

**LDAO SEAC CIRCULAR**

**April 2020**

**COVID-19 Edition**

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.

 **Topics covered by this SEAC Circular:**

1. The continuing role of SEAC during school closures

2. Budget planning

3. Programming for students with special education needs during school closures

4. Resources for parents

5. Mental health supports

6. Financial support for parents

 **List of Supplementary Materials:**

1. LEARNstyle Cloud Gear Learning

2. LEARNstyle PULSE

3. Texthelp Ontario COVID Response

**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 funding (B & SB) memos by date at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/memos/>

 **1. The continuing role of SEAC during school closures**

These are exceptional times in all areas of life, including education. Apparently some SEACs across Ontario are continuing to meet electronically but others have had their meetings postponed or cancelled.

**Regulation 464/97, Special Education Advisory Committees,** states that:

**9.** [(8)](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/french/elaws_regs_970464_f.htm#s9s8)The committee shall meet at least 10 times in each school year.
[**10.** (1)](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/french/elaws_regs_970464_f.htm#s10s1) The board shall make available to its special education advisory committee the personnel and facilities that the board considers necessary for the proper functioning of the committee, including the personnel and facilities that the board considers necessary to permit the use of electronic means for the holding of meetings of the committee in accordance with the regulations made under section 208.1 of the Act.

A new regulation was just passed that allows meetings of the school board to continue electronically without the requirement of anyone being present in person ([www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/R20042](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/R20042)).

Under Regulation 464/97,

[12. (1)](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/french/elaws_regs_970464_f.htm#s12s1) The board shall ensure that its special education advisory committee is provided with the opportunity to participate in the board’s annual review, under Regulation 306 of the Revised Regulations of Ontario, 1990, of its special education plan.

[(2)](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/french/elaws_regs_970464_f.htm#s12s2) The board shall ensure that its special education advisory committee is provided with the opportunity to participate in the board’s annual budget process under section 231 of the Act, as that process relates to special education.

**It is extremely important that school boards continue to meet these legislated requirements to consult with SEACs on the review and development of changes to their Special Education Plan, and provide the opportunity for participation in the annual budget process.**

LDAO SEAC members are requested to let LDAO know the status of meetings of their SEAC. Please contact me at dianew@LDAO.ca.

 **2. Budget planning**

The financial projections and regulations for 2020-21 have not yet been released by the Ministry of Education and with the fluidity of the Covid-19 situation it would not be surprising if there is a delay. In spite of this, SEACs can ask where their school board is in the budget planning process. Some school boards ask their SEAC members for input into budget priorities, or involve SEAC members in budget subcommittees. These processes should be continuing, even if in a different format.

**3. Programming for students with special education needs during school closures**

Providing educational opportunities for students while they are out of school will be very challenging, but particularly for students with special education needs. SEACs should ask their school boards what provisions are being made for access to technology and the internet for all students, and what specific provisions are being made for students with special education needs. For example:
- are IEP expectations being modified, and if so are parents being informed?
- are accommodations remaining in place, especially for any assessment?
- will teachers be available to students and parents for explanation and clarification?
- are students able to access support staff, such as EAs, that they have been working with?
- are students able to access SEA funded equipment, such as laptops, at home?
- are teachers able to provide curriculum materials in accessible formats that can be read by screen readers?
- do teachers have access to technical supports they need in order to provide online learning?
- do classroom teachers have access to special education resource teachers to consult with?

Finally, SEACs should ask how school boards are monitoring the effectiveness of the systems they have set up for education during school closures, especially education of students with special education needs.

LDAO SEAC members are asked to forward to LDAO any concerns they are hearing from parents and any issues that they are aware of in their school boards

**4. Resources for parents**

A number of organizations have been providing resources that parents can use to help them with their children’s education at home during the Covid-19 crisis. For a list of some general sources: [www.ldao.ca/online-educational-activities-that-can-be-done-at-home/](http://www.ldao.ca/online-educational-activities-that-can-be-done-at-home/)

**LEARNstyle** has made a couple of programs available free of charge, **CloudGear Learning** and **PULSE (Personal Use Learning Evaluation).** Information releases are attached.

**Texthelp** has made their **Read&Write** program available free to Ontario students and parents. If you do not have a gmail account you will need to set one up. Instructions are in the attached document.

**LDAO** will be creating materials for parents through their LD@school project. Teachers should be made aware of the wealth of materials available already on the **LD@school** website, [www.ldatschool.ca](http://www.ldatschool.ca), and parents can check out the **LD@Home** website, [www.ldathome.ca](http://www.ldathome.ca/), for interesting articles, webinars and videos, including Building Math Skills at Home.
**I will let you know when the LD@school materials for parents are available.**

**5. Mental health supports**

The COVID-19 pandemic is a stressful time for everyone, including children and youth. **School Mental Health Ontario** has developed some tips and resources to help support student mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, geared separately to educators, parents & families, and students: <https://smho-smso.ca/covid-19/>

**6. Financial support for parents**

The Ontario government is offering direct financial support to parents while Ontario schools and child care centres remain closed as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The new Support for Families initiative offers a one-time payment of $200 per child 0 to 12 years of age, and $250 for those 0 to 21 years of age with special needs.

Families can complete a simple online application at Ontario's Support for Families web page, [www.ontario.ca/page/get-support-families](http://www.ontario.ca/page/get-support-families),to access this financial support.

The definition of Special Needs includes: “For the purposes of this program, a child with special needs means the following: any student reported to be receiving special education programs and/or services by his or her school board …. This does not include students identified by an IPRC as being solely gifted who are receiving special education programs and services.”

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