



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

DRAFT SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY



“Development of good policy is carried out by and with people, not on or to people. It improves both the ability of individuals to take action and the capacity of groups, organizations or committees to influence change”

- World Health Organization, 1997.



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Draft Special Education Policy



1.

1. Policy Title: Special Education Policy

2. Policy Statement

The Special Education Policy articulates the commitment of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT), through the Ministry of Education (MOE), is committed to the development of an effective system of Special Education Service Delivery (SESD) that outlines the key services and resources, which should be afforded to students with Special Education Needs (SEN) and their families to allow all students equal opportunity to attain their full learning potential.

In particular, this policy will form the basis for creating and reforming the mechanisms for addressing the issues of *access and equity* for students with Special Education Needs that arise due to the physical, cognitive, behavioural, and psycho-social challenges they face, which inhibit their full learning potential and achievement.

3. Rationale / Background

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has undertaken to address the needs of the most vulnerable in our society, particularly those with special education needs, through a renewed focus on the strengthening of the education system and its capacity to provide meaningful opportunities and supportive infrastructure for lifelong learning and development of our citizens.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has also reaffirmed its commitment “to regional and international prerogatives in the achievement of “Education For All” (World Conference On Education For All, 1990) and the “Millennium Development Goals” identified in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000).

In renewing the pledge of the world community to work towards the achievement of *Education for All*”, the World Conference on Special Needs Education adopted by acclamation, The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) which proclaims that “every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning” and that “those with



Special Educational Needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting those needs” (p.viii).

This policy encompasses government’s commitment to make *adequate* and *appropriate provision* for the education, prevention, rehabilitation, and empowerment of all persons with special education needs, particularly those with those with various categories of exceptionality, as equal members of our society.

The vision and mission of the Ministry of Education embody the guiding philosophy and principles of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. The Education Sector Strategic Plan: 2011-2015 of the Ministry of Education enunciates the Ministry’s vision to become a “high performing and dynamic organization leading a quality education system that is responsive to the diverse needs of 21st century learners who are able to satisfy the human capital needs and sustainable development of society” (MOE’s Strategic Plan 2011 to 2015). It is also the Ministry’s expressed mission to “educate and develop” children who are able to fulfil their potential, academically, socially, culturally and emotionally, towards their optimum and holistic development.

The strategic direction of the Ministry of Education serves as the basis for the development of the Special Education Policy. There is a recognition that students with special education needs have different abilities, different strengths/weaknesses, and may face unique challenges due to their particular disabilities/areas of exceptionality. As such, their learning and development cannot be compared solely with the norms that are applicable to the general population, but rather must be evaluated in relation to each individual’s incremental growth process, based on an understanding of their own unique needs and abilities.

Definition of Special Education

While the policy approach to defining special education needs varies from country to country, special education can be generally understood as a broad term that refers to a range of educational and social services, made available to students identified as having special education needs. It involves the provision of specially designed instruction that addresses the unique needs of students with learning challenges that arise from various categories of exceptionality. Special education may include the provision of extra assistance, adapted



programmes or learning environments, specialised equipment or materials designed to support learners in their efforts to access the curriculum in a range of settings. Special education interventions are individually developed to address the identified needs of the child and may consist of:

- *an individualized curriculum that is different from that of same-age, non-disabled peers;*
- *the same (general) curriculum as that for non-disabled peers, with adaptations or modifications made for the student*
- *a combination of these elements.*

Curriculum modifications and adaptations may require trained personnel, additional support, specialized or alternative teaching strategies/methods, specially designed/modified instructional materials and adaptation of facilities and equipment.

Prevalence and Classification of Special Education Needs

In the global context, estimates of the incidence of special educational needs among the school-aged population have increased significantly over the last few decades. The World Health Organization estimates that there are 93 to 150 million children aged (0-14 years) with disabilities in the world (World Health Organization, 2011).

According to the Marge Report (Marge, 1984), which remains the only comprehensive study on Special Education Needs in Trinidad and Tobago, 16.1 % of children aged 3 through 16 years were found to have special education needs. This estimate reflected approximately 28,500 children as having some form of disability. Types of disabilities covered in the study included Physical Disabilities, Hearing, Visual Disabilities, Speech and Language, Mental Retardation, Learning Disabilities and mentally handicapped. Notably this study did not include students with emotional-behavioural disorders or gifted and talented students.

Lack of consensus as to what criteria should be used for data collection for special education needs has resulted in significant variation in the overall international estimates of disability (Mitchell, 2010). As such, in order to provide essential baseline data to support decision-making regarding service provision for children with special education needs, there is an



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urgent need for current comprehensive research on the incidence of disability/special education needs in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in an effort to deal with the variation in definitions of criteria used for special education needs, sought and gained agreement across countries to classify students of special education needs into three main categories. The use of these categories facilitates the generation of more reliable data on the incidence of special education needs and the making of more valid comparisons across nations.

OECD (2005) categories include:

- Category A: Disabilities: students with disabilities or impairments viewed in medical terms as organic disorders attributable to organic pathologies; their educational need is considered to arise primarily from problems attributable to these disabilities.
- Category B: Difficulties: students with behavioural or emotional disorders, or specific difficulties in learning, arising primarily from problems in the interaction between the student and the educational context.
- Category C: Disadvantages: students with disadvantages arising primarily from socio-economic, cultural, and/or linguistic factors, and whose educational need is to compensate for the disadvantages attributable to these factors.

Educational provision for students with special education needs falls within the ambit of the Student Support Services Division (SSSD) of the Ministry of Education. SSSD identifies students with special needs as including:

- *Children with sensory (visual, auditory) or physical impairments*
- *Children with health impairments/challenges.*
- *Children with developmental disabilities*
- *Children with neurological disorders*
- *Children who are gifted and talented*
- *Children with intellectual disabilities*
- *Children with specific learning disabilities/difficulties*
- *Children with emotional or behavioural disorders*



The development of this policy is both timely and appropriate. The adoption of this special education policy would ensure that all children whose lives are affected by the presence of a special education need are identified at the earliest possible age, that there is equitable access to the services, resources and support that they require to develop optimally, and that they benefit from the range of educational opportunities available to all students.

4. Scope

The policy for the delivery of special education services will apply to:

- 4.1 All learners with special education needs under the purview of the Ministry of Education inclusive of students enrolled in public and private schools, from early childhood level through secondary education level, special schools, vocational programmes/trade schools and students who are hospitalized or participating in alternative education programs.
- 4.2. All educational organizations (government and government assisted schools, private schools, special education institutions, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and denominational boards) offering early childhood, primary and secondary and special education services to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.
- 4.3. Parents, guardians and other caregivers.
- 4.4 All school administrators, school supervisors, teaching and non-teaching personnel.
- 4.5. All Divisions, Units and Departments within the Ministry of Education and the Division of Education of the Tobago House of Assembly (THA)
- 4.6 Other relevant Ministries and Social Services Departments, (e.g. Ministry of Gender, Children and Youth Development, Ministry of the People and Social Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Planning & Sustainable Development).
- 4.7. All Service Providers working with students with special needs and their families.



- 4.8. All researchers and faculties of Universities with an emphasis on human development, particularly those focused on the development of individuals with special education needs.

5. Goals

- 5.1. To outline a clearly defined approach to special education in Trinidad and Tobago
- 5.2. To establish a framework for the efficient and cohesive delivery of services to learners/students with special education needs.
- 5.3. To develop an integrated system (and effective mechanisms) for the early identification, assessment and subsequent provision of relevant interventions for learners/students with special education needs.
- 5.4. To delineate the range of services and service delivery /placement options to be made available for students identified as having special education needs.
- 5.5. To create a platform for continuous, meaningful dialogue and consultation with all stakeholders involved in special education service provision.
- 5.6. To provide an effective mechanism for accountability and redress for families of children with special education needs.

6. Objectives

- 6.1. To inform the development of a legal framework that supports special education;
- 6.2. To improve educational opportunities and outcomes for learners with special education needs from the early childhood through secondary education levels;
- 6.3. To ensure there is a clear, consistent and equitable resourcing framework for special education service delivery irrespective of school setting or geographic location;
- 6.4. To make provision for the needs of learners/students in the planning, financing, implementation and evaluation of all education initiatives;



- 6.5. To identify and implement an approach to funding that is cost effective, yet responsive to the needs of students with special education needs, within the resource constraints of the Ministry of Education.

7. Relevant Legislation/ Authority

7.1 At the National Level	<p>7.1.1 Education Act, Numbers (7). (39) and (40) of 1966.</p> <p>7.1.2 National Policy on Persons with Disabilities (2005), Ministry of Social Development, Trinidad and Tobago.</p> <p>7.1.3 Equal Opportunity Act No. 69 of 2000, Trinidad and Tobago.</p>
7.2 At the International Level	<p>7.2.1 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)</p> <p>7.2.2 United Nations Millennium Declaration, September, 2000.</p> <p>7.2.3 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)</p> <p>7.2.4 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)</p> <p>7.2.5 UN Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)</p> <p>7.2.6 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960)</p> <p>7.2.7 Key Principles for Special Needs Education – Recommendations for Policymakers – European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2003)</p> <p>7.3. Other International Human Rights Agreements for example the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993); and the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994), (while not legally binding but are considered to have moral force and practical guiding principles.</p>

8. Related Documents / Policies

- 8.1 Ministry of Education Student Support Services Division (SSSD) Policy, 2004
- 8.2 Miske Witt Study on Inclusive Education 2008



- 8.3 Ministry of Education Inclusive Education Policy, 2009
 8.4 Ministry of Education Sector Strategic Plan:2011-2015

9. Critical Areas to be Addressed

This policy will address various areas/factors that impact the effective delivery of special education services.

<u>AREA/FACTOR</u>	<u>IMPACT</u>
Research and Prevalence Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study on the Prevalence of Special Education Need • National Child Find Project • On-going School Based Needs Assessment
Disability Research and Development through Government Funded Research Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous review of Best Practices in Special/Inclusive Education (from Assessment to the Intervention Process) • Exploration and Review of Systems of Service Delivery • International Cooperation Initiatives which may include Targeted Study Tours for Special Education Practitioners
Integrated Programme for Early Identification of Special Education Needs	<p>Cross-Ministerial and Seamless Approach to Service Delivery that facilitates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-departmental and ministerial communication; • Information sharing, storage and retrieval • Coordination of essential support services
Ministry of Health – Children’s Health Care Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental Assessment & Support • National Immunization Programme • Centralized Data Management Systems • Record of Disability/Special Need • Identification of Children At Risk for health/learning challenges via screening for sensory, developmental and



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	<p>other disorders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Health Programme
Ministry of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of Students' Readiness for Learning. At ECCE, Primary and Secondary level and at each point of transition.
Ministry of People and Social Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Services Delivery/Support e.g. Access to Services and Financial Assistance • Related Grants Resource Listing of Grants and relevant Eligibility Criteria • Available Services • Services required but not yet available to be identified in collaboration with various stakeholders groups
Public Awareness and Public Education Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Media in collaboration with Ministries of Social Development/Education/ Health • Comprehensive Parent Education Programme – General Information Sessions & Workshops (SSSD, Health Centres) • On-going Teacher Education Re: Disability – Teacher Information Sessions & Workshops
A Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Disability: Ministry of Education, Health and Social Development and various social services organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genetic counselling • Pre-Natal, Peri-Natal and Post-Natal Care • Early Diagnosis and Intervention
Capacity Building (System Wide)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening of Public and Government –Assisted Special Schools via Formalization of Procedures for the Administration and Leadership Of Special Schools, Staff Development & Training, Restructuring of Services, Coordinated System of Resource Provision • Strengthening of Support for Private Special Schools



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarships in Specialized Services – Physical and Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, etc. • Provision of Adequate Support Personnel to meet demand • Strengthening of the Student Support Services via Recruitment and Retention of Human Resource Base – (Establishment of Critical Positions for Technical and Administrative Leadership of the Division). • Professional Development of Special Education Leadership e.g. Scholarship Programmes in the areas of Coordination of Special Education Services • Training & Re-Training of Special Education Personnel for effective service delivery • Improved mechanisms for service delivery
Improvement of Educational Service Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuum of Service Provision • Accommodation for Special Needs • Provision of Specialized Resources and Support Services • Assistive Technologies based on Identified Needs
Curriculum Design and Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum integration and differentiation to meet individual needs
Provision for Specialized Assessment and Therapeutic Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psycho-Educational/Clinical, Physical, Occupational, Speech & Language and Behavioural.
Alignment and Coordination of Assessment, Treatment and Intervention Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register of Service Organizations & Services Offered • Register of Approved Service Providers • Development of Integrated Service Delivery Mechanism across relevant Ministries and Service Organizations • Child Services – Children Authority



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Support and Counselling Services • Respite Care • Parent Education and Support • Social Services
Universal Design of Educational and other Public Services Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility to Public Facilities and Services
Framework for continuous development of Special Education Legislation/Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision of the Education Act to address the roles and responsibilities of all educators with respect to learners with special education needs within the public education system • Provision of Procedural Guidelines re: Special Education Referral/Assessment/ Intervention Processes <p>Accountability Procedures for Administrators and Supervisory Staff outlining their responsibilities for the Implementation of Policy Guidelines for addressing students' special education needs</p>

10. Policy

Preamble

The Ministry is determined that exceptionality must not diminish the right to equal access. Students with special educational needs will, therefore, be afforded the entire range of opportunities (curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular) in education, training, leisure and community activities that are available to all other students.

10.1 Statement of Underlying Principles:

In order to build a comprehensive system for special education service provision, the following principles must be embraced:

10.1.1 Recognition of Human Rights:

- ❖ **Equality of Opportunity.**



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Inclusive education is based on the premise of equal opportunity. All learners irrespective of ethnic origin, gender, disability or additional educational needs are entitled to equal opportunities to develop their skills and abilities to the best of their individual potential.

❖ **The Right to Appropriate Education**

Every citizen has an inherent right to education that is appropriate and accessible so as to ensure that each individual's unique learning needs are identified and catered for in the least restrictive environment. The right to education involves four key actors:

- (i) the government and its institutions as a provider of public education and duty bearer;*
- (ii) the child as the holder of the right to education, whose duty is to comply with compulsory requirements;*
- (iii) the parents/legal guardians as manager of this child's education, whose duty it is to seek and hold the best interests of the child as a guiding principle, and*
- (iv) the teachers, as both rights-holders and duty-bearers.*

❖ **The Right to Quality Education**

Learners are exposed to the highest level of professional education and care that is delivered by appropriately qualified teachers and support/service providers. Quality standards are established and monitored through an efficient system of monitoring and evaluation.

❖ **The Right to Full Inclusion and Participation in the Life of the Nation**

Inclusion is concerned with the learning and participation of all children and young people vulnerable to exclusionary pressures, particularly those with impairments or those categorized as having 'special educational needs'. Inclusion involves reviewing the cultures, organisational practices and procedures of schools, taking into account the diversity of children and young people and recognising the potential richness of the interaction that occurs within their locality.

All individuals have the right to be included and to participate in all aspects of life of the nation. This entails the provisions of adequate and appropriate supports services that facilitate maximum participation in education and society. Inclusivity is encouraged through the promotion of



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positive attitudes, values and beliefs that are based on a respect for life and recognizes the dignity of each individual regardless of ability/exceptionality.

10.1.2 Valuing Diversity

All children can learn and should be equally valued, regardless of their differences. Diversity is not viewed as a problem to be overcome, but a source of enrichment and support to the learning of all. Inclusion is most likely to be achieved when diversity is recognized and positively regarded.

10.1.3 Equitable Access

At the heart of educational inclusion of students with special education needs is the removal of physical, social and environmental barriers to living and learning in the community. Special education service provision is based on the recognition that schools are an integral part of the community and as such, should be accessible to all, irrespective of individual differences or challenges, in accordance with the law.

10.1.4 Positive Discrimination

The principle of positive discrimination recognizes that some learners, because of the obstacles and barriers with which they are confronted should receive more support than that which is normally available to others. This may constitute more resources, more time and more specific consideration.

10.1.5 Maximum Involvement:

Inclusion for students with special education needs must include fostering mutually sustaining relationships between families, schools and communities.

Efforts toward supporting learners with special education needs in realizing their fullest potential are maximized by involving parents and families in the process of educating their children.

Parents should be supported in making informed choices about the service options available to them. All students and their parents are entitled to be treated with respect and should be actively encouraged to make their views known and have them taken into account in planning and decision-making. An effective system of special education service delivery demands the full participation of all stakeholders.



10.1.6 Recognition of Parental Rights

All procedures and processes for the identification and intervention with students suspected or identified as having special education needs must recognize the rights of parents and caregivers to due process.

- ❖ *This acknowledges the responsibility of the all professionals to ensure that parents/legal guardians are apprised of the services available to them and their rights to information regarding the assessment process and results involving their children/charges. Parent must be given the opportunity to provide informed consent for all interventions/services that are recommended to identify or address their children's special learning needs. Parent must be informed of their right to refuse recommended services and the available mechanisms for redress.*

10.2 General Provisions

10.2.1 Equal Access

All children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional or other conditions are entitled to an appropriate education and the opportunity to be supported by the State in their efforts to access same. As such, this policy must include the educational needs of all learners. These learners include:

- (i) children with a diverse range of learning difficulties and/or challenges that arise from the presence of a disability or special education need.*
- (ii) children identified as gifted learners.*
- (iii) children who may be hospitalized, institutionalized or experiencing other such conditions.*
- (iv) children who may be home schooled.*

All children with special education needs, inclusive of those with sensory, physical and health impairments, emotional/behavioural and neurological disorders, children with intellectual or developmental challenges, those who experience specific learning difficulties or those who are gifted/talented, should have the option of receiving education at a school within their community where feasible, or at an appropriate public or private special school.

The Ministry of Education therefore, shall make adequate and reasonable provision for students identified as having special education needs. In doing so the Ministry of Education



will adopt an approach that is responsive to the identified needs of students and cost effective in the provision of resources.

10.2.2 Equitable Resourcing

An efficient and transparent mechanism must be developed to ensure that the available resources are targeted effectively and equitably for the benefit of all learners inclusive of those with additional needs based on the principle of positive discrimination.

Optimum use will be made of resources to support mainstream schools in achieving more effective and inclusive educational environments. Resources are limited and this needs to be recognized and embraced as a catalyst to spur creativity and cooperation.

- **Public School Funding**

Budgetary allocations to public schools include a per capita allowance for each learner and all schools are currently required to prepare strategic plans which demonstrate the application of their financial resources to the realization of effective educational outcomes for all learners, based on the principle of equal opportunities. Budgetary allocations to schools should be determined/adjusted in accordance with specific interventions and individualised programmes for learners identified as having special education needs, based on the principle of positive discrimination.

- **Funding for students in Private Special Education Institutions**

The Ministry of Education will continue to provide specific funding to private special schools, appropriately registered and approved by the relevant authorities, to support students identified as having special educational needs and who are enrolled in special educational programmes at these institutions. These private institutions will be monitored by officers of the Student Support Services Division, the Division of School Supervision and the Division of Curriculum Development to ensure that the special needs of students are adequately catered for and that programme delivery meets the standards required of all special schools.

10.2.3 Increasing Provision for Special Education Needs



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The Ministry of Education will adopt a comprehensive approach to provision of special education service delivery for all learners identified as having special education needs. Such provisions will include:

Ministry Of Education – Central Administration

- **Legal Reform**

- ❖ Facilitate the revision and updating of the legislative framework that addresses improved access and equity in service provision for students with special education needs.

- **Research-Driven/Evidenced-Based Practice**

- ❖ Facilitate continuous research based decision making and development initiatives in the area of special education and which address the critical need for updated prevalence data, the early identification of special education needs and the adoption of best practices that are relevant to our local context and consistent with international standards for special education service delivery.

- **Policy Development**

- ❖ Provide leadership and direction in the development of policies and procedures so that financial, human, physical and material resource needs are met towards the efficient and equitable delivery of services to meet identified needs.

- **Inter-Ministerial Collaboration**

- ❖ Create and manage an integrated, cross-ministerial system of support to meet cross-portfolio responsibilities in the delivery of special education services.

- **Stakeholder Engagement And Management**

- ❖ Establish and maintain collaborative relationships and formal linkages with other relevant stakeholders involved in delivery of special education services. Special Education provision for learners with varying special education needs will be facilitated through strategic partnerships across divisions and units within the education sector, as well as with external ministries, organizations and other stakeholders.

- **Infrastructural Mobilisation/Universal Design For Accessibility**

- ❖ Address the infrastructural needs of all schools to ensure that they are safe, accessible and welcoming to students with special mobility needs.

- **Capacity-Building – (System-Wide)**



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- ❖ Development of a Resource Base – Facilitate the development of a professional resource base of adequately and appropriately trained staff and service providers through continuous recruitment, retention, training and development.
- ❖ Continuous Professional Development – All staff who work in and with the Ministry of Education toward the development of learners with special education needs shall have access to appropriate, coherent and continuous professional development initiatives. At the core of this training, will be exposure to and adoption of effective teaching and learning strategies augmented by a range of “needs-specific” training and the provision of scholarships in identified areas of specialization to ensure the availability of required specialized services to meet students’ needs for particular special educational and therapeutic interventions.

10.2.4 Facilitating Access to the Curriculum

The Ministry of Education, through its Division of Curriculum Development, shall provide a differentiated curriculum, that offers meaningful opportunities to all learners to develop maximally, to optimise their learning potential, and to participate in the life of their communities.

Ministry of Education – Division of Curriculum Development

- **Curriculum Design and Delivery**

- ❖ Facilitate maximum participation of learners in appropriately designed learning environments through the adoption of a more inclusive approach to curriculum design and delivery. Curricula shall be adapted to accommodate for students’ identified needs. Curriculum development should offer instructional programmes and support that:

- (i) cater for the entire range and abilities of learners;*
- (ii) are responsive to learners specific interests and individual needs;*
- (iii) utilize multiple resource aids and technologies along with varied and dynamic approaches to curriculum delivery;*
- (iv) make provisions for learners identified as gifted/talented,*
- (v) maintain flexibility with regards to learner participation and performance outcomes*
- (vi) offer curriculum access arrangements for students who are eligible for special concessions.*



- **Curriculum Support**

- ❖ Development of explicit school-based intervention plans /programmes to meet identified needs within every aspect of the curriculum. This must include effective measures for progress monitoring, accountability and programme evaluation.
- ❖ Provision of curricular opportunities that are relevant to students' diverse abilities and interests. Students with special educational needs shall receive additional instructional support in the context of the regular curriculum, as opposed to a different curriculum. The guiding principle shall be to provide all students with the same education, providing additional assistance, and support to children requiring it.

- **Process of Continuous Assessment**

- ❖ Continuous assessment procedures shall be incorporated into the regular educational process to track the progress of each child, in order to keep learners and teachers informed of the learning mastery attained. Assessment procedures for students with identified special education needs will include a periodic review of students' performance aimed at the timely identification of and intervention for addressing specific learning challenges.

10.2.5 Education Districts – Division of School Supervision

- **Promoting Inclusive Educational Environments for SEN**

- ❖ Education districts and individual schools shall be guided by the Ministry of Education's Special Education Policy in servicing all learners with special education needs. School Supervisors shall be responsible at the district level, for promoting and upholding the underlying principles of this policy and for facilitating the implementation of the established procedures for Special Education Service Delivery.

- **Commitment to the Accommodation of Students with Special Education Needs**

- ❖ Education districts and schools within each district shall develop a mission statement which supports the identification of concrete goals and objectives and reflects their commitment to an inclusive philosophy and the accommodation of students with special education needs in particular.

- **Transformation and Development**



- ❖ School Development Initiatives should reflect a gradual process of transformation that is focused on building the capacity of schools to provide more welcoming and inclusive learning environments that are equipped and empowered to maximize the development of each child's inherent capabilities.

10.2.6 Provision of Quality Education

- **Public Schools**

All schools, under the leadership of the school administrators, through established School Based Management (SBM) procedures, shall recognise, respond to and monitor the diverse learning needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning, and ensuring quality education for all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, resource use, teaching strategies and partnerships with their communities.

- **Special Schools.**

Special Schools (public or private) shall have a twofold function:

- a. to serve as an avenue for early identification and the provision of initial educational intervention that would equip students with the compensatory skills in preparation for transition to the regular school system. Procedures should be in place to facilitate an ease of movement from one school to the next, when required.
- b. to provide basic education for students who are moderately or severely challenged due to a particular disability, or students identified with multiple disabilities whose educational needs cannot be met within the regular school environment.

Special schools should provide quality education for all students with special educational needs through continuous assessment, the use of appropriate instructional materials, resources and technology. The development and implementation of Individual Education Programmes, (IEP's), adequately trained and qualified teaching staff and the provision of adequate support services are essential components of quality education for students with special education needs.



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Special Education Institutions should serve as Model Resource Centres that offer essential guidance and support to regular schools in their efforts to provide for students with special needs.

Systems should be put in place to ensure the quality of service provisions at special education institutions, both public and private. A team comprising officers of School Supervision, Student Support Services Division (SSSD) and the Division of Curriculum Development should be responsible for effective monitoring and supervision of special schools.

● **Alternative Educational Programmes**

- ❖ Provision shall be made for Alternative/Special Education Placement through the established service delivery systems. Alternative or Special school placements are designed to complement formal regular education intervention initiatives and shall include but not be limited to, community-based, home-based, hospital-based, and other non-school-based programmes and services for learners with special needs.

10.3 Ministry of Education – Student Support Services Division

A comprehensive system for Special Education Service Delivery will cater for the special education needs of students primarily through the systematic implementation of policy provisions via the Student Support Services Division. The Special Education Component of the Student Support Services Division has direct responsibility for the following:

Strengthening of the Support System

- ❖ To oversee the management of an effective and integrated referral system for early identification, assessment and intervention for students with special education needs, that promotes a multidisciplinary approach to case management.

Change and Transition Management

- ❖ To be the catalyst and champions of the management of change and transition as it applies to inclusivity and the delivery of special education services.

Accommodation of Special Education Needs



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- ❖ To address the identified learning needs of learners with special education needs through the planning, implementation and periodic review of the students' Individualized Education Programme (IEPs).
- ❖ To offer students with special educational needs and their families a range of support services that facilitates optimum learning and development. A continuum of support shall be established, ranging from provision of minimal help in regular classrooms to the development of additional learning support programmes within the school and extending, where necessary, to the provision of assistance from specialist teachers and external support staff.
- ❖ To establish a mechanism for redress through a well defined and effective appeals process.

Special Education Services

- ❖ Within this framework of this policy, special education service provision includes but is not limited to the delivery of the following specialized services and support for students with special education needs:
 - Needs Assessment (Identification of Students' Learning Needs)
 - Diagnostic Assessment and Screening
 - Referral Management
 - Standard/Comprehensive Assessment (e.g psycho-educational, neuro-developmental, clinical assessment)
 - Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Review of Individualized Education Programmes based on diagnosed needs.
 - Specialized and Therapeutic Interventions and Itinerant Support
 - Specialized Services (Physical/Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, and Behaviour Therapy)
 - Special Education – Counselling and Transition Services
 - Education and Empowerment Programmes (for Parent, Teachers, and Students, etc.).
 - Student Advocacy and Empowerment
 - Community Outreach and Linkages
 - Professional Collaboration



- Professional Support
- Professional Development
- Teacher Training and Support
- Management of Access Arrangements for Special Education (including Special Concessions for National Examinations)
- Technical Support for Public and Government Assisted Special Schools
- Coordination of Services re: Funding for Private Special Schools
- Coordination of Outsourced Services of Specialists and Related Service Providers

The Administration of Alternative Arrangements/Special Concessions for Examinations

- ❖ The Ministry of Education will offer Special Concessions to eligible students who are registered for national and international examinations at the primary and secondary levels. A special concession aims to minimize the impact of a disability on the performance of the student during school-based and national assessment.
- ❖ The approval of special concessions for examinations places the student with special educational needs on a level playing field with the non-disabled student without providing any unfair advantage. It is to be noted that the same academic requirements and standards are to be applied to all students whether or not they have special educational needs. The objective of special concessions is to accommodate the student's functional differences which exist due to the presence of a disability/special educational need.
- ❖ The approval of special concessions, however, is subject to limitations of what can be reasonably provided and the particular environment in which the student is being assessed.

Assistive Technologies/Augmentative Communication for Learning

- ❖ Appropriate and affordable technology shall be used when necessary to augment the ability of students in accessing the school curriculum and to aid communication, mobility and learning.

Technological aids and specialised resources can be offered more economically and distributed in a more effective efficient way, if they are provided and managed from a central pool in each locality, by qualified special education district personnel with expertise in matching resources to individual needs.



Coordination of Specialised Services

- ❖ Specialised assessment and intervention services shall be made available through the Student Support Services Division, to all students with special education needs as required, and as identified through a well-coordination referral-based system of service delivery.

Registration of External Service Providers

- ❖ External Service providers shall be appropriately screened and registered with the Ministry of Education and adhere to identified standards and guidelines for service delivery.

10.4 Quality Assurance

- ❖ The Ministry of Education, through its Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, Student Support Services Division, School Supervision, School Administrators and teachers have significant roles and responsibilities in the development of systems and procedures to monitor and evaluate the support services that are provided for all learners.

10.5 Development of Related Policy and Standards Documents

- ❖ The implementation of the special education policy and the achievement of the policy objectives would require the articulation of procedures and processes to support various service delivery functions outlined. Policy Guidelines shall be developed for the following areas:
 - *Special Education Procedures*
 - *Curriculum Accommodations for student with special education needs.*
 - *Access Arrangements for Students with Special Needs e.g. Special Concessions for Examinations/*
 - *Policies and Standards for Educational Testing in Trinidad and Tobago*
 - *Parents' Handbook of Special Education Services and Procedures*
 - *Policy Guidelines for Registration and Provision of Specialised Services for Students with Special Education Needs – SEN*

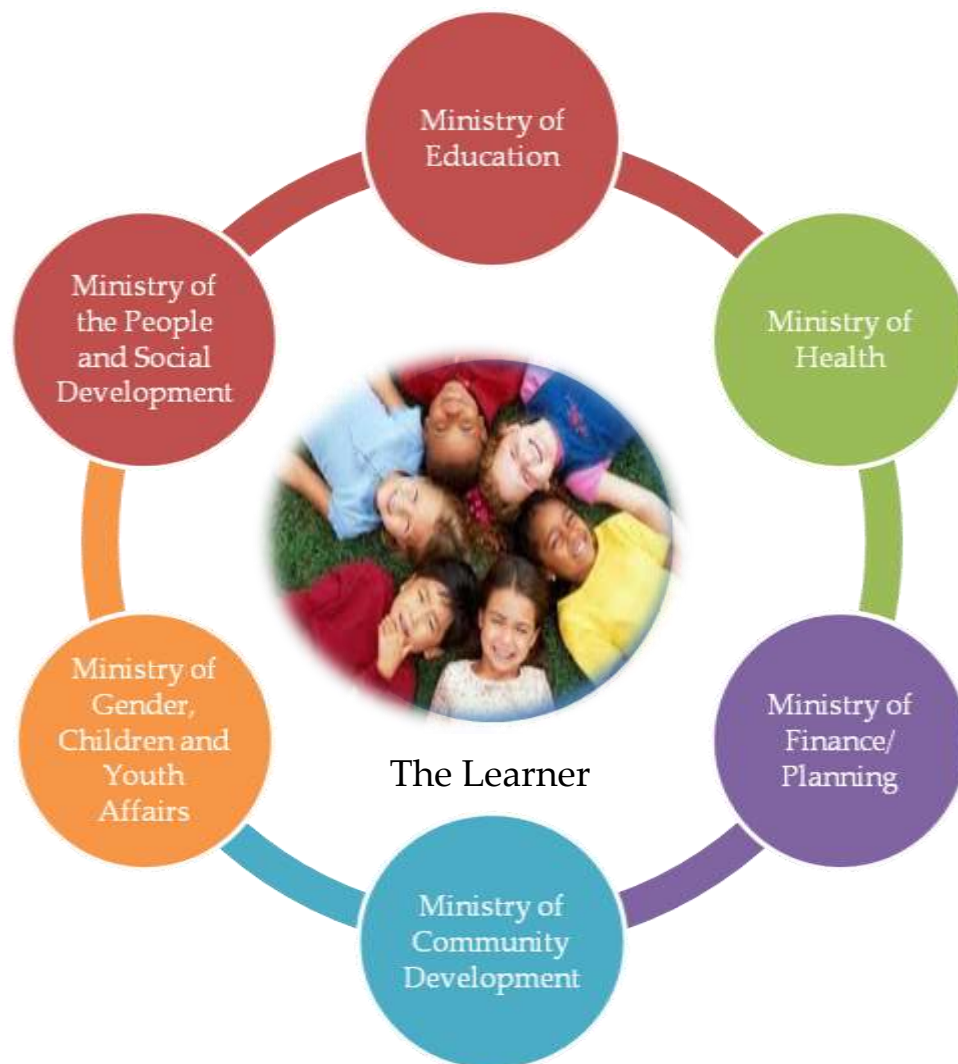


10.6 Identification of External Student Services and Support

External Linkages

- ❖ Private Organizations
- ❖ Non-Governmental Agencies (NGO's)
- ❖ Community Based Organizations (CBO's) & Service Organizations
- ❖ Private Health Care Professionals & Service Providers

Basic Model of Integrated/Cross Ministerial Collaboration



11. Roles/Responsibilities



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INSTITUTION/STAKEHOLDER	ROLE/RESPONSIBILITY
Ministry of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation, Infrastructure, Policy Implementation, Quality Control, Special Education Service Delivery, Coordination of Support Services, Monitoring and evaluation, Support for Individualised Programme Development and Delivery, Personnel/Staffing, Research
Other Relevant Ministries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of related services: Comprehensive Health Programme/Universal Screening, Medical/Therapeutic Assessment and Interventions, Social Welfare/ Social Development Programmes, Research Data
Principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote this policy in the context of their school • Provide a welcoming and supportive environment for all parents/guardians, students, teachers and other school personnel • Utilize established protocols in accessing the required support, resources and advisory services to cater appropriately for all students within their school • Negotiate/Liaise with District School Supervision and the Student Support Services Division to address issues arising or related to service provision • Notify District School Supervision if it is believed that the school is unable to provide an appropriate curriculum to cater for the needs of a student enrolled or requesting enrolment • Facilitate consultation with parents/guardians of



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	<p>students with special educational needs and stakeholders in the wider school community where alternative programmes and/or modifications to existing provision are planned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep accurate and up to date records/files and ensure confidentiality of such.
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in teaching-learning processes that are designed to meet the needs of the learner by adopting teaching strategies which support the inclusion of a range of students in their classrooms • Continuously review their own level of competence and effectiveness, seek necessary improvements as part of a continuing process of professional development, and adhere to and promote the goals and requirements of this policy • Keep accurate and up to date records/files and ensure confidentiality of such.
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and support their children in the quest for learning; • Advocate for the rights of their children and for appropriate policies, services and legislation; • Proactively seek support and participate in school-related decision-making by collaborating with teachers, administrators and other professionals, to set realistic goals for students in the personal and educational development of their children.
Service Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of services for which the organization was established, with fairness, equity, accountability



	and integrity.
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12 Implementation

- 12.1** The Student Support Services Division shall be responsible for the administration and implementation of these provisions in coordination with pertinent Divisions, Units, or Departments within the Ministry of Education. An implementation plan for the realisation of identified goals and objectives will be developed within required timelines.
- 12.2** The Manager of the Student Support Services Division is hereby authorized to organize personnel under his/her Office to intensify the supervision and development efforts for special education service delivery at the early childhood, primary and secondary education levels, and to promulgate the necessary procedures and guidelines in consultation with the relevant Offices and personnel for the implementation of this policy within ninety (90) days of its approval.
- 12.3** The Coordinator of Special Education and Diagnostic Prescriptive Services will provide technical advice and information to the Manager – SSSD, to inform policy decisions on all special education matters towards the improvement of special education service delivery.

13. Monitoring and Evaluation.

The Division of Educational Services in collaboration with the Student Support Services Division, the Division of Curriculum Development, the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, Division of Educational Research within the Ministry of Education, shall monitor the implementation of this policy. Monitoring mechanisms shall be formulated to provide regular and up-to-date information on the progress of its implementation. Specific monitoring mechanisms should be outlined by the respective departments.

14. Effective Date.

This policy shall commence in School Year 2013-2014. Its implementation will be preceded by the recruitment and training of the staff required for the effective rollout of the comprehensive system of special education service delivery.



12. Review Date.

This policy will be reviewed at the end of every school year or at any earlier time as deemed necessary by the Minister or the Permanent Secretary.

Approved by: _____ **Date** _____



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Appendix A: The Student Support Services Division – Model of Special Education Service Delivery

The Special Education arm of the Student Support Services Division offers the following Model for the Delivery of Special Education Services:

Model of Special Education Service Delivery



APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY

DEFINITIONS OF RELATED TERMS

Listed below are definitions of commonly used terms in special education:

Access and Equity

The term “access and equity” refers to the processes involved in ensuring that equal opportunities are afforded to all individuals irrespective of their beliefs, cultural backgrounds, socio-economic status, gender age or abilities, and that resources and services are allocated in a *fair, consistent and inclusive* manner.

Accessibility

Accessibility refers to the architectural and environmental criteria, that involves the modification of buildings, curbs and other structures to allow unrestricted movement by persons with limited mobility.

Assessment

It is a systematic process of gathering information in order to make appropriate educational decisions for a student. It is a collaborative and progressive process designed to identify the student’s strengths and needs, and results in the identification and implementation of selected educational strategies.

Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology refers to the products, devices or equipment whether acquired commercially, modified or customized that are used to maintain, increase or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

Disability



Any restriction or lack of ability (resulting from impairment) to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. Disability refers to the social effects of physical or mental impairment. This definition, known as the 'social model' makes a clear distinction between the impairment itself (such as a medical condition that makes a person unable to walk or unable to sit) and the disabling effects of society in relation to that impairment.

Early Identification

The process used to identify students with special education needs at the earliest possible time, prior to or subsequent to their entry into school.

Handicap

The term handicap refers to a disadvantage of a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability, that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normal, depending on age, sex, social and cultural factors for that individual. It describes the encounter between a person with a disability and the environment.

Impairment

Impairment refers to a condition of being unable to perform as a consequence of physical or mental unfitness.

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

An IEP is a written plan developed for a student with special needs which describes the educational program modifications and/or adaptations for the student, and the services that are to be provided.

Learning Deficits

Learning deficits is sometimes used to refer to specific skills that the student has not mastered sufficiently. Students may have a "deficient vocabulary" or have a "two-year deficit" in reading comprehension scores. This use of the word *deficit* involves a comparison of age, grade level, or ability with actual performance. The word deficit is also applied to learning functions, such as an "attention deficit", which implies that the child has limited ability to sustain attention to task.

Learning Difficulty



Learning difficulties and impairments can range from conditions such as dyslexia and attention deficit disorder to retardation. Many individuals with learning difficulties and impairments are perfectly capable of learning if information is presented to them in a form and at a pace that is appropriate to them individually. During the learning process, many individuals with learning difficulties benefit from having a multisensory experience of audio speech paired with a visual representation.

Mainstreaming

Generally, mainstreaming has been used to refer to the selective placement of special education students in more regular education classes. Proponents of mainstreaming generally assume that a student must earn his/ her opportunity to be placed in regular classes by demonstrating the ability to “keep up” with the work assigned by the regular class room teacher.

Modifications

Modifications are changes in the content, format, and/ or administration of a test to accommodate test takers who are unable to take the test under standard test conditions. Modifications alter what the test is designed to measure or the comparability of scores.

Modifications are practices that change, lower, or reduce learning expectations. (Modifications can increase the gap between the achievement of students with learning disabilities and expectations for proficiency at a particular grade level.)

Public School

A public school is a government funded institution organized for the purpose of providing free education to students at Primary and Secondary levels. They are maintained at public expense to which the public has access without condition. (Ed Act. Part 1)

Public Special School

A public special school is an institution providing special education programmes to students with disabilities at no cost to parents to meet unique need of child. It is governed by the Government administration through the Ministry of Education.

Rehabilitation Centre



Rehabilitation centres provide services by qualified personnel in individualized or group sessions that focus specifically on employment preparation or career development. These centres also focus on helping students to become more independent and integrate them into the workforce.

Residential School

A residential school is a special school which in addition to providing special education and related services also provides room and board.

Resource Room

A resource room is a special education classroom where students can go for additional help mastering academic skills. A resource room instruction is special supplemental instruction given to special needs students who receive their major education programme in regular classroom, special classes or vocational units.

School Based Team

The School Based Team is an on-going team of school-based personnel which has a formal role to play as a problem-solving unit in assisting classroom teachers to develop and implement instructional and/or management strategies and to co-ordinate support resources for students with special needs within the school.

Special Education

Special education describes an educational alternative that focuses on the teaching of students with academic, behavioural, health, or physical needs that cannot be met using traditional educational programs or techniques.

