LEARNING DISABILITY (LD)

Goal(s) for 201516 LD program

1. If there is focus on supporting the regular use of technology with ALL students and students with LD, then the regular use of assistive technology for students with LD will increase. (This is a longer term goal: 2015-16, 2016-17)

2. **In mathematics:** If math instruction for students with LD is directly focused on computation as well as reasoning, then we can reduce the achievement gap in math. (This is a longer term goal: 2015-16, 2016-17)

3. **In reading:** If reading instruction for students with LD is directly focused on decoding and comprehension, we can continue to reduce the achievement gap. (This is a longer term goal: 2015-16, 2016-17)

Strategies implemented in LD program:

Assistive Technology

- Participating in a collaborative inquiry that is focused on the consistent use of technology for all students as part of regular classroom instruction, in order to explore enablers and barriers. (The use of assistive technology by TCDSB students during provincial assessments was observed to be low).
- Support LD Intensive Support Program teachers in facilitating use of assistive technology by their students. They also received professional development focused on the classroom application of Google Apps for Education (GAFE), in order to implement this technology and assistive technology in their classrooms.

Mathematics:

- Continued implementation of JUMP Math in LD ISPs.
- Provided information and professional development material to teachers, relevant for teaching math to students with LD.

Reading:

- Continued systematic and strategic implementation of all 3 components of Empower Reading intervention, i.e. Comprehension (in

grades 2-5), and Decoding in grades (2-5 and 6 -8).

- Continued implementation of Lexia Reading (a web-based literacy intervention), targeting students with LD who require continued support to improve their reading.

General strategies:

- Accountability Framework for Special Education goals were communicated to LD ISP teachers, Special Education Teachers and Special Services Support Staff.
- To support educators, professional development was provided (centrally and locally) to facilitate a better understanding of the academic and social-emotional/mental health implications of LD, executive functioning and learning skills, and strategies to foster success.
- To support the LD Intensive Support Programming, program delivery and the current and historical composition of LD ISP classes were reviewed to assist in better understanding and addressing the strengths and needs of the LD Intensive Support Program.
- To support parents, information was provided on central and local in-services and resources on LD and on their role in fostering academic success, self-advocacy, resilience, and positive mental health.

Outcomes/Observations/Learning in LD program:

- Assistive technology: Teachers and students from one elementary and one secondary school participated in the collaborative enquiry project aiming to increase the use of assistive technologies. Teachers from both schools participated in professional development on and hands-on application of Google Apps for Education (GAFE), and provided feedback. Based on the data collected, there is a need for further exploration of the best practices in this area. It was found that students with limited experience with technology and more limited literacy skills found the added tasks involved in using the technologies taxing. Students need to be introduced to these technologies as soon as possible in their schooling careers to build familiarity and fluency.
- LD Intensive Support Program teachers received professional development focused on the classroom application of Google Apps for Education (GAFE), in order to implement this technology and assistive technology in their classrooms.

- Math: Grade 9 EQAO results indicated that 69% of students with LD in the Academic course, and 38% in the Applied course reached provincial standards. (Other EQAO data were unavailable due to the elementary teachers' job action).
- Reading: OSSLT results indicated that 56% of "first-time eligible" students with LD, and 29% of "previously eligible" students with LD were successful. (CAT4 and EQAO data were unavailable due to the elementary teachers' job action).
- Reading: in 2015-16 there were 111 Empower Reading Programs in 83 schools. Data collected regarding implementation indicated that teaching staff in all three Empower programs generally are in agreement that students make substantial progress in Empower, both in terms of improved reading performance and in confidence and willingness to read in class and elsewhere. These results are generally supported by assessment results. While almost all students improved, teachers expressed concern that some students will continue to need support because of issues pertaining to more severe learning problems (such as severe LD, LI; MID, memory and concentration issues, student attendance; behavior). These students will continue to need support in the area of reading.
- In order to better understand and address the strengths and needs of the LD Intensive Support Program, data were collected on the composition of LD ISP. Based on the review of current scientific research on LD, as well as the data collected through this study it was determined that the current admission/demission criteria and process for LD ISP classes need to be streamlined. Changes were proposed in alignment with current research in the field of LD.
- Presentations and professional development events on LD for :
    - Teachers on LD and Assistive Technology (February 12 PA day),
    - EAs/CYWs on LD (February 12 PA day),
    - Educators and parents on LD and executive functioning (TCDSB Special Services Fair on April 30, 2016)
    - Educators and parents on teaching self-regulation and pro-social behaviour (Psychology Symposium, February 2016)
    - Educators and parents on teaching self-regulation and pro-social behaviour (Psychology Newsletter sent out to all schools and posted on website in February 2016.)
- Sharing resources with educators, parents and support staff: Facilitated accessing free webinars and other professional on www.ldatschool.ca

resources; disseminated information on Integra and other PD opportunities in the community; posted and shared internal and external resources on the TCDSB staff and public portals, offered local presentations to school by psychology staff and Assessment and Programming Teacher, etc.

Next Steps to consider with the LD program

- Investigating further possible solutions for increasing the use of assistive technology for students with LD through a continued collaborative inquiry with two elementary and a secondary schools participating.
- Implementation of more consistent admission and demission criteria for students in the LD ISP classes across TCDSB, as well as moving to earlier intervention and a two-year programming in the ISP.
- Continued implementation of Empower Reading and Lexia Reading.

Goal(s) for 2016-17 LD program

1. If there is focus on supporting the regular use of technology with ALL students and students with LD, then the regular use of assistive technology for students with LD will increase. (This was a longer term goal: 2015-16, 2016-17).
2. **In mathematics:** If math instruction for students with LD is directly focused on computation as well as reasoning, then we can reduce the achievement gap in math. (This was a longer term goal: 2015-16, 2016-17).
3. **In reading:** If reading instruction for students with LD is directly focused on decoding and comprehension, we can continue to reduce the achievement gap. (This was a longer term goal: 2015-16 and 2016-17).

Strategies that will be implemented in the LD program:

Assistive Technology

- Build teachers' capacity in applying appropriate assistive technology for students with LD.
- Expanding the collaborative inquiry that is focusing on the use of the consistent use of technology for all students as part of regular

classroom instruction. Two elementary and one secondary schools will be participating in this initiative in order to explore enablers and barriers.

Mathematics:

- Continue the implementation and monitoring of JUMP Math in LD ISPs. Provide information and professional development material to teachers, relevant for teaching math to students with LD.
- Support the implementation of the Ministry's Renewed Math Strategy by providing PD opportunities and disseminating resources and sharing information on evidence based best practice in teaching math to students with and without LD.

Reading:

- Continue to implement and monitor Empower Reading intervention, including the systematic and strategic implementation and monitoring of all 3 components of Empower Reading intervention, i.e. Comprehension (in grades 2-5), and Decoding in grades (2-5 and 6 - 8).
- Continue to implement Lexia Reading targeting students with LD who require continued support to improve their reading.

General strategies:

- Accountability Framework for Special Education goals will be communicated to LD ISP teachers, Special Education Teachers and Special Services Support Staff.
- To support educators, professional development will be provided (centrally and locally) to facilitate a better understanding of the academic and social-emotional/mental health implications of LD, executive functioning and learning skills, and strategies to foster success.
- To support the LD Intensive Support Programming, the recommended changes in admission/demission criteria will be implemented and feedback collected.
- To support the LD Intensive Support Programming, there will be a focus on supporting social-emotional learning and the development of Learning Skills. Ways of implementing and monitoring support for social-emotional learning and well-being in the LD ISP will be explored and a plan developed.

- To support parents, information will be provided on central and local in-services and resources on LD and on their role in fostering academic success, self-advocacy, resilience, and positive mental health.

Outcomes/Observations/Learning in LD program:

- Support is provided for the implementation of the Ministry of Education's Renewed Math Strategy by including Special Education Teachers with regular classroom teachers in PD opportunities in school identified as RMS schools.
- Support is provided for the implementation of the Ministry's Renewed Math Strategy by disseminating resources and sharing information on evidence based best practice in teaching math to students with and without LD
    - Psychology Newsletter on changing children's attitude toward math sent out to all schools and posted on website in February 2017
    - Psychology Newsletter on evidence based math teaching strategies sent out to all schools and posted on website in February 2017.
- Provide professional development to teachers implementing Lexia Reading and monitor implementation. (73 teachers received formal training in using Lexia on the October 7th PA day).
- Empower Reading is being implemented in 73 schools, and the implementation is monitored through regular data collection.
- Support is provided to LD ISP teachers (orientation to teachers new to ISP – October 2016, Lexia training – October 2016, training in formal assessment measures, December 2016).
- Presentations and professional development events on LD so far for :
    - Teachers on LD and Assistive Technology (February 17 PA day),
    - EAs/CYWs on fostering student well-being (February 12 PA day),
    - Educators and parents on helping children flourish and supporting well-being (Psychology Symposium, February 2017)
- Sharing resources with educators, parents and support staff:
    - Facilitating accessing free webinars and other professional resources on www.ldatschool.ca; regularly disseminating information on Integra and other PD opportunities in the

community;

- posting and sharing internal and external resources on the TCDSB staff and public portals
- creating a public portal on LD at TCDSB website