need medical or therapeutic services offered through child development centers or clinics; others may require the support of a mental health worker or a drug rehabilitation counselor, or the services of a social worker or probation officer.

It is essential that community services be coordinated to avoid duplication, and to ensure consensus regarding goals, consistency in interventions and an integrated approach to service delivery. (Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines, 2013; http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/special_ed_policy_manual.pdf).

In addition, some parents have engaged outside individuals/agencies to work with their child in a home or centre-based program. The outside individual/agency may request information on a student or seek permission to conduct an observation of the student in the school setting. Written permission must be obtained from the parent/guardian prior to access being granted (*Authorization to Share Student Information*



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and/or Observe Student form attached). This authorization needs to be renewed and resigned each September, and when the observer and/or agency changes.

Langley School District is committed to working with outside individuals/agencies in the most positive way possible. Collaboration with outside individuals/agencies can result in a helpful dialogue about the student and his/her needs and can enhance a positive and co-operative partnership between the home and school.

Request for School Observations by Outside Agencies

- The principal must be contacted by the outside individual/agency and approve any request before access to a student in the school setting is granted. The principal will discuss the request with the teacher and, where applicable, the support staff. Written permission from the parent/guardians must be obtained before providing access to the student or sharing information.
- The classroom teacher, as manager of the learning environment, is responsible for each student's program and therefore, should be central in any conversations about student performance, progress and/or intervention strategies.
- Prior to involvement by outside individuals/agencies, it is recommended that an initial discussion by all participants (parents, school staff, district staff, outside individuals, etc.) be held to discuss the purpose of the observation, how the members of the team will collaborate and how decisions will be made (*Request for Observations by Outside Agencies* form attached).
- The purpose of any classroom observation is to observe a child in the school setting and must not be evaluative in terms of the performance of a teacher or a S.E.A./Y.C.W.
- The family may request up to a maximum of 10 observations by outside individuals/agencies in each school year (September-June). A short, debriefing meeting will be held at the school directly (or shortly) after the observation to share and clarify. This meeting should include as many members of the school team as possible and can also include the parent.
- Outside individuals/agencies may make programming suggestions, however it is the school-based and district-based personnel who have the professional responsibility to decide on the instructional/behavioral strategies most appropriate to the particular child/classroom context.



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- Families may also have access to data collection records tracking learning objectives that are shared between school and home programs. The sharing of this information will be facilitated through the resource teacher (or case manager).

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Request for Home/Community Observation by School Personnel

- If school or district personnel are invited to observe a student or participate in a home team meeting outside of the school, it must be with the approval of the administrator. Observations or attending a meeting could be done by: the Resource Teacher, Classroom Teacher and/or S.E.A./Y.C.W. The hours that the S.E.A./YCW normally works would be adjusted to accommodate the observation/meeting. The purpose of the observation or attendance at a meeting is to become more familiar with the ways in which the student reacts/responds to experiences in another setting/program. Staff that attend home team meetings are expected to share information with the school team following attendance.
- School personnel must ensure that permission is in place and approved by the school administrator prior to the home observation/meeting.
- The family may request up to a maximum of 10 home observations/meetings by school personnel in each school year (September-June).
- The family may also request that the S.E.A. attend home sessions during the summer months (July-August) for up to 5 days. The S.E.A. and the family must mutually agree upon the dates and payment is the responsibility of the family; the family will be billed by the school district.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Differences are inevitable and require us to use effective communication skills to come to a positive resolution. It is important that individuals listen to the perspectives of others with a genuine desire to understand their point of view.

Strategies for effective communication include:

- separate the people from the problem
- focus on interests, not positions
- generate a variety of possibilities before deciding what to do
- insist that the result be based on some objective standard.

More information on the use of these strategies can be found in Getting to Yes by Roger Fisher and William Ury (1991).



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Langley School District (#35)

Authorization to Share Student Information and/or to Observe Student

I, _____ hereby authorize
(Parent/Legal Guardian)

_____, to observe my child,
(name of person and agency)

_____, in the school setting:

_____.
(name of school)

I give permission for information to be shared regarding my child for the following purpose(s):



(Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian)

(Date) **November, 2015**

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**Request for School Observations
By Outside Agencies**

STUDENT'S NAME: _____ **D.O.B.** _____

SCHOOL: _____ **DATE:** _____

Written consent from the parent/guardian must be obtained prior to an observation and be attached to this form.

Name of Observer: _____ **Position:** _____

Agency/Program: _____ **Phone No.:** _____

Date and Time of Observation: _____

Purpose of Observation: _____

Who initiated the request for the observation: _____

Date and Time of Debriefing Meeting (preferably scheduled on same day as

observation): _____ (for the observer to share/debrief the observation with the school team prior to preparing comments/recommendations to share)

How will the information gathered be shared with the student's team (home and school)?
(i.e. a team meeting, a written report):

What follow-up involvement will you have with the student?



Principal's Signature

Teacher's Signature

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Request for Home/Community Observations
By School Personnel

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SCHOOL: _____ DATE: _____

Written consent from the parent/guardian must be obtained prior to an observation and be attached to this form.

Name of Observer: _____ Position: _____

Date and Time of Observation: _____

Purpose of Observation: _____

Who initiated the request for the observation: _____

How will the information gathered be shared with the student's team (home and school)?
(i.e. a team meeting, a written report):

What follow-up involvement is recommended?

Teacher's Signature

Principal's Signature