

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE CLASSROOM

Presenter

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Children with Special Needs in the Classroom

Who are they?

The term 'children with special needs' is used to describe the children whose needs fall outside the established 'normal' range. The needs may be global or in a particular area or domain, that is, physical, behavioural, cognitive, social/ emotional etc.

Children with Special Needs in the Classroom

Other terms used to describe these children include:

- ▶ Children with exceptionalities,
- ▶ Children with challenges and
- ▶ Children with disabilities

The diagnoses which are commonly recognised among children:

Autism spectrum disorder(ASD), primarily a behavioural and developmental disorder

Cerebral palsy – manifested mainly as a physical (motor-based) disability,

Down syndrome and other syndromes
physical manifestations and involving
developmental and intellectual disabilities

Children with Special Needs in the Classroom

Diagnoses contd.

- ▶ Sensory-based disabilities, that is, visual and hearing deficits

However, there is sometimes confusion about other disabilities such as learning and intellectual disabilities

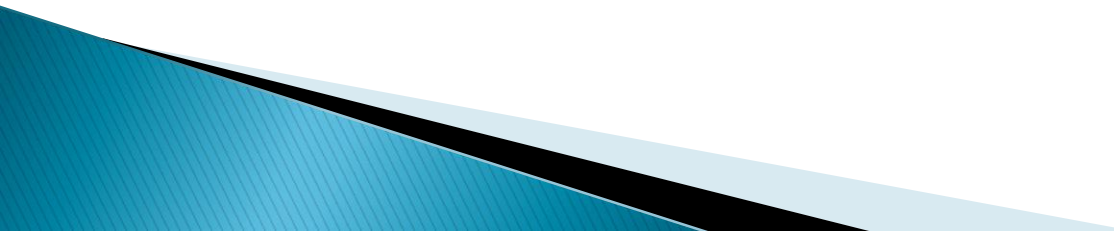
- ▶ **These children are often labeled incorrectly before a professional diagnosis is made**
- ▶ Children who are gifted and talented are often also misunderstood by teachers

Children with Special Needs in the classroom

- ▶ Common mistakes made by teachers:
 - a learning disability and an intellectual disability in the same.
 - a child with cerebral palsy also has an intellectual disability

The most basic requirement should be that all teachers are knowledgeable about the different types of disabilities they are likely to encounter in the classroom.

Children with Special Needs in the classroom

- ▶ The child with a learning disability may be average or above average in overall intelligence but may have difficulty with a specific academic area such as reading, writing, mathematics, spelling... They may also have challenges in recalling and organizing information if not given appropriate guidance and if taught using traditional teaching methods.
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Children with Special Needs in the classroom

- ▶ **Intellectual Disability** (formally MR) is defined as an intellectual functioning level that is below average and with **significant limitations in daily living skills (adaptive functioning)**. These limitations will cause a child to learn and develop more slowly than a typical child. Levels of disability are expressed as mild, moderate and severe.
- ▶ However, the **mild ID** child can have highly developed skills in a particular area – negotiating sales (street smart).

Special Needs Versus Disability

What is a disability?

There are varying types, levels and combinations of sensory, cognitive, physical and mental conditions which fall under the umbrella of

‘disability’.. The [World Health Organization](#) defines Disability as

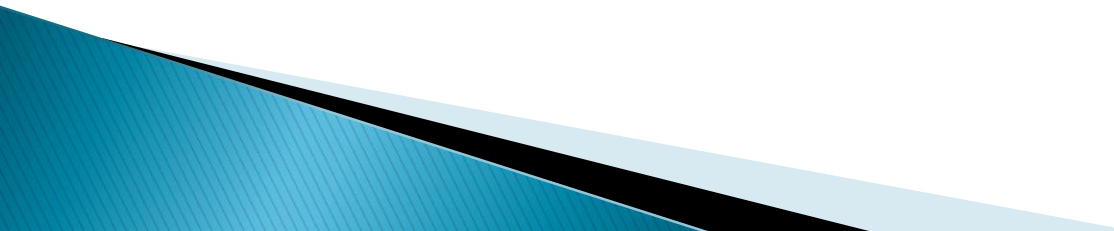
“... an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions

Special Needs versus Disability

.....thus disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives.

Disability versus Special Needs

Disability should be distinguished from “handicap” which are environmental “obstacles” that can be physical, social or cultural that impede persons from having access to amenities and basic rights, for e.g. the absence of a ramp in a building handicaps a person who is wheelchair bound. The education system or teachers’ attitudes towards children with disabilities can also prove to be an handicap, preventing them from achieving their educational goals.



Boy with Cerebral Palsy



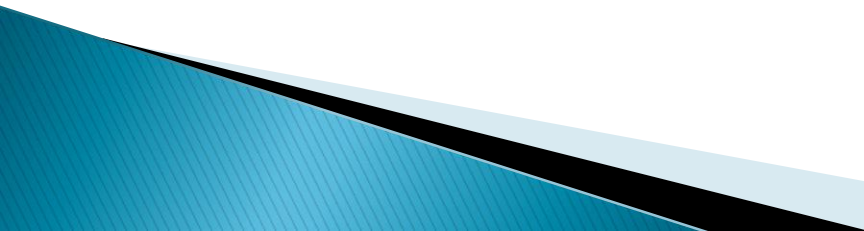
DOWN'S SYNDROME
FLOPPY MUSCLE TONE
EYE SHAPE
HIGH PALATE



Boy with Autism Spectrum Disorder



Provisions for students with Special Needs

- ▶ In developed Countries the provision of special education services is mandated by law
 - ▶ In the USA – **The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** ensures that all students can receive the type of educational services needed through IEPs and in the **LRE**. Students can be placed in fully inclusive classrooms, mainstreamed or segregated for instruction.
 - ▶ In Canada, provincial governments determine the extent of support for each child.
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Provisions for Students with Special needs

- ▶ In these countries, the focus is on the **definition of disability** in order to obtain funding for each student.
- ▶ **The cost for special education services is exorbitant** and budgets within the Departments of Education have been greatly impacted as more disabilities have been added for special education services.
- ▶ In Australia – the number of children requiring special education intervention within regular classrooms moved significantly by adding **Asperger's Syndrome and Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**. The prevalence of children with ADHD, 6 – 17 years, was found to be 11.2% (Sawyer et al, 2002).

Provision for Students with Special Needs

- ▶ In Jamaica, there are multiple problems in addressing special education needs within regular classrooms. These are discussed on a regular basis and teachers often feel that they have been given baskets to carry water. At the same time the MOE has given a clear mandate to teachers

All children can learn and all must learn.

In the USA, the **No Child Left Behind Act, 2001**

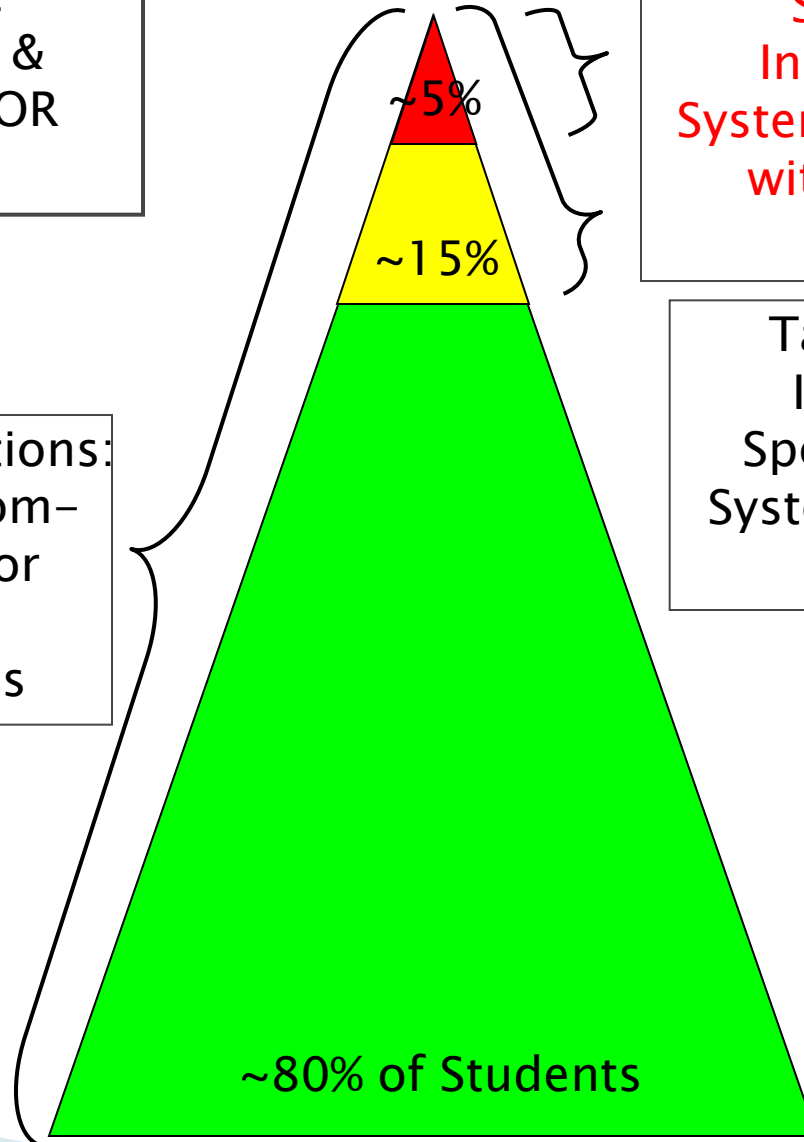
How do we operationalise this mission? The work has begun but there is still much to be done.

Provision for Students with Special Needs

- ▶ The Disability Act which should have been passed by Parliament is necessary to give legal substance to the advancement of special education services in Jamaica.
- ▶ The Transformation Unit of the MOE is working towards developing a comprehensive educational framework with a clear path that will take any child, including those with special needs, on a journey towards achieving his/her educational potential.
- ▶ Solutions being offered e.g. Differential Instruction, using various National Tests to identify children with special learning needs, ASTEP.

CONTINUUM OF
SCHOOL-WIDE
INSTRUCTIONAL &
POSITIVE BEHAVIOR
SUPPORT

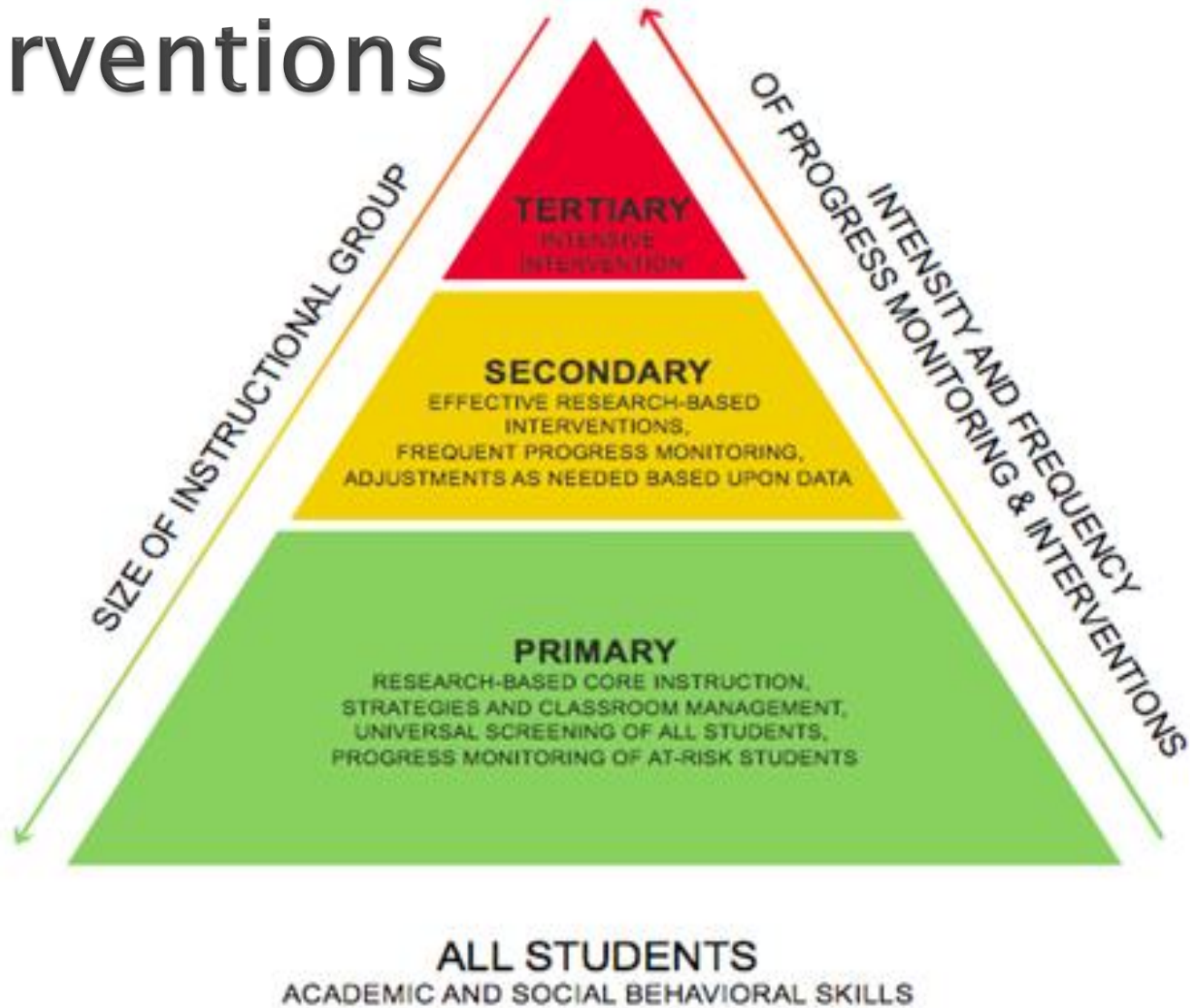
Universal Interventions:
School-/Classroom-
Wide Systems for
All Students,
Staff, & Settings



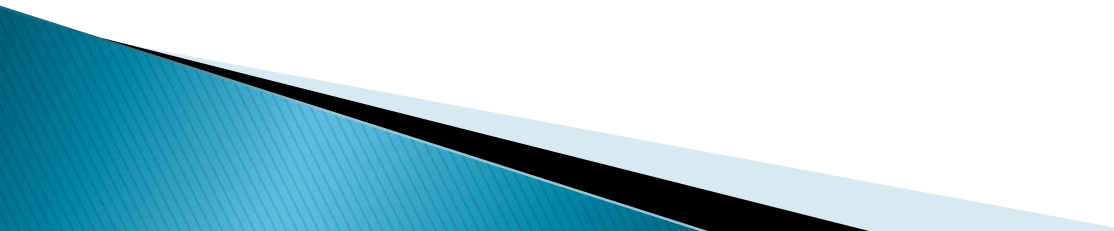
Intensive Individual
Interventions:
Specialized
Individualized
Systems for Students
with High-Risk
Behaviour

Targeted Group
Interventions:
Specialized Group
Systems for Students
with At-Risk
Behaviour

Interventions



Types of Intervention – Students with Special Needs

- ▶ **Inclusion** – children with different levels of disability are accommodated in all classes with support
 - ▶ **Mainstreaming** – students join classes for particular subjects
 - ▶ **Resource Rooms** – Students go to resource room (already exists in public and private schools).
 - ▶ **Resource Persons** – Special educator, Reading specialist, Guidance Counselor
 - ▶ **Itinerant teams** – school and or clinical psychologists, nurse, special educator, occupational therapist, speech and physical therapist
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Role of the Teacher as Parent Confidant

- ▶ The birth of a baby born with a disability is seen as a death to expectations for parents and extended family members. Emotions may include:

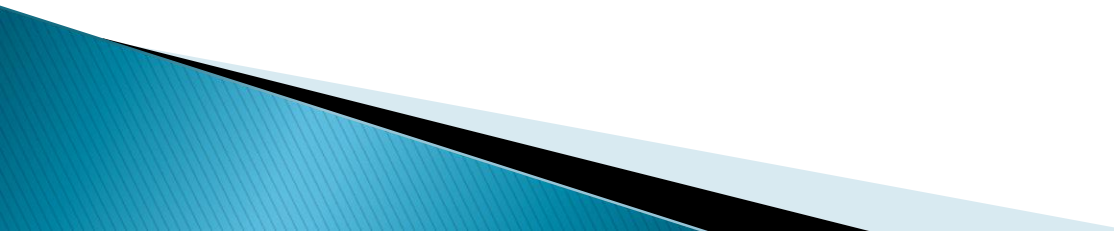
Shock and disbelief

Anger and resentment before resignation and acceptance ..this is my burden, my test of faith.

There may be bitterness and unacceptance (rejection leading to neglect)Resolution – to do the best for this child

Role of the Teacher as Parent Confidant

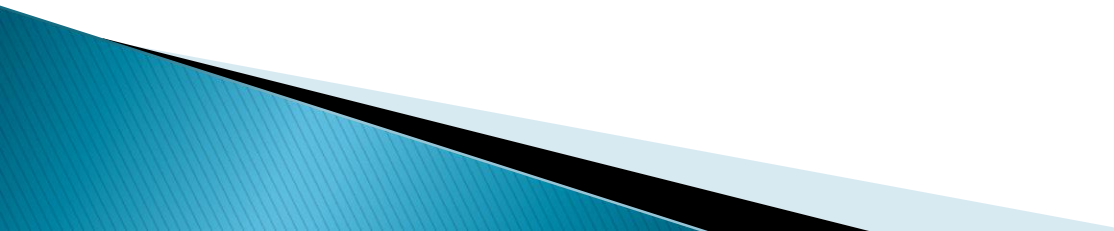
Remember!!

- ▶ The parents of children with special needs are in need of a lot of psychological support. They may appear to be defensive, demanding, in denial and overprotective but they are often still working through the impact of having a child with special needs.
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Role of the Teacher in Identification and Referral Process

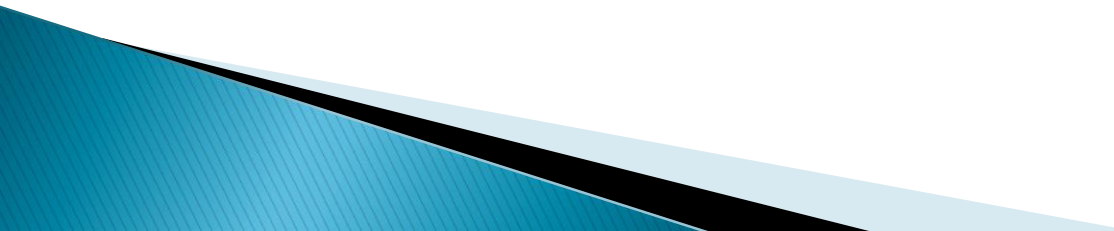
- ▶ Teachers are often the first to detect a disability or significant delay
- ▶ Teachers can provide useful information necessary to determine a diagnosis. **There is no room for assumptions. Refer if in doubt.** Several conditions can mimic a presentation of ID or ADHD incld. iron deficiency, ear, nose and throat, malnutrition...
- ▶ Teachers' careful observation provide evidence for medication e.g. children with ADHD

Role of Teacher in Intervention

- ▶ Teachers input is essential in developing and reviewing individual education plans (IEPs).
 - ▶ Teachers **must record** their observations to be used as evidence in discussions.
 - ▶ Teachers must pursue the recommendations provided through comprehensive assessments.
 - ▶ Teachers' must employ best practices – **training is essential**
 - ▶ Teachers' self efficacy must be evident – seek out information, improving practice, setting personal goals, finding ways to improve the work environment. What contributes to your self fulfillment as a teacher?
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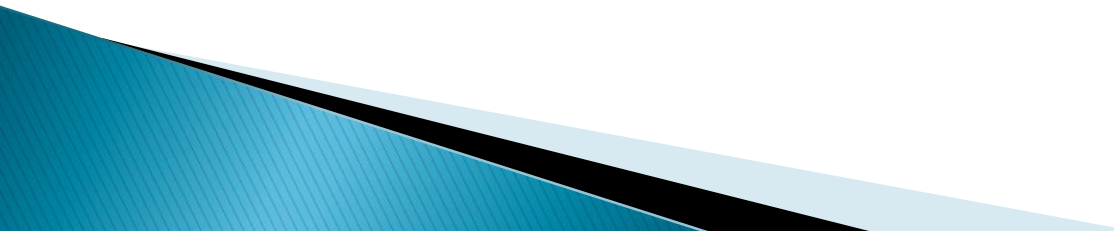
In Summary

Children with special education needs in the classroom will perform best if:

- ▶ The student to teacher ratio is smaller
 - ▶ There is an IEP for each student with special education support
 - ▶ There is sufficient space for children to learn comfortably
 - ▶ There is a comprehensive intervention team including: school/clinical/counseling psychologists, guidance counselor, speech therapist, occupational therapists, physical therapists, behaviour therapists, special educators
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It's A Process

In the USA the process begun in 1972 with Public Law mandating the enrollment of special needs children in Head Start programmes

- ▶ 1975 – Education of all Handicapped children Act with the right to free and appropriate education.
 - ▶ 1990, 1997 and 2004 – Individual with Disabilities Education Act.
 - ▶ It takes time, there must be resources but teachers can help to move the process along
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Finally

- ▶ The question is, ‘Are we deliberately or inadvertently leaving some children behind or out of the picture completely?’

They want to make it to the finish line!



References

- ▶ Sawyer, M. *et al*, 'Use of Medication by Young People with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder', *Medical Journal of Australia*, Vol. 177, 1 July 2002, p. 23
- ▶ Florida State University Centre for Prevention and early Intervention Policy (2002) *What is Inclusion?* <http://www.cpeip.fsu.edu/resourceFiles>
- ▶ *Special education legislation and ADHD*
- ▶ National Joint Committee On Learning Disabilities (2001), *Journal on Learning Disability*