

How to Support Children with Intellectual Disability

Education Bureau 2022

Introduction

Parents always wish to nurture their children's talents by providing them with a suitable living and learning environment. Early identification and support help children with special educational needs (SEN) adapt to everyday life and the learning environment, and develop their potential.

What is Intellectual Disability (ID)?

ID refers to significantly sub-average intellectual ability accompanied by marked difficulties 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 generalisation
- Memory: deficits in the memory system, and rely heavily on rote memorisation
- Attention: short attention span, and tend to be easily distracted
- Language: difficulty in comprehension and expression, limited vocabulary and simple sentence patterns, and may have defective articulation
- Perceptual Motor: clumsy body and eye-hand coordination
- 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 the Special Educational Needs Coordinator, class teacher, student guidance personnel or school social workers so that the school may arrange appropriate assessments and guidance services

My child has been 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 of the proper behaviour before your child attends school
 - 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 practise
 - Adopt the 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, to link up learning with everyday life, e.g. encourage your child to calculate changes and read descriptions on packages when making purchases
 - Break down into small steps: break down tasks into steps, set sub-goals, teach them one by one and allow plenty of rehearsal
 - Use information technology and interactive educational software to learn and practise repeatedly
- 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

Support Services and Strategies

In general, subject to the assessment and recommendation of specialists and consent of parents, the Education Bureau will place students with ID into appropriate special schools for intensive support. 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 grades, 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 learning skills, enhancement of self-understanding and relationship with the society, and skills for independent living, etc.

Ordinary Schools

➤ “3-Tier Intervention Model”

- Provide Tier-1 quality teaching to students by adopting effective pedagogic methods and teaching materials, and making adjustment in the instruction based on continuous monitoring of the students’ learning progress; by doing so, students’ needs in class can be met and their adaptability in learning and social interaction can be enhanced.
- Arrange Tier-2 “add-on” intervention support, e.g. small group learning, after-school remedial programmes, and pull-out remedial programmes; by doing so, students can master important learning concepts or skills, consolidate what they have learnt in ordinary classes, or strengthen their self-care and social skills.
- Students with ID have significant difficulties in learning academic subjects, social skills, and adaptive life skills. Generally, they need to receive individualised Tier-3 support. Schools will design “individual education plans” for them and discuss with their parents in setting up appropriate individual learning objectives based on their needs, provide individualised intensive training, and conduct regular review on their learning

progress and the effectiveness of the plans.

- Support strategies often used by schools to cater for students with ID

Task Analysis

Break down teaching content into small steps. For a complex concept, focus on teaching one component of the concept each time so that students can master it step by step

Scaffolding

Set up different scaffolding during teaching process to assist students' learning, e.g. providing concrete object display, verbal guidance, diagram illustrations, examples, vocabulary list, and writing frameworks

Positive Behaviour Support

Through behavioural analysis, train and enhance students' ability to replace problem behaviour with appropriate classroom adaptation behaviour and learning participation behaviour

Peer Support

Promote the interaction between students with ID and their peers, e.g. arranging friendly peers to sit next to students with ID, or arranging students to participate in peer interaction groups

Speech and Communication Training

Provide group or individual speech and communication training for students in need

➤ Professional Support

Arrange school-based educational psychologists, speech therapists, etc. to provide services on assessment, consultation and professional support.

Useful Websites and Telephone Numbers for Enquiry

Education Bureau

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

Hong Kong Regional Education Office 2863 4646

Kowloon Regional Education Office 3698 4108

New Territories East Regional Education Office 2639 4876

New Territories West Regional Education Office 2437 7272

General Enquiries on Special Education 3698 3957

Educational Psychology Service Section

- Hong Kong 3695 0486
- Kowloon 3698 4321/ 3907 0949
- New Territories East 3547 2228
- New Territories West 2437 7270

“SENSE” Integrated Education and Special Education Information Online

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/index.html>

- Information about supporting students with ID

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/types-of-special-educational-needs/intellectual-disability/index.html>

- “Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education”

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated-education/guidelines/ieparentguide.pdf>

- Operation Guide on the “Whole School Approach to Integrated Education”

https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated_education/landing/ie_guide_en.pdf

Department of Health

Child Assessment Service

<https://www.dhcas.gov.hk/en/>

Student Health Service

<https://www.studenthealth.gov.hk/eindex.html>

Social Welfare Department

<https://www.swd.gov.hk>