



Assisting Students with Learning Difficulties (Learning Support Team) Policy

Overview

- In any one school there will be students who may experience difficulties with learning. These difficulties may vary in cause, nature, intensity and duration.
- Learning difficulties may arise at any time throughout a student's school life. Students may experience difficulties in learning because of the ways in which they learn or the rates at which they learn.
- Students experiencing difficulties in learning will have differing levels of educational need, which may require the provision of one or more educational support services over varying periods of time.
- Prime responsibility for meeting the specific learning needs of students with difficulties in basic areas of learning lies with the school and the classroom teacher.
- The school learning and support team plays a key role in ensuring that the specific learning needs of students experiencing difficulties in learning are met.

What is a Learning Support Team?

A learning support team is a whole school planning and support mechanism. It is formed with the purpose of addressing the learning support needs of students through the coordination, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of educational programs.

A prime function of our Learning Support Team is to ensure that the needs of all students in the school are being met using a three-tiered model of support addressing universal, targeted and intensive supports for students and teachers. Our team also employs the logic of Positive Behaviour for Learning i.e. a strong focus on **systems** (what we do to support teachers), **practices** (what we do to support students), and **data** (to inform our decision making about systems and practices.)

A key feature of our learning support team is the facilitation of collaborative planning between teachers, support staff, parents and students. Our learning support team also addresses **whole school need, teacher need** and **student need** (as outlined in the Special Education Handbook).

Why implement a Learning Support Team?

The Implementation of a Learning Support Team will:

- Enable **coordination of support**
- Enhance the **collaboration and provides collegial support** to school personnel and the wider community.
- Ensure a whole school and ongoing plan is implemented to meet the needs of students with support needs.
- Establish guidance and support systems for all staff in order that they can cater for students with support needs.
- Ensure that programs based on current research and best practices are implemented for students with support needs.

Learning Support Teams work when:

- teachers see the learning support team as a support for their classrooms
- processes are inclusive, well organised and understood by all
- teachers are involved in the identification of outcomes for support for students
- support is provided and the teacher is involved in identifying what may be most effective in his/her classroom
- realistic action plans are developed
- the learning support team is seen as a group of professionals who coordinate support for teachers and students rather than a step in the referral process to other services.

Adapted from: Hoskins, B. (1996) *Developing Inclusive Schools*

Who are our team members?

In principle, every teacher is a member of the LST. However their participation will vary according to the function of the team at a particular time e.g. whether or not our team is focusing in universal, targeted or intensive supports.

The intensive / caseload team should include a:

Team facilitator (usually a member of the school executive)

School counsellor

Learning and Support Teacher/s

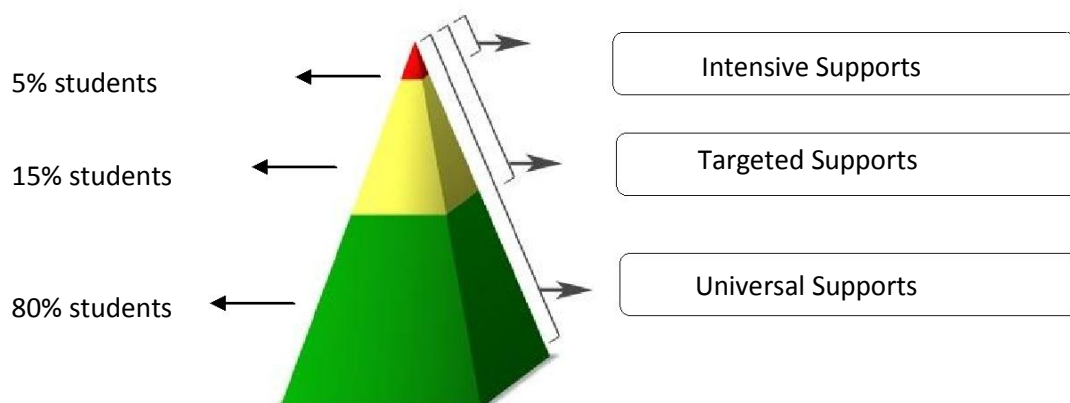
Teacher representatives (as required)

Specialist personnel including the OT, Speech therapist (as required)

Other specialist personnel e.g. Itinerant teachers and outside agencies, parents and care givers can be invited to attend as necessary

Roles of LST team members:

Team members will have a number of roles determined by the LST.



As a general rule of thumb the following roles can apply:

Principal:

- Ensure recommendations by LST are included in school's Management Plan.

LST Coordinator:

- Convene regular meetings.
- Develop meeting agenda.
- Keep and distribute minutes.
- Maintain LST documents.

LAST:

- Identify school needs.
- Establish school priorities.
- Training and development.
- Coordinate resources (human and material).

- Identify resource needs.
- Assist in development of school Learning Support Policy and Procedures .
- Collaboratively plan to develop action plans with strategies to support students.
- Liaise with students, parents and outside agencies.

Classroom Teachers:

- Refer students to LST when programs are not meeting students needs (and teacher has tried several strategies first).
- Attend LST meetings when required.
- Implement LST recommendations.
- Monitor student progress and inform LST.

What does our LST do?

When implementing a LST it is important that schools determine a priority order and gradually work through areas of need. The LST may:

- Develop the schools policy for students experiencing difficulties in learning or those requiring extension
- Implement school 'identification' procedures in order that students experiencing difficulties in learning receive 'early' and 'appropriate' instruction.
- Develop referral systems for classroom teachers to access support services.
- Establish mechanisms to coordinate support personnel within the school (e.g. LAST, Counsellor, ESL, Reading Recovery).
- Develop a plan to coordinate and access 'external' specialist personnel (e.g. Regional LAST, Integration, Specialist counsellors, ESL Consultants, Regional curriculum consultants).
- Implement school 'levels of support' for classroom teachers in order that they can access appropriate personnel and cater for students experiencing difficulties in learning.
- Establish support systems for specialist personnel within the school (e.g. policy/ model implementation, funding issues).
- Implement mechanisms for on-going support services for students (e.g. progressive monitoring and record keeping).
- Provide direction for professional learning programs.
- Assist the school with the selection, implementation and evaluation of resources for students experiencing difficulties in learning and those requiring extension.
- Establish communication and liaison procedures within the school community (e.g. school based/

home based programs, parent referral procedures).

- Implement effective models and programs to improve student outcomes (e.g. early intervention programs, assessment procedures, programs based on current research and best practice in the area of learning difficulties, effective teaching strategies, monitoring and evaluation procedures).

The Learning Support Team (from Special Education Handbook – 1996)

Addresses key areas:

- Teaching and learning
- School organisation
- Training and development
- Curriculum
- Student support and development
- Parent and community participation

Considers:

- Implications for school wide planning
- Coordination of support resources within and outside the school
- Development of strategies for program planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- Parent involvement
- Collaborative approaches to development of programs and support mechanisms for students who need additional support

The Learning Support Team

contributes to the provision of quality teaching and learning for all students

Coordinates planning for students who need additional support to implement the support cycle including:

- Appraisal of achievements, goals and needs
- Access to services
- Program planning, implementation and evaluation
- Reappraisal of progress towards planned educational outcomes.

Addresses key focus areas:

- literacy
- numeracy
- aboriginal education
- gender equity
- student welfare
- state-wide and local initiatives and priorities

Where does LST fit into our school resources?

The classroom teacher can access a number of resources to support students, including the LST.

These resources range from the least intensive support (adaptation to the class program – universal supports) to the most intensive support (support from outside agencies may be included).

School Levels of Support

1. Instructional adaptations to the class program.
2. Support from school specialist resources (LST)
3. Support from out of school resources.

1. Instructional adaptations to the class program.

Students experiencing difficulty in learning are catered for by the class teacher within the regular class program.

This will involve the teacher making instructional adaptations to the program.

These adaptations could include:

- simplifying instructions
- prompting/cues
- corrective feedback
- grouping students with similar instructional needs
- peer and/or parent tutor programs
- selecting instructional level text on the same topic as the rest of the class
- additional practice of skills.

2. Support from school resources

- Coordinated through the LST
- After step 1 has been implemented and the student is still not progressing according to expectations, the teacher may refer the student to the LST
- Collaborative problem solving is used to design appropriate interventions

3. Support from out of school resources

- If a student has support needs that cannot be met by school resources, the LST can seek support

from regional or state resources.

- Students are only referred for support after extensive intervention by the class teacher and school resources.
- It is important the parents are involved in the decision making process at this stage of intervention and that communication and collaboration exists between specialists and school personnel.

Learning Support Team Operational Guidelines

The Learning Support Team at Cessnock West Public School will operate in the following ways:

1) address the 3 tiers of the learning continuum by: (see description of 3 tiered intervention on next pages)

- The LST will meet on a fortnightly basis to discuss, plan and develop intensive interventions for identified students. Other team members will include the school counsellor, LAST, Itinerant teachers and outside support agencies (where applicable), parent / caregiver and referring classroom teacher. Students supported at this tier will have already had significant input from the classroom teacher and appropriate team leader.

The LST will hold extraordinary meetings when the need arises, for example, to review integration programs and to consult with relevant teachers, parents, SLSOs, and Itinerant Teachers (where applicable).

2) LST process

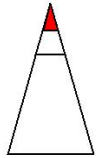
- An executive member will facilitate this meeting and act as an executive officer. The LAST's responsibilities will include collection of referrals, provision of copies of referrals to members prior to the meeting, management of Integration Support Programs and School Learning Support Officers (SLSOs).

The LAST will prioritise referrals to ensure that referrals are given appropriate levels of attention particularly when large numbers of referrals are submitted.

- Staff wishing to make a referral to the LST will be required to follow the LST flowchart for individual student referral and complete a LST referral form and submit it to a LAST.
- The LST will maintain written meeting records that will be stored on the common drive (or Sentral). These records clearly define the course of action for each item / student considered and responsibility will be assigned for action and individual student case management. Action will include responsibility for reporting to staff and parents as appropriate.

Three – Tiered Intervention at Cessnock West Public School

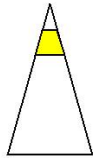
Intensive Supports



5%

Between **1% and 5%** of students will need **intensive support** beyond that available through the targeted and universal levels (below). These are the relatively few students who experience the greatest difficulties learning or those that need extension. Often students with challenging learning support needs dictate that the best chance of quality learning time might be offered by instruction given away from the sometimes distracting (for them) regular classroom. The **focus for LST** and school efforts is on ensuring quality and validity of the teaching practices, as well as taking all possible measures to ensure best **alignment** between the classroom program and the teaching provided in the intensive support program, lest these students with greatest need are inadvertently required to master two separately provided sets of knowledge

Targeted Supports

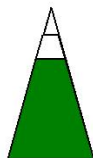


15%

About **10 - 15%** of students will need **targeted support** beyond that feasibly provided in the regular curriculum through accommodative teaching. In primary schools these students might typically be in the low reading group or maths group. The **focus for LST** and school efforts is making the organisational and structural changes needed to ensure that those students have daily access to this level of support.

Schools often consider this level of action to be **important**, because it engages students with significant need and there is much potential for improving learning outcomes through both teacher capacity building and schools' structural adjustments.

Universal Supports



80%

Around **80%** of all students can have their learning needs met through high-quality, accommodative teaching delivered through the regular classroom program by their classroom teacher. The **focus for LST** and school efforts at this level is on enabling and supporting all classroom teachers to deliver that kind of teaching across the KLAs.

Schools often consider this level of action as **strategic**, because it has the greatest potential for reducing learning support needs and urgency at higher levels yet, at the whole school level, requires the least effort to do something about it.

Referrals

Student referral flowchart

Referral forms



Support Referral Flowchart



*** All new enrolments must be referred for assessment using the LST referral form ***

1. Pre-referral Process

- **Before making a student referral:**

- discuss your concern with previous teacher, identify any teaching or learning accommodations / adjustments needed for the student to access the curriculum, and consider and / or implement effective strategies the previous teacher has used (use the Classroom Teacher Reflection Sheet to assist) (if applicable).
- check student record card to ascertain if previous support has been provided eg. LAST / ESL and discuss previous support programs implemented with LAST / RR/ ESL (if applicable)
- speak to the student's parents about your concerns and indicate your intent to submit a referral to the LST. Check if student has had a recent vision / hearing assessment or any specialist documentation e.g. speech / Occupational Therapy / Paediatrician reports (ask the parent to provide copies of this documentation.)

2. Referral Process

- **When completing the LST referral:**

- complete LST referral form and submit to LAST
- LAST to check that all required information has been submitted

3. LST meeting

- **Student will be discussed at next LST meeting:**

- LAST brings all relevant documentation i.e. signed parent referral /acknowledgement form, completed assessments from the LST assessment package, any additional reports / information provided by the parent / caregiver
- referring teacher attends the meeting
- contribute to the development of an LST action plan for the student which will be kept on common drive in the relevant stage folder
- Determined whether a school counsellor referral is required. If so, class teacher discusses referral form with the parent, when completed return to LAST. Class teacher completes school counsellor referral form.

4. Notification process

- **After the LST meeting:**

- referring teacher to implement plan with support from LAST and specialist staff (where applicable)
- other staff notified through appropriate communication method e.g. LST update in communication meeting
- parent / carer notified by letter or interview
- School counsellor and/or LAST to record the outcome in the students record card eg. Psych report, support program or referrals to outside agencies

CLASSROOM TEACHER REFLECTION SHEET

Have you considered these ways to modify a concept/skill/activity to ensure success?

Tick off points you already do:

- Setting different outcomes for different students
- Expecting differing amounts of work
- Asking kinds of questions for different students e.g. more literal questions for students having difficulty
- Setting open ended activities where all students can complete at own level
- Providing additional modelling, rehearsal, practise and review time
- Teaching in smaller steps – breaking skills into sub skills to be taught separately first
- Giving one instruction at a time e.g. having students repeat what he / she is required to do
- Providing more hands on concrete material
- Seating closer to teacher and the board
- Opportunities to share ideas with buddies and small groups
- Providing opportunities to practise to mastery level
- Using non-cluttered notes, mind maps
- Providing visual cues / prompts
- Giving questions before reading a passage instead of after
- Demonstrating using “Think Aloud” and “Self-Talk” e.g. listen to what I say as I work this out
- Talking slowly
- Increasing ‘wait time’
- Connecting experiences to real life
- Linking new learning to what is already known
- Highlighting relevant sections of texts
- Using aides, peer tutors and volunteers
- Using very specific praise



Individual Student Learning Support Referral Form



Student Background – please write student details in the relevant sections below

Student name		Spelling age	
Date of Birth		Fluency CWPM	
Referring teacher		Reading BM level	
Year / Class		Language background	
Referral date		Sounds (Kinder)	
New enrolment:	YES / NO		
Any relevant background information:			

Presenting concern – indicate ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to the following:

Academic		Behaviour	
Welfare		Social / Emotional	
Physical		Health	
Briefly describe concern:			

Attendance – indicate with a tick, the attence pattern that is /are of most concern:

Regular		Arrives late	
Whole day absences		Unexplained	
Partial			

Previous programs and assessment (If known) – indicate ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and the date of the program intervention

In-school programs			
LAST		Reading Recovery	
ESL		School Counsellor	
MultiLit	Other:		

Regional Support Programs (if known)

IST Vision		IST Hearing	
IST Behaviour		Regional LAST	
Regional language class placement		Regional reading class placement	

Outside specialist / agency support (If known)

Speech / Language		Occupational therapy	
Other (please identify and describe)			

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION – Write a brief description of the problem

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Priority rating – please indicate the level of urgency of this referral (1 being least urgent and 5 most urgent)

1		2		3		4		5	
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CESSNOCK WEST – TEACHER REFERRAL TO SCHOOL COUNSELLOR

For completion by **CLASS TEACHER** or **LAST**

NB. A copy of this referral form may be given to, or discussed with, parents or caregivers.

Please complete relevant sections. Other information may be attached.

Student's Name: _____
School: _____
Date of Birth: _____
Year or Grade: _____

First referral Re-referral Completed Parent / Caregiver referral form attached

Reason for referral?
Classroom achievement? (Reading, spelling, number, etc)
Language skills? (Expressive and receptive language, fluency, etc)
Physical skills? (Gross motor, fine motor)
Behaviour, social skills, attendance?
Student's strengths
What strategies have been tried so far and with what success?
What outcomes would you like from this referral?
Teacher's name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____
Comments by LST Co-ordinator

LST ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Curriculum

Reading

- Neal Educcheck
- Neale analysis of reading
- Johnson sight word assessment
- SPAT (Sutherland Phonological Awareness Test)

Writing

- Writing Assessment Rubric

Spelling

- Waddington Spelling Test

Numeracy

- SENA 1 & 2

Behaviour

- Behavioural Checklist
- Teachers Assessment of Functional Ability

New Enrolment Assessment Record

Student:

Class:

Previous School:

Assessment Tools	Score	Comments
Benchmark Reading Level		
Neal Phonemic Educheck		
SPAT (Sutherland Phonological Awareness Test)		
1 Minute Read Fluency		
South Australian Spelling		

Overall Comments: