



Inclusive Education Policy Final Draft

MINISTRY OF EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION, BARBADOS

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FOREWORD

(To be inserted by the Minister)

ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATION	LONG FORM
AAC	Augmentative & Alternative Communication
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
BAPSW	Barbados Association of Professional Social Workers
BDSA	Barbados Down Syndrome Association
BHDC	Barbados Horizon Deaf Charity
BMD	Becker Muscular Dystrophy
BNCPWD	Barbados National Advisory Commission for Improving the Lives of Persons with Disabilities
BSSEE	Barbados Secondary School’s Entrance Examination
BVTB	Barbados Vocational Training Board
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CRT	Criterion Reference Test
CVQs	Caribbean Vocational Qualifications
DCD	Developmental Co-ordination Disorder
DMD	Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ETTC	Erdiston Teachers’ Training College
GEPs	Group Education Plans
IDB	International Development Bank
IEPs	Individual Education Plans
IHCPs	Individualised Health Care Plans
ITQAU	Information Technology and Quality Assurance Unit
JIA	Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis
LSC	Learning Support Coordinator
MEDT	Ministry of Educational Transformation
MIS	Management of Information Systems
MIST	Ministry of Innovation, Science and Smart Technology

ABBREVIATION	LONG FORM
MOHW	Ministry of Health and Wellness
MPEA	Ministry of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs
MRPF	Model Regional Policy Framework (2023)
MTW	Ministry of Transport and Works
NDU	National Disabilities Unit
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NUSB	National United Society for the Blind
NVQs	National Vocational Qualifications
PBM	Positive Behaviour Management
PBS	Positive Behaviour Support
PECS	Picture Exchange Communication System
PT	Physical Therapist
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
SCRs	Special Considerations and Recommendations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEN	Special Educational Needs/ Special Needs Education
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SLP	Speech & Language Pathologist
SSSU	Student Support Services Unit
TEACCH®	Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children
TP	Transition Plan
TVETC	Technical & Vocational Training Council
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UN	United Nations
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
WHO	World Health Organisation

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Acceleration

The practice of presenting curriculum content earlier or at a faster pace, especially for students identified as academically gifted. The choice of how to accelerate the curriculum for a particular student should be based on the individual needs of the student.

Accommodations

Changes in how students access instruction, materials, or assessments without altering curriculum expectations. Examples include extended test time, speech-to-text software, preferential seating, and alternative response formats.

Adaptive Learning Tools

Instructional materials or technologies that adjust to the individual needs of students with disabilities. Examples include screen readers, large-print texts, and text-to-speech software.

Alternative Assessments

Non-traditional evaluation methods that allow students with disabilities to demonstrate learning in varied ways, such as oral presentations, hands-on projects, or portfolio-based assessments.

Alternative Curriculum

An **alternative curriculum** is a modified or specialized educational programme designed to meet the unique needs of students who may not thrive in a traditional curriculum. It often focuses on personalized learning approaches, life skills, vocational training, or specific learning styles, catering to students with disabilities, gifted learners, or those requiring non-traditional education pathways. Alternative curricula may include flexible assessment methods, experiential learning, and customized content to support student success. Additionally, an Expanded Curriculum for Blind students includes independent living skills like cooking, washing, commercial activity and Operationalization and Mobility Training.

Alternative Script

An **alternative script for the visually challenged** refers to any writing system, technology, or method used to help people with visual impairments read and write. Some common examples include: Braille, Moon Type, Audio Books and Screen Readers, Tactile Graphics and Large Print.

Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)

An evidence-based intervention approach used to teach social, academic, and life skills by reinforcing positive behaviours and reducing challenging behaviours.

Assistive Technology (AT)

Any device, software, or tool that helps students with disabilities access learning, communicate, or complete tasks. This includes speech-generating devices, AAC systems, and adaptive writing tools.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

A range of communication methods used by individuals who have difficulty with verbal speech, including PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), sign language, and speech-generating devices.

B

Barrier-Free Education

An approach that removes physical, instructional, and systemic obstacles to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to learning.

Behaviour Intervention Plan (BIP)

A structured strategy designed to address and modify challenging behaviours in students with disabilities. It includes positive reinforcement, structured routines, and alternative behaviour strategies.

Braille

A tactile writing system used by individuals who are blind or visually impaired, consisting of raised dots that represent letters and words.

C

Career Exploration

A structured process that helps students identify interests, skills, and potential career paths through activities such as job shadowing, internships, and vocational training.

Community-Based Instruction (CBI)

An educational approach that teaches students functional and life skills in real-world settings, such as public transportation use, grocery shopping, and job site training.

Curriculum Modifications

Changes made to what a student is expected to learn, often simplifying concepts or adjusting learning expectations to align with the student's cognitive abilities.

D

Developmental Disability

A group of conditions, including intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and cerebral palsy, that impact cognitive, social, and adaptive functioning before adulthood.

Disability

Long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder an individual's full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others¹.

Differentiated Instruction

A teaching approach that tailors content, instructional methods, and learning activities to meet the diverse needs of all students, ensuring accessibility for learners with disabilities.

E

Early Intervention

A system of services and supports designed to identify and address developmental delays in children from birth to age five to promote learning, communication, and motor skills.

Enrichment

The process of providing extended learning opportunities and challenges to students who have already mastered, or can quickly master, the basic curriculum.

Equitable Assessment

A method of evaluation that ensures students with disabilities can fairly demonstrate their knowledge through accommodations, assistive technology, and alternative formats.

Exceptional Student

An "exceptional student" refers to a learner whose educational needs differ from the norm, requiring specialized instruction or services. This term encompasses both students with disabilities, struggling students and those who are gifted. In some educational contexts, the term "twice exceptional" or "2e" is used to describe students who are both intellectually gifted and have one or more learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, ADHD, or autism spectrum disorder.

F

Functional Academics

Academic instruction that focuses on real-life applications, such as reading signs, managing money, and writing grocery lists, to enhance independent living skills.

G

Gifted and Talented Students

Gifted and talented students are individuals who demonstrate exceptional aptitude or competence in one or more domains compared to their peers. These domains can include intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, or specific academic fields. The National Association for Gifted Children

¹ Adapted from Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). UN division for Social Policy and Development (2006).

(NAGC¹) defines gifted individuals as those who perform, or have the capability to perform, at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, and environment. Similarly, gifted children are described as those who exhibit advanced abilities or potential in one or more specific areas when compared to their peers, necessitating special educational services and support to fully develop their potential and talents.

Group Education Plan (GEP)

A structured framework that provides specialised accommodations and modifications for students who require support, but in a manner to promote a cooperative learning environment.

Inclusion

The practice which ensures universal and unbiased acceptance of all learners regardless of gender, ethnicity, language, religion, disability or any other characteristic, thus allowing them full access to educational opportunities, assessment, and support, and equitable and participatory learning experiences, in the environment that best suits their requirements and needs².

Inclusive Education

Educational Practices that ensure that all learners, including those with special educational needs, are provided with educational opportunities that are fair, equitable, relevant, rights-based, and non-discriminatory. These opportunities enable them to attend their community school to receive high-quality instruction, interventions and supports that enable them to meet success in the core curriculum, unless it is clearly demonstrated that education in general education classes is incapable of meeting the child’s educational or social needs, or when it is required for the welfare of the child or that of other children³.

Individual Education/Learning Plan

An Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a customized educational plan designed to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability. It outlines the special education instruction, supports, and services a student requires to thrive in school. The IEP is developed collaboratively by a team that includes the student's parents or guardians, teachers, school administrators, and other relevant professionals. This document serves as a blueprint for the child's special education experience, ensuring they receive the appropriate resources and support to succeed academically.

Invisible Disabilities

Disabilities that are not immediately noticeable but impact learning, behaviour, or cognition, such as dyslexia, ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, and anxiety disorders.

Learning Support Co-Ordinator

A Learning Support Coordinator (LSC), also known in some (UK) regions as a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), is an experienced qualified educator responsible for

² Spencer-Ernandez *et al*, (2023). Model special needs/inclusive education policy and strategy. CDB_SEN_Inclusive_Draft_Policy_Framaeork.net
³ Adapted from the Salamanca Statement and Framework for action on special needs education (1994). World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and quality: Salamanca, Spain.

ensuring that students with diverse learning needs receive appropriate support to succeed academically and socially. The LSC plays a pivotal role in promoting an inclusive educational environment by collaborating with teachers, parents, and external agencies to address the unique challenges faced by these students.

Life Skills Curriculum

A set of instructional programmes focused on teaching students independent living skills, including money management, meal preparation, self-care, and workplace readiness.

M

Multi-Disciplinary Team

A multidisciplinary team (MDT) is a group of professionals from diverse disciplines who collaborate to provide comprehensive care or address complex issues. Each member contributes their specialized expertise to achieve a common goal, ensuring that various aspects of a student's needs or a problem are thoroughly addressed.

Multi-Sensory Instruction

An instructional method that engages multiple senses (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and tactile) to reinforce learning, especially effective for students with dyslexia and dysgraphia.

Monitoring and Evaluation

A structured process used to assess student progress, instructional effectiveness, and policy compliance, ensuring that inclusive education strategies meet student needs.

P

Parental Involvement

The active participation of parents in educational planning, advocacy, and transition planning to ensure that students receive continuous support both at school and at home.

Peer Support and Cooperative Learning

A structured approach where students work together in mixed-ability groups to enhance learning, develop social skills, and promote inclusion.

Person-Centred Planning (PCP)

A transition planning strategy that focuses on the student's individual goals, strengths, and aspirations, ensuring that education and career planning align with their preferences.

Positive Behaviour Management (PBM)

A term used to refer to strategies that are aimed at reinforcing positive behaviours and diminishing undesirable ones through proactive and reactive measures.

S

Self-Advocacy

The ability of students with disabilities to understand their needs, communicate their challenges, and request necessary accommodations in education, employment, and daily life.

Structured Written Expression

A method used to support students with **dysgraphia and writing difficulties**, incorporating graphic organisers, sentence starters, and step-by-step writing templates.

Special Considerations and Recommendations (SCRs)

The mutually-agreed-upon therapies and additional professional interventions recommended for students with exceptionalities in inclusive settings.

Special Education

A range of educational and social service provisions designed to facilitate the learning of individuals who, for a wide variety of reasons, have special educational needs and therefore require additional support and adaptive pedagogical methods in order to participate and meet learning objectives in an educational programme.

Special Educator

A special educator, or special education teacher, is a professional trained to provide individualised instruction and support to students with disabilities, learning differences, and special needs. These educators work across various educational settings, including public and private schools, specialised learning centres, and inclusive classrooms.

Their primary responsibilities include adapting general education lessons to meet the unique needs of students with mild to moderate disabilities and teaching basic skills to those with severe disabilities. They collaborate with general education teachers, specialists, administrators, and parents to develop Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), which outline specific educational goals and services for each student.

Special educators work with students across a wide range of disabilities, including cognitive, emotional, and physical challenges. They may teach students individually, in small groups, or within inclusive classrooms alongside general education students. Their goal is to help students develop academic, social, and behavioural skills that they will use throughout their lives.

T

TEACCH

TEACCH is a program and a model that focuses on structured teaching and visual learning to help individuals with autism learn and develop skills. It emphasizes understanding the effects of autism on individuals, using assessment to personalize learning programmes, and promoting independence. The programme also emphasizes collaboration between parents, professionals, and the individual.

Transition Plan (TP)

A personalised plan integrated into the IEP that outlines post-secondary goals and supports for students preparing for college, vocational training, employment, and independent living.

Transition Planning

A structured process that prepares students with disabilities for post-secondary education, employment, vocational training and/or independent living. It includes career exploration, life skills development, and access to adult services.

Transition Services

A coordinated set of activities designed to help students with disabilities move from school to adult life, including vocational training, job coaching, and community-based instruction.

U**Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**

A teaching framework that promotes flexible instructional methods, materials, and assessments to accommodate diverse learning needs and ensure accessibility for all students.

SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The history of education in Barbados has been interesting and varied according to The Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture (MOE, 2000⁴). From 1627, the days of Transatlantic slavery, when education was the purview of the white planter class, blacks were excluded from the institutions of formal education. With the introduction of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1834 (really 1838), Christian denominations began to educate blacks as an act of charity, and by the 1950's universal primary education was established. Barbados' education system expanded to include secondary and tertiary level institutions with specific criteria for entry, mainly academic aptitude. Except in the case of our technical institution the Samuel Jackman Prescod Institute of Technology, all the other institutions of advanced learning were based on the arts and sciences and welcomed students who were outstanding in these areas (MOE, 2000⁵). Even after 1966, our education system continued to reflect the legacy of a colonial emphasis on academic ability, and to downplay the vital importance of technical and vocational skills and competencies. The Barbados Secondary School Entrance Examination (BSSEE) taken at 11 years old, continued to perpetuate a system of older grammar schools seen as more prestigious and desirable, newer secondary schools, and special schools designated as primary level institutions. In light of the foregoing, it can be concluded that our education system has never been fully inclusive.

Today a different world is emerging, driven by technological advancements. The skills which are needed to propel this Small Island Developing State (SIDS) into the desired first world status, are not situated exclusively in the narrow toolbox of academics. The global field is widening to appreciate the giftings found in disciplines like Information Technology and Cybersecurity, software engineering and Robotics, Artificial Intelligence and FinTech, industries like fashion, music, inventions and sports as areas of gifting and talents which were not historically promoted in our schools and institutions of higher learning.

Our tenacity in maintaining the elitist system perpetuated by the BSSEE's results, reveals the truth of our postcolonial discomfort at transforming our system. Our reluctance to find a more seamless method of secondary school transition has been the bane of true advancement and inclusivity in our society. The urgency for educational transformation cannot be underscored enough, if our children are to attain the optimum standards of excellence in their areas of gifting and talents. Our human capital is our primary resource, and education has historically been viewed as the means through which the Barbadian citizen has gained international recognition. However, the contradiction is observed when our two living National Heroes are among those world class citizens whose contributions to the international landscape occurred in the areas of sports and music. Though neither of these were classified as notable academics in their day, and neither pursued a university education, both have become exceptional global citizens.

⁴ Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture (2000). Historical developments of education in Barbados 1686-2000. The Planning, Research and Development Unit. Retrieved from <https://www.mes.gov.bb/Resources/Publications/>

⁵ Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture (2000). Historical developments of education in Barbados 1686-2000. The Planning, Research and Development Unit. Retrieved from <https://www.mes.gov.bb/Resources/Publications/>

Students with exceptional learning profiles have historically been the last to be included in formal educational settings under our current system. They are entitled to the same educational privileges as those who are typically developing. They have the right to a free quality education that is accessible in the format most amenable to them, to the human and material resources which will produce the optimum results, to the benefits of technology, and to a local setting that does not create barriers to physical access. These conditions have been articulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Article 24⁶. This Convention was signed by the Government of Barbados in 2007 and ratified in 2013. This ratification signals the responsibilities of state parties to ensure that the tenets of the convention are reflected in local laws and the goals of the convention are met.

Under our current Barbados Education Act, there is a glaring exclusion of adequate provision for students with exceptionalities, except as an optional response of a sitting Minister of Education (see **Education Act Cap 41, Part VII Miscellaneous, Subsection 53:1-5**). The clauses to which reference is made, do not uphold the human rights of exceptional students in our system, as outlined by the CRPD.

Lifelong Learning

Education is a life-long process and should be offered as such to all citizens. Barbadians should cultivate the mindset that learning is living. Reskilling, retooling and rethinking are crucial for the nation's socio-economic survival. Alignment of our educational goals with the economics and investment, labour interests and global development of our citizens is paramount. Put simply, education must be fit for purpose, taking our people, our natural resource, on a continuous journey of excellence in a varied scope of educational options which are relevant and modern.

In a broad sense, an education transformational policy would seek to align itself to the very recent thrust towards the establishment of the rights of persons with disabilities, with specific reference to a legislative framework. Such a framework is offered by the recent passing in Parliament of the **2023-2030 National Policy for Improving the Lives of Persons with Disabilities in Barbados**⁷. As the first ever National Policy for Persons with Disabilities in Barbados, it presents a comprehensive set of principles under **Education, Training and Lifelong Learning (Section 4: p. 58 – 62)**. Under **Policy Goal 4**, the draft sets out the overarching objective which is “To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to the high quality, inclusive education, training and lifelong opportunities, programmes and resources to realise their fullest potential” (p. 58).

The five pages cited in the previous paragraph from the National Policy, propose a set of strategies for facilitating access to quality education, learning support services and resources for exceptional citizens. The proposed strategies include, *inter alia*

⁶ United Nations (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

⁷ Ministry of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs (2023). The 2023-2030 National Policy for Improving the Lives of Persons with Disabilities in Barbados. Retrieved from <https://www.barbadosparliament.com/uploads/sittings/attachments/5a8a360c31a626ffd68f4f57769a0960.pdf>

- THE CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF A COMPREHENSIVE DATA REGISTRY FOR LEARNERS WITH EXCEPTIONAL PROFILES;
- AVAILABLE SECTOR-WIDE EARLY ASSESSMENTS FROM NURSERY TO TERTIARY LEVELS WHERE BARRIERS TO FULL ACCESS CAN BE IDENTIFIED AND ELIMINATED;
- THE ENHANCEMENT AND STRENGTHENING OF EXISTING EDUCATIONAL POLICIES TO MAKE THESE MORE INCLUSIVE TO STUDENTS WITH DIVERSE EXCEPTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS;
- ENHANCING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM TO CATER TO A MORE DIVERSE SET OF EDUCATIONAL ABILITIES AND INTERESTS, UTILISING BEST PRACTICES;
- EXPANDING ACCESS TO THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT OF SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, THUS DISMANTLING THE BARRIERS OF PHYSICAL ACCESS; AND
- PROVIDING RELEVANT TRAINING TO TEACHERS, TUTORS AND DEMONSTRATORS IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT THE LEARNING NEEDS OF EXCEPTIONAL CITIZENS, ARE MET IN THE LOCAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT⁸.

*To complement the foregoing, the overarching vision statement of this Inclusive Education Policy is proposed as follows:

‘TO PROVIDE A QUALITY EDUCATION WHICH IS INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE FOR ALL STUDENTS, AND WHICH PROMOTES THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING FOR ALL CITIZENS, IN AN ACCEPTING AND ENRICHING ENVIRONMENT.’

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This policy is underpinned by the guiding principles of the following documents:

⁸ The 2023-2030 National Policy for Improving the Lives of Persons with Disabilities in Barbados. Retrieved from <https://www.barbadosparliament.com/uploads/sittings/attachments/5a8a360c31a626ffd68f4f57769a0960.pdf>

- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Article 24- Education (CRPD 2006),
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC 1989)⁹
- Sustainable Development Goals [Goal 4 Access to Quality Education] (2020)¹⁰
- Model Special Needs/Inclusive Education Policy and Strategy (MRPF 2023)¹¹
- The 2022-2027 Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education, Technological & Vocational Training (2022)¹²
- The 2023-2030 National Policy for Improving the Lives of Persons with Disabilities in Barbados (2023) (cited above)
- The Report of the National Advisory Committee for Improving the Lives of Persons with Disabilities (2023)¹³
- The Child Protection Bill (Barbados 2023)¹⁴
- as well as the vision statement of our **Ministry of Educational Transformation**,

“to create a modernised, high quality and relevant educational system that fulfils the diverse needs of all learners and educators, wider industry and societal stakeholders' demands and interests, and national development goals”¹⁵.

⁹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention>

¹⁰ Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 4). Retrieved from <https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/4-quality-education/>

¹¹ Model Special Needs/Inclusive Education Policy and Strategy. Retrieved from <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?tab=rm&ogbl#sent?projector=1>

¹² The 2022-2027 Strategic Plan for the Ministry of Education, Technological & Vocational Training

¹³ Comprehensive Report of the National Advisory committee for Improving the Lives of Persons with Disabilities. Retrieved from <https://www.barbadosparliament.com/uploads/sittings/attachments/4215ed16d3680b1bacc34b281171448c.pdf>

¹⁴ The Child Protection Bill 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.barbadosparliament.com/bills/details/682>

¹⁵ Ministry of Educational Transformation (2024). Mission and Goals. Retrieved from <https://www.mes.gov.bb/About/Mission-Goals/>

Key Aspects of the Policy:

Guiding Principles	The policy draws upon the principles of education as a basic human right, access to a free and equitable quality education, lifelong learning opportunities, and inclusive educational practices
Universal Access:	It guarantees a free, quality education for all citizens between the ages of 5 and 16, recognizing education as a fundamental human right.
Lifelong Learning:	It promotes access to lifelong learning opportunities, including teaching, training, and instructional programmes, ensuring physical and technological accessibility for adult learners.
Full Potential	The policy aims to develop all citizens to their full human potential in literacy, numeracy, and areas of interest, extending beyond secondary provision.
Support Systems	The policy recognizes the need for support systems for families of exceptional students to further develop their potential.
Full Participation	It encourages the full participation of all citizens in various areas of society, including education, finance, social responsibility, and economic growth.

SECTION II. RATIONALE

An Inclusive Education Policy has become necessary because of the problem of exclusion of certain students (youth and adults) from the educational system, due to some disabling condition or exceptional trait. The document is developed to address these shortfalls in the system, and to articulate the conditions under which all citizens, including those with exceptional profiles, can access education from the nursery to tertiary levels, in accordance with their basic human rights. It promotes the concepts of access, equity, respect, acceptance, inclusion, full participation, support and economic advancement through education. The policy will create a pathway to provide lifelong learning opportunities for all and consequently, fuller economic participation.

SECTION III. CURRENT SITUATION

A situational analysis of the current state of education for students with exceptional conditions follows. Investigations of the inclusion of these students in general education have been previously undertaken by consultants representing various regional and international entities, such as the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the International Development Bank (IDB). This document builds on the work of the foregoing, as well as data gathered from local stakeholders.

They provided perspectives on the continuum of provision offered, the experiences of exceptional students, and the issues faced by teachers in the current system. Qualitative data was gathered from tutors at Erdiston Teachers’ Training College, tertiary institutions like the University of the West Indies (Cave Hill), the Barbados Community College, the Samuel Jackman Prescod Institute of Technology, and the Barbados Vocational Training Board. Interviews were conducted with the Barbados Horizon Deaf Charity (BDHC), the National United Society for the Blind (NUSB), the Barbados Down Syndrome Association (BDSA), and the specialist teachers from various schools and units. Data of a quantitative nature has also been gathered through the Ministry of Educational Transformation’s Student Support Services Unit. Survey forms were provided online to gather further quantitative data from Secondary School Principals, Heads of Departments and classroom teachers, as well as members of staff of the Ministry of Educational Transformation. However, the three survey forms gained a less than 50% response rate and results will therefore not be quoted going forward. The face-to-face stakeholder meetings proved to be frank and open as participants shared their experiences.

Synopsis of Results

The results of the situational analysis indicate that broadly speaking, students with exceptional characteristics did not have an inclusive educational experience. The major gaps identified in the current system are outlined in the tables below. The corresponding policy requirements according to the CDB’s Model Special Needs/ Inclusive Education Policy & Strategy (2023) are outlined.

1. Table 1: Legislative Framework

Major Gaps Identified	
Access to Quality Inclusive Education through Legislative Framework	Insufficient legislative policy framework to support inclusive education
	Inclusive education not mentioned or defined in legislation or policy in most educational documents in Barbados (e.g. Barbados Education Act)
	Exceptional and vulnerable (at risk) students were largely ignored, excluded or not mentioned
	Outdated language in legislation and policy documents (e.g. <i>integration, educationally subnormal, handicapped, mainstream</i> , etc. from 1995 White Paper & 1997 Education Act (revised))
	Limited placement options for exceptional students including adults with exceptionalities desiring life-long training opportunities
	No clearly articulated policy for early identification, assessment and access in early childhood education (ECE) years

1.1: Policy Requirements Not Met: Clear Legislative Framework

- A national legislative framework that is consistent with the principles outlined in the UNCRPD, UNCRC, SDG4, and CARICOM-HRD 2030 Strategy

- Inclusion defined and documented in local legislation and policy
- Inclusion of vulnerable groups in the legislation such as students with disabilities, “at risk students”, etc.
- Terminology used needs to be updated in current documents
- Classification of types of special needs to be included in policy documents
- Placement options to be enhanced and documented as part of continuum of service provision in policy documents
- Early Childhood identification and assessment systems to be put in place (Adapted from Spencer-Ernandez *et al*, MRPF 2023)

A grounded legislative framework which will give teeth to the measures outlined under this document, must be coupled with the Educational Transformation activity. A **transformation** of the **Barbados Education Act**, bringing it into alignment with the principles outlined in International Conventions, signed and ratified by government, as well as CARICOM Strategy Reports, will serve well as the bedrock upon which to articulate and build upon the rights, privileges and freedoms of all citizens which are enshrined in the constitution of Barbados. At the parliamentary level, the 2023-2030 National Policy for Improving the Lives of Persons with Disabilities has recently been passed.

Students in the Early Childhood years need access to reliable assessments based on medical and clinical referrals to the respective professionals, as part of their legal access to appropriate support.

A policy whose enforcement is supported by legal power will motivate the reluctant practitioners, whether in leadership positions or otherwise, to comply with the stated measures. Responsibilities of all concerned stakeholders must be clearly articulated in any legal framework. Persons must be clear on the expectations which a transformation will bring to bear on their practice, without exceptions to the rule of law.

2. Table 2: Data Collection and Cyber Security

Major Gaps Identified	
Data Collection and Security System	No clear data collection system identified for the storage and security of up-to-date sensitive information
	No clear policy on the transfer of records across institutions to track and follow students’ progress and continued needs
	Limited local data available to assist with planning, research & development of comprehensive educational policy or other academic research
	Limited assessment data based on professional reports for students suspected of challenges with specific exceptional conditions
	Limited data to properly plan for current population and make projections for future populations

2.1 Policy Requirements Not Met: Secure Data Collection System

- Reliable data-gathering policies with security features to counteract cyber attacks
- System-wide mechanism for monitoring students' progress and continued needs
- Strategic planning and ongoing research data made available to policy-makers to assist in proper formulation of planning and policy initiatives
- Clear classifications of types and categories of exceptionalities identified among student populations
- Data gathered at the institutional level and made available to key stakeholders of education
(Adapted from Spencer-Ernandez *et al*, (MRPF, 2023), & NPPWD, 2023)

In expressing the urgent needs of the education sector, a series of assessments in terms of educational, behavioural and medical, need to be undertaken in order to gain a true picture of the present needs on the ground that are as yet undiscovered. This is separate and distinct from the current students enrolled in provision, but data will merge into one database. For example, the data shared by the **Student Support Services Unit** contained a worrying statistic under the heading “Academic Challenges”. There were **469** students under this generic grouping, referred over the three-year period 2021-2024. Those who are educators are aware that there is always a reason why students experience academic challenges. There is either a visible (physical), social (trauma, neglect or abuse), or invisible (neurological or intellectual) reason for the academic challenges. These students would need a deeper academic analysis and professional assessment in order to determine the reasons behind their academic failure. This exercise will uncover new data.

Even before resource allocation and human resource training, the scope of the task must be measured. Data from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Polyclinics, the A. C. Graham Development Centre (MOHW), National Disabilities Unit (NDU), schools (private and public), colleges, universities, post-secondary institutions, SJPI, BVTB (Ministry of Educational Transformation) private paediatricians, The Barbados Council for the Disabled (BCD), service groups extraneous to that umbrella organisation, and families, must be gathered. This task cannot be seen as exhaustive, but continuous collaboration with the institutions named, would provide the government with a stronger database of the annual statistics, not only for reporting purposes, but to provide critical services for those who need them. The goal is to establish reliable **inter-sectoral** structures for information-sharing and exchanges of expertise. Collaboration and partnerships, exchanges in human, material and technological resources would become necessary. A re-organisation of current ministerial structures is needed (Spencer-Ernandez et al, 2023 p. 14-15).

A sustainable and justifiable approach to assessments and data-driven decision-making would first of all see the current students in our system with suspected exceptional conditions, being properly assessed by the professionals in the respective fields. In this way the diagnoses could be properly filed and added to the database, so that recommended interventions and supports could be sourced.

A challenge to this approach of assessments for the current population in our educational institutions, may stem from the lack of adequate personnel in the various professions; doctors/developmental paediatricians, nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and special educators to furnish the level of assessments needed for this juncture in our transformation. Private practitioners would need to be engaged for short-term contracts in order to broaden the suite of services offered in terms of assessments, subsidised by government. Therapies and ongoing medical, psychological and psychiatric interventions would need to be undertaken by the government/local ministries.

3. Table 3: Building Human Capital (Training & Professional Development)

Major Gaps Identified	
Building Human Capital and Enhancing Human Resources (Training and Professional Development)	Inadequate numbers of trained, qualified personnel in Special Needs Education (SEN) and Inclusive Education available for classroom instruction, or to conduct assessments
	Insufficient in-service training to increase competence for general education teachers to instruct exceptional students who are included in diverse settings
	Inadequate staffing of Special Education Committees in Ministry of Educational Transformation, with single officers given responsibility for the full SEN portfolio
	SEN professionals who typically constitute a multi-disciplinary team in short supply due to lack of national investment in these personnel (e.g. speech and language therapists, clinical psychologists, occupational and physical therapists, developmental paediatricians, etc.)
	Inadequate training in school leadership was a recurring theme
	Insufficient professional development opportunities for teachers to be upgraded to next-level training and leadership instruction in Inclusive Education
	Training qualifications and competency levels failing to be in alignment with regional CARICOM standards
	Non-alignment of tertiary level institutions with local and regional bodies (ETTC, SJPI, BCC, BVTB, etc.)
	National Development Scholarships, Barbados Scholarships and Exhibitions awarded only on academic criteria

3.1 Policy Requirements Not Met: Adequate and Relevant Training

- Teacher training institutions to broaden their capacity in areas of special training for professionals and paraprofessionals
- Recruitment and training policy required to articulate specific levels of qualifications before appointment
- Offer Special Education as a major in teacher training college courses
- TVET, BVTB and SJPI trainer qualification standards in alignment with regional CVQ Levels of Competency beyond Level 2

- Training institutions align with teacher-training curricula and professional development programme with CARICOM standards for the Teaching Profession (CARICOM HRD 2030 Strategy)
- Increase capacity building to include mandatory SEN courses in pre-service and in-service training for teachers at all levels of the education system to teach all learners
- SEN Units and Committees in Ministry of Educational Transformation must be appropriately staffed with qualified personnel (Adapted from Spencer-Ernandez *et al*, 2023)
- Recruitment and training of multi-disciplinary assessment teams to serve the system, and flexible training opportunities in on-going professional development, for educators
- Outline in policy who comprises a multi-disciplinary team and outline their specific roles
- Principals and management teams must receive training in the management of inclusive schools and institutions to regional (CARICOM) standards
- Full access to post-secondary and tertiary level training opportunities, in order to build capacity in vulnerable populations
- Scholarship opportunities awarded over a wider, more inclusive set of criteria, giftings and competencies as outlined in policy

A rigorous campaign of training for teachers, tutors, lecturers, support staff, instructors and demonstrators at the tertiary level, behaviourists, counsellors, extended training for therapists (occupational, physical, speech and language), medical practitioners, nurses, nursing assistants, technicians, social workers, police officers, firefighters, clerks who interface with the public, Social Welfare Officers, Child Welfare Officers, etc., to identify and support diagnosed and suspected cases of exceptionality, should be launched in an accepting, tolerant and humane approach. Ideally this would be an *island-wide* exercise. However, initially confining the training activities to the educational sector, the professional development opportunities can be offered to those who work directly in the educational field, beginning with teachers and instructors. The Erdiston Teachers' Training College would need to broaden its programmes, increase staff and develop a more rigorous module of training in exceptionalities in the classroom, for all levels of instruction. Support staff like Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Parent Volunteers (PVs) would not be excluded from the training, since they are a vital part of enhanced support for students identified as needing additional intervention.

National Development Scholarships which reflect the expert knowledge needed in the areas of support for exceptional minor and adult students, should be specially offered. These areas would be (but are not limited to), Special Education, Disability and Inclusion Studies, Speech and Language Therapies, Sign Language Interpreting, Communication Disorders, Abnormal Psychology, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Behavioural Modification and Intervention Techniques, ITC for the Blind, Physical and Occupational Therapies, and Emotional Intelligence and Management. Wherever the expertise can be sourced locally, the scholarship should be translatable for the local or online context. Where there is need for relocation, then this should be an option.

In the meantime, expert trainers in these areas could be recruited from the region and the wider international community, on short-term contracts, to help build capacity.

To bolster the social impact of this training, a simultaneous Public Awareness Campaign which saturates the nation with snippets, sound bites, poetry, posters, dramatic presentations, advertisements in the print, audio-visual and social media, taking into account every exceptionality identifiable and the real experiences of those who are twice-exceptional (2e or dual diagnoses) should be undertaken. Parents, care-givers, service groups & providers, and adult students, drama majors from the Barbados Community College, University of the West Indies, community groups, etc. can be engaged in this capacity. The modalities by which these advertisements are disseminated should be accessible to the Blind (sound), Deaf (Sign) and Intellectually Challenged (visual).

4. Table 4: Full Family Support Services

Major Gaps Identified	
Full Family Services for families with Exceptional members	Little ongoing, consistent support daily for families with exceptional members, except through welfare and disability allowances
	Limited access to social work professionals due to lack of capacity compared to articulated needs
	Limited involvement of stakeholders including NGOs
	Limited attempts to train stakeholders in NGOs and Charities to assist other exceptional citizens in affiliate organisations, thus supporting each others
	Low levels of parental involvement in the educational planning and process for exceptional students

4.1 Policy Requirements Not Met: Full Family Support

- Policy for educational transformation requires the full involvement of families in all educational processes and actions, not just as recipients of services, but as equal partners
- Access to holistic support for the exceptional child or adult student
- Access to ongoing parent-support or family-support advocate or social work professional
- Access of parent/guardians/caregivers to assessment reports, case conferences, IEP development, and support services to manage their exceptional child
- Policy should outline how to evaluate the quality of services (Adapted from Spencer-Ernandez *et al*, 2023)

Families who are suffering the impact of having a child or children or young adults with exceptional traits, can be supported by newly-trained and competent social workers, therapists, counsellors, medical personnel, psychiatric services, nurses, teaching and support staff, etc. Interventions and support in the form of information, social service references, navigation of those systems of services, transportation to the services, etc. must be put in place. A special bar code on the National Registration (Trident) card could alleviate the parents from the burden of having to pay bus fare for self and the exceptional student, particularly if they are on Welfare. Suitably accessible transportation for those with mobility challenges should also be accessed through the Ministry of Transport and Works (MTW), another inter-sectoral partner.

A team of **Family Support Advocates** (at least 15 to cover families in all 11 parishes), should be established to whom social workers (over 100 from MEDT & MPEA) should report, and through whom therapists, counsellors and support staff will liaise on behalf of the vulnerable family. These will also assist the vulnerable families in navigating the medical, social and educational systems in the absence of the assigned social worker (sickness, family crisis or vacation leave). Many of the parents of students with exceptionalities, have been found to be challenged with exceptionalities themselves. The families will need these interventions of support. The island can be zoned for this purpose in the same manner that the Welfare Department and Child Care Board has zoned its officers to work in various districts.

5. Table 5: Curriculum Revisions and Pedagogical Shifts

	Major Gaps Identified
Curriculum Adaptation and Pedagogical Shifts	Over-reliance on talk and chalk instructional approaches due to lack of training, lack of adequate resources or lack of accountability mechanism for teacher appraisals
	Lack of skill in Curriculum Adaptation for exceptional students, resulting in exclusion of students from basic skill acquisition
	Curricula that are not diverse enough to facilitate the basic skills and competencies for exceptional students, except as academic acquisitions
	Use of the Common Entrance Examination as a benchmark for all 11-year-olds, thus excluding those students who cannot reach the national standard at 11 years old
	Feedback to schools of National Means Data and Criterion Reference Test (CRT) results without the required Reading and Mathematics interventions at the local school level for struggling students
	Top-down approaches to Curriculum Development rather than full collaboration of stakeholders

5.1 Policy Requirements Not Met: Curriculum Revision & Pedagogical Shifts

- Training of teachers in Curriculum Adaptation and modifications for students with exceptional traits
- Revision of Curricula to include Life and Independent Living Skills for the Future, Transition Education and Job Skills for exceptional students
- Transition students from primary to secondary provision through the use of Continuous Assessments, thus freeing teachers to deliver instruction tailored to learners’ abilities

- Trained personnel to be recruited even in temporary staff positions. Staff who are trained in Curriculum Adaptation and providing assessment accommodations for exceptional students, to provide more equitable access to National Curriculum
- Training in intervention strategies for struggling students at the primary and secondary levels, coupled with a dedicated summer school programme
- Collaborative and multi-sectoral approaches to Curriculum Development to ensure educational relevance in the wider society e.g. Employers’ Confederation, Entrepreneurship support services, etc.

The approach to Curriculum Revision and Development needs to be revised to provide a more inclusive approach for the ideas of stakeholders to educational transformation. Employers, students, parents, teachers, tutors and demonstrators need to be a part of the process. The inclusion of elements into the National Curriculum of areas such as Life Skills, Emotional Intelligence, Job and Interview Skills, and Transition Education must become a formal part of the offerings for students who need these skills.

Examination and assessment results of national examinations must be used to create interventions for local schools such as basic skills for struggling students, summer school and extra enrichment programmes.

6. Table 6: Modern Technologies

Access to assistive technologies for students with exceptional profiles as part of daily living skills routines	Major Gaps Identified
	Limited access to assistive technologies in general education classes for included exceptional students
Access to pedagogical approaches which utilise appropriate technology for academic instruction	Little use of technology in educational instruction beyond viewing of videos and power-point presentations
	Lack of access to technological instruction for students with exceptional traits in special schools
	Lack of technological resources for some students in vulnerable populations (severe exceptional traits, lower SES, etc.)

6.1 Policy Requirements Not Met: Access to Modern Technologies

- Access to technology as a learning support tool for every student
- Access to technology as part of instructional toolkit in pedagogical practice of teachers
- Access to available assistive technologies for blind, deaf and students with fine-motor challenges. as part of a suite of provisions for accessing the curriculum

Access to technologies that are supportive of quality of life is critical. The advances that have been made in AI Technology for converting speech to text for essay writing as well as social communication for persons with dyslexia and autism spectrum disorders, screen reading and described video for the visually impaired, etc. must become a part of the Living Skills Curriculum offered to minor and adult citizens with exceptionalities. There is a vast world of technological

advancements even in the world of orthotics and prosthetics. These must be made available to our citizens as a matter of course, to assist with their independent daily living skills. The fact that there are citizens living below the poverty line who are unable to access electricity, pay service providers for internet access, or who cannot enjoy decent living conditions, should be a concern to policymakers, corporate businesses and citizens at large. The fact that many of these citizens have disabling conditions and experience barriers to inclusion daily, should be of great concern to policymakers.

7. Table 7: Improved Assess to Spaces

Major Gaps Identified	
Improved Access to the Continuum of Service Provision	There is less capacity available than the indicated need
	The population of students who are difficult to mainstream due to sensory or behavioural challenges is increasing
	No purpose-built public schools for exceptional students have been built in the past 10 years, even though referrals and requests for placement are increasing, according to data shared
	There is a lack of trained and willing personnel to be deployed into special or inclusive classrooms
	No ready access to critical material or financial resources, for special schools designated as primary schools
	A lack of human resources in terms of paraprofessionals in special schools and resource rooms along the continuum

7.1 Policy Requirements Not Met: Improved Access to Spaces

- Ensure access to quality, appropriate, special needs education at all levels
- Access to resources at all levels which will enhance the educational experience
- Personnel trained from public funds to be available for deployment in Special schools and Units
- Purpose-built, accessible, state-of-the-art spaces for students along the continuum of service provision, who need separate provision as their least restrictive environment
- Teaching Assistants in all special classes and units (Synopsis of qualitative information from interviews with stakeholders, (2025)

The specialist teachers spoke of issues pertaining to lack of space, lack of training, staffing issues in special schools which were designated as “primary schools”, no clear mandate regarding Individual Education Plans, lack of monitoring or feedback from the Ministry of Educational Transformation, lack of resources and professional support staff, lack of assessments for students placed in special facilities, and principals without special educational training who did not seem

to understand the needs of students in special classes or units attached to mainstream schools. The specialist teachers welcome the idea of inclusive education on the continuum of provision/service already established, but caution about students whose behaviours make them difficult to include in mainstream settings, because they are disruptive. They were also concerned about Educational Transformation, and what that would mean for special needs education in terms of resource distribution and personnel deployment.

Access to additional facilities for instruction under our continuum of provision, is critical. It is clear that not every exceptional student can function in a mainstream setting. The Inclusive Education Policy is recommending that each local primary school should have a special class included in its structure, for students with exceptional profiles who for various reasons, find it difficult to access their education in larger, noisier settings. The policy is also recommending that secondary schools, especially those with the intake attaining the lowest marks at the BSSEE, should establish the Non-Categorical Resource Rooms as an added support for the students’ introduction into the secondary school’s curriculum. The additional spaces created at the primary and secondary levels would enhance support for those students who need it most, as well as expand our **continuum of provision**. Redesignation of special schools with teenage populations, will remove barriers to secondary level instruction for students who are deaf, blind or intellectually challenged.

8. Table 8: Institutional Strengthening

Major Gaps Identified	
Institutional Strengthening	Weak communication and co-operation among Ministry of Educational Transformation (MEDT) Units
	Poor communication between the MEDT and the wider education system, in terms of information sharing
	Weak roles given to personnel responsible for portfolio covering exceptional students. Lack of autonomy with respect to personnel deployment for students in need of support
	Roles of key personnel in the MEDT, schools and other agencies are not clearly defined in legislation and policy
	Inadequate inter-sectoral collaborative framework between ministries of Education, Health, Transport & Works, and Social Welfare which also provide support and professional interventions for exceptional learners
	MEDT failed to give clear written guidelines to Principals of mainstream schools with special units regarding the financing of those units
	MEDT failed to give clearly stated guidelines for the monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice, to ensure inequalities to access, instruction and participation were eliminated
	MEDT exercised limited supervision and administrative support for programmes in special schools and units across the system

8.1 Policy Requirements Not Met: Institutional Strengthening

- Roles of key personnel clearly defined in legislation and policy

- Clearly outline the functions and authority of the SEN/Special Needs Education Officers and Unit Personnel in policy
- Establish a comprehensive collaborative framework across the Ministries of Education, Health & Wellness, Transport & Works, and Social Empowerment Agency
- Fiscal commitment to support programmes geared to the advancement and improvement of students with SEN and other vulnerable groups
- Establish an efficient monitoring and evaluation framework to include input from all stakeholder groups
- Supervisory and administrative support mandated across the system and documented in policy (Adapted from Spencer-Ernandez *et al*, 2023)

The Ministry of Educational Transformation has a hierarchical structure in place which works for the organisation as it stands, in terms of internal functioning. However, this structure does not always work to provide the services needed by the general public and the school population. There is a need for more personnel in the areas of the ministry where the general public directly interface (Examinations and Assessments Unit, Student Support Services Unit (SSSU), and Information Technology and Quality Assurance Unit (ITQAU), for example). These Units need an injection of personnel with the expertise to answer the public's questions, to be accessible when critical national needs arise (e.g. Covid-19 pandemic), and when queries about a student's future become urgent. Parents, research students, the disabled and other stakeholders need to feel a welcoming atmosphere when they call or come to the Ministry of Educational Transformation. Physical access to the ITQAU and SSSU is prohibitive, since they are both located upstairs. Sometimes the lone service elevator is out of order. Beyond this simple maintenance issue, however, are the attitudes of some public servants towards the inquiring public, especially those members of the public who seem to have challenges with comprehending the systems and procedures of the Ministry. This area of sensitivity harks back to the final goal stated on the Ministry's website, "*to make the Ministry more responsive to the needs of its various publics*".

Parents who feel aggrieved in the way their child or ward has been treated currently ask for an audience with an Education Officer, the Senior Education Officer, the Deputy Chief of Schools, or the Chief Education Officer herself. There is no **Grievance Handling Committee**, which would be able to meet the members of the public either individually or as a part of a larger group. This panel should be established by Ministry and given the autonomy to liaise with nursery, primary and secondary principals and teachers, in order to determine the issues being faced at the school level, or multi-school issues like bullying. This panel would then report to the Senior Education Officers of the respective sections, who would in turn bring critical issues to the Deputy Chief responsible for Schools, should the case so warrant. The members of the public who feel aggrieved should be allowed to make appointments, have walk-ins or calls made. In each case, the issues should be dealt with to a speedy resolution. Members of this Grievance Committee could be made up of some Education Officers, some retired Educators, a Union representative and a law Enforcement Officer.

All the critical ministries involved in this revolutionary process of Educational Transformation must be willing to critically analyse their strengths, the areas of weakness and seek to shore up those links that may spell barriers for our vulnerable populations. Multi-sectoral approaches which borrow strengths from other entities, corporate partnerships, human and material resource exchanges where necessary, innovative thinking, fluid boundaries in pursuing and executing services for the vulnerable must take priority.

Permanent Secretaries, Deputies and Officers down the hierarchical line should dialogue frequently, exchange ideas and make suggestions regarding how to best serve the vulnerable students, parents and families who seek guidance through our educational system. Open dialogue will strengthen internal and multi-sectoral relations.

Treatment of Data from the Student Support Services Unit (Quantitative)

Data received from the Ministry of Educational Transformation presents our island’s current referral figures and needs for assessments, placements, counselling and crisis intervention. The table below shows the categories of exceptionality referred for the period September 2021 to September 2024 (3 academic years).

Table 9: Categories of Exceptionality

Year	Autism Spectrum Disorder	ADHD and ADD	Down Syndrome	Cerebral Palsy	Epilepsy	Speech and Language Difficulties	Learning Difficulties	Behavioural Challenges	Sexually Assaulted	Visually Impaired	Hearing Impaired	Emotional Behaviour Challenges	Academic Difficulties	Suicide Ideations	Social Challenges	Multiple Disabilities	Special Needs -Global	Developmental Delay Medical Challenges	Academic & Behavioural Challenges	TOTAL
2021	25	2	2	0	3	33	25	24		0	2	40	84	1	13	4	6	0	33	297
2022	39	3	2	4	2	45	49	104	2	0	1	85	73	2	0	2	10	1	97	521
2023	30	5	4	1	0	39	49	101	0	1	1	34	79	1	8	2	7	3	93	458
2024 Jan - Sep.	33	3	0	0	0	45	61	53	0	0	2	28	74	2	3	0	2	1	89	396

The table lists the exceptional students referred to the unit within the past **3 academic years**, and the categories of exceptionality diagnosed. The **Student Support Services Unit** is the one in the Ministry of Educational Transformation to which students with exceptional profiles are referred, for placement into our public school system, or if necessary, into one of our private Government-Assisted Special schools.

The most significant conclusion which can be reached from this data, is that within the period under consideration (2021-September 2024), there were **1672 referrals** made to the Student Services Unit, primarily from Nursery and Primary Schools. Of these, **127** were students on the Autism spectrum, **162** were students with Speech or Language Disorders, **282** were students with Behavioural Challenges, **187** were students with Emotional Challenges, and a staggering **622** were students with “Academic and Behavioural Challenges”. Early intervention is critical, according to the literature on exceptional learners¹⁶.

Visual Impairments, Hearing Impairments, Multiple Disabilities, Down Syndrome and Cerebral Palsy are noted to be Low-Incidence Exceptionalities. These cases would be handled by the Education Officer Special Needs and the three peripatetic support staff. Cases marked Learning Difficulties, Behavioural Challenges, Emotional/Behavioural Challenges, Academic Difficulties, Social Challenges, Academic and Behavioural Challenges **total 1299** in all. These would be distributed to the 9 social workers on the SSSU team. The remaining categories referred such as Sexually Assaulted and Suicide Ideations (**totalling 8 referrals**) would be handled by the Senior Psychologist as crisis intervention. Those with Chronic Medical Challenges referred (**5 cases**) would possibly be investigated by the Senior Education Officer to determine suitability for school.

Table 10: Students referred according to Nursery Primary and Secondary ages

	June - Dec. 2021	Jan Dec. 2022	Jan - Dec. 2023	Jan. - June 2024
Nursery Level	0	10	8	7
Primary Level	193	504	470	189
Secondary Level`	181	34	29	9
Unclarified Age	15	12	7	4

The table above details students who have been referred for the 3-year period under consideration, from Nursery (25 referrals), Primary (1356 referrals) and secondary schools (253 referrals). There are even referrals whose ages are unclarified (38 referrals). The total from this table comes to **1634 referrals**. This figure is **38** less referrals than those presented on the Categories of Exceptionality table. A dedicated data analysis team is needed to keep abreast of the trends in referrals.

The total number of students placed in public special schools and government-assisted private schools for **2024** is **86**, according to the sitting Officer. The difference between numbers referred for 2024 (**396**) and numbers placed (**86**) is staggering. The students unaccounted for may have remained unplaced for several reasons, including **lack of spaces**, inclusionary practices at the local

¹⁶ Hallahan, D., Kauffman, J. & Pullen, P. (2014). Exceptional learners: An introduction to special education (12th ed.). Pearson Education Ltd: UK www.pearsoned.co.uk

school level, changes in strategy and teachers, a need expressed other than placement, or a move to private provision.

Treatment of Data from Institutions and Organisations (Qualitative)

A. Tertiary Level Institutions

A synopsis of the contributions made by the staff of the tertiary level institutions, indicated a varied response to students with exceptional traits. The University of the West Indies had already developed and set in place a disability policy for their own institutional use. This was to assist their faculty in the management of any students who presented to the University with any exceptional diagnosis. However, staff interviewed lamented that the policy was not properly promoted to new hires and that there were no ‘walk-throughs’ or refreshers provided for academic staff.

In the case of the **Samuel Jackman Prescod Institute of Technology**, the personnel interviewed stated that the Institute encouraged the enrolment of exceptional students and pointed to their special relationship with the Irving Wilson and the Ann Hill Schools. However, they also pointed out that the Entrance Examination to the institution may be presenting a barrier to some students who may have challenges with Reading and Mathematics. They lamented the fact that **over 2000** applications were received in any academic year, yet the Institute could only offer placements to **16 students** in each instructional skill cohort. The personnel also pointed out that many of their staff were untrained in facilitating young adults with exceptional traits. Staff members seemed reluctant to access the training programme offered by the Erdiston Teachers’ Training College for technical and vocational staff.

The interviews conducted with staff of the **Erdiston Teachers’ Training College** proved to be open and enlightening. One of the points made by the staff, with respect to the training programmes offered in the areas of special needs education, was that the material seemed to be geared towards teaching primary school students, rather than secondary ages and young adults. Personnel interviewed also lamented the physical inaccessibility of critical areas of the college campus itself (offices, library, computer labs, etc.), and the limited programmes being offered, which would assist teachers-in-training to face diverse classroom populations. College personnel admitted that staff lacked up-to-date training, and that programmes offered also lacked critical components to assist teachers in becoming more inclusive in their practices.

The Barbados Vocational Training Board personnel interviewed, admitted that their institution attracted many exceptional students since their offerings were skills-based, and there was no entrance exam. However, they also highlighted a lack of training in facilitating students whom they encountered in their classrooms. The tutors and demonstrators reported a general lack of information on the invisible challenges being faced by students in terms of reading and comprehension, communication deficits, and social and behavioural disorders. They also lamented the physical inaccessibility of some training sites, the lack of financial resources to make these more accessible, and the lack of professional support staff available (only 2 counsellors) to counsel troubled students.

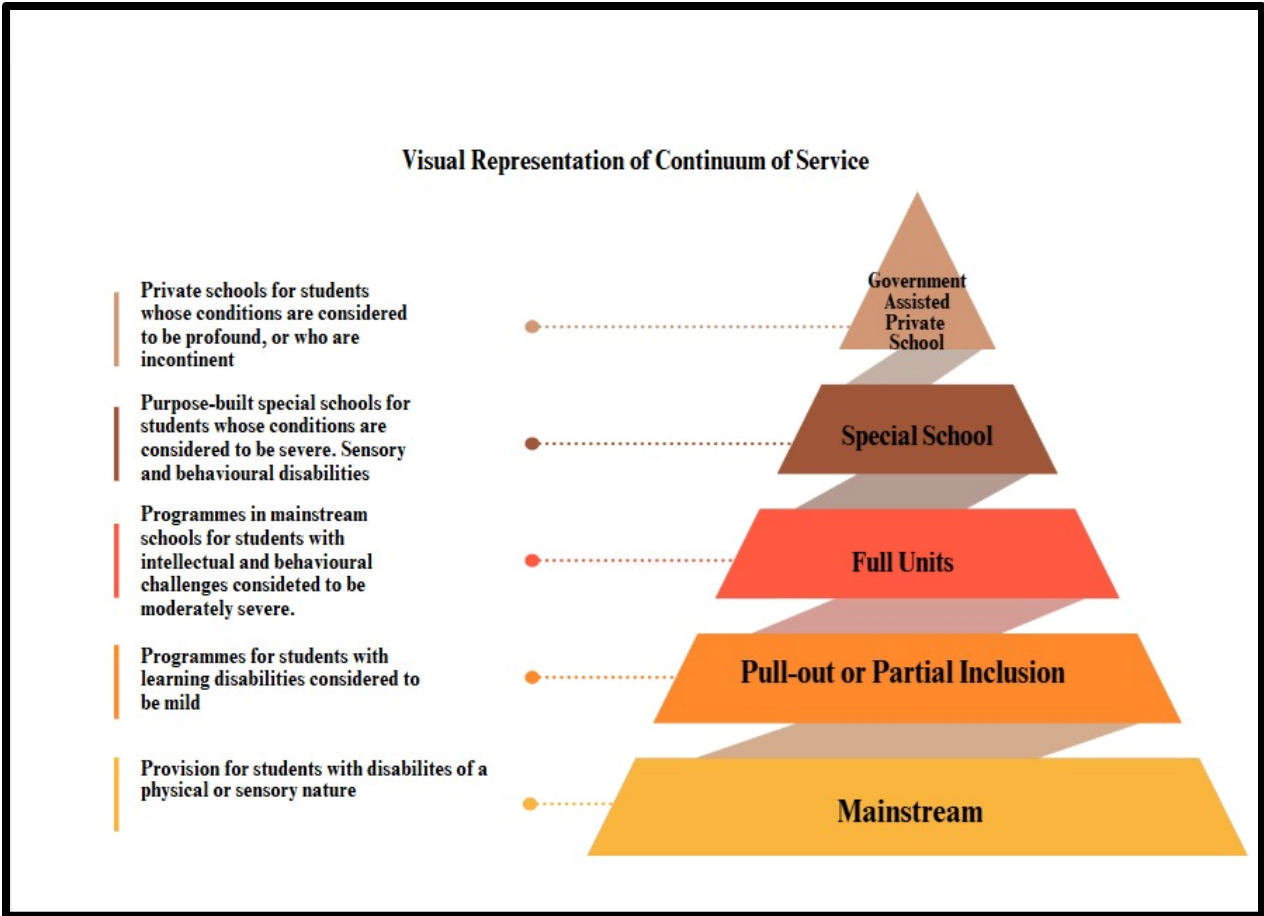
As labour markets become more specialised, and economies demand higher levels of skills, governments and businesses are increasingly investing in Technical and Vocational Education and training. For their part, the Technical and Vocational Council (TVETC) co-ordinates Competence Based Education and Training (CBET) and maintains standards in vocational qualifications (NVQs and CVQs). Administrative staff have revealed that the tutors and demonstrators involved in delivering technical skills, were experiencing certain deficits in their own levels of competency and certification as well. These are the persons tasked with delivering content, skills and competencies to young adults who may also be challenged with invisible exceptional traits. Administration also lamented the staff’s reluctance to pursue professional development courses at the local Teachers’ Training College, which would assist them in providing instruction to their adult students.

Service Delivery Models: Our Continuum of Provision

Service delivery spans from full inclusion in general education classes, to government-assisted private schools on the continuum of provision, depending on perceived needs. The features of each provision are articulated on the pyramid.

Following is a graphic representation of the service delivery models at the local level:

Figure 1: Visual Representation of Continuum of Service Provision



General Education Classrooms

Several offerings are available for parents in both public and private provision. Many of the students whose conditions are considered to be mild, such as those with mild to moderate dyslexia, students considered high-functioning on the autism spectrum, or those with physical disabilities whose intellectual capacity is unaffected, remain in mainstream settings. Students who are blind, deaf or physically challenged may fall into this category as well. They remain in general education settings with appropriate support.

Pull-out or Partial Inclusion Programmes

Pull-out programmes or those with dual settings, are populated by students whose intellectual deficits or specific learning disabilities are considered to be mild. The categories of exceptionality represented would be students with Academic Challenges, Dyslexia, Mild Intellectual Deficits, and Attention-Deficit Disorders (ADD) of the mild type. Many students are undiagnosed, and the difficulties are only suspected. These students are facilitated in Partial Inclusion Units or Resource Rooms of mainstream schools. Ideally the students have contact with a specialist teacher for half of the day. The specialist teacher concentrates on areas of weakness in the core curricula of literacy and numeracy. Afterwards, the students are included in general education classrooms with their age-appropriate peers, to be exposed to the broader curriculum of general subjects like Science, Social Studies, Art and Physical Education. In such dual settings, while the specialist teacher is responsible for the student's progress in the core subjects of Language Arts and Mathematics, the mainstream teacher is responsible for the student's progress in the other areas of the curriculum. Mainstream teachers have expressed the need for further training in differentiated instruction, in order to facilitate the students from the inclusion units. Furthermore, there is no specific mechanism in place to monitor and evaluate the progress of students in dual settings, aside from mainstream and national testing.

Non-Categorical Resource Rooms

The non-categorical resource programme has been incorporated into the provision of services to learners with exceptionalities in three secondary schools and four primary schools. This approach serves as an alternative educational framework that has been designed to support students experiencing difficulties in one or more academic areas. The model aims to provide targeted interventions and support for students and their families by addressing literacy and numeracy difficulties in a structured and inclusive manner.

At seven schools, a systematic referral and screening process is employed to identify and support students who may require additional academic intervention. The process begins with the regular classroom teacher, who, as Elman (1981¹⁷) suggests, is a key resource in identifying potential candidates for the programme. These classroom teachers collect student data about areas of

¹⁷ Elman, N.M., & Ginsberg, J. (1981). The resource room primer. London: Prentice Hall

difficulty through informal observations and records their concerns on a standardised Referral Form.

The process continues with a private interview with the identified learner where an opportunity is given to share their thoughts about challenges encountered in specific academic areas, their academic progress and any other concerns that they may have.

According to the Resource Room teacher, on completion of the screening procedure, students who appear to be in need of further diagnostic testing are selected and observed in their regular classroom. This helps to identify internal and external factors that impact student capacity.

When observations have been completed, decisions on administering the diagnostic assessments are usually planned. This includes a parent-teacher conference where all data collected is shared with parents/guardians, who are asked to provide permission for testing. What follows is the development of Individualised Reading Remediation Plans, Individualised Learning Plans and, in some cases, Individualised Education Plans (IEPs).

Full units

Full units in mainstream schools are reserved for students who possess moderate to severe challenges, whether physical, intellectual or behavioural. The full unit is so labelled because students who have been placed there remain with specialist teachers for the full school day. They may interact with students in mainstream classes at break or lunch times, in a typically social rather than academic setting. There are Senior Teachers placed in charge of full units, and ideally highly-trained staff should be chosen to fill the teaching positions. The reality is that due to challenges with human resource management and teacher availability, sometimes there are several new staff members. The pool of trained teachers with a willingness to be deployed into full units seems to be relatively small, compared to the needs. Full units can be found at Eagle Hall, Charles F. Broome, Ellerton and All Saints Primary Schools. All are oversubscribed.

Special Schools

There are at least five (5) special public schools in operation in Barbados currently. These are the Erdiston Special School, the Ann Hill School, the Irving Wilson School, the New Horizons Academy and the Alma Parris Academy. Students in purpose-built special schools are not exposed to non-disabled peers in the school setting. Their conditions are considered to be moderate to severe, to the extent that they need the full support of specialist teachers, trained intervention specialists and further therapies which are not offered in the mainstream school settings. Ideally, highly-trained specialist teachers are chosen for these roles, since students may present with a range of challenges from physical, sensory, intellectual and behavioural disabilities. There may also be students with multiple disorders, including mental health challenges. These schools are headed by highly-trained Principals at the local level, who have specialised in some specific area of exceptionality. The staff at these schools are also ideally supposed to be highly trained in order to deal with a variety of learning and behavioural deficits or sensory impairments.

The Erdiston Special School, located in the compound of the **Erdiston Teachers' Training College**, caters to students with a variety of severe conditions ranging from autism spectrum disorders, Down's Syndrome, moderate intellectual deficits, William's Syndrome, Noonan's Syndrome, and other low-incidence disabilities. The school has limited space for students' creative activities, or for extra support staff like a social worker, behaviourist or a guidance counsellor. There are no Information Technology labs or IT staff. There is no separate room for dysregulated students to cool down and become calmer. These needs are critical in a special school.

The Ann Hill School caters to students with intellectual challenges, Down's Syndrome and a growing population on students on the autism spectrum. This is the purpose-built feeder school for all of the special units at the primary level. The school caters to students over 12 years old who have not sat the Barbados Secondary School's Entrance Examination (BSSEE). These students transition to the Ann Hill School in their pre-teen years in order to prepare them for the world of employment. Students are expected to remain up to the age of 18 years, but in many cases, due to constraints of space, they are graduated at 16 years of age. However, the school offers **a primary school curriculum**, due to its designation by the MEDT as a primary facility. A primary school principal manages the school of teenagers with exceptionalities.

In the more recent past, skills such as Agricultural Science, leathercraft, basketry, ceramics, Industrial Arts, Electronic Document Production & Management (EDPM) and Food Preparation have been introduced. Challenges are experienced with staff who have been hired under the primary school's mandate but are then expected to introduce job skills. The skilled artisans who are hired to deliver some of the skill areas, are part-time and untrained in the delivery of content to such a varied population of students. There are also issues with the availability of material resources to deliver such trade skills (leather, Plaster-of-Paris, rush for basket weaving, food supplies for food prep classes, etc.). Since the school is designated as a primary school, it does not enjoy the financing afforded the secondary counterparts who also cater to teen-aged populations. The primary school grant does not extend to the furnishing of such materials. This is a financial need which is critical. In many instances the school depends on the sponsorship of corporate Barbados to finance its skills and job preparation programmes. The Ministry of Educational Transformation is responsible for the payment of part-time staff at this institution. Attempts are ongoing to establish school to work programmes on a consistent basis, as students transition.

The Irving Wilson School, situated next to the Ann Hill School, was opened in 1966. It caters to students in three categories of exceptionality according to the data delivered by the Ministry of Educational Transformation's SSS Unit. These are students with blindness and Low Vision, students with deafness and Hearing Loss and, since 2012, students with autism spectrum disorders. There are six (6) classes of students in the latter group, 2 classes of students who are deaf, and one class of students who have some degree of vision loss. The school caters to students of all ages in these categories of exceptionality, up to 18 years of age. Trained staff would ideally be hired to cater to students in the classes of exceptional students. Staff who can sign would be hired for the Deaf students. Staff who can teach Braille and the use of screen readers, embossers, Braille

machines and Orbit readers would ideally be hired to cater to the needs of students with low vision. Staff trained in the TEACCH¹⁸ approach would ideally be hired to cater to students on the autism spectrum, since this institution is considered to be a flagship school in delivering instruction to students under the guiding principles of TEACCH. However, this is not always actualised. One of the unwritten standards at the local level is the placement of not more than five (5) students with autism to a single teacher. At the Irving Wilson School some teachers cater to seven (7) students with autism. If a staff member from this grouping is ill or absent, the students in his/her care are split between the remaining teachers, thus increasing their unit responsibilities for the duration of the absence. This is due to the fact that there is no substitution system in effect in the local education system. This is a critical need.

Students in the junior and senior classes for the deaf are instructed by two trained teachers and formerly a Deaf volunteer. However, professional development has not been made available to these teachers, nor to those other teachers and support staff who also interact with Deaf students. There is no monitoring mechanism in place to evaluate the quality and level of instruction of the deaf in this institution. There are no certification tracks for the students in this area when they reach 18 years of age. The school-to-work programme previously established seems to be non-functional.

The Vision unit is staffed by two teachers, one of whom is visually impaired and a past student of the Irving Wilson School. Both teachers are trained, one at the local level, the other received her training overseas. Further training in facilitating the blind is needed as only two teachers in the public school system possess these skills, and one is a principal.

The New Horizons Academy is also located on the grounds of the **Erdiston Teachers' Training College**, and was opened in 2014. This alternative day school was specially set up for the purpose of providing education for students between the ages of 10 to 16 years, who were experiencing severe behavioural challenges in mainstream provision. These were students who had been considered for expulsion in secondary (and primary) settings, because of repeated behavioural issues. The staff was specially chosen and exposed to uncertified training, in order to work with this population of students. The Ministry of Educational Transformation hired counsellors, social workers, educators and support staff to create an atmosphere of alternative support, guidance and rehabilitation. The goal as articulated in the early days, was to assist students in returning to traditional classroom settings once they had been sufficiently supported and rehabilitated. The school's population has remained small (N27) for the purposes of manageability. The current Principal of the school is the former Director of the Edna Nicholls Centre.

The Alma Parris Academy was officially reopened on January 27th, 2025, after seven (7) years of closure. This special secondary school caters to students whose **mental age** is assessed as between 5.6 to 11.6 years old, even though their chronological ages range from 11.5 to 15.0 years old. So far, there are 27 students enrolled with a staff of 13 who are familiar with the population

¹⁸ TEACCH® Autism Program. Charlotte, North Carolina. Retrieved from website <https://teacch.com/trainings/>

for the most part. Students are being exposed to the core curriculum (English & Mathematics) at the basic level, as well as Physical Education & Health & Family Life, Social Studies & Civics, Art and Craft, Conversational Spanish, Music & Theatre Arts, Information Technology, Food & Nutrition, and Cosmetology. The school plant is still not accessible to the physically challenged, since all classrooms and bathrooms for students are located upstairs.

Suspension Centre

The Edna Nicholls Centre is a suspension centre for secondary-aged students. It was established more than 20 years ago out of a need for students with behavioural infractions to be facilitated away from familiar classroom settings, for a 10-day period. There is special transportation which departs the Ministry of Educational Transformation each morning. Students assigned to the Edna Nicholls Centre are expected to access this transportation, make their way to the Edna Nicholls site, and participate in anger management sessions, drug counselling and other rehabilitative activities, for their smooth return to the mainstream classroom. Counsellors, psychologists and a social worker/special needs educator have been engaged by the Ministry of Educational Transformation to staff the facility. Before entry, all prospective students are given a parent-approved drug test from the National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA). Students are only allowed two 10-day stays for rehabilitation purposes. A report to the secondary school of origin is forwarded for each student.

Government-Assisted Private Special Schools

Government-Assisted special schools are those which partner with the Ministry of Educational Transformation to provide education to students whose conditions can be considered to be profound, or students who are incontinent. The exclusion of students from public educational institutions on the basis of incontinence has been practised as an unwritten policy for decades.

There are a number of special schools which are privately run, but which depend on the Ministry of Educational Transformation to pay staff, maintenance costs and cover subventions. Schools like the **Challenor Creative Arts and Training Centre**, the **Learning Centre**, the **Derrick Smith School**, **School House for Special Needs** and **Lifelong Skills Inc.** are named as schools who partner with government to provide facilitation for students who are difficult to place in public school settings. Students who are incontinent, who may also have multiple disabilities in terms of communication and mobility, are placed with bursaries if they have approached the Ministry of Educational Transformation for placement. This means that the government of Barbados undertakes the cost for placement of students whom the public school system is unable to facilitate. Parents can also approach private Government-Assisted schools on their own, as long as they are willing to undertake the cost. **Lifelong Skills Inc.** is a private facility for post-secondary aged students with severe disabilities.

IV. OVERALL AIMS, VISION AND CORE VALUES OF THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY

The policy seeks to marry the clear vision, mission statement and objectives of the Ministry of Educational Transformation with the concept of Inclusive Education at the local, regional and international levels. This could be problematic since most jurisdictions seem to have a varied view of what inclusive education should look like. However, in the local context, when the position has been settled philosophically that inclusion is not a location, but rather a right, an attitude, and a value system in the wider context of acceptance of differences, then definitions become easier. The core statement of this policy, *“to provide a quality education which is inclusive and equitable for all students, and which promotes the opportunities for lifelong learning for all citizens, in an accepting and enriching environment”*, merges well with the core values stated by the MEDT on its website.

The MEDT envisions providing a quality and equitable education for all students, as reflected in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #4 of the United Nations (UN¹⁹). It also commits to the idea of promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all students, and the respecting of these as a basic human right. Coupling this philosophy with our local thrust for universal free education to the tertiary level, the belief that education is the catalyst for social and economic change, is supported.

The ability to create an accepting and enriching environment in our local schools is an achievable goal, if promoted by the support of our local Ministry through training and professional development, creating state-of-the-art, purpose-built institutions and engaging the services of well-trained human resources. The Ministry is committed to social and economic equity in the education system, in a socially democratic framework.

The key policy areas, goals and strategies outlined are those which it is felt are crucial to the proper establishment and functioning of an Inclusive Education Policy. The policy cannot exist in isolation. Therefore, consideration must be given to the state of our current structures in terms of accessibility, training, human and material resources, programmes and stakeholder involvement. Of greatest importance is the foundation laid for the policy by other policy documents signed and ratified by government. Those international and regional conventions, listed in the **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**, outline the core values to be discussed and defended.

These values include education as a basic human right (CRPD Article 24), the right to equity (CARICOM-HRD 2030), and a quality education (SDG 4), access to the general education system and lifelong learning opportunities (CRPD Article 24, 2a, b & 5), and inclusivity in educational approaches (NPPWD, 2023).

¹⁹ United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Retrieved from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Policy Objective #1:

Education as a Basic Human Right: (CRPD-Article 24)

The government of Barbados recognises the right of persons with exceptionalities to education and will ensure appropriate measures for citizens to exercise their right.

To achieve this objective, the following policy considerations are recommended:

1. Examine existing education legislation and public policy documents to ensure that the right of all citizens to education as a basic human right is enshrined.

Policy Objective #2:

The Right to Equity in Education: (CRPD-Article 24)

The government of Barbados recognises the rights of persons with exceptionalities to equity at all levels of education; from nursery to tertiary levels, as a lifelong pursuit

To achieve this objective, the following policy considerations are recommended:

2. The Minister responsible for Education shall ensure that students at all levels of education; nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions are treated in a fair and equitable manner, such that non-discriminatory principles and approaches are actualised.
 - 2.1. The Minister responsible for Education shall set up a monitoring mechanism to ensure the fair treatment of all students at all levels, and ensure recourse to appeal any perceived grievances.

Policy Objective #3

The right to a quality and free education (SDG-4 (2015), CRC 1990)

**The government of Barbados recognises the right of all citizens
to a quality and free education without discrimination**

To achieve this objective, the following policy considerations are recommended:

3. The Minister responsible for Education shall ensure that all students of all ages are able to access a quality education that is free and non-discriminatory on the basis of race/ethnicity, sex, religion, culture, age or disability.

3.1.The Minister shall ensure that reasonable accommodations of the individual’s requirements are provided without cost to the individual student.

Policy Objective #4

Access to General Education: (MRPF)

The Government of Barbados recognises the responsibility of ensuring access to the general education classrooms to all students at all levels of the education system

To achieve this objective, the following policy considerations are recommended:

- 4. The Minister responsible for education shall establish a clearly-stated policy that ensures access to a free, quality, appropriate inclusive education at all levels, for all students, with free and compulsory primary and secondary education in their communities with their peers.
- 4.1.The Minister responsible for education shall ensure that students with exceptionalities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education.

Policy Objective #5

Inclusivity in Education: (MRPF)

The Government of Barbados recognises the right to inclusion of all students in the education system, and inclusion of key stakeholders including parents in the planning and learning process.

To achieve this objective, the following policy considerations are recommended:

- 5. The Minister responsible for education shall ensure that students in the system are included at all levels of education.
- 5.1.Principals of institutions for minor students under 18 years shall make provision that parents/guardians/caregivers are provided with opportunities to be a part of the planning team and learning process.

This Inclusive Education Policy follows the proposed strategies and actions outlined in **Section 4: Education, Training and Lifelong Learning (Policy Goal 4, pp. 58-62)** of the 2023-2030 National Policy for Improving the Lives of Persons with Disabilities in Barbados. Broadly speaking, these are summarised under the following headings:

- 1. Access through Legislation
- 2. Data Collection and Security
- 3. Assessments and Data-driven Decision-Making
- 4. Curriculum Adaptation and Pedagogical Shifts
- 5. Training of Human Resources

6. **Full Family Support Services**
7. **Emerging Technologies**
8. **Expansion of Services**
9. **Institutional Strengthening and Multi-sectoral Partnerships (MPEA, MEDT, MOHW, MTW)**

The Policy Requirements speak to these headings with specific reference to the various key stakeholders under the Roles and Responsibilities Section.

V. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS IN CURRENT SOCIAL CONTEXT

General observations of the barriers faced by students in the social context are highlighted in this section. These barriers are part of the daily lives of students with exceptional profiles.

Accessibility to Buildings

The findings from interviews conducted across the educational landscape of Barbados highlight significant infrastructural barriers within the educational system, underscoring the need for improved accessibility to support inclusive education for students with physical disabilities. Such access is crucial for students challenged with Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy, Traumatic Brain Injury, and adult students with Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

Educational institutions must be equipped with ramps and elevators or bucket lifts, as these ensure entry points within multi-level buildings for students with disabilities. Ramps and lifts are essential for these individuals as they provide safe and independent access to buildings and facilities, ensuring equal opportunities for participation in daily activities. Unlike stairs, ramps and lifts offer a smooth and navigable surface for wheelchair users, those with walkers, or individuals with limited mobility, reducing the risk of trips and falls. Ramps and elevators create access and therefore foster independence by enabling students with disabilities to access classrooms, laboratories, computer rooms and other spaces on school compounds and campuses. Access to facilities also promotes a sense of belonging among the students with disabilities.

In the event of emergencies on the school compound or campuses, ramps and elevators will serve as critical evacuation routes, further highlighting their importance in creating a safe, accessible, and inclusive school environment for everyone (NPPWD, 2023; p.37).

Larger bathroom stalls are also needed with adequate room for wheelchairs or other mobility aids to manoeuvre easily, and for students to use the bathrooms with dignity.

Consideration must also be given to the installation of non-slip tiles to minimize the risk of falls. Safety and access on the local campuses of our educational institutions is vital.

Classroom Modifications

Classroom modifications are central to improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Effective modifications require individualised adaptations tailored to each student's needs, ensuring accessibility and engagement. Customised furniture with adjustable desks and

chairs will assist in meeting individual needs, both for larger students and for wheelchair users. Furthermore, students with disabilities should be supported with assistive technology. Devices like voice-to-text tools, text-to-speech (talking computers), Braille displays, or screen readers like JAWS® are essential for the implementation of inclusive education.

Specialised Support Rooms

While accessible classroom spaces are important for inclusive education, time-out and quiet rooms are also essential. Therapy rooms offer a dedicated, supportive environment where students can receive specialized interventions to address their unique needs. These specialised facilities serve as a safe space for addressing mental health needs, such as anxiety, stress, or behavioural challenges such as dysregulation. Therapists can use these spaces to help students with exceptionalities develop coping strategies, enhance self-regulation, and boost overall emotional well-being.

A student with traumatic brain injury, by working in a therapy room with the right interventions, can begin to regain cognitive function, motor control, and communication skills, which directly enhances his or her ability to participate in classroom activities and engagement with peers (social skills). Over time, the student's confidence may grow as they experience small successes in therapy.

Transport Facilities

Transportation for students with exceptionalities in our special schools and units, is a challenge generally. Several of our students are not able to be accommodated on the four (4) small buses designated to make the special school trips. So far, Ann Hill, the Irving Wilson School, the Units at Ellerton, Charles F. Broome and Eagle Hall are served. Since the buses do not travel beyond Hometown, there is no bus service to the All-Saints Special Unit. Furthermore, the annual requests for transportation from home to school far outstrips the capacity of the 4 buses. Rather than enhancing the fleet of buses and drivers, the Transport Board refuses the applications of new parents to be accommodated on the fleet. Routinely, the list of requests is cut in half. Parents of students who are refused are forced to seek alternative methods to get their children to school, or else keep them at home. Many opt for the latter, since the shuttle services are costly, and sometimes inaccessible. There is need for a dedicated Transport Service for students with exceptional challenges.

Parents of students with physical disabilities such as Cerebral Palsy, Muscular Dystrophy, and Traumatic Brain Injury lament the absence of access to buses or vans that are equipped with lifts or ramps for easy boarding. The transportation should not only be spacious but feature seats with harnesses or supports for students with limited trunk control. The vehicles need to have air conditioning so that a comfortable temperature can be maintained, as some students for example those with Cerebral Palsy may be sensitive to heat or cold. More vehicles of this kind are required to support transportation of students with exceptionalities. Although the National Disabilities Unit (NDU) has accessible vehicles, these are not accessible to the entire population of students with

disabilities. Moreover, the NDU does not engage their vehicles in school transport. The A. C Graham Development Centre, Learning Centre, Edna Nicholls Centre, and the Challenor School provides transportation for its students. In the case of the Barbados Council for the Disabled, they provide transportation for a limited number of students who have applied for such through the Council.

Sports and Recreation

Barbados' Inclusive Education Policy seeks to ensure that all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, have equal access to quality education. Students with disabilities need to participate in extracurricular activities that are accessible and inclusive. However, some students will require adaptive sports equipment, wheelchair-accessible sports courts and specially designed play-parks with rocking see-saw balance boards, pod swings, large audible balls, etc. Accessible playgrounds will feature ramps, sensory play areas, and ground-level play equipment. The policy is also advocating for specially-trained Physical Education teachers to work with students with intellectual, physical and neurological challenges.

Health and Safety

To ensure that students with conditions such as Cerebral Palsy (CP), Muscular Dystrophy (MD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and Multiple Sclerosis (MS) have access to an equitable and supportive learning environment, schools and educational institutions must implement a range of procedures and accommodations.

Many students with disabilities, such as those with cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, traumatic brain injury, or those with mental health issues, require regular medication to manage symptoms, prevent pain, inhibit harmful behaviours, or maintain muscle function. All schools adhering to the policy must have emergency procedures in place that identify accessible escape routes and equipment like evacuation chairs or mats. Emergency drills are essential, and the procedures should be tailored for all needs. Special care and consideration must be taken of exceptional students (minors and adults) during evacuation procedures.

Investment into the engagement of **school nurses** is critical, even if this professional is shared among at least five (5) neighbouring schools in a zone. The Ministry of Health and Wellness can be consulted on the best ways of going about this aspect of health and wellness provision for students.

SECTION VI: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

This section deals with the roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders in inclusive education. They are set out below in detail, according to the subtitled stakeholder.

A. The Ministry of Educational Transformation

Issues of staffing, training opportunities, monitoring, and evaluation of all schools, learning institutions (both private and public), special classes and programmes, grievance handling, resourcing of schools and learning institutions, analysis of assessment results, educational interventions, curriculum matters (learning targets), generating public awareness, creation of new state-of-the-art spaces for students, professional development, financing and special provision arrangements fall under the ambit of the Ministry of Educational Transformation. Reconfiguration or redirection of any arrangements for the optimum benefit of the students and teachers where necessary is also the purview of the Minister, according to the current **Barbados Education Act**.

Policy Requirements (A)

1. The Ministry of Educational Transformation (hereinafter referred to as the Ministry) shall establish a **Multi-Disciplinary Team** consisting of psychologists, social workers, special education officers, school counsellors and diagnosticians to assist with the **assessment** of students with exceptional learning profiles, **monitoring** of special schools, units, alternative settings and programmes in public, private and government-assisted institutions, **conducting training seminars** for staff of Ministries and educators, and providing a pool of expertise in the area of Inclusive Education and Exceptionality.
2. The Ministry shall establish a system of reporting that requires the Principal, Deputy Principal or Senior Teacher of public and private schools, special units, alternative settings and programmes to submit annual electronic reports to the Ministry. These reports should outline the demographics of the population served (names, dates of birth, contact information, disability/challenge, recommended interventions, etc.), document the curricula used or adapted; the numbers of students served; the activities engaged in (both academic and social); the outcomes measured and methods used for such measures; and the projected plans for the upcoming academic year. Any challenges noted in the delivery of the curricula must be clearly documented, along with suggestions for alleviating these challenges.
3. The Ministry shall take the responsibility of ensuring continuous effective evaluation of schools, units, programmes and alternative settings. To this end it must commit to at least one annual visit from each member of the Multidisciplinary Team to each school, unit, programme or alternative setting. A checklist should be developed by the MEDT for team members to use during visits. These team members must document their visits and be prepared to have an annual plenary near the close of the academic year, to highlight strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) pertinent to the institutions visited. Team members are responsible for ensuring that Individualised Educational Plans (IEPs) and Group Education Plans (GEPs), record keeping, standardised student report preparation, and acceptable pedagogical practices are being adhered to. The Ministry is also responsible for analysing results of national examinations, providing feedback to schools, and developing interventions to support better student outcomes.
4. The Ministry shall commit to a selection process of students that is systematic and based on a dedicated assessment protocol. The students selected for Special Needs Education (SNE) must be those experiencing exceptional challenges as documented by a medical or clinical

professional, or those suggested for such (in the absence of a formal assessment), by three or more educators, including the **Learning Support Coordinator**. Students with behavioural disorders as attested to by a series of professional agencies; students subject to repeated academic failure as documented by annual school reports for three (3) consecutive terms, or by selection of the on-site selection panel at local schools, are eligible. Students referred to the *Student Support Services Unit* (SSSU) of the Ministry of Educational Transformation, who have undergone the process of the clinical family interview and classroom observation where possible, and have been recommended for special placement by the local school's selection panel, are also eligible. The on-site selection panel at a local school would typically comprise a diverse group of professionals including the Principal, Senior Teacher, Special Educator, **Learning Support Coordinator**, parent/guardian/caretaker, and other educators familiar with the student. This team collaboratively reviews the documented challenges and needs of each student, ensuring a thorough and systematic selection process for provision. The role of **Learning Support Coordinator** in local schools must be created and established, similar to Subject, Early Childhood, and ICT Co-ordinators.

5. The Ministry shall ensure that teachers' aides as well as nursery aides be assigned to work in the classrooms of each special school/unit and in general education classes, where necessary, to facilitate students who need more educational support.
6. The Ministry shall ensure that students with disabilities will be given the opportunity to access general education with appropriate supports. It is only where it is clearly demonstrated that education in a general education classroom is incapable of meeting a child's educational or social needs, or when it is required for the welfare of the child, or that of other children, that the student be considered for special education services.
7. The Ministry shall ensure the availability of relevant training opportunities for staff and students at the local, regional and international levels. The Ministry should also provide opportunities for specialist teachers to share their expertise on an exchange basis wherever possible, thus ensuring professional development across the local and regional educational landscapes.
8. The Ministry shall ensure that exceptional students whose best fit is full inclusion in general education classes, be given the tools, human and material resources, assistive technologies, accommodations and curriculum adaptations as needed with appropriate supports to provide the best chances for success in an inclusive setting.
9. The Ministry shall safeguard the quality assured in public and private schools, special units, programmes, government-assisted special schools and alternative settings by ensuring that the minimum entry qualification into this area of education is not violated. It is therefore suggested that those selected as special education practitioners should be:
 - I. Those who hold a minimum of five Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) certificates in conjunction with the Special Needs General Interest Introductory Course being offered by the Erdiston Teachers' Training College, as a minimum standard, or
 - II. Those who hold a Bachelors' Degree in any subject area in conjunction with the Special Needs Certificate Course being offered by the Erdiston Teachers' Training College, or

- III. Those who hold the Associate Degree in Education Certificate (ADE) whose chosen option was Special Education, or
 - IV. Those whose training on the ADE and/or the Diploma in Education Certificate (DipED) consisting of a compulsory practical component of not less than four (4) teaching weeks at one of our special schools, full units or special programmes, or alternative school settings, as partial fulfilment for the qualification, or
 - V. Those who hold the Bachelor's degree in education, with a Major in Special Education, who have been exposed to not less than a four (4) weeks practicum at a special school, special unit or an inclusive classroom as partial fulfilment for their qualification, or
 - VI. Those who hold the Master's degree in Special Education who have been exposed to not less than four (4) weeks practicum in an inclusive, special or alternative school setting, as partial fulfilment of their qualification, or
 - VII. Those who hold qualifications in the areas of Special Education, Disability Issues, Exceptional Learners or Inclusion Studies or any other related qualifications from accredited overseas institutions, and have had no less than three years' experience in a special or inclusive setting.
10. The Ministry shall ensure that a clear pathway to source financial support for assistive technologies and resources for students with exceptionalities, be established in the annual education budget (estimates and emoluments), and that the necessary allowances as negotiated for special educators, by collective bargaining agreements, be delivered to those who qualify for these.
 11. The Ministry shall establish an **Education Grievance Handling Committee** for parents of students who feel aggrieved. A panel of special educators, medical and psychiatric professionals, family counsellors and members of relevant NGOs, can hear their concerns in a timely manner ,and seek the best solutions given the unique circumstances of the case .These members of this panel should serve on the committee on a **voluntary** basis.
 12. The Ministry shall develop a written set of guidelines giving clear direction on what kinds of alternative tests, accommodations and modifications can be used in schools and under which circumstances. This would provide standardised practice across the primary and secondary school systems.
 13. The Ministry shall develop a **Life Skills Curriculum** for exceptional students, through its Curriculum Section. This Section should also be engaged in a regular review and revision of the National Curriculum, following stakeholder meetings.
 14. The Ministry shall ensure accessibility of its public-school plants and central offices, in order to facilitate students, staff and public being served.
 15. The Ministry shall ensure that written guidelines for a Positive Behaviour Management Protocol be developed and disseminated to each school and special institution, detailing various possible infractions and the specific consequences which Principals and teachers must follow to ensure consistent discipline in the schools/institutions. The document should also articulate the appropriate supports that students with behavioural challenges should have.
 16. The Ministry shall ensure that specific guidelines for the transitions of students with exceptionalities onto the next level of education or employment should be developed and

disseminated throughout the education system. As an addition, each local special school should develop a directory of local businesses and government facilities where students can be accepted to experience internships in the world of work.

17. The Ministry shall ensure that a cadre of public and private health and social work professionals are available to provide full family services such as therapies, interventions and family counselling for identified students and their families, in a reasonable time, at least two terms or 24 weeks, following referral.
18. The Ministry should ensure that at least **one teacher** trained in special education is on staff at every school along with a **Learning Support Coordinator**, to ensure compliance with the measures and stipulations outlined in this policy.
19. The Ministry shall ensure that appropriate resourcing of educational institutions in terms of material and human resources is a priority across the system from nursery to tertiary levels, to support programmes and inclusive initiatives at the local institutional level.
20. The Ministry shall take responsibility for the creation of new spaces in a wider expansion of service provision as needs of students (both minor and adults) so dictate.

B. The Erdiston Teachers' Training College

The Erdiston Teachers' Training College is the institution responsible for teacher training at the local level. The College offers courses in Education to the Bachelor's degree level, Certificate courses in Education for Primary and Secondary Teachers, Post-Graduate Diplomas in Special Needs Education and Educational Leadership. The College also offers certificate courses for trainers at technical and vocational institutions (The Technical and Vocational Teachers' Training Programme in Adult Education), with a heavy emphasis on understanding diverse students in the classrooms. Information Technology instruction is embedded into the modules of the teacher training courses, along with Mathematics and Language Arts. Secondary School Teachers can pursue courses in their chosen areas of speciality such as Mathematics, English, Science, Social Studies, PE, Music, Religious Education, Home Economics/Clothing and Textiles, Art, Business Studies, and Foreign Languages. These courses do not currently carry a component for the teaching of diverse student populations.

Policy Requirements (B)

B.1. Teachers in training shall be exposed to the information regarding the characteristics, behaviours and needs of students with exceptionalities in the classroom, as part of their set course modules, regardless of the courses undertaken, to cover at least 12 credit hours of instruction.

B.2. Teachers in training shall be exposed to strategies and techniques that may be utilised to assist with the remediation of students experiencing difficulties in the classroom to cover at least 12 credit hours of instruction.

B. 3. Teachers in training shall be exposed to at least four (4) weeks of practical classroom training in a special school, class or special programme or inclusive setting, in order to operationalise the knowledge and strategies learnt.

B. 4. Teachers in training shall have recourse to a **Student Help Desk or Student Affairs Unit** based at the College, to allow those student teachers who are feeling stressed, overwhelmed, suffer grief, anxiety, depression or are experiencing any social or emotional traumas to be counselled and supported during their time of study.

B. 5. Administrative and library staff at the College shall be given training in public interactions and customer care, and assist students with institutional knowledge and support wherever possible.

B. 6. The administration of the College shall take urgent steps to provide accessibility to key areas of the College such as the Library, Bursary, Accounts, Conference Rooms and those other key areas located upstairs. There is also the need for accessible bathroom facilities downstairs, for students who may have been injured in an accident, or more diverse student populations who may wish to pursue teacher training in the future.

B.7. The administration of the College shall take steps to set in place the appropriate training programme to offer the Associate Degree or Bachelor's Degree with a Major in Special Needs Education (SEN) to teachers who so desire this course of study.

B.8. The administration of the College shall make compulsory the SEN courses for all pre-service teachers in order to prepare them to teach all learners in diverse settings.

B.9. The administration of the College shall recruit qualified tutors in adequate numbers to meet the demands of training, retraining and professional development courses for teachers and support staff in SEN.

B.10. The administration of the College shall ensure that the teaching materials (books, journals, periodicals, etc.) are the most modern, and up-to-date resources available for the delivery of their training programmes.

B.11. The administration of the College shall ensure that programmes offered are relevant and aligned to the policies, goals and mission of the Ministry of Educational Transformation. There must also be mechanisms in place for the monitoring, evaluation and review of these programmes on a bi-annual basis.

C. Principals of Primary & Secondary Schools & Tertiary Institutions

Principals of public and private educational institutions have a duty of care for each student enrolled. They have a duty to provide a secure, accessible and supportive institution in which students can function and be as productive as their abilities and potential allows. Therefore, the MEDT must also provide sufficient secretarial and teaching staff to enable Principals and management to mentor and supervise teachers.

Policy Requirements (C)

C. 1. The Principal shall mentor younger staff members in his/her capacity as instructional leader, with the assistance of his or her management team, in order to provide practical support and foster classroom management skills.

C. 2. The Principal, as overall caretaker of the school, shall make the school accessible to staff and students with mobility challenges, through the Board of Management of the school in the case of secondary schools. In the case of nursery and primary schools, the Ministry shall retrofit the school plant for the inclusion of all students and staff, irrespective of physical challenges being experienced. In the case of tertiary level institutions, the various Boards and Councils which assist the Principals, are expected to work along with the institutions to make this a reality.

C. 3. The Principal of the school shall ensure the access, participation and support of each student enrolled in the institution in the National Curriculum, in an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere. No student should be denied access to a nursery or primary school on the basis of disability. Principals shall assist class teachers in referring exceptional students so enrolled, for further support.

C. 4. The Principal, as chief educational instructor, shall make available to all staff information shared regarding professional development opportunities. This includes courses of study, seminars, conferences, webinars and other opportunities of exposure to quality instruction which will enhance practice.

C. 5. The Principal, as chief instructional leader and caretaker, shall support the referrals of students with suspected cases of abuse, neglect, traumas, psychiatric challenges or any other related challenges, to the relevant agencies, as these are brought to his or her attention by concerned staff. Failure to report may result in charges being brought under the Child Protection Act (2023⁹).

C. 6. The Principal, as instructional leader and manager of the educational institution, shall report in writing on the conduct of any staff member, whether academic, ancillary or support staff, who contravenes the tenets of this policy, especially as it relates to their conduct towards enrolled students. Staff also have a duty to similar recourse should the Principal be in contravention of the policy.

D. The School Administration

The school administration must seek to ensure that all students, especially those with exceptionalities, are catered for with the best possible deployment of available resources (both human and material).

Policy Requirements (D)

D. 1. Manage the human resource component on their respective plants to maximise the strengths of those assigned to the special and inclusive classrooms.

D. 2. Assure the contact hours given to students in special programmes by utilising other members of staff besides the **Learning Support Coordinators** or **Specialist Teachers**, to resolve absenteeism.

D. 3. Insist on high professional standards from all teachers who support the education of students with SEN.

D. 4. Ensure the quality of service-delivery by consistent and unbiased teacher appraisal practices, both formal and informal.

D. 5. Ensure the communication of available opportunities for training and professional development, as sent from the Ministry of Educational Transformation, is distributed in a fair and equitable manner.

D. 6. Ensure the timely referral of students presenting with challenges of a social, behavioural, sensory, traumatic or academic nature, so that recommended assessments or services may be accessed.

D. 7. Ensure that students are not excluded from accessing education on the basis of disability, economic disadvantage, race, religion, sex, age or any other category of difference stated in this policy.

E. Teachers in Practice (Primary & Secondary)

Teachers in public and private schools, special units, support programmes, and alternative settings have a responsibility to ensure the progress of their students in the National Curriculum, and to provide safe and supportive settings to ensure positive student outcomes.

Policy Requirements (E)

E.1. Ensure that instructional practices are in keeping with international best practice in terms of differentiated teaching strategies (structured lessons, concept mapping, clear presentations, appropriate pacing, modelling skills by demonstration, interactive questioning, individual and group practice, matching learning tasks to student ability, assessment and evaluation, and adapted accommodations), promoting Universal Design for Learning (UDL) standards.

E. 2. Provide opportunities to assess and evaluate the performance of students in diagnostic, formative and summative ways in order to determine the level of achievement of stated goals.

E. 3. Ensure that student reports are in standardised formats, consistently prepared on a termly basis and reflective of students' areas of strength and weaknesses.

E. 4. Ensure that Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Group Education Plans (GEPs) are developed and operationalised for students in their immediate instructional grouping, utilising the team approach wherever possible.

E. 5. Ensure that the keeping of students' records is done in a professional manner, and that these records are available upon request for members of the Ministry's Multidisciplinary Team.

E. 6. Ensure that any social, behavioural or psychological problems regarding the students are reported immediately to the Principal of the school; and ensure that these challenges are addressed as a matter of priority through chain of command.

E. 7. Ensure the implementation of a varied and relevant education product for all students.

E. 8. Liaise with and cooperate with other professional agencies (The A.C. Graham Development Centre, The Queen Elizabeth Hospital, The Child Guidance Clinic, The Child Care Board, the Ministry of Educational Transformation, the Social Welfare Workers of the Ministry of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs, etc.), who are working with the families of students in their groupings. Co-operation may be in the form of information checklists, forms or reports which professionals working with vulnerable families may require.

E.9. Ensure the inclusion of parents/guardians/caregivers in the development of students' IEP's where these are indicated.

F. Role of Parents/Guardians/Caregivers

Parents/Guardians/Caregivers of students with exceptionalities have a responsibility to seek the services of professionals in the medical, therapeutic, clinical and educational settings in either public or private spheres, in order to ensure the best possible instruction and care for their children/wards.

Policy Requirements (F)

F. 1. Ensure the keeping of professional appointments with medical, educational, therapeutic, clinical and social work professionals or agencies as a matter of urgency, unless providentially hindered.

F. 2. Ensure that advice, suggestions and recommendations from professional staff is followed through when it is indicated that such recommended action is the responsibility of the parent/guardian/caregiver. This stipulation covers medical interventions such as medication, diet, medical procedures as recommended by professional staff, unless religious persuasion of the family is a consideration in the making of these decisions.

F. 3. Ensure that students' attendance at school is consistent and punctual, thus ensuring continuity. Failure to comply in this regard should incur the fines and penalties as set out in the **Barbados Education Act**.

F. 4. Provide timely and accurate updates to the school regarding any changes in the child's health, behaviour, or emotional well-being that might affect their learning or interaction with others. This ensures that educational and support strategies can be adjusted as needed to accommodate the student's evolving needs.

F. 5. Collaborate actively with the school by participating in regular reviews of the child's Individualised Education Plan (IEP) and other related Parent Level meetings. Parents/Guardians/Caregivers are expected to contribute to the planning process by sharing insights and observations that can help tailor the educational approach to better meet the child's unique needs.

F. 6. Exercise a willingness to participate in mandatory parenting seminars, workshops and training initiatives as recommended by representatives of the varying support ministries if so directed, on penalty of losing any public benefits or allowances.

G. THE MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAM /PROFESSIONAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

The professionals in the Multidisciplinary team, particularly the Special Education Team at the **Ministry of Educational Transformation**, and teams at the Ministry of Health & Wellness (MOHW) which supervise the A. C. Graham Development Centre, have specific roles and responsibilities towards students in the nursery, primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education.

G. 1. Developmental Paediatrician

A developmental- paediatrician is a medical doctor who specializes in evaluating, diagnosing, and managing children and adolescents with developmental delays and disabilities. Their comprehensive training equips them to address a wide range of issues affecting a child's developmental milestones.

Policy Requirements (G)

1. The Developmental Paediatrician shall conduct thorough evaluations to identify developmental delays, learning disabilities, and behavioural disorders. They utilize standardised tests, clinical observations, and gather detailed histories from families and educators.
2. The developmental paediatrician shall make recommendations for additional professional interventions like therapies with the physiotherapist, occupational therapist, psychologist, speech therapist, social worker or any other members of the Multidisciplinary team as required.
3. The developmental paediatrician shall monitor and adjust treatment plans based on the child's progress and emerging needs.
4. The Developmental paediatrician shall advocate for children with developmental and behavioural disorders within the healthcare system and the broader community.
5. They shall engage in public education initiatives to raise awareness and understanding of developmental delays and behavioural health issues.

G. 2. Speech and Language Therapist

A speech therapist, also known as a speech-language pathologist (SLP), specialises in assessing, diagnosing, and treating communication and swallowing disorders across all age groups. Their work encompasses several key areas. Such language disorders as speech delays, echolalia, perseveration, selective mutism, etc. are the purview of the Speech-Language Pathologist. They also make recommendations to parents on how to reinforce the sounds and speech patterns being worked on with their children/wards. They can also work with small groups of students in the school setting who may all be experiencing articulation challenges of a similar nature.

Policy Requirements (G2)

1. The speech therapist shall evaluate speech, language, and cognitive-communication abilities to identify issues such as articulation problems, language delays, or social communication difficulties.
2. S/He shall assess swallowing function to diagnose conditions like dysphagia, which can result from various medical conditions.
3. S/He shall develop and implement tailored treatment programmes to address specific needs, aiming to improve communication skills and swallowing safety.
4. S/He shall employ evidence-based methods, including exercises to enhance speech clarity, language comprehension, and cognitive-communication skills.
5. S/He shall provide guidance to patients and their families about communication strategies and swallowing precautions to facilitate better outcomes. They shall design activities and exercises for patients to practice outside of therapy sessions, promoting continued progress.
6. S/He shall participate in professional development opportunities to maintain and enhance clinical competencies, and stay updated with the latest research to apply effective treatment methodologies.

G.3. Psychologist

A psychologist studies human behaviour, emotions, and mental processes to understand and improve mental health and well-being. Their work can be divided into several key areas: Assessment and Diagnosis, Therapy and Counselling, Education and Training, Health and Rehabilitation Psychology, and Community and Social Work.

Policy Requirements (G3)

1. The psychologist shall conduct psychological tests, interviews, and observations, with a view to case management or further referral.
2. S/He shall diagnose mental health conditions like depression, anxiety, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and generate psychological reports on students' states of mind.
3. S/He shall evaluate cognitive abilities, personality traits, and behavioural patterns, and generate individual reports on evaluated students.

4. The psychologist shall provide individual, group, or family therapies as s/he sees fit, in helping to provide holistic interventions for students with exceptionalities and/or in vulnerable groups.
5. The psychologist shall help students manage stress, trauma, addiction, grief or relationship issues, using therapeutic techniques or psychoanalysis.
6. S/He shall help in conflict resolution and leadership development at the local school and institutional levels, as well as in family and social contexts.
7. The psychologist shall be willing to be involved in training and education, and to develop programmes for substance abuse prevention, domestic violence, or bullying.
8. S/he shall be willing to provide expert testimony in court cases.
9. The psychologist shall be willing to work with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), government agencies, or community organisations.

G.4. Audiologist

An audiologist is a healthcare professional specialising in the assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and management of hearing and balance disorders. They work to conduct hearing tests (e.g. pure-tone audiometry, speech audiometry, tympanometry). They also evaluate balance through tests like vestibular assessments. They use diagnostic tools to assess auditory processing and hearing loss types.

Policy Requirements (G4)

1. The audiologist shall conduct hearing tests and balance tests to assess the state of students' auditory processing abilities, and hearing loss types.
2. The audiologist shall interpret test results to identify hearing impairments or disorders in students, and provide reports with interpretations to parents, guardians, caregivers and professional staff.
3. The audiologist shall develop individualised treatment plans based on assessment results, and fit and dispense hearing aids and assistive listening devices where appropriate.
- S/He shall provide rehabilitation services for students with hearing impairments (e.g. auditory training, counselling) and tinnitus management programmes.
4. S/He shall educate students and families about hearing health, ear anatomy, and listening strategies. They shall provide counselling regarding hearing loss, communication strategies, and device use.
5. S/He shall work with other healthcare providers (e.g. otolaryngologists, speech-language pathologists) for comprehensive patient care.
6. The audiologist shall participate in multidisciplinary teams, especially for complex cases involving communication and balance issues.
7. The audiologist shall stay updated on advances in audiology technologies and methodologies, and request the latest in technology and equipment to conduct further testing.

G.5. Physiotherapist

A physiotherapist (or physical therapist) focuses on helping individuals improve their movement, manage pain, and enhance their physical well-being. Their work typically involves conducting thorough evaluations of patients' physical abilities and limitations, using clinical tests and patient history to identify issues affecting movement or pain.

Policy Requirements (G5)

1. The physiotherapist must develop individualised treatment plans following assessments., and set achievable goals with the patient for recovery and improvement.
2. The physiotherapist is required to implement tailored exercise programmes to improve strength, flexibility, and coordination.
3. S/He is required to educate patients on proper techniques to prevent injuries, and utilize hands-on techniques to relieve pain, improve tissue mobility, and enhance joint function.
4. The physiotherapist is required to apply various modalities such as heat, cold, ultrasound, or electrical stimulation to aid recovery, and to teach self-management strategies for long-term health benefits.
5. S/He is required to provide guidance on posture, ergonomics, and lifestyle changes to support recovery and prevent future issues after surgery, injury, or illness through structured rehabilitation programmes.
6. S/He is required to monitor progress and adjust treatments as necessary, and to work alongside other healthcare professionals to provide comprehensive care.

G.6. The Occupational Therapist

An occupational therapist (OT) is a healthcare professional who assists individuals across the lifespan in developing, recovering, or maintaining the skills needed for daily living and working. They work with students facing physical, mental, developmental, or emotional challenges to enhance their ability to perform meaningful activities, or "occupations," that are essential to their daily lives. Challenges may include neurological disorders (e.g. stroke, traumatic brain injury, multiple sclerosis (in older students), musculoskeletal injuries (e.g. fractures, juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA), scoliosis), Developmental disorders (e.g. autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy) and chronic illnesses (e.g., scoliosis, Juvenile diabetes and asthma).

Key responsibilities include assessment and evaluation, intervention and treatment planning, adaptive equipment and environmental modifications, client and family education, and collaboration with other professionals.

Policy Requirements (G6)

1. The occupational therapist is required to conduct comprehensive evaluations to identify clients' strengths and areas of need.

2. S/He must utilize standardized assessments, interviews, and observations to gather information about clients' physical, cognitive, and psychosocial abilities, and develop individualised treatment plans aimed at achieving specific goals related to daily activities and participation.
3. S/He must implement therapeutic interventions to improve clients' functional abilities, such as exercises to enhance motor skills, cognitive retraining, or strategies to manage sensory processing issues.
4. The occupational therapist must train clients in the use of adaptive equipment or assistive technology to facilitate independence, and assess and modify clients' home, school or work environments to remove barriers and promote optimal functioning.
5. S/He must educate clients and their families about strategies to manage daily activities and promote health and well-being, and provide guidance on coping strategies, energy conservation techniques, and ways to prevent further injury or decline.
6. The occupational therapist must work collaboratively with other healthcare professionals, educators, and families to ensure a comprehensive approach to client care.

G.7. The Social Worker

A Social Worker is a trained professional who helps individuals, families, and communities enhance their well-being. They address life challenges, advocate for social justice, and promote empowerment and social change. The social worker seeks to provide support and resources to individuals and families facing various challenges.

Policy Requirements (G7)

1. The social worker is required to facilitate access to necessary services (healthcare, education, housing, childcare, etc.).
2. S/He is required to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults in families.
3. S/He is required to advocate for vulnerable populations and promote social justice as well as promote mental health and emotional well-being.
4. The social worker is required to educate clients about their rights and available resources.
5. S./He must provide counselling, case management, crisis intervention, and support services for groups.
6. S/He must engage in advocacy by lobbying for policy changes, representing clients' interests, and raising awareness on social issues.
7. The social worker must conduct needs assessments, and understand social issues.
8. S/He is required to commit to client confidentiality and privacy, as well as adherence to ethical guidelines and professional standards set by social work organisations (e.g. Barbados Association of Professional Social Workers (BAPSW)).

9. Social workers are required to comply with local and international conventions regarding child protection, mental health, and elder care and to uphold the mandatory reporting of abuse or neglect to appropriate authorities.
10. The social worker is required to affirm diversity and inclusion, respecting clients' cultural, racial, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as clients' rights to dignity, autonomy, and informed consent.
11. S/He is required to work with interdisciplinary teams, including healthcare providers, legal professionals, and educators.
12. S/He is required to work with families, providing resources and education on parenting skills and child development, and offering support in navigating family dynamics, particularly during crises.
13. The social worker must support parents/guardians/caregivers in navigating the social and educational systems, and facilitate family therapy and conflict resolution training and services.
14. The social worker is required to assist families with accessing childcare, financial assistance, recommended therapies and educational services.
15. The social worker shall engage in ongoing education through workshops, conferences, and training programmes available locally, regionally or internationally.

G.8. The Behavioural Therapist

A behavioural therapist is a mental health professional who uses principles of behavioural psychology to help individuals change problematic behaviours and develop healthier ways of coping. This form of therapy is based on the idea that all behaviours are learned and that unhealthy behaviours can be unlearned or replaced with positive ones. Behavioural therapists use evidence-based techniques to help clients address issues such as anxiety, depression, phobias, addiction, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and behavioural problems in children and adolescents.

Policy Requirements (G8)

1. The behavioural therapist is required to identify the specific behaviours that are causing difficulties, and to understand the *triggers* (what causes the behaviour) and *consequences* (what happens after the behaviour).
2. S/He is required to set clear, achievable goals, typically focused on changing specific behaviours rather than exploring deep-rooted emotional issues.
3. Behavioural therapists are required to use classical and operant conditioning techniques to develop desired behaviours and to diminish harmful, destructive or inappropriate behaviours.
4. S/He shall ensure that the appropriate certification and licensure for practice as a therapist are established and renewed at his or her own expense on an annual basis.

G.9. The Special Education Officer

The Special Needs Education Officer is part of the multidisciplinary team created by the Ministry of Educational Transformation. The duties include co-ordinating special programmes, monitoring inclusive practices, assisting teachers and principals in creating more inclusive school environments, and ensuring equity in the distribution of material and human resources. The Special Needs Officer should possess the qualifications in the area of SEN up to the Masters' Level, or possess no less than seven (7) years' experience in a special setting, in order to properly execute the functions of training and advisory support.

Policy Requirements (G9)

1. The SEN officer is required to support, organise and advise on the facilitation of students of any age with special educational needs in public or private educational institutions. S/He is required to carry out the policies of the Ministry of Educational Transformation, as approved by the Minister.
2. The SEN Officer is required to evaluate students who are referred for Special Education, and to conduct clinical interviews and classroom observations as part of the data-gathering process, to determine the suitability of students for special educational interventions.
3. The SEN Officer shall prepare documents for, organise, and conduct special educational placement meetings, and generate reports as required for activities carried out under the Special Education portfolio.
4. The SEN Officer is required to liaise with multidisciplinary teams and other professionals regarding students with Special Educational Needs, and liaise with other social service agencies regarding students.
5. The SEN Officer is required to conduct and/or facilitate training workshops and seminars in Special Needs Education, and to assist with the formulation and revision of policies on Special Education and inclusion.
6. The SEN Officer shall conduct investigations into the suitability of candidates for exemption from the Barbados Secondary School's Entrance Examination (BSSEE), and to document such.
7. The SEN Officer is required to assist with the development of curriculum for students with special needs, and to present proposals for the organisation, management and enhancement of the educational provision of students with SEN.
8. The SEN Officer is required to have knowledge of the relationship existing between the Ministry of Educational Transformation and public and private schools, as providers of quality education for all.
9. The SEN Officer is required to demonstrate knowledge of the professional and pedagogical practices which are found to be effective in catering to students with varying educational needs, and to be involved in the training of teachers imparting these pedagogical skills.

G.10. The Learning Support Coordinator (LSC)

The Learning Support Coordinator (LSC) is a qualified teacher who has responsibility for coordinating the day-to-day operation of the school’s special education and inclusion policy.

Their duties would include ensuring that students with exceptionalities are identified early and supported effectively. They would also carry out the duties of acting as a liaison between parents, teachers, support staff, external agencies, and the wider school community. This **is not a currently existing post**, but the Inclusive Education Policy is strongly recommending that this professional be added to the multidisciplinary team at every school, as added support staff.

Policy Requirements (G10)

1. The LSC is required to have attained Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), especially in the area of Special Education or Inclusive Practices, and should possess a clear understanding of the concept of inclusive education.
2. The LSC must have excellent organizational, communication, and interpersonal skills.
3. The Learning Support Coordinator (LSC) is required to work with teachers and parents to identify students with special educational needs.
4. The LSC must assist teachers in the mainstream classrooms to develop IEPs and GEPs for the better facilitation of exceptional students.
5. The LSC is required to organise appropriate interventions, accommodations, and resources for students with exceptional profiles, and to promote inclusive teaching practices across the school.
6. The LSC is required to collaborate with external professionals such as educational psychologists, speech and language therapists, PTs & OTs and social workers.
7. The LSC is responsible for maintaining records, ensuring accurate documentation of support provided, progress made, case conferences and meetings held.
8. The LSC is required to contribute to the completion of education and care plans where necessary.

SECTION VII: THE USE OF INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLANS AND GROUP EDUCATION PLANS²⁰

An **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** is a personalized document designed to support students with exceptional educational needs. It outlines the specific learning goals, accommodations, and services required to help a student succeed in school.

²⁰ A sample of the Individual Education Plan as well as the Group Educational Plan is included as an appendix to this document, in the form of two QR codes.

Functions of an IEP:

1. **Personalized Learning Goals:** Establishes measurable academic and developmental objectives tailored to the student's needs.
2. **Specialized Support and Services:** Specifies any accommodations, modifications, or specialized instruction needed (e.g. speech therapy, assistive technologies, rehabilitative therapies, etc.).
3. **Collaboration Tool:** Serves as a communication framework between teachers, parents, and specialists to ensure the student receives appropriate support.
4. **Progress Monitoring:** Provides a method for tracking and assessing the student's progress towards their goals.
5. **Legal Protection:** Acts as a formal agreement ensuring the student receives their legally mandated educational rights.

IEPs are typically developed for students with disabilities, learning difficulties, behavioural challenges, or other special needs, ensuring they receive a fair and accessible education. There will always be students in our system whose unique needs will require an **Individual Education Plan**. These may be students diagnosed with severe and profound conditions, sensory impairments, multiple disabilities and/or rare syndromes.

Challenges to the Use of IEPs

According to Rashid & Wong (2023²¹), there are certain challenges inherent in the implementation of IEPs for students with exceptional traits. These include:

- a) Short-term focus (one academic year)
- b) Limited parent and student involvement
- c) Fragmented services
- d) Lack of teacher training & resources
- e) Lack of teacher skills
- f) Inadequate support and resources in many cases
- g) Misconceptions about students' abilities
- h) External factors- home & peer relationships, and
- i) Services provided may not be evidence-based.

Other researchers have also written on these features listed above, including the lack of empirical research to substantiate their effectivenessⁱ. In other words, they suggest that it is difficult to create a common set of circumstances upon which to develop a set of foundational benchmarks to measure IEP effectiveness. This is due to the fact that every learning situation is unique with differing variables, coupled with the situation where services are applied in different ways in

²¹ Rashid, S M. & Wong, M. T. (2023). Challenges of implementing the IEP for special needs children with learning disabilities. Systematic Literature Review (SLR). International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research Vol 22 (1) 15-34

varying jurisdictions. The interpretation of IEP services by different educators is also a determining factor.

Functions of Group Education Plans (GEPs)

An alternative to the foregoing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) is being presented in the form of a Group Education Plan (GEP). The GEP is being conceptualised as a purely academic document, specific to the educational goals set out by the teacher in the learning environment. These goals will encompass not only the academic benchmarks which it is hoped that students may attain within an academic year, but also the attitudes and social skills needed to function in a social grouping, such as the learning community.

Group Education Plans are structured learning documents to be conducted in a group setting, where a facilitator or educator guides participants through the curriculum on a specific topic. Here are some key points about these programmes:

- **Collaborative Learning Environment:** They create a setting where participants learn not only from the instructor but also from each other's experiences and insights.
- **Interactive and Engaging:** Sessions often include discussions, group exercises, projects and interactive activities designed to enhance understanding and retention.
- **Wide Range of Applications:** These programmes are used in various fields such as healthcare (for patient education on managing conditions), schools (to teach or reinforce academic concepts), and corporate settings (for training and professional development).
- **Cost-Effective and Scalable:** By addressing groups at once, these programmes can be more efficient than one-on-one sessions, allowing for broader reach and shared learning experiences.
- **Supportive Atmosphere:** The group dynamic can provide peer support and motivation, making it easier for participants to ask questions and overcome challenges together.

For many years the local education system has been characterised as competitive, individualistic and elitist. These descriptors stem from the structures inherited from our colonial past, which pitted one individual against another as a competitor for the prize of high marks, rather than as a partner and team player in the learning community.

Today's demands in the modern world focus on critical thinking, innovative ideas, inventions, social and emotional intelligence, business acumen, entrepreneurship, partnerships and co-operative networking on the world stage. The island of Barbados is seeking to produce world-class citizens. The transformation of the local education system should not become a reflection of the failed initiatives of the larger, more well-resourced countries. Rather, this country of critical thinkers must develop workable solutions which will give us the citizens we desire; those who can cooperate in the work environment without translating it into a toxic, competitive, stressful and isolating workplace. The notion of creating cooperative learning communities, through the use of the Group Education Plan, is one such innovation.

During the focus group meetings, the discussion on Individual Education Plans was initiated. Special educators were critical of the initiative since they felt that it was not a “workable, living, breathing document” but rather a strictly academic exercise for an individual teacher. Further revelations suggested that there was not yet an educational policy making these ‘mandatory’.

Teachers would arrange for parents to meet and be a part of the process. However, they reported that parents, for the most part, were seemingly unable to contribute meaningfully to the discussion. This did not mean that parents were to be excluded from the process. Rather the educators felt that parents needed more information on the challenges faced by their particular child or children, in order to contribute meaningfully to the plans and goals projected for the student going forward. In the absence of the professionals who offer specific therapies, however, teachers were reluctant to recommend therapies which were beyond the scope of their expertise.

Students with exceptionalities need to feel a part of a larger community of learners. Rather than highlighting individuality and singleness, the Group Education Plan seeks to foster this sense of belonging to a wider community of learners, irrespective of where the child has been placed; whether in a mainstream classroom, a resource room or a full special school. The emphasis is rather on the concept of group cooperation, cohesion, shared goals and mutual encouragement, much like the Japanese model. The Group Education Plan would seek to create such interdependence, cooperation and teamwork.

Students on the autism spectrum have been observed to be challenged in three key areas; *communication, social skills and repetitive behaviours or habits*. Since it is clear from the data that this area of exceptionality has become the most prolific modern-day challenge (WHO documents 1 in 55 births; local figures for the 3-year period documents **127 new cases**), the Group Education Plan (GEP) would address at least two (2) of these areas of challenge: **communication and social skills**. It would become necessary in an educational grouping to communicate in order to accomplish the tasks set by the teacher. It would also necessitate the development of social skills in order to get along with the group with its diversity, to help others who may be struggling with a particular concept, to acknowledge strengths within the group and use these to assist those who need to develop strengths in the particular area. Generally, this would foster an understanding in these students on the spectrum, that they are not alone in an isolated world. The earlier they can be encouraged into acknowledging the presence of others, the feelings and viewpoints of others, the less “inwardly focussed” they will become.

Lastly, the Mission Statement of the Ministry of Educational Transformation, speaks to creating *“a modernised, high quality and relevant educational system that fulfils the diverse needs of all learners and educators, wider industry and societal stakeholders' demands and interests, and national development goals”*. If this mission is to be realized, it cannot be by the continuation of the same approaches of the past. There must be new approaches tried, reviewed and evaluated, adjusted and reapplied in order to secure the outcomes for which the nation is hoping. The *“wider industry and societal stakeholder's demands and interests, and national development goals”*, speak to developing citizens who can cooperate in the work and school environment, who come with the

right attitude and work ethic, who realize that more is accomplished through cooperation and teamwork, who exercise emotional intelligence, innovative and creative thinking.

This approach highlights similarities in the human condition, shared experiences and social values. It promotes the social unit as more important than the individual; a “common good” approach which adheres to a fixed set of rules. In essence, Group Education Plans are designed to foster learning through collective engagement, making them a popular choice in many educational environments. Methods of delivery including discovery, team approaches, project methods and groupwork are a few of the ways that Group Education Plans can be presented.

The Group Education Plan provides a method of collaborative learning, creates a supportive environment and fosters a sense of belonging in the classroom.

Challenges to the Use of Group Education Plans (GEPs)

There are some challenges to the use of group educational plans in inclusive settings. The major concerns are listed below:

1. Lack of Individualization

- GEPs may overlook specific needs of individual students, particularly those requiring tailored accommodations or modifications.

2. Wide Range of Abilities

- Inclusive classrooms often include students with vastly different cognitive, emotional, and physical abilities, making it hard for one plan to address all learning levels effectively.

3. Difficulty in Differentiation

- Teachers may struggle to differentiate instruction within a group plan, especially when managing large class sizes or limited resources.

4. Equity vs. Equality Issues

- Group plans might inadvertently promote equality (same plan for all) rather than equity (individualized support), disadvantaging students with higher support needs.

5. Insufficient Teacher Training

- Educators may lack the training to design and implement GEPs that balance group goals with individual accommodations, especially if the training did not extend to Differentiated Instruction and UDL Principles.

6. Limited Flexibility

- Group plans can be rigid, making it harder to adjust instruction in real-time based on the progress of individual students.

7. Monitoring and Assessment Challenges

- It can be difficult to assess individual progress and provide meaningful feedback when instruction and goals are group-focussed.

8. Parental Concerns

- Parents of students with special needs may feel their child's needs are not fully addressed or understood in a group plan format.

9. Resource Constraints

- Inclusive classrooms often have limited support staff, tools, or time to adequately address the individual needs within a group framework.

10. Collaboration Difficulties

- Implementing effective GEPs requires strong collaboration among general education teachers, special educators, and support staff, which can be inconsistent or lacking.

Teachers may wish to exercise a wider choice in the facilitation of students, depending on their educational setting. A sample IEP and a sample GEP are set behind the following QR codes:



SAMPLE IEP



SAMPLE GEP

SECTION VIII: ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIAL SCHOOLS AS ALREADY-EXISTING PROVISION

The following section outlines a few additional recommendations for special schools and units already in existence as part of the **continuum of provision** offered to parents of students with exceptionalities. These recommendations are being made following interviews with staff and former students of the institutions, as well as parents of students attending the educational institutions. The recommendations are being made to enhance current provision and support the efforts of staff, as they seek to provide facilitation for students who may be difficult to include. In many cases, the schools are making commendable progress with exceptional students. However, there is need for additional financial and material resources from the Ministry of Educational Transformation, as well as additional human resources.

THE IRVING WILSON SCHOOL

Recommendations

1. That the Irving Wilson School be reclassified as a Special Academy, under the Secondary School's mandate such as the Alma Parris Academy. This would ensure that an appointed Board of Management runs the affairs of the school.
2. That immediate training for teachers of the deaf be made available for all teachers of the school. The training could take an online format or include overseas relocation.
3. That the school pursues CVQ Centre qualification as a matter of urgency.
4. That Teaching Assistants (TAs) be assigned to every classroom, as added support for teachers.
5. That parental support be enhanced for parents of the deaf, blind and students with autism spectrum disorders.
6. That students at the Irving Wilson School be graduated at 21 years old, as recommended by personnel of New Brunswick Department of Education in 2016.
7. That students at the Irving Wilson School be given school-to-work opportunities across the business, tourism and services sectors through government ministries and local corporate entities as a rigorous campaign of affirmative action and diversity (inclusion) policy.
8. That the Ministry of Educational Transformation provides a rotation of competent Sign Language Interpreters to facilitate post-secondary and tertiary level Deaf students who wish to pursue lifelong learning courses.
9. That Second-Chance educational opportunities be extended to former students (blind & deaf) of the Irving Wilson School as soon as possible.

THE ANN HILL SCHOOL

Recommendations

1. That the Ann Hill School be reclassified as the Ann Hill Academy, under the Secondary School's mandate such as the Alma Parris Academy, governed by a Board of Management.
2. That a full support staff including a trained clinical or behavioural psychologist, a Career Guidance Counsellor, a community/school nurse be attached to the school, and Teaching Assistants (TAs) be allocated in every classroom.
3. That the school's compound be expanded to include the facility of the Irving Wilson School, making it one (1) academy.
4. That the staffing of the school be purposefully aligned with the skills being offered such as Arts and Craft, Food Preparation, Agricultural Science, Basic Language Arts and Mathematics, Information Technology/Electronic Document Preparation and Management, Social Studies & Civics, Health & Family Life, Physical Education and Ceramics.

THE ERDISTON SPECIAL SCHOOL

Recommendations

1. That the Erdiston Special School be relocated as a matter of urgency, to either the site of the current New Horizons Academy, or some other suitable site.
2. That the new site be able to support the work of certain critical staff such as a full-time social worker/counsellor, behavioural therapist, and a full-time Music/Arts & Craft Teacher.
3. That the students of the Erdiston Special School be given opportunities to join Brownies, Beavers and Cub Scout packs of the local service organisations, like any other primary school.

THE NEW HORIZONS ACADEMY

Recommendations

1. That the New Horizons Academy be designated as a special school, and that it be governed using a Board of Management structure such as the Alma Parris Academy, with an annual budget, etc.
2. That the NHA be relocated to the site of the current Edna Nicholls Centre, with enhanced infrastructures, outbuildings and security, as a **residential** facility. The curriculum should be extended to include horse grooming and care, animal husbandry (goats, rabbits, chickens and sheep), agricultural science and landscaping on a wider scale.
3. That the benefits of a residential facility be thoroughly explored.

GOVERNMENT-ASSISTED SPECIAL PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Recommendations

1. That special private schools be responsible for submitting annual reports of student data, the curriculum being offered, the use of funds, the skills and competencies being delivered and the levels of qualifications of current staff.
2. That the Government-Assisted special schools provide an annual budget of projected programming, suited for their student population, and specific to the skills and competencies being offered.
3. That the Government-Assisted Special schools be monitored and evaluated annually by the Ministry of Educational Transformation, as are other schools, using a monitoring tool specifically developed for the task, by the Ministry of Educational Transformation.
4. That the Government-Assisted Special Schools appoint a representative on their Boards of Management from the Ministry of Educational Transformation.

Conclusion

The Inclusive Education Policy document has been developed to present an Action Plan for a more inclusive educational system, fit and relevant for the local Barbadian context. The document highlighted the historical background, the areas of weakness in the system, the suggested measures of previous consultants for the alleviation of these weak areas. The voices of stakeholders in the system were documented, and the suggested recommendations were outlined. All recommendations, outlined procedures, legislative frameworks and detailed descriptive conditions have been recorded in order to provide a firm foundation for the paving of a new approach to the education system in Barbados; a transformed system that is fair, inclusive, relevant and modern.

APPENDICES: STEPS TO FACILITATING THE VARIOUS EXCEPTIONAL CATEGORIES OF STUDENTS

The facilitating of students with exceptional characteristics is addressed in this section as **Appendices**. Each category is addressed separately as outlined in the data set received from **the Ministry of Educational Transformation**, with the addition of the categories of students with Dyslexia, Traumas, and the Gifted Students, which were not represented in the information shared. Some of the headings have been merged, as they are in the literature, such as Social, Emotional and Behavioural disorders²². Speech and Language Difficulties are recorded under Communication Challenges.

In seeking to cover all the categories delineated by the data set received, as well as to include those which appear to have been omitted, a few changes, additions and amalgamations will be made.

Categories with specific traumas (Sexual Assault, Suicidal Ideations) will be treated under the broad heading of **Trauma**. Categories for which no students are represented (e.g. hydrocephalus), but which it is known affects intelligence, will be addressed under Intellectual Impairments/Disabilities. Broad categories like academic challenges, learning difficulties, and global developmental delays will be addressed under Intellectual Impairments/Disabilities, until such students receive a firm diagnosis of their difficulties. The categories like Behavioural Challenges and Social Challenges will be merged with Social and Emotional Disorders. The categories Dyslexia, Dysgraphia and Dyscalculia will be added and addressed under Specific Learning Disabilities. Epilepsy will be addressed under the category Medical Challenges along with Asthma, Scoliosis, Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA) and Type 1 Juvenile Diabetes. Special Needs-Multiple Disabilities will be addressed separately. ADD and ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Hearing Impairments and Visual Impairments will be treated as discrete categories.

The following link leads to the 16 Categories of Exceptionalities identified in this policy, and their required detailed interventions.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AD8fuU1nBWUEX6LZYFVh9bjYvKTAqqb/view?usp=sharing>

²² Hallahan, D., Kauffman, J. & Pullen, P. (2014). Exceptional Learners: An introduction to special education (12th ed.). Pearson Education Ltd., U.K. www.pearsoned.co.uk

APPENDICES

The QR code below contains information for the systematic delivery of a Transition Planning Policy for students with Exceptionalities in our education system.



Transition Planning