

**LDAO SEAC CIRCULAR**

**November 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.

**Topics covered by this SEAC Circular:**

1. PAAC on SEAC survey

2. OHRC Right to Read public inquiry

3. Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grant changes

4. People for Education report on mental health supports

5. OHRC on access to education for students with disabilities during strikes

 **List of Supplementary Materials:**

1. PAAC on SEAC Survey 2019-20

**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. PAAC on SEAC survey**

PAAC on SEAC conducted surveys of SEAC members across Ontario in 2009 and again in 2014, to look at SEAC membership, practices and training needs. [PAAC on SEAC Survey 2014: Executive Summary & PAAC on SEAC Response](http://www.paac-seac.ca/wp-content/uploads/PAAC-on-SEAC-Survey-Executive-Summary-2014.pdf). PAAC on SEAC is now distributing a new version of the survey, with comparable questions, to find out what has changed and whether there are new issues or challenges. After analyzing the results, we will post the results on the PAAC on SEAC Website at: [www.paac-seac.ca](http://www.paac-seac.ca) and will share our report with the Ministry of Education.

The survey should take roughly 10 to 15 minutes to complete and individual surveys should be submitted by January 31, 2020. In the past, some SEACs have addressed the questions in a SEAC meeting and submitted a group response, in addition to having individual SEAC members respond. A group discussion of the issues raised in the survey would be a useful exercise for SEACs.

The survey is available at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/HYZ3PWY](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HYZ3PWY) and an introduction for SEAC members is attached. Please share this introduction with fellow SEAC members.

**2. OHRC Right to Read public inquiry**

On October 3, 2019 the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) launched **Right to Read**, a public inquiry into human rights issues that affect students with reading disabilities in Ontario’s public education system.

As part of its inquiry, the OHRC will hear from parents, students and educators across the province. It will also assess whether school boards use scientific evidence-based approaches to meet students’ right to read. The OHRC will assess school boards against five benchmarks that are part of an effective systematic approach to teaching all students to read:

* + Universal design for learning (UDL)
	+ Mandatory early screening
	+ Reading intervention programs
	+ Effective accommodation
	+ Psycho-educational assessments (if required).

The inquiry is looking in depth at 8 school boards around province and also may request information or assistance from the Ministry of Education, the Ontario College of Teachers, as well as faculties of education.

The OHRC wants to hear directly from parents, students, educators and others, and invites them to email legal@ohrc.on.ca, or call 416-314-4547 or 1-800-387-9080.

An online survey will be available soon on the Right to Read website: [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/news\_centre/ohrc-launches-right-read-public-inquiry](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/news_centre/ohrc-launches-right-read-public-inquiry)

**Resources**

[Right to Read flyer](http://trk.mmail.lst.fin.gov.on.ca/trk/click?ref=zr9uf3m5h_2-6197x38583x02570&)

[Right to Read Inquiry terms of reference](http://trk.mmail.lst.fin.gov.on.ca/trk/click?ref=zr9uf3m5h_2-6197x3857fx02570&)

[Backgrounder](http://trk.mmail.lst.fin.gov.on.ca/trk/click?ref=zr9uf3m5h_2-6197x38580x02570&)

[Voices from the community](http://trk.mmail.lst.fin.gov.on.ca/trk/click?ref=zr9uf3m5h_2-6197x38581x02570&)

[Voices from community partners](http://trk.mmail.lst.fin.gov.on.ca/trk/click?ref=zr9uf3m5h_2-6197x38582x02570&)

 **3. Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grant changes**

Since 2006, parents’ organizations in Ontario have been able to apply for funding to support projects and programs focused on supporting more parents to be able to be engaged in their children’s education. According to the [Ministry’s website,](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/reaching.HTML) over the years, more than 27,000 projects have been supported with over $35 million in funding. Those projects ranged from single-school initiatives such as Family Math night, to provincial parent conferences.

A notice from the Ministry received by People for Education states that the grants will be transformed and funding, which was $2.9 million in 2014 and $2.5 million in 2018, will be reduced to $1.25 million this year.

There will no longer be a mechanism for individual school councils or organizations to apply for the funding. Instead, school boards will receive a “predetermined” amount of funding – presumably based on numbers of students – and the board, working with its Parent Involvement Committee, will decide which projects it should fund.

In a memo outlining new goals for the funding, the Ministry says that projects will be “required to demonstrate a commitment to respecting the role of parents in students’ educational experiences by working with parents or seeking parent input on how schools can:

* Provide a safe and welcoming school environment;
* Maintain open communication with teachers;
* Respect parents as valued partners within the education system in relation to decisions about their child’s education”

[People for Education's analysis of the PRO Grant changes](https://peopleforeducation.us4.list-manage.com/track/click?u=677f6bbe3dfb7cfe0fdfeb760&id=720a17d09e&e=8f39fa8602)

(<https://peopleforeducation.ca/our-work/province-cuts-1-million-from-funding-for-parent-engagement-projects/?utm_source=E-Newsletter&utm_campaign=fee05b4e10-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_06_10_03_29_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_422aeb3dbd-fee05b4e10-7967801>)

SEACs should ask if their school board has developed a policy on distribution of designated PRO Grant funds.

**4. People for Education (P4E) report on mental health supports**

On November 4, 2019 People for Education released a report on access to mental health supports for students. Some of the findings included a decline in access to psychologists, as well as substantial regional disparities in access to supports such as social workers, psychologists, and child and youth workers. Principals responding to the Annual Ontario School Survey reported that most mental health workers are available only a few hours a week, and raised concerns that existing mental health supports tend to focus on managing crisis situations rather than fostering positive mental health.

Data from the survey show that schools in Northern and Southwestern Ontario are much less likely to have access to mental health supports than schools in the GTA. Principals in French-language systems also expressed concerns that their francophone communities are underserved when comes to mental health and that access to francophone professionals is an issue.

The full report can be read at: [Supporting students mental health: a collective responsibility](https://peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/People-for-Education-report-on-supporting-students-mental-health-2019.pdf)

(<https://peopleforeducation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/People-for-Education-report-on-supporting-students-mental-health-2019.pdf>)

SEACs could ask how their school board compares to the P4E report in terms of mental health supports.

**5. OHRC on access to education for students with disabilities during strikes**

In anticipation of possible labour disputes, the Ontario Human Rights Commission has created a fact sheet on **Equal access to education for students with disabilities during strikes** ([www.ohrc.on.ca/en/equal-access-education-students-disabilities-during-strikes-fact-sheet](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/equal-access-education-students-disabilities-during-strikes-fact-sheet))
One concern raised is that there may be a lack of appropriate contingency planning by government, school boards and unions. SEACs can ask what contingency plans their school board has to ensure that the accommodation needs of students with disabilities can be met should there be labour actions.

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