

SEAC CIRCULAR

February 2006

Greetings and a belated Happy New Year to you all!

We are now well into the new year, and into the mandate of a new federal government as well. The Ontario Ministry of Education announced new initiatives in late November and December, and we will bring you up to date on other initiatives we have been following.

As usual, action items will be underlined and summarized at the end.

Feel free to share any of this information or the attachments with other SEAC members. As always, when you are planning to introduce a motion for the consideration of SEAC, it is particularly important that you share all related background items with your fellow SEAC reps.

The topics covered by this SEAC Circular:

1. SEAC tasks for the coming months:
2. Special Education Working Table:
3. CODE Professional Development Projects:
4. Planning Entry to School:
5. Bullying Prevention:
6. Learning to18 Initiative:
7. Provincial Parent Involvement Initiative:
8. SEAC Training:

List of attachments:

1. PAAC on SEAC Calendar
2. List of CODE school board projects
3. List of CODE partnership projects

1. SEAC tasks for the coming months:

You will find attached an updated calendar of SEAC activities created by PAAC, the provincial parent association that advises SEAC members. You will see that the tasks for the coming months are focused on revisions to the board's Special Education Plan and the board's budget for special education.

2. Special Education Working Table:

The Working Table on Special Education Reform (as it is now called) has held six meetings, and the two co-chairs have put together a series of 30 recommendations, which were submitted to the Minister in January. The report is to be released to the Working Table members after it has been translated into French, but there is no date yet for the public release. Topics covered in the recommendations should include research, professional development, parent involvement, service coordination, improving learning, accountability, data gathering and funding.

3. CODE Professional Development Projects:

The CODE professional development funding has been approved for 72 board projects, and 12 additional projects by provincial schools, school authorities and other partnerships. Researchers on CODE monitoring teams are conducting focused interviews with participating school teams and will collect baseline information to compare to results in June. The next monitoring period will be in late May or early June.

A list of the 72 board projects and the 12 partnership projects are attached. Some projects may have steering committees on which LDA chapters could seek membership.


As mentioned in the November SEAC Circular, an update on your board's CODE project should be on the agenda for every meeting.

4. Planning Entry to School:

The Planning Entry to School document has been released by the Ministry of Education, and is available on the Ministry website: www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/planningentry.html. Although this is a general resource guide, it does contain a section on effective planning for children with special needs. Information sessions were held around the province starting on January 13th, with representatives from the Ministries of Education and Children & Youth Services.

5. Bullying Prevention:

In November the Safe Schools Action Team released an action plan for bullying prevention: [Stamping out bullying in Ontario schools](#) (November 16, 2005)

[Shaping safer schools: A bullying prevention action plan](#)  (596 KB)

Recommendations include:

- All school boards should adopt bullying prevention policies and procedures
- Each school should, as a priority, implement an effective bullying prevention program consistent with the school board's broader bullying prevention policy.



SEACs should ask to be consulted on the development of their board's bullying prevention policies and procedures.

6. Learning to 18 Initiative:

In December the Ministry released the 3rd stage of its high school Student Success Strategy, called Learning to 18. The initiative includes a new Specialist High-Skills Major, expanded cooperative education, and links between high school and postsecondary destinations. The proposed specialist high-skills major will still require students to complete 18 compulsory credits, 30 total credits, and the Ontario literacy graduation requirement, so it should not be considered a lesser diploma. LDAO still has some concerns that students with LDs might be automatically steered into such a program, when it is not appropriate to their skills and ambitions.

A more controversial part of the Learning to 18 Initiative is legislation before the legislature that would require students to keep learning in a classroom, apprenticeship or workplace training program until age 18 or graduation. Possible penalties for habitual absenteeism could include suspension of a young person's driving privileges.

Details of the Learning to 18 initiative can be found on the Ministry website:

- December 8, 2005: [Ontario Launches Third Phase Of Student Success Strategy](#)  (101K)
- December 8, 2005: [Transforming High Schools: Ontario's Student Success Strategy](#) 

Details of the new co-op opportunities can be found at:
www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/newcoop1.html.

SEACs should ask for their school board's plans for implementing the Specialist High-Skills Major and the expanded cooperative education opportunities.

7. Provincial Parent Involvement Initiative:

In December the Ministry released a new Provincial Parent Involvement Initiative, based in part on the Parents Voice in Education Report. Details can be found on the Ministry website: [Ontario Parent Involvement Policy](#) (2005) (47K).

In June LDAO sent a letter to Minister Kennedy expressing concern that the Parents Voice in Education report did not mention links to parents of children with special education needs. We have similar concerns about the new Provincial Parent Involvement Initiative, and will be writing to the new director of the Parental Engagement Office.

In the meantime, SEACs should initiate contact with the new Parent Involvement committees at their school boards.

It would also be useful to find out how many LDA chapter members and members of other special needs parent organizations sit on their school councils.

8. SEAC Training:

The LDAO SEAC Training which had been scheduled for December 3, 2005 had to be cancelled because of too few applications. We heard concerns about travel distance and expenses, so we have decided to put the SEAC training materials into our courseware in order to create an interactive on-line training module. I will let you know when this is ready. We still hope to be able to get SEAC reps together in person at some point.

ACTION ITEMS:

- An update on your board's CODE project should be on the agenda for every meeting. If your board has a steering committee for its CODE project, you could seek representation for your LDA chapter.
- SEACs should ask to be consulted on the development of their board's bullying prevention policies and procedures.
- SEACs should ask for their school board's plans for implementing the Specialist High-Skills Major and the expanded cooperative education opportunities.
- SEACs should initiate contact with the new Parent Involvement committees at their school boards
- It would be useful to find out how many LDA chapter members and members of other special needs parent organizations sit on their school councils.