

# Educational Policies Related to Language Disorders in Ontario



**Inclusive educational framework:** Ontario recognizes that students are unique and must have opportunities to succeed according to their interests, abilities, and goals.

**Categories of exceptionalities:** Ontario's *Education Act* identifies five categories of exceptionalities.

These categories are meant to address a wide range of conditions and are meant to be inclusive of all medical conditions—whether diagnosed or not—that can lead to learning difficulties.

- behavioural
- communicational
- intellectual
- physical, and
- multiple



**Recognizing speech and language disorders:** Ontario recognizes speech and language impairments under the communicational category.

A speech impairment is defined as a disorder in *language*\* formulation that may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors, that involves perceptual motor aspects of transmitting oral messages, and that may be characterized by impairment in articulation, rhythm, and stress.

A language impairment is defined as a learning disorder characterized by an impairment in comprehension and/or verbal communication, which may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors (including language delay, *disfluency*\*, *voice*\*, and *articulation development*\*).

\*Ontario distinguishes between speech and language, but problematically confuses the definitions.

\* See more details about the difference between speech and language on <https://www.understood.org/en/articles/difference-between-speech-impairment-and-language-disorder>

**Developmental Language Disorder (DLN)** is a persistent language difficulty that interferes with a child's learning, understanding, and communication and is not explained by other conditions (e.g., hearing loss, autism) or extenuating circumstances (e.g., lack of exposure to language).

DLN affects a child's learning, understanding, and communication; however, their language difficulties will differ from child to child.

No provinces or territories use the term DLN (QC uses a synonym)

DLN affects about 2 children in every classroom

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