

How to Support Children with Intellectual Disability

Education Bureau 2015

Introduction

Parents always wish to provide their children with the best living and learning environment in order to nurture them to achieve success in future. With early identification and support, children with special educational needs (SEN) may adapt to everyday life and the learning environment, and develop their potentials.

What is Intellectual Disability (ID)?

ID refers to significantly sub-average intellectual ability accompanied by marked limitations in learning and adapting to life. Compared with peers of the same age, children with ID generally show difficulties in the following areas:

- Cognition: relatively weak in abstract and logical reasoning, and with lower ability in knowledge integration and generalization;
- Memory: deficits in the memory system, and rely heavily on rote memorization;
- Attention: have short attention span, and tend to be easily distracted;
- Language: have difficulty in comprehension and expression, limited vocabulary, simple sentence patterns, may have defective articulation;
- Perceptual Motor: tend to have motor clumsiness and incompetence in perceptual motor skills; and
- Adaptive skills: relatively weak in daily self-care and social skills.

Roles of Parents

I Suspect that My Child may have ID...

- Initiate contact with his/her teachers or the student guidance personnel of the school. Schools can then give appropriate assessment and guidance services.
- My Child is Assessed to have ID...
- Provide the school with the SEN information of your child promptly and proactively;
- Maintain communication with the school's student support team, class teacher and subject teachers to understand your child's learning in school; and discuss appropriate support strategies with them when necessary;
- Adjust your demands and expectations toward your child according to his/her abilities;
- Make suitable arrangements at home to facilitate effective learning, e.g.
 - Arrange your child to study in a quiet and distraction-free area;
 - Set up a regular home schedule, allowing breaks in between tasks;
 - Go over the daily schedule and must-knows of the day and remind him/her the required behaviour before your child attends school; and
 - Promptly and specifically praise your child's proper behaviour to reinforce good performance.
- Adopt the following support strategies to help your child's learning:

- Be concrete: use concrete examples and materials to help your child understand relatively complicated and abstract concepts, e.g. use concrete objects to teach mathematical calculations, demonstrate every step in a task and let your child imitate and practice;
 - Multi-sensory approach to learning: use multi-sensory learning materials to help your child grasp specific learning contents, e.g. concrete objects, pictures, stories, charts/tables, etc.;
 - Relate to everyday life: seize every opportunity in daily life to teach your child, e.g. encourage your child to calculate changes and read descriptions on packages when making purchases;
 - Small steps in learning: break down tasks into steps, set sub-goals, teach them one by one and allow plenty of rehearsal; and
 - Use information technology and interactive educational software to learn and repeatedly practice.
- Encourage your child to take part in meaningful leisure activities to enhance his/her sense of achievement and confidence, and build on his/her strengths.

For further information on supporting children with SEN, parents may refer to the “Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education” on the Education Bureau (EDB) website (please see the back page for the website).

Support Services and Strategies

In general, subject to the assessment and recommendation of specialists and consent of parents, EDB will place students with ID into appropriate special schools for intensive support. Students with limited intelligence may attend ordinary schools. Schools will provide the following support in accordance with the needs of the students:

Special Schools

There are three types of special schools for children with ID – mild, moderate and severe grade, providing education services for students with various degrees of ID. These schools operate classes from primary one to secondary six, with a curriculum focusing on basic subject knowledge and skills learning, enhancement of self-understanding and relationship with the society, skills for independent living, etc.

Ordinary Schools

- Students identified with learning difficulties who have not been given any assessment will first be kept under observation and receive intervention rendered by teachers. Should they show unsatisfactory progress or severe difficulty in their learning or adjustment, teachers will refer them to the educational psychologist for professional assessment on the cause of their learning difficulties, hence providing appropriate support;
- “3-Tier Intervention Model” and Teaching Accommodation:

- Schools provide Tier-1 quality teaching to students by adopting effective teaching materials and methods, and making adjustment in the instruction based on continuous monitoring of the students' learning progress;
 - Tier-2 support is “add-on” intervention in the form of small group learning support for students with persistent learning difficulties; and
 - Students with ID have significant difficulties in learning academic subjects, social skills, and adaptive life skills. They generally require Tier-3 support in the form of individual education plans. Schools will discuss with parents in setting up appropriate learning objectives (including school work, classroom behaviour, social communication, behavioural and emotional management and self-esteem), corresponding teaching strategies, support measures, success criteria, etc.; and conduct regular review on their learning progress and the effectiveness of the plans.
- Professional Support: Arrange educational psychologist, speech therapist, etc. to provide services on assessment, consultation and professional support.

Useful Websites and Telephone Numbers for Enquiry

Education Bureau

<http://www.edb.gov.hk>

Hong Kong Regional Education Office (Tel: 2863 4646)

Kowloon Regional Education Office (Tel: 3698 4108)

New Territories East Regional Education Office (Tel: 2639 4876)

New Territories West Regional Education Office (Tel: 2437 7272)

General Enquiries on Special Education (Tel: 3698 3957)

Educational Psychology Service Section

- Hong Kong (Tel: 3695 0486)
- Kowloon (Tel: 3698 4321)
- New Territories East (Tel: 3547 2228)
- New Territories West (Tel: 2437 7270)

Special Education Resource Centre (Tel: 3698 3900)

<http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/special/resources/serc/index.html>

Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education

<http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/special/resources/serc/download/ieparentguide.pdf>

Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education

http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/special/support/wsa/ie%20guide_en.pdf

Department of Health

- Child Assessment Service (Tel: 2246 6659)
<http://www.dhcas.gov.hk/eindex.html>
- Student Health Service (Tel: 2349 4212)
<http://www.studenthealth.gov.hk/eindex.html>

Social Welfare Department

<http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index>

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service

<http://www.hkcss.org.hk/e>

OneClick

<http://oneclick.hku.hk/en>