



I Belong-Education for Learners with FASD

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An FASD Initiative

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Overview

FASD classrooms should be created throughout PDSB Secondary Schools. Currently, no classroom or placement types reflect the unique needs of students with FASD. A “one size fits all” approach does not work for these students. Therefore, the PDSB must evolve to meet the needs of these students, thereby achieving their equity goal of having every student have a sense of belonging.

Goals

1. Each student with confirmed/or suspected FASD will have an equitable opportunity to attend school, build social skills, create friendships, follow schedules, and develop meaningful academic and life skills.
2. For Students with/or suspected of FASD to have a safe space that is representative of their needs and are taught by educators who have an FASD lens
3. For the requirement of continuous learning of FASD by educators and administrators, scholars, researchers, and clinicians with expertise in FASD and those with lived experiences in their commitment to anti-oppressive practices.

Specifications

A homeroom would be created in each secondary school where students with suspected or confirmed FASD would begin their day. Regarding the structure for the day, subjects that require the brain to focus and use more energy (e.g. budgeting) should be the focus in the morning and subjects that allow for the brain to rest and don't require as much structure should be the focus of the afternoon (e.g. gym or arts). Scholars, researchers, and clinicians with expertise in FASD, parents of children and youth with FASD, and students with FASD should be consulted to develop the right curriculum and structure for this classroom.

An FASD homeroom should be established for students with confirmed or suspected FASD. Within this classroom, there would be students with various developmental capacities. Some students could access/be integrated into mainstream classes (focused on the regular curriculum), while others access adapted programming based on their developmental needs (e.g. focused on life skills). This proposed FASD homeroom would follow the current Day 1 and Day 2 schedule.

For Day 1:- Those who can be in the mainstream would move off to their regular classes for the morning. These classes would all be in the same hallway or floor. These learners find time and memory difficult, and we need to make classes accessible to them.

The students who cannot be in mainstream classes would stay in the homeroom class with students at the same social level. Morning classes would include communication, money and life skills. Afternoon classes would consist of rest, gym or any other activity. These students mustn't always stay in the homeroom and can move around to another class or school. The students would return from the mainstream classes for lunch and the afternoon. The afternoon would consist of help with homework, rest or gym.

For Day 2-All students stay in the FASD program (homeroom), and two workshops are held with role-play regarding general issues that affect these students, such as stealing and ownership, emotional regulation, boundaries, social cues, internet safety, etc. Other periods could include gym, art, or rest, depending on the student's needs.

Key Considerations:

I believe it's essential to sit and eat with the students, teachers included. We know that bonding happens when people sit and have a meal together. Trust, bonding and connection are essential for those with FASD. The students would also get energy for the day ahead, but we do not know their economic situation. These meals could be simple: croissants, toast or cereal. Students could bring their own lunch, and snacks could include granola bars. The students will want to go to school and be in a safe place to learn and be themselves.

Benefits:

- Students with/or suspected of FASD would finally be understood and valued in the school system, giving them a sense of belonging in their community/with peers.
- The suspension rate would decrease, and students' time would be filled with positive experiences and achievements rather than being out in the community and making poor decisions.
- Students with FASD would graduate with applicable life skills (e.g. how to budget and take public transit), gain a sense of purpose and positively contribute to society.
- The incarceration rate will decrease if these students find a sense of belonging and purpose.
- We can change these students' cycles and coping mechanisms with renewed hope for their children.



This is a workable document and can be changed/improved. Please get more input from the FASD community.

I will be working on a proposal for FASD classrooms for elementary schools. I welcome any help from the PDSB.