

The Link between Assessment Data, Defining Areas of Strength & Need and Programming for Students with Learning Disabilities

Parents and students are an integral part of developing the Individual Educational Plan for the student. In order to choose appropriate programming/accommodations, parents and students must know the student's areas of strength and need. It is especially important to determine the areas of strength since the student's strength ought to be used to address the areas of need.

The Ministry of Education states that a logical flow from Assessment Data to Areas of Strength & Need to Programming/Accommodations has to exist to create an effective IEP. Assessment Data can include a psycho-educational assessment (done by a psychologist), and should include a current educational assessment (done by the SERT/teacher) as well as observations (by teachers, parents, and student). The summary of the assessment data on the IEP should lead to very clear statements of areas of strength and need:

Areas of strength: samples

- Preferred learning style/modality (visual, auditory...)
- Cognitive processing/communication
 - Oral communication skills
 - Reasoning skills
 - Creative thinker
- Acquired skills
 - Computer skills
 - Organizational skills
 - Time management skills

If oral expression is an area of strength and written expression is an area of need, an accommodation of assistive technology or a scribe should be the accommodation listed in the IEP.

Areas of Need: samples

- Cognitive processing
 - Receptive language: writing
 - Visual memory: cannot copy from black board
 - Receptive language skills: reading
- Skill deficit areas interfering with the ability to learn
 - Attention skills
 - Organizational skills

“Attention Difficulties” or “organizational skills” in the area of need section should lead to special programming in these areas: teaching strategies and accommodations which will raise the skills. Learning Disabilities are life long and the areas of need will not change drastically over time. However, the areas of strengths will change, as the individual's acquired skills will be added. Effective programming and accommodations developed from the assessment data and the student's area of strength & need, will enable the student to access the curriculum at grade level and to acquire new skills which in turn will make the student more successful now and in the future.