

**LDAO SEAC CIRCULAR**

**April 2019**

The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) SEAC Circular is published 5 times a year, in September, November, February, April and June.

The following are some topics that your SEAC should be looking at. Action items and/or recommendations for effective practices will be underlined.

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. Special Education funding for 2019-20

2. PA day changes

3. Exclusion and modified days

4. Announcements and Survey results from Ministry of Education consultation

5. AODA Committees

6. MACSE Committee

**List of Supplementary Materials:**

1. Supporting Students with ASD Memo

2. PAAC on SEAC comments on denial of school attendance

3. New Visions for Education Memo

4. Class Size Consultation Guide

**Note:** You can access the SEAC Circular and supplementary materials at
[www.ldao.ca/about/public-policy-advocacy/seac-circulars/](http://www.ldao.ca/about/public-policy-advocacy/seac-circulars/).

You can access Ministry memos by date at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/memos/> (Note: general memos have not been posted since July 2018, although some more recent funding B and SB memos are posted)

**1. Special Education funding for 2019-20**

The 2019-20 funding documents have not yet been released. However, the attached March 11, 2019 **Supporting Students with ASD** Memo, from the Deputy Minister of Education, outlines continuing special education funding and some changes that may affect all students with special education needs, including the following:

* Special education funding is projected to be $3.01 billion in 2018-19, which will continue in 2019-20.
* The Behaviour Expertise Amount (BEA) allocation will be $15.2 million in 2018-19 and will be continued in 2019-20.
* The Special Incidence Portion (SIP) allocation is projected to be $105.3 million in 2018-19 and will be continued in 2019-20.
* The Special Equipment Amount (SEA) allocation is projected to be $106.6 million in 2018-19 and will be continued in 2019-20.
* The Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) MDT funding allocation, introduced in 2018-19, will be $50.8 million in 2018-19 and will be continued in 2019-20.
* The ministry has been supporting a pilot program in many boards to allow the provision of the After School Skills Development Program. The ministry will make an investment of $6.1 million to allow this successful pilot to be extended to all school boards across the province in the 2019-20 school year.
* For the 2019-20 school year, the ministry intends to provide additional funding, and continued funding, to support school boards and students with ASD. ministry will propose a 2019-20 GSN regulation to support this funding and will further advise school boards about this proposed regulation.

SEACs should ask how the changes to funding for students with ASD, and the expected return of some students who have been outside the school system, will affect services for all students with special education needs in the board.

Discussion of other possible changes to Special Education funding will need to wait until the 2019-20 funding documents are released later in April.

**2. PA day changes**

The March 11, 2019 **Supporting Students with ASD** Memo contains the following change to PA day requirements:

In 2019-20, the ministry will request that school boards focus the special education topic on the list of Professional Activity Day permitted topics on supporting students with ASD. Policy/Program Memorandum 151 will be amended to include this direction.

In 2020-21, the ministry will mandate that school boards support learning opportunities for all educators in supporting students with ASD, within a professional activity day.

SEACs should find out how their boards plan to follow this directive, and how the PA Day topic can incorporate supports that are beneficial to all students with special education needs.

 **3. Exclusion and modified days**

The March 11, 2019 **Supporting Students with ASD** Memo mentions:

The ministry will also host a series of virtual sessions about exclusions and modified days to engage parents, educators, administrators and others in a dialogue about these complex issues. The details will be communicated at a later date.

The issue of denial of school attendance is one that affects all students with special education needs, not just those with ASD. This issue has been raised by the Ontario Human Rights Commission in its **Policy on accessible education for students with disabilities** (2018), as well as by the AODA Alliance and People for Education. PAAC on SEAC addressed the issue in a 2018response to the authors of the *Suspension/Expulsion Program Evaluation* conducted by Western University Centre for Educational Leadership (excerpt of PAAC response attached).

 **4. Announcements and survey results from Ministry of Education consultation**The attached March 15, 2019 **New Visons for Education** Memo**,** from the Deputy Minister of Education, as well as the linked **News Releases** below, outline the Ministry’s new initiatives based on the results of the public consultation that ended in December 2018. Summaries of the actual survey results are also linked below.

* [Education that Works for You - Modernizing Classrooms](https://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2019/03/education-that-works-for-you-2.html)
* [Education that Works for You - Modernizing Learning](https://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2019/03/education-that-works-for-you.html)
* [Education that Works for You - Modernizing Health and Physical Education](https://news.ontario.ca/edu/en/2019/03/education-that-works-for-you-1.html)

**Summaries of survey results:**

On-line Survey: [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/OnlineSurveyReport.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/OnlineSurveyReport.html)

Town Hall Sessions: [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/TelephoneTownHallSessions.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/TelephoneTownHallSessions.html)

**Of particular interest to students with special education needs are the following announcements:**

* Secondary students will take a minimum of four e-learning credits out of the 30 credits needed to fulfill the requirements for achieving an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. That is equivalent to one credit per year, with exemptions for some students on an individualized basis. These changes will be phased in, starting in 2020-21.

(Note: It is not clear at this time if all students with special education needs will be exempted)

* The government will work with EQAO on promising themes in education:
* Transferable skills like collaboration, problem-solving and citizenship.
* Supporting greater parent engagement.
* Using digital platforms for student learning, assessment and evaluation.
* Learning from other high-performing education jurisdictions.
* Assessing learning in ways that feel comfortable for students.
* Providing useful feedback to teachers and parents.

(Note: The survey results show that many parents have concerns about EQAO testing)

* Proposed changes to class sizes for 2019-20 are as follows:
* Kindergarten - no changes to the class size caps.
* Primary (grades 1 to 3) - primary class size caps remain in place. There are no proposed changes to either the caps or the average class size requirements.
* Intermediate (grades 4 to 8) - all school boards would be required to maintain a board-wide average class size of 24.5 or less, while the funded average class size would be minimally increased from 23.84 to 24.5. This would standardize funding and class sizes across the province, as historically there was variability for these grades.
* Secondary (grades 9 to 12) - average class size requirements adjusted from 22 to 28 students to align secondary class sizes more closely to other jurisdictions across Canada. School boards would be required to maintain a board-wide average class size of 28 or less and the funded average class size would be increased to 28 to support this change. In addition, school operations funding would be adjusted accordingly.

(Note: It was good to see that concerns about class sizes in primary grades were heeded, but the increases in later grades are concerning)

A further consultation on the issues of Class Size and Teacher Hiring Practices is seeking input from education partners by May 31, 2019. The Consultation Guide on Class Size, including consultation questions, is attached. The Class Size consultation contains a question about the new e-learning strategy, which includes the requirement for four e-learning credits.

SEACs may wish to ask for a presentation and have a discussion on the possible effects of these announcements on students with special education needs in their boards.

**5. AODA Committees**

The [2019 Legislative Review of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*](https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-legislative-review-accessibility-ontarians-disabilities-act-2005)*,* by David Onley, has been released. It contains the following recommendation:

Recommendation 4: Direct the standards development committees for K-12 and Post-Secondary Education and for Health Care to resume work as soon as possible.

Revised Terms of Reference for the education committees are currently being developed, with the intention of resuming the work of the committees.

The recommendations for changes and additions to the existing Information & Communication Standard, made by the Information & Communication Standard Development Committee, have not yet been released for public review. The Onley Report states,

“The Information and Communications SDC is working on recommendations to update the standards and is developing a more complex policy proposal involving regulation based on functional requirements. The government should give their advice serious consideration.”

**6. MACSE Committee**

The Minister’s Advisory Committee on Special Education (MACSE) has not met in several months, but is expected to meet at a date to be announced in June 2019.

**Questions?** Email Diane Wagner at dianew@LDAO.ca