



BEDFORD COUNTRY SCHOOL

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Where every child has every chance, every day to learn with love and laughter



POLICY REGARDING EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF LEARNERS WITH LEARNING PROBLEMS

1. The learners' *strong and weak points* and needs should be *identified* as early as possible in Grade 1, in order to ensure the learners' progress. New learners who join later in a grade and who experience problems should be identified and should join the other learners.
In Gr 2-7 learners with learning problems should be identified in the *first term*. The report with the names of the learners should be submitted to the principal for further action.
2. Learners with *special needs* or *barriers for learning* should under no circumstances be forced into the main stream. *Intervention* should occur as early as possible.
3. *Educators* should have a good and *clearly planned intervention* programme in place. Learners should be observed from the first day in Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills. Educators should support the learners regarding their needs and barriers for learning.
4. Educators should record all *observations* in the *learner profile*.
5. Other *identified role players*, such as the *TST* at the school and the school Clinic, should help with more specialized support.
6. *Parents or guardians* should be informed *timeously* so that an extensive support and enrichment programme can be developed. Parents are important partners in the learning process. They should understand this and they should be fully informed.
7. *The following aspects should be recorded on the learner support sheet:*
 - all contact with parents
 - all support offered
8. *All evidence of intervention*, such as activities and assessment, should be stored.
9. Learners may not be allowed to *spend an extra year in the same grade* without having complied with the official, prescribed procedure according to *Circular 108/99*.
10. Educators should identify learners who:

- *need support*
- *need diagnostic help in certain aspects of a learning programme*
- *have a barrier for learning*
- *are over or above age*
- *experience problems with the language of learning and teaching because it is not the same as their mother tongue*
- *experience physical problems, such as with sight, hearing, etc.*
- *experience health related problems, such as malnutrition, etc.*
- *experience emotional problems due to molestation, violence, etc.*
- *do not attend school regularly.*

Barriers to fair assessment

1.1 Sensory Barriers

1.1.1 Vision Barriers

Visual impairment refers to a situation where certain eye conditions make it difficult for the learner to successfully participate in learning if certain barriers are not addressed. In these cases ordinary print is problematic, even with the help of spectacles or contact lenses. However, it should be borne in mind that learners who experience barriers because of their blindness or visual impairment may need different types of adaptations. Vision barriers include colour blindness.

1.1.2 Hard of Hearing

Deafness and hard of hearing refers to a barrier related to hearing which can be measured on a continuum of intensity. The barrier manifests either as an inability, or a serious problem in acquiring a spoken/written language (including normal speech) through the usual auditory channels.

In the case of **learners who are hard of hearing**, depending on the extent of hearing loss, communication is through hearing aids, lip reading and 'cued speech' which aids lip reading. These learners may have an inability to access information delivered orally (e.g., assessment/external assessment instructions or when clarifying assessment/external assessment questions). These learners may have difficulty in English because it is a second language or because of restricted auditory input of English where deafness occurred prior to early language development.

1.1.3 Physical Barriers

This refers to physical barriers due to impaired function in the hands, arms, legs, trunk and/or neck. The barrier may involve the inability to move the body parts (e.g. quadriplegia), the inability to co-ordinate movement (e.g. cerebral palsy) or a missing limb(s). Writing will be affected by conditions affecting muscle strength and mobility of the wrist, which consequently affect the learner's grip, tempo and neatness of writing.

1.1.4 Speech barriers

Learners who experience physical barriers to such an extent that they have an inability to speak or have difficulty in expressing themselves through speech

1.1.5 Learning Difficulties

This term refers to a range of barriers experienced in receiving, processing, expressing or retrieving information, any of which may affect the person's ability to function effectively in one or more areas (such as understanding, interpreting, transferring knowledge or skills, receptive or expressive language, spelling, grammar, following directions, spatial relations, numbers, etc.).

1.1.5 Expressing own knowledge in a written form; particular difficulty with spelling and/or grammar

These functional difficulties present themselves in various degrees but may be such that it is almost impossible to evaluate the learner's written work. The difficulties may involve spelling which is so poor that it is impossible for the examiner to understand the work presented by the candidate or the candidate may express him/herself in as far as the learner uses phonetic spelling (particularly in English), which however, can still be deciphered.

1.1.6 Numbers and numerical concepts

Many students have difficulty learning mathematics for a variety of reasons. Not all of these students have dyscalculia. However, there are some basic areas of mathematical activity in everyday life that may indicate a dyscalculic tendency if persistently difficult and frustrating for a person. Such symptoms manifest as: mathematics anxiety and dyscalculia.

1.1.7 Behaviour barriers

Behaviour can become a barrier in assessment when it has been diagnosed as either a mild or a severe disorder. These could include mild or severe oppositional defiance and conduct disorder which makes it difficult for learners to perform under controlled conditions such as in examinations.

1.1.8 Autistic Spectrum, Anxiety and Attention Deficit Disorders

Any learner who is diagnosed with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (e.g. Asperger's Syndrome), Anxiety Disorder and Attention Deficit Disorder may become disorientated during examinations, preventing him/her from answering the question paper to the best of his/her ability. These learners are inclined to give up easily and will need either assistance with planning or regular monitoring and encouragement to prevent them from giving up and handing in incomplete answer papers.

1.1.9 Specific medical conditions

Particular severe medical conditions might also require adaptive methods of assessment, for example severe Diabetes, epilepsy, chronic pain, back injury and HIV and AIDS.

2. Provision of support for barriers to fair assessment

2.1 Provision of support for sensory barriers, physical barriers and learning difficulties

Strategy or method of adaptation or support	Vision Barriers	Deafness / Hard of Hearing	Physical Barriers	Learning Difficulty	Behaviour, Anxiety, Attention Deficit Disorders	Limited Functional Speech	Severe barriers to learning
Additional Time	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adaptation of questions	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Amanuensis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Computer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enlarged Print	✓		✓				✓
Oral examination	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reader	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓

2.2 Support for specific medical conditions

Condition	Support provided	Additional support provided
Severe Diabetes	Medication Light meal/ fruit	Rest
Chronic pain and back injury	Scribe or oral examination or computer	Rest breaks & stretching /movement
HIV and AIDS	Medication	Rest breaks
Epilepsy	Medication	Rest breaks

3. Mechanisms of support

3.1 Additional time

- i. All learners receive 10 minutes reading time prior to an examination. However, learners who experience barriers may apply for and be granted up to 25% additional time. More than 25% additional time can only be granted under exceptional circumstances, such as where a learner experiences multiple barriers or where the question paper is particularly long and the learner uses Braille.
- ii. Supervised rest periods are not counted in the time allowance.

3.2 Adaptation of assessment

Assessment tasks and questions may be adapted for learners, particularly learners who experience sensory barriers:

- i. Setting a substitute task of similar scope and demand
- ii. Replacing one task with a task of a different kind
- iii. Reducing the complexity of graphs, diagrams, tables, illustrations, cartoons, etc.
- iv. Picture or diagram simplified or shown differently without compromising complexity of question
- v. Picture or diagram replaced by written description
- vi. Picture or diagram supplemented by written explanation
- vii. Picture or diagram replaced with a real item or model
- viii. Unnecessary picture or diagram removed
- ix. Detail reduced

3.3 Support from a person during the assessment process

3.3.1 Use of Amanuensis (scribe)

- i. **Amanuensis** refers to the practice where a person (scribe) reads the tasks/questions to the learner and writes down the learner's spoken words (responses) verbatim where the learner's reading/writing ability prevents him/her from giving a true account of his/her knowledge and/or competence or where the learner cannot write the paper/respond due to the severity of a disability.
- ii. **A scribe** should be an educator, but should not be a GAP staff member, nor may the scribe be related to the candidate. Training of scribes is highly recommended.
- iii. A separate, suitable room should be provided for each scribe. The scribe and the learner must each receive a copy of the assessment task/question paper.
- iv. In the case of an external assessment, a continuous cassette recording of the external assessment must be made. The recorder may only be switched off to turn or replace a cassette. These recordings must be kept until the results are released.
- v. An invigilator must be present at all times.

3.3.2 Use of a reader

- i. A reader is a person who reads the assessment to a learner who experiences reading problems such as an inadequate reading rate due to decoding and word recognition, which distort comprehension.
- ii. The reader can read out the assessment task/question paper to one or more learners simultaneously. Both the reader and the learner(s) should have assessment tasks/question papers.
- iii. The reader should be a qualified teacher.

3.3.3 Use of computers/word processors in non-IT assessments

- i. Learners may be given approval to utilize a computer in cases where the learner's physical disability or learning barriers either impairs their handwriting competency or renders the answers illegible to markers.
- ii. Standard formatting is acceptable but the computer may not contain any stored information, nor may a database be utilized. A learner may not utilize predictive text software, grammar check, spell check or a thesaurus. Where there is more than one learner in a venue using a computer, the computers may not be connected to each other or to the intranet or internet.
- iii. The work must be printed out at the end of the assessment and the learner must be given the opportunity to read through his/her work.

4. Responsibility for ensuring fair assessment of learners who experience barriers to assessment

4.1 Responsibilities of School

The principal of the school is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all learners who may need support are appropriately assessed and an application made for support.

An assessment committee is elected. The functions of these committees include:

- i. Assessing learner needs in respect of adaptive methods of assessment
- ii. Completing and submitting the necessary application forms to the District-based Support Team with all relevant documentation attached.
- iii. Determining the materials needed and practical arrangements to be made, once approval has been given for support to be provided
- iv. Monitoring and reporting of the process

- v. Ensuring that all decisions made by the school team regarding adaptive methods of assessment are included in the learner profiles which accompany them throughout their school careers.
- vi. The logistical arrangements at the school/centre for the application of adaptations in continuous Assessment and external assessments, including
- vii. Sourcing of assistive devices, special equipment, an amanuensis/scribe, etc.

4.2 Responsibilities of the District-based Support Team

- i. Verification and submission of the required application forms to the Assessment Body
- ii. Liaison with the district/regional official responsible for the co-ordination of assessment and external assessments

This policy was adopted by the School Management on

This policy has been made available to school personnel and is readily accessible to parents and learners on request.

This policy will be reviewed and updated every year.

Signed _____
School Management

Date: _____

Signed _____
Principal

Date: _____

Signed _____
Educator Representative

Date: _____