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Association of Ontario**

The right to learn, the power to achieve

Response to the Ontario College of Teachers Consultation on the Additional Qualification Course Guidelines, Special Education I, II and Specialist

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Overall Learning Expectations for Candidates

The learning expectations are too general and achieving them will not adequately equip educators to teach students with special education needs. In addition, with such general learning expectations the programs vary too much from one institution to another, depending on the instructors' philosophies and experience.

Course Content

Special Education Part I gives information that would be useful for the regular classroom teacher, but is insufficient for a special education teacher who is responsible for remedial programming for students.

All three levels require more detailed course content on the range of characteristics of students with various exceptionalities, and on research-based instructional methods and teaching strategies for students with different exceptionalities.

Special education teachers must be familiar with the types of professional assessment reports they will come across, and be able to interpret the terminology and the recommendations in these reports.

Special education teachers also need to be familiar with the range of assistive technologies that are available, and have hands-on experience with commonly used software (e.g. text-to-voice and voice-to-text software). The online courses taught at Cambrian College for postsecondary Learning Strategists and Adaptive Technologists would have some valuable content that could be incorporated.

Levels II and Specialist should be linked to expertise in one or more of the specific exceptionalities.

Assessment and Evaluation

The range of assessment and evaluation methods is good, but the specific components reflect the inadequate course content and learning expectations. They would need to be revised in line with revisions to course content and learning expectations.

Practical Experience

"Authentic school-based experiences" should be a requirement, not just "where possible."
Learning is not integrated when it is not related to real experience.

Additional Comments

The Special Education Specialist course is misnamed -- it is really a special education leader/supervisor course. Special Education II or Specialist should actually be a specialist course, specializing in one or two exceptionality areas. One way this could be accomplished is to make one or more of the individual exceptionality courses a requirement for completion of Special Education II and/or Specialist.

Special Education Part I could be slanted to regular classroom teachers (all of whom deal with students in their classrooms who have special education needs) and Special Education Part II could provide more detail for teachers who will be special education teachers. In this case Part II should be a requirement for special education teachers.