

LDAO SEAC CIRCULAR

June 2009

The following are some topics that your SEAC should be looking at this month. 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. Special Education Plan and Budget
2. Special Equipment Amount
3. Dispute Resolution processes
4. Assistive Technology for All Conference
5. Student Support Leadership Initiative

1. Special Education Plan and Budget

At your June meeting you should be approving any changes to the Special Education Plan and reviewing the final special education budget (if not done previously).

There has been a lot of confusion and concern expressed by boards about the effects of the new Measures of Variability (HOV) of the High Needs Amount (HNA), even though the HOV represents only 5% of the total HNA. The formula is quite complicated, and there are concerns about the appropriateness of using 2005-2006 data for prevalence, and EQAO data to measure high needs. For example, students might have complex learning disabilities, with co-existing conditions, but not be scoring in the lowest EQAO levels or receiving five accommodations. LDAO SEAC reps are asked to forward to LDAO any correspondence of their SEACs about special education budget concerns, including details of any budget shortfalls or cuts to special education services.

2. Special Equipment Amount

The 2009-2010 manual for the Special Equipment Amount (www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/0910/SEAguide09.pdf) has the following new provisions:

1. Boards will ensure that, in addition to any other obligations to give notice under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (MFIPPA), the parent has been informed that a SEA claim has been submitted to the ministry, in accordance with these guidelines, to partially offset the cost of special education equipment provided by the board for the use of their child.
2. The student's IEP documents the use of the equipment; and includes, where appropriate, that the student is using the equipment for provincial testing; and
3. During the school year, the Ministry will conduct a review of SEA claim documentation which may include classroom, school and/or board visits.

SEACs could ask to review their board's process for SEA claims, to see that parents are informed of the applications.

3. Dispute Resolution processes

The Provincial Advisory Committee on Formal Dispute Resolution met on May 26, 2009 and had presentations from six school boards that had been piloting alternative dispute resolution processes. While there were very few actual cases, the boards had created parent booklets about the options available, and had done training sessions on effective communication and conflict resolution with educators, administrators, SEACs and parents.

The Ministry is processing the results of the school board surveys about the impact of *Shared Solutions* on prevention and resolution of conflicts (regarding programs and services for students with special education needs). Preliminary results indicate that more than half of boards have implemented conflict resolutions strategies, and more than three quarters have reported using collaborative approaches. I will let you know when the final report comes out.

4. Assistive Technology for All Conference

The Ministry of Education - Provincial Schools Branch (PSB) and the Association for Special Education Technology (ASET) are partnering to host a provincial conference focussing on Assistive Technology (AT), **"AT4ALL: Assistive Technology for All - On the Road to Success"**, from August 27-29, 2009 in Milton. On Saturday morning, August 29th there will be sessions specifically for parents. Todd Cunningham, a doctoral student in psychology who has a learning disability, will be the dynamic keynote speaker.

Information and the registration form can be found at: www.at4all.ca/
SEACs could ask if their school board plans to send any SEAC reps.

5. Student Support Leadership Initiative

The Special Education Policy and Programs Branch has recently taken the lead in the Ministry of Education (EDU) in dealing with student mental health.

EDU, in partnership with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), is also providing multi-year funding of \$3M per year for three years (07/08 to 09/10) for the **Student Support Leadership Initiative**, to help school boards enhance partnerships with local community agencies in order to meet the mental health needs of children and youth and to:

- share expertise;
- improve decision-making through collaborative planning mechanisms;
- establish and/or enhance referral mechanisms;
- increase access to services and supports for students and families;
- improve a student's and family's ability to understand, navigate and use the services and supports available to them; and
- maximize local resources.

The funding is being provided annually to 29 geographic clusters of neighbouring school boards and coordinating community agencies.

SEACs could ask for an update on the work of their local 'cluster' of the Student Support Leadership Initiative.

ACTION ITEMS

- LDAO SEAC reps are asked to forward to LDAO any correspondence of their SEACs about special education budget concerns, including details of any budget shortfalls or cuts to special education services.
- SEACs could ask to review their board's process for SEA claims, to see that parents are informed of the applications.
- SEACs could ask for an update on the work of their local 'cluster' of the Student Support Leadership Initiative.
- SEACs could ask if their school board plans to send any SEAC reps to **AT4ALL: Assistive Technology for All - On the Road to Success**.
- Register for **AT4ALL: Assistive Technology for All** parent session?

Questions?

E-mail: Diane Wagner at dianew@ldao.ca or call (416) 929-4311 Ex. 22
FAX: 416-929-3905.