

Actualizing a Needs-Based Model

Saskatchewan Ministry of Education 2015



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Original Document Published in 2011
Revised and Updated in 2015

Context

The mandate of the Ministry of Education is to provide leadership and direction to the early learning and child care, Kindergarten through Grade 12 education, literacy, and library sectors. The ministry supports these sectors through funding, governance and accountability with a focus on improving student success. The ministry is committed to improving the learning success and well-being of all Saskatchewan children and youth, as well as enhancing literacy for all Saskatchewan people. This document is intended to serve the following purposes:

- to provide pertinent information relative to a needs-based service delivery model;
- to outline the Ministry’s philosophical ideals and guiding principles; and,
- to reflect the provincial spirit of continuous improvement.

“The year has not been without its difficulties but the staff always met with us and rather than focusing on the issues and deficits, we focused on solutions and unlearned skills/unmet needs. My husband and I have learned a lot and while we considered ourselves fairly well versed in inclusion before we started this journey, the school has shown us what inclusion really means. The fact that our child has real friends and has learned many academic skills...”

– Parent of a student with intensive needs

Supporting All Learners

The Ministry of Education, in partnership with stakeholders including school divisions, schools, parents/guardians, inter-ministry groups, students, and human service agencies, encourages the actualization of a needs-based model of identifying and providing supports for students. The intent of this process is to ensure that:

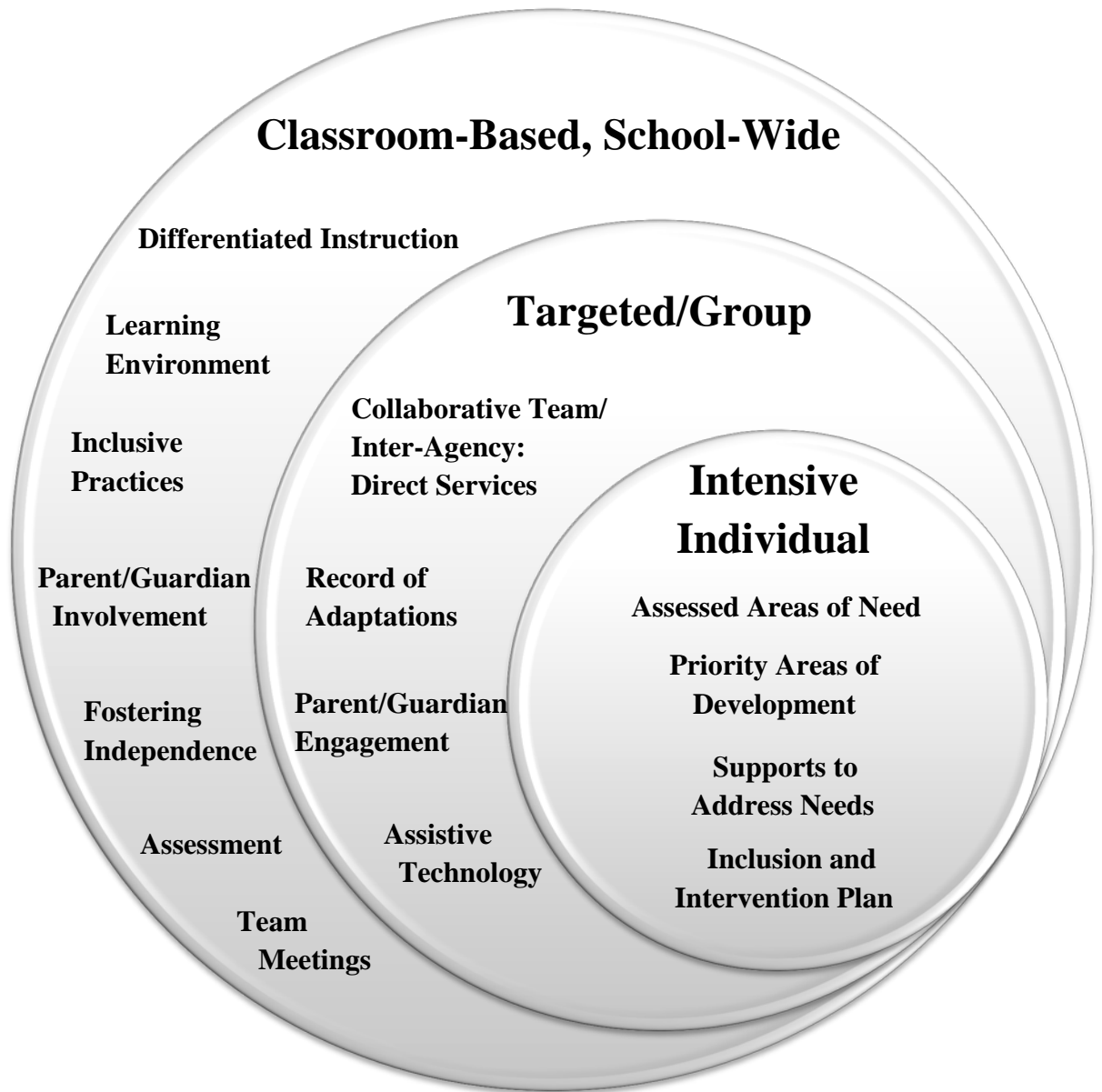
- students are provided with supports in the development and attainment of competencies and independence;
- students have access to appropriate learning opportunities, resources, and supports;
- students are supported through differentiated and responsive instruction; and,
- students are provided with inclusive opportunities to reach their potential.

A number of significant practices that characterize this actualization include:

- creating positive, welcoming and responsive learning environments;
- differentiating instruction;
- nurturing student independence;
- screening and early intervention;
- involving collaborative, interprofessional teams;
- engaging parents, guardians and caregivers; and,
- building partnerships within the community and other agencies.

The needs-based model focuses on developing and implementing procedures and practices to support all learners. This is supported by three tiers of responsive instruction, interventions and supports at the classroom and school level, through targeted and/or group approaches and, when needed, at an intensive individual level. While we recognize that universal classroom practices meet the needs of most students, some students require short-term targeted supports in order to be successful. In addition, a small number of students require an inclusion and intervention plan (IIP) that is specific to their learning needs.

Responsive Instruction, Interventions and Supports



A Framework for a Needs-Based Service Delivery Model

Historically, a medical model influenced our thinking and guided our practice for educating students with intensive needs. This model focused on diagnosing students' disabilities or impairments with the purpose of curing or medically managing the problem. While the importance of medical science in the lives of children with intensive needs is acknowledged, the application of the medical model has also resulted in a limiting view of student potential, as well as barriers to accessing services.

The basic premise underlying a needs-based service delivery model is that the needs of students are more important in determining programming and essential supports than are the categorical labels of disabilities. A needs-based model is based on the concept that students receive appropriate services, not just the services for which they qualify. This approach recognizes that students have different needs and that such needs can and do change over time. Accordingly, students require individualized, flexible, and responsive supports to meet their particular needs and to enhance the continued growth of their individual strengths and abilities. A needs-based approach involves a comprehensive evaluation of the holistic needs of individual students and their families, the identification of concerns and priorities, and the coordination of appropriate supports through an efficient use of resources.

Three key principles form the framework for a needs-based service delivery model:

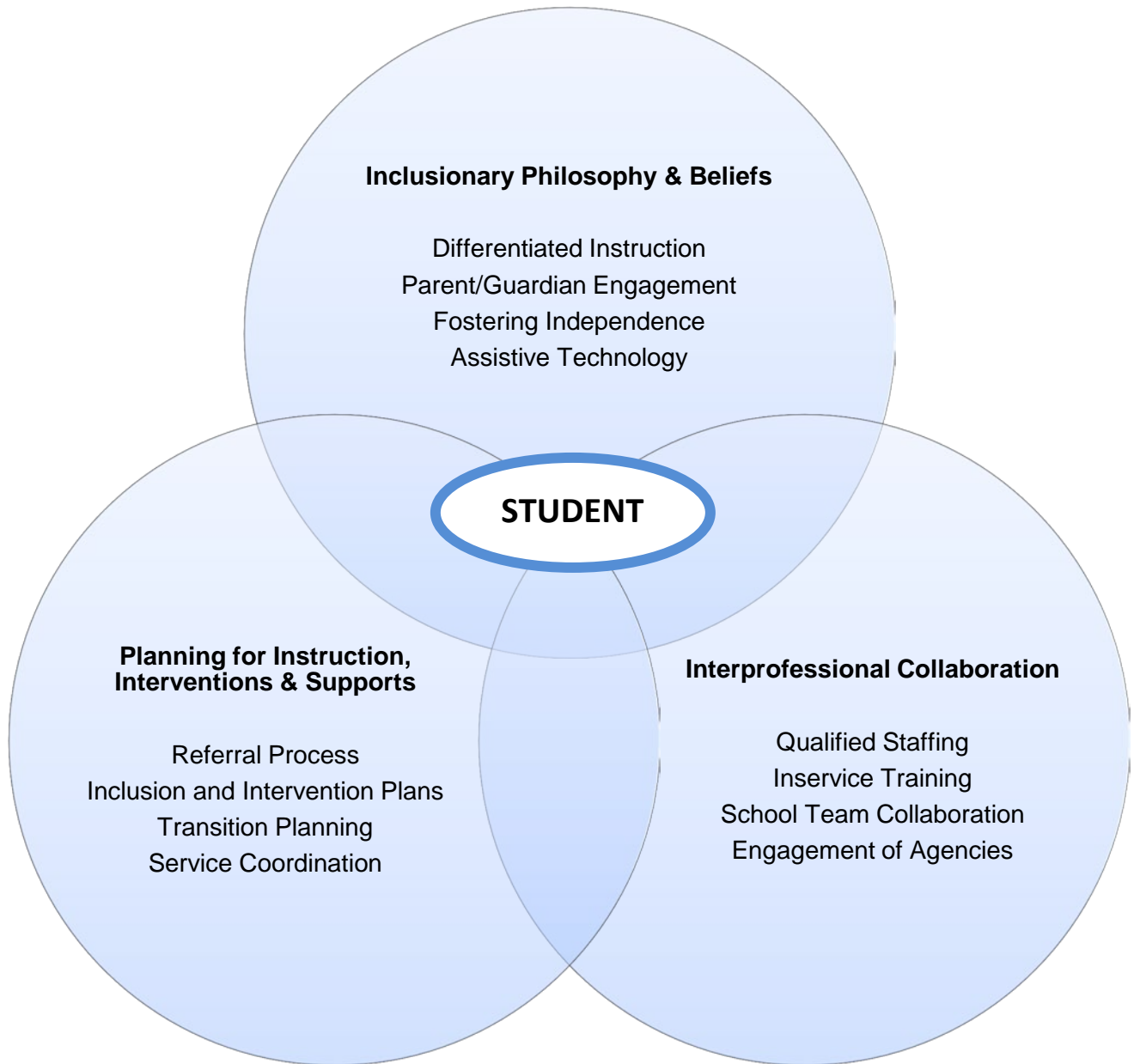
- a) inclusionary philosophies and beliefs;
- b) planning for instruction, interventions and supports; and,
- c) interprofessional collaboration.

“His peers have embraced him as a ‘fellow’ student, and his outbursts are very infrequent. He is viewed in the middle school as a student, just like the others, and he is responding accordingly. The progress, in moving from treating him as a ‘medical model’ student to treating him as one of the crowd, with his needs in mind, has been significant.”

– Parent of a student with intensive needs



Key Principles of a Needs-Based Service Delivery Model



Comparison of Medical and Needs-Based Models

Actualizing a needs-based model of service provision across Saskatchewan means that student support services are shifting practices away from a medical model and heightening the focus on student success within each of the key principle areas. The following table illustrates the differences between the two models:

Inclusionary Philosophy and Beliefs

Medical Model	Needs-Based Model
From a focus on the diagnosis and/or the categorical label of the student's disability	To a focus on the strengths, abilities and needs of the student
From an emphasis on the "problems" or deficits of the student that need to be "cured" or managed	To an emphasis on the supports that the student requires and the elimination of barriers
From an approach that fosters dependence by sheltering and protecting the student	To an approach that nurtures independence/interdependence by providing opportunities that promote the development of personal empowerment and self-determination
From a view that the student will benefit best by functioning in specialized environments in relative seclusion from others	To a view that the student will benefit best by functioning within the immediate community and wider society
From an unchanged society that expects the student to adapt to the environment in order to be included	To an evolving society that believes that all students belong and are valued members of a diverse society
From an attitude of pity and charity towards those with disabilities	To an attitude of respect and appreciation for diversity

Planning for Instruction, Interventions and Supports

From a prescriptive and predetermined approach	To an outcomes-based approach based on the impact of services intended to meet the needs of the student
From a reliance on norm-referenced assessment methods	To the incorporation of authentic assessment approaches that are used to inform instructional practices and programming interventions
From an emphasis on special therapies and medical treatments from a clinical perspective	To an emphasis on using natural supports and adapting structures within the environment
From assuming long-term service provision	To providing services for only as long as required by the student
From determining programs and services based on categories of disabilities	To providing flexible services and differentiated programming tailored to the student's unique needs
From an emphasis on designing and delivering a different curriculum	To an emphasis on providing access to the regular curriculum and adapting instruction with the use of evidence-based practices
From a progression of congregated classrooms and pull-out settings	To inclusive classroom settings

Interprofessional Collaboration

From an approach that is specialist/expert-directed	To a collaborative culture of shared responsibility
From segregated service delivery by various professional agencies/personnel	To an interdisciplinary team approach, which includes parents/guardians as integral team members, resulting in coordinated and integrated service delivery
From an authoritative expert stance	To a reflective and holistic approach that is responsive to students' needs

Collaboration: The Key to Effective Implementation of a Needs-Based Model

No one professional has all the knowledge and skills required to successfully meet the range of diverse student needs in today's classrooms. Thus, collaboration among parents/guardians, teachers, supporting professionals, educational assistants, human service agencies and community organizations is seen as central to student success within inclusive settings.

Collaboration is a dynamic interactive process, where there is genuine shared ownership for decision-making, action taking and outcomes. It recognizes that shared goals can be better achieved by working together in an interdependent and reciprocal manner.

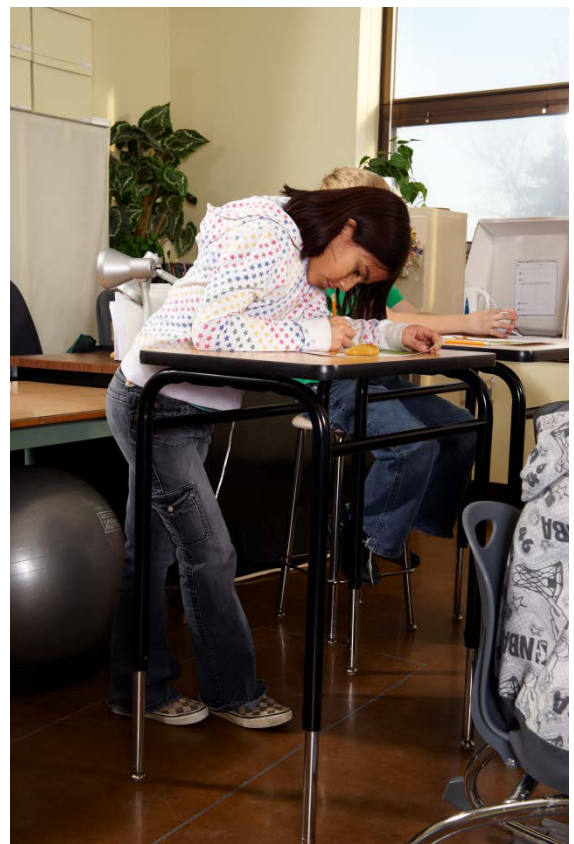
A collaborative approach creates a forum for discussing ideas, reflecting on instruction, interventions, strategies and supports, and sharing expertise and perspectives. Team members work together to identify strengths and needs, develop plans, coordinate and implement services, and provide each other with support. Collaboration involves structural and attitudinal changes, which will improve services, personalize solutions to learning at the micro or school/classroom level, and transform whole-service sectors at the macro or government/community level.

The benefits associated with the collaborative approach include improved information sharing, problem solving and student outcomes. Collaboration requires an investment in the development of trusting relationships that contribute to effective teamwork.

In addition, effective collaboration requires:

- professional development and training in collaborative processes for all team members;
- systems and structures that support integrated service delivery models;
- clarity of purpose, roles and accountability;
- commitment and shared expectations;
- communication networks that support open, trusting and respectful dialogue; and,
- leadership committed to building and fostering a collaborative culture.

Collaboration moves professionals beyond traditional and isolated roles to the creation of educational partnerships and teams that engage in collaborative ways of delivering service. For example, classroom teachers work collaboratively with other team members to develop and monitor inclusion and intervention plans for students. Educational assistants may participate in collaborative team meetings to share their ideas and perspectives, and to learn how they can support the team's decisions.



Student Support Services Teachers and Their Collaborative Roles

Student support services teachers perform an array of collaborative roles, such as those identified below, in order to assist classroom teachers and instructional support to students.

A Learning Support Coach	provides indirect support to targeted students through direct consultation with the classroom teacher.
A Co-Teacher	co-plans and co-teaches with the classroom teacher in a classroom context.
A Peer Collaborator	works together with the classroom teacher to solve a problem or develop a plan of support.
A Supportive Teacher	provides direct instruction or support to individual students or groups of students.
An Interventionist	works within school-wide models (e.g., Response to Intervention and/or Instruction; School-Wide Positive Behavioural Supports) to provide support at multiple levels and across multiple settings.



Collaboration has the potential of enriching learning experiences and outcomes for students. Collaborative team members share knowledge, develop skills, enrich problem solving and gain insights as they work together on behalf of students. A true learning community evolves when parents/guardians, school personnel, and supporting professionals and agencies invest in collaborative relationships and professional growth, while supporting each other in the achievement of common goals.

“Increasing professional supports and developing a strong parent-school team that assist both my son’s teacher and my son has made a world of difference in his progress at school and in my confidence that his educational needs are finally being met and will continue to be met.”

-Parent of a student with intensive needs

Actualizing a Needs-Based Service Delivery Model

The Ministry of Education has embraced a Student First approach to education that puts the student front and centre. Student First is about unifying and re-orienting the education system on what matters most – the student. A needs-based model for identifying and providing instruction, interventions and supports for students based on their strengths to meet their needs exemplifies Student First.

Actualizing a needs-based model takes commitment, partnership, collaboration and time. The ministry is committed to working collaboratively with all partners as we actualize a needs-based model, informed by Student First, to improve learning outcomes and success for all Saskatchewan children and youth.

“The challenges some students face are extraordinary, but they are not insurmountable. Students just need to be given options and have our support.”

-School Principal, Student First
Engagement Discussion Guide

