



Saskatchewan  
Ministry of  
Education



EPA SASKATCHEWAN EDUCATIONAL  
PSYCHOLOGY ASSOCIATION

# Guidelines for the Practice of Professional Psychology in Schools within Saskatchewan

**LIVING DOCUMENT**

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## Preface

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*This document serves as a supplement to the Canadian Psychological Association document **Professional Practice Guidelines for School Psychologists in Canada** (2007), and makes the information unique to psychologists in Saskatchewan.*

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Throughout this document, the term “psychologist” is used to identify any individual who is registered with the Saskatchewan College of Psychologists (SCP), and who provides psychological services in Saskatchewan schools (Canadian Psychological Association, 2007; Saskatchewan College of Psychologists, n.d.).

Registered psychologists working in Saskatchewan schools contribute a broad array of knowledge, skills, and abilities, beyond providing psychometric assessment. In order to be registered, psychologists must demonstrate foundational knowledge in Psychology, as well as core competencies. These abilities are required to practice both in Saskatchewan and nationally through the *Mutual Recognition Agreement* (Canadian regulators of psychology, now known as the Association of Canadian Psychology Regulatory Organizations, 2001).

Psychologists are integral members of collaborative school teams that may include a student, parent/guardian, teacher, administrator, and other agencies/professionals. Using this broader background of knowledge, skills, and abilities, psychologists promote and support prevention, intervention, and follow-up activities within Saskatchewan schools.

This document contains information regarding the qualifications, role, and responsibility of psychologists in Saskatchewan. However, the judgement of the psychologist may take precedence over these guidelines, as the information may not always be applicable to the varied situations within Saskatchewan schools.

### **FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN PSYCHOLOGY**

- Knowledge of the biological bases of behaviour
- Knowledge of the cognitive-affective bases of behaviour
- Knowledge of the social bases of behaviour
- Knowledge of the psychology of the individual

### **CORE COMPETENCIES**

- Interpersonal relations
- Assessment and evaluation
- Intervention and consultation
- Research
- Ethics and standards
- Supervision (not a requirement in all jurisdictions)

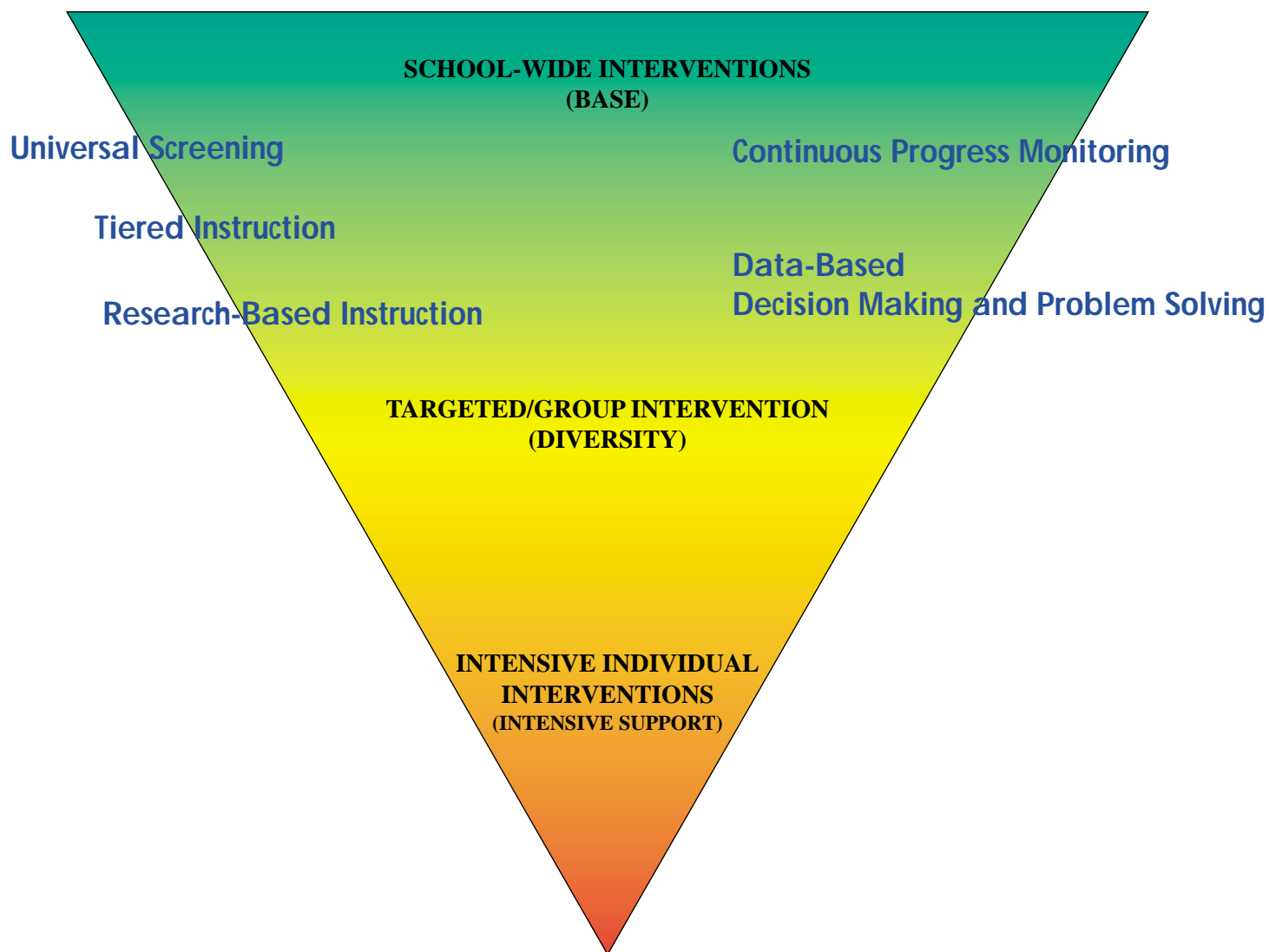
*“Other agencies/professionals” is defined as including, but not limited to: Ministry of Health; Ministry of Justice and Attorney General; Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing; Ministry of Social Services; as well as Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that participate in the school setting or in the community.*

**School Team:** *Team members include those who are directly involved with the student or who may be able to contribute to the intervention plan. Team members may include parents/guardians, student (if appropriate), classroom teacher, student support services teacher, educational assistant, previous teachers, administrator, speech/language pathologist, psychologist, occupational therapist, or other agencies/professionals.*

## The Response to Intervention (RTI) Process

The Ministry of Education promotes the multi-tiered *Response to Intervention* (RTI) process which provides a continuum of services, supports, and interventions to students. The RTI process is effective in serving the needs of all students because of its focus on school-wide, group, and individual interventions. Psychologists in Saskatchewan schools will use their core competencies (e.g., research, assessment, consultation) to assist school divisions in implementing RTI procedures.

## The Response to Intervention Model



## The Evolution of the Role of Psychologists in Saskatchewan Schools

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*The role of psychologists working in Saskatchewan schools has evolved from that of a professional who provides assessments in order to place students in particular programs, to a role of responding to the needs of students in collaboration with parents/guardians, teachers, school administrators, multidisciplinary team members, and other agencies/professionals (adapted from Saklofske & Grainger, 2001).*

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Changes in Saskatchewan over the past century have had a significant impact on the role of the psychologist working in Saskatchewan schools. The following list highlights some of the relevant legislative and policy changes:

- ❖ The *Registered Psychologists Act, 1962*, established a regulatory framework for the practice of professional psychology in Saskatchewan. However, persons working as psychologists in schools were among those exempted within the legislation from the requirement of licensure, which resulted in most of the individuals practicing as psychologists within schools not falling under the jurisdiction of the self-governing profession of psychology.
- ❖ In 1979, *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* gave everyone the right to an education in any school without discrimination (Saskatchewan Learning, 2002).
- ❖ The *Education Act, 1995*, established legislative assurance that students with disabilities receive special services and are assessed by qualified personnel (Saskatchewan Learning, 2000).
- ❖ In 1995, *First Nations and Métis Education Policy from Kindergarten to Grade 12* outlined effective practices, strategic directions, and performance measures to implement significant improvement in the learning success and engagement of First Nations and Métis students and their families in education planning and decision making.
- ❖ In 1997, *Our Children, Our Communities and Our Future. Equity in Education: A Policy Framework* outlined the policy and strategies to create the climate, process, and culture for change required for equity in education.
- ❖ In 2002, *The Children's Services Policy Framework* outlined that the gathering and interpreting of assessment information (and the resulting recommendations) be conducted by qualified personnel in collaboration with parents/guardians, teachers and the student (when appropriate), as well as others involved in the student's educational program.
- ❖ In 2002, the Saskatchewan College of Psychologists (SCP) was established under *The Psychologists Act, 1997*. With the proclamation of the *Psychologists Act, 1997*, the *Registered Psychologists Act, 1962*, was repealed. Under the new *Act*, all individuals wishing to use the title “psychologist” were required to be registered with the SCP. The new *Act* eliminated the exemption allowing individuals to practice as psychologists within schools without licensure.

These legislative and policy changes in Saskatchewan have provided both opportunities and challenges for psychologists working in schools. Additional social, economic, and demographic changes have been identified that affect the current and future role of the psychologist in Saskatchewan.

- ❖ Saskatchewan’s First Nations and Métis population, aged zero to six years, is growing. It is estimated that by 2015, 50% of children entering kindergarten in Saskatchewan will be of First Nations or Métis ancestry. This demographic shift creates an opportunity for all professionals, including psychologists, to seek ways to infuse First Nations and Métis content and perspectives into curricula, and to understand other “ways of knowing” in order to be responsive and effective for the benefit of all students in this changing province (*Early Childhood Development Progress Report 2005/2006*, Saskatchewan Learning, 2007).
- ❖ Increasing ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity is also apparent within Saskatchewan. In 2001, approximately 12% of the population reported to Statistics Canada that French, or non-official languages such as German, Ukrainian, or Cree, is their mother tongue. The American Psychological Association (2002c) has established guidelines for psychologists when working with diverse populations.
- ❖ The trend in Saskatchewan toward a decline in the rural population base, combined with distances between rural communities is also a challenge for school psychologists. The rural-based psychologists can face hours of travel, increased isolation, less collegial support, and limited access to other agencies/professionals. Conversely, urban schools may have larger numbers of students with intensive needs, and the psychologist to student ratio can be high (adapted from Saklofske & Grainger, 2001).

*An ideal psychologist to student ratio would be 1:1000.*

*(Davis, McIntosh, Phelps, & Kehle, 2004)*

The context in which psychologists provide support in Saskatchewan schools will continue to evolve in response to these social, economic, and demographic changes.

## Qualifications of Psychologists in Saskatchewan

In accordance with the *Psychologists Act, 1997*, individuals in Saskatchewan must be licensed by the Saskatchewan College of Psychologists (SCP) to use the title "psychologist" and to represent themselves as a member of the profession. These individuals are permitted to use the following title that applies to their specific situation:

Registered Psychologist, Registered Doctoral Psychologist, or  
Registered Psychologist (Provisional), Registered Doctoral Psychologist (Provisional).

The right to convey a diagnosis is a controlled practise, open only to Full Practice registrants of the SCP, under the *Psychologists Act, 1997*, and requires additional licensure, referred to as an Authorized Practice Endorsement (APE).

Licensing by the SCP generally requires individuals to:

- have a graduate degree in Psychology from a recognized university program;
- meet documentation and reference requirements;
- meet requirements relating to “good character”;
- fulfill a 1500 hour supervised practice experience under a Registered Psychologist;
- meet the areas of foundational knowledge requirements for psychology under the national Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA);
- successfully complete the Examination for the Professional Practice of Psychology (EPPP);
- successfully complete an SCP oral examination;
- practice only within their area of declared competency; and
- meet the SCP annual requirements for continuing education.

## Ethics for Psychologists in Saskatchewan Schools

Registered Psychologists strive to provide the highest level of services. They must practice under the guidelines set out by:

- *The Psychologists Act, 1997*,
- *The Education Act, 1995*,
- *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* (3rd ed., 2000), and
- the school division.

The Canadian Psychological Association’s *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* (3rd ed., 2000) articulates those ethical principles relevant to the discipline as a whole. If there is an instance in which the *Code* conflicts with Saskatchewan regulations and guidelines, psychologists are directed to adhere to the highest standards regarding the ethical issue in question.

## FOUR ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

*(ordered according to the weight generally given when they conflict)*

**PRINCIPLE 1:** Respect for the Dignity of Persons

**PRINCIPLE 2:** Responsible Caring

**PRINCIPLE 3:** Integrity in Relationships

**PRINCIPLE 4:** Responsibility to Society

Many psychologists working in schools are also members of the Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation (STF). The STF also follows a code of ethics that has been endorsed by the STF council, and covers a commitment to the following four areas:

- the student,
- the employer,
- the profession, and
- the community (2000, October).

Other professional affiliations that support professional growth of psychologists in Saskatchewan are the Saskatchewan Educational Psychology Association (SEPA) and the Psychological Society of Saskatchewan (PSS).

The Saskatchewan College of Psychologists (SCP) is the regulatory body for the profession in Saskatchewan.

<http://www.saskedpsych.ca/>  
(Saskatchewan Educational Psychology Association)

<http://www.psychsocietysk.org/>  
(Psychological Society of Saskatchewan)

<http://www.skcp.ca/>  
(Saskatchewan College of Psychologists)

## Roles and Responsibilities of Psychologists in Saskatchewan Schools

The Canadian Psychological Association’s *Professional Practice Guidelines for School Psychologists in Canada* (2007) identifies five levels of involvement including assessment, direct and indirect intervention, research, and evaluation. Inherent within these five levels is the balanced, proactive approach that focuses on prevention, intervention, and follow-up activities most commonly utilized by Saskatchewan school psychologists.

Services that psychologists may provide depend on their area of competency declared to the SCP. These may include, but are not limited to, the following.

PREVENTION	INTERVENTION	FOLLOW-UP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative consultation with classroom teachers, student support services teachers, administrators, and school teams</li> <li>• Advocacy for diverse learners</li> <li>• Professional development for school personnel</li> <li>• Public presentations on issues relating to student learning, behaviour, and mental health</li> <li>• Support of the development and implementation of the service delivery model and policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychological assessments and counselling services</li> <li>• Crisis/tragic events support</li> <li>• Referral and collaboration with other agencies/professionals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative review of interventions, outcomes, and recommendations</li> </ul>

Psychologists in Saskatchewan schools engage in these activities as part of collaborative teams. The concept of collaborative teams emphasizes the necessity for each member to:

- share expertise,
- merge unique skills,
- foster positive interdependence,
- develop creative problem solving, and
- enhance accountability for individual responsibilities.

(Saskatchewan Learning, 2001)

Psychologists complement the different training and approaches of other team members. They provide research-based and competency-based understanding of human development, combined with knowledge of current effective practises, to support the planning and implementation of interventions/supports. This collaborative approach provides opportunities for teachers, in consultation with the school team, to more fully address the needs of students. This collaboration enables teachers to access further information in meeting the needs of students and to have a forum for shared decision-making.

(adapted from Prince Edward Island Department of Education, 2004)

## The Psychological Assessment Process in Saskatchewan Schools

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*Assessment is a fluid process that incorporates information about the student from multiple sources. A variety of instruments are used with the goal of identifying the student's strengths, needs, and preferences. Assessment information guides the development of appropriate and relevant interventions and supports.*

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Although the role of the psychologist continues to evolve, formal psychological assessment remains an integral function. The formulation of diagnoses as a result of assessment is a protected function under the *Psychologists Act, 1997*, and therefore is a function that can and must only be provided by only those Registered Psychologists licensed to provide that function (Authorized Practice Endorsement).

Some students will enter the school system having already been identified as requiring intensive interventions related to learning, behaviour, or circumstance. For these students, supports and interventions may already be in place. However, for many students requiring intensive interventions, their entry into the school system marks the first opportunity for these needs to be identified and addressed. Identification and assessment often begins at the level of the teacher, through direct observation. At this level, intervention is delivered in the form of adaptations and modifications to the learning environment with the aim of mitigating or ameliorating student difficulties. Teacher consultation regarding concerns and progress should occur with parents/guardians and the school team of which the psychologist is a member.

Based on the student's presentation, the teacher may also raise the possibility of a referral for medical evaluation to rule out a physically based cause for the student's difficulties. This may include, but is not limited to hearing or visual assessment, or a complete physical assessment.

This initial intervention process will assist the school based team in determining the direction for assisting the student, which may include a referral for a formal psychological assessment.

The psychological assessment process involves the gathering of information about the student from multiple sources and through multiple means to arrive at accurate recommendations for intervention, and when appropriate, accurate diagnoses. This process includes the following 4 components: formal referral, assessment, report, and follow-up.

### Formal Referral Process

A referral form for psychological assessment is usually completed by the school team to provide the following information:

- reason for referral;
- current diagnosis or diagnoses if applicable;

- names/contact information for collateral service providers (e.g., psychiatrist, mental health worker, social service worker, etc.);
- relevant background information;
- family involvement/information; and
- record of adaptations, including
  - student response to interventions/supports.

## **Informed Consent and Confidentiality**

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*The Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists (3rd ed., 2000) includes a recommendation to establish and use signed consent forms in which the dimensions of informed consent have been specified and are understood.*

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Informed consent as defined within the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* (3rd ed., 2000) respects the expressed wishes of persons (in this case the student) regarding the involvement of others (e.g. parents/guardians) in decisions relating to the receipt of psychological services. Although the *Code* does not provide a specific age at which informed consent can be given by a student, it is intended that a written or verbal directive by the student is to be respected if determined to be appropriate. Matters involving informed consent should consider the age of the student, the student's level of functioning, the student's capacity/ability to understand what they are consenting to, and the consequences of that consent both positive and negative. It is important that before proceeding with only student consent that the psychologist is certain that due process has been served in determining the right of a minor to provide consent. Where possible, parental/guardian involvement in the process of assessment is the desirable path.

One exception to obtaining informed consent occurs when a student presents as an immediate risk to self or others. In this case, immediate assessment and/or intervention would proceed and consent from parents/guardians would be sought as soon as possible.

Informed consent is more than simply having the student and/or parents/guardians sign a permission form allowing for the assessment by the psychologist. Informed consent involves ensuring and documenting that there was a full understanding of the following:

- the purpose and nature of the psychological service;
- mutual responsibilities;
- confidentiality protections and limitations;
- likely benefits and risks;
- possible alternatives;
- dual or multiple relationships;
- the likely consequences of non-action;
- where and how the information will be stored;
- the option to refuse or withdraw at any time and how to do this; and
- what period of time the consent applies (usually 1 year).

*(adapted from Canadian Psychological Association, 2000)*

## Psychological Assessment

*The Children's Services Policy Framework, Policy 3.1 Assessment of Student Strengths and Needs* (2002, p. V.3.1i) defines assessment as “a comprehensive range of methods and strategies used to gather information about a student. Information is gathered from a variety of sources including classroom-based measures, parent/family interviews, observations in a variety of settings, past student records, reports from other personnel involved with the student and family, and formal assessments.” This is congruent with the position of the Canadian Psychological Association:

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*“that psychological assessment in schools is a process of approaches, comprised of various assessment strategies and tests, intended to better understand the cognitive, social, emotional and academic functioning of a student. This comprehensive process is employed to determine strengths, needs and appropriate services for the individual student. Within the variety of approaches used, there should be formal and informal assessment tools, including interviews with teachers and parents, student work samples and file reviews, curriculum based assessment, and standardized psychological and educational tests. No single measure or test score is comprehensive enough to fully represent the student's psychological, social and educational functioning, and hence, no single measure should be used to determine programs or placement for students.”*

*(Canadian Psychological Association, 2004, p. 2)*

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### **SELECTING INSTRUMENTS**

*According to the Canadian Psychological Association, **individual psychological assessment** “involves the use of formal, psycho-diagnostic procedures requiring a considerable degree of training, expertise, and continual upgrading of knowledge” (2007, p.8). It is essential that assessment instruments are selected and administered by qualified psychologists who have the proper training, experience, and knowledge to do so.*

*“A **psychological test instrument**... is any structured and standardized measurement of cognitive, behavioural, or emotional functioning including (but not restricted to) performance tasks, structured behaviour samples, self-report inventories or checklists, test record forms, or other materials used in the evaluation of an individual.”*

*(College of Alberta Psychologists, 2005, p. 2)*

## Report

A written report should be completed by the psychologist within a reasonable time and in a manner that is easily understood. A report is intended to:

- “1. provide accurate assessment-related information to the referral source and other concerned parties;
2. serve as a source of clinical hypotheses, appropriate interventions, and information for program evaluation and research;
3. furnish meaningful baseline information for evaluating a) the examinee's progress after the interventions have been implemented or b) changes that occur as a result of time alone;
4. serve as a legal document.”

*(Sattler, 2001, p. 677)*

Effective practices in comprehensive report writing include:

- ensuring that the report can be understood by non-professionals;
- considerations to the circumstances under which the assessment took place;
- providing a behavioural basis for the assumptions made about the student;
- recommendations that consider the needs, values, and culture of the student, his/her family, as well as the school and community; and
- ensuring that respect for the student is apparent throughout the report.

### **Interpretation**

Once all of the assessment information is gathered, it must be integrated in order to interpret the findings. Psychologists should avoid using a single test score as the sole determinant of decisions about students. Instead, the interpretation of test scores should be within the context of other information about the student. Interpretations should involve consistent findings from information collected from multiple sources.

In Saskatchewan, by law, only duly qualified practitioners and Registered Full Practice Psychologists with an Authorized Practice Endorsement (APE) designation on their license are allowed to issue diagnoses. Additionally, Registered Psychologists make diagnoses only within their area of competency as declared to the Saskatchewan College of Psychologists (SCP). Diagnoses can have a lasting and life changing impact upon those to whom they are applied, and thus, the diagnoses of psychological and learning disorders is a controlled act.

### **Developing Recommendations**

Recommendations are starting points for the psychologist and for those responsible for implementing the interventions/supports. Recommendations are based on all of the information collected during the individual psychological assessment process, including the strengths, preferences, and needs of the individual student. The recommendations should be developed in collaboration with the parents/guardians and teachers to support flexibility and ease in incorporating them into the classroom, the work place, or the home routines.

## **Sharing Results**

Information obtained through an assessment should be communicated to the parents/guardians, teachers or referral source, and, as appropriate, to the student. This information should be presented in a format that can be easily understood by all individuals. Meetings with the parents/guardians, student, and teachers provide an opportunity to discuss the report and the results of the assessment, and to identify any further recommendations.

Information obtained from individual psychological assessments should be shared only with those persons involved with the teaching and learning process of the student on a need-to-know basis.

*Note: When sharing results, keep in mind that there are a variety of learning styles. Approximately 46% of the population are visual learners, 35% are kinesthetic learners, and 19% are auditory learners (Sousa, 2001).*

## **Filing**

Psychological reports are the property of the employer that employs or contracts the psychologist and should be kept in secure areas with limited access. Information regarding the acquisition, use, retention, and disclosure of such personal information, including security measures must be in accordance with legal obligations under *The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and the *Health Information Protection Act*. As well, the student and/or parent/guardian (with permission) is always allowed access to these records.

## **Test Security**

A specific responsibility of psychologists involves the ethical requirement to protect test security and to ensure that access to standardized test equipment and protocols is restricted. This includes respecting copyrights and eliminating opportunities for potential test-takers to obtain information, protocols, or scores by inappropriate means. Outdated testing materials should be disposed of in a secure manner. As a general rule, psychologists should refrain from releasing or disclosing test materials, other than to another psychologist, unless required to do so by law (adapted from Multi-Health Systems, 2004). School divisions employing psychologists should take reasonable steps to ensure that the purchase and distribution of psychological tests are controlled processes, and that only qualified users have access to such materials.

## **Follow-up**

A balanced, proactive approach using prevention, intervention, and follow-up activities should include close monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations, the interventions/supports provided, and any changes in the student's development.

## Conclusion

This document is a reflection of what is accepted as effective practice with regard to the provision of psychological services within Saskatchewan schools. The psychologist is seen as an integral part of a collaborative team that takes a holistic approach to working with students, involving not only the school and other professionals, but also the parents/guardians of the student. The three goals of the prevention, intervention, and follow-up service delivery model are to work as a collaborative team, to share skills and knowledge in areas of expertise, and to make appropriate educational decisions for all students.

## Future Directions

This document provides guidelines for the practice of professional Psychology in schools within Saskatchewan. In addition to these guidelines, it is anticipated that the role of the psychologist will continue to evolve.

As a response to intervention, psychologists in Saskatchewan schools will have the opportunity to:

- increase their involvement in prevention and early intervention for all students;
- provide services such as counselling and/or referrals related to mental health and behavioural needs;
- have strategic involvement with school-based teams and families to provide comprehensive, integrated, holistic, and culturally-affirming assessments that move beyond the traditional psychometric approach;
- identify appropriate intervention strategies;
- identify barriers to intervention;
- collect responses to intervention data;
- continue to broaden their approaches in working with students and teachers, to understand learning styles, learning differences, and learning needs;
- engage in a variety of responsibilities that provide a balance of direct and indirect services, including consultation, in-service, program development, and research; and
- enhance their collaboration with other professionals and disciplines by providing partnerships and team approaches to facilitate the accountability of outcomes and interventions.

The realization of this future direction is a shared responsibility of the employer and the psychologist, and will require a shift in the fundamental expectations held by both with regard to what it means to be a psychologist working within Saskatchewan schools.

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