

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE
October, 2009**

This update includes key activities from the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch led by Barry Finlay, Director.

Mental Health and Addictions

The Special Education Policy and Programs Branch has recently taken on the lead in the Ministry of Education with regard to student mental health. SEPPB is representing Education (EDU) on the Inter Ministerial Project Team on the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, as part of the Government's ten-year Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.

To support the provincial strategy, SEPPB has coordinated sector representation for four of the five theme groups working on the development of the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, including Healthy Communities, System Design, Early Intervention and Early Identification and Strengthening our Front-Line Workers.

In July 2009, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) released *Every Door is the Right Door*, a discussion paper that sets out a framework for the proposed mental health and addictions strategy. It was introduced at a Summit on mental health and addictions in July 2009. *Every Door is the Right Door* can be found on MOHLTC's website at:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/mentalhealth/minister_advisgroup/minister_advisgroup.html

SEPPB is presently leading a series of stakeholder consultations across the province on *Every Door Is the Right Door*. Four of these stakeholder consultations will take place in collaboration with MCYS and MOHLTC. The feedback gathered from these consultations will be rolled up and presented to MOHLTC for inclusion in their draft mental health strategy.

Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions

An all-party committee has also been formed by the Ontario legislature to help develop ways to improve access to mental health and addiction services in the province. The Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions – with representatives from all three parties – will work with consumers/survivors, providers, experts and other interested parties to determine the mental health and addiction needs that currently exist. The committee is expected to issue a report in 2010.

EDU, represented by Grant Clarke and Barry Finlay, presented to the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, June 3rd, 2009. The presentation highlighted for the committee the mental health and addiction needs of children and youth in an educational context and identified the importance of all ministries collaborating to support children and youth with mental health needs.

A transcript of the presentation is available at the following web address:

http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/committee-proceedings/committee_transcripts_details.do;jsessionid=b65f09b76b21d4cec1f911e18b47dc15dc266f327d424e07e7d4edcf7f21b8c9.e38QbhiLbxaRbi0MahuTbhiTb3b0n6jAmljGr5XDqQLvpAe?locale=en&Date=2009-06-03&ParlCommID=8915&BillID=&Business=Mental+health+and+addictions+strategy#P70_3171

KEY SPECIAL EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Special Education Funding

The 2009/10 Special Education Grant (SEG) is projected to increase by \$49 million to a provincial total of over \$2.25 billion. This is an increase of over \$627 million since 2002/03, or 39 per cent. This funding enhancement is the second instalment of our government's commitment to increase special education funding by 8 percent by 2011/12.

As work continues on developing a new funding approach, this \$49 million investment in 2009/10 will:

- provide funding stability for school boards by maintaining 95 percent of the school boards' HNA allocation unchanged (HNA base amount),
- introduce the Measures of Variability (MOV) amount (5 percent) as part of the HNA allocation to better reflect the variability of high needs students and boards' ability to respond to these needs in order to revise the HNA allocation without relying on a claims-based process,
- stabilize funding for education programs for school-aged children and youth in government-approved care and/or treatment, custody, and correctional facilities, following up on the ongoing review of these programs, and
- support the Special Incidence Portion (SIP) and the Special Equipment Amount (SEA) claim-based applications.

The Ministry has invested approximately **\$48 million** since 2006, through targeted funding outside the Grants for Student Needs (GSN), to build capacity and improve the learning environment for students with ASD, including:

- \$5M for Geneva Centre for Autism to train Teachers' Assistants (2006);
- \$1M for Geneva Centre for Autism to provide principal training (August 2007);
- \$3M for school team training (August 20-23, 2007);
- \$4M to DSBs to further school teams' ABA training (2007/08);

- \$2M for Collaborative Service Delivery Models for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (2007/08);
- \$2M for Geneva (4th Q Investment in March 2008);
- \$4M to DSBs to further ABA Training (2008/09);
- \$6M to DSBs to hire ABA Expertise (2008/09);
- \$5M for Collaborative Service Delivery Models for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders Phases 1 and 2 (2008/09);
- \$1M for Geneva Centre for ASD training (summer 2009)
- \$4M to DSBs to further ABA training (2009/10);
- \$6M to DSBs to hire ABA Expertise (2009/10); and
- \$5M for Collaborative Service Delivery Models for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders Phases 1 and 2 (2009/10).

Review of Funding Processes

During the 2009/10 school year, the ministry will continue to implement the recommendations of the Working Table for a new approach to special education funding and practices. As it relates to special education funding, the ministry will continue to review and refine the components of the Special Education Grant. We will continue to consult with our stakeholders to ensure that the evolution of the funding approach supports students with special education needs, improves student outcomes, and places less emphasis on the identification process for students with special education needs.

A review of the Special Incidence Portion (SIP) and the Special Equipment Amount (SEA) allocations was conducted by a consultant group for the Ministry of Education in 2009.

The review of the SIP and SEA allocations was designed to:

- evaluate and monitor these funding processes;
- assess the effectiveness of these funding processes;
- assist to gain a better understanding of supports required by students for whom SIP and SEA funding claims are submitted,
- provide an understanding of how some school boards serve their highest needs students without accessing the SIP allocation,
- provide an understanding of the growth in these two areas, and
- help to inform future funding criteria and processes.

A final report was submitted by the consultant group in September 2009. The Ministry is reviewing the report and it will consider its findings and recommendations as it proceeds with the planning for the 2010-11 school year.

School Board Special Education Plans

School boards and school authorities were required to report amendments only for 2008-09 and to incorporate amendments into their current special education plans.

In 2009-10, the Ministry will consult with stakeholders to draft a model for aligning Special Education Plans with the K-12 Board Improvement Plans (BIP) and reporting processes for the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat and Student Success/ Learning to 18.

Assessing Achievement in Alternative Areas

In 2008-09, the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch surveyed school boards to gather provincial information on current methods being used to assess and report on the achievement of the very few numbers of students who are in programs where none of the student's learning expectations are derived from the provincial curriculum and who are exempt from all standardized provincial assessments. To enhance assessment and reporting processes for these students, in 2009-10 SEPPB will:

- Consult with stakeholders;
- Distribute draft assessment guidelines;
- Support regional school board projects; and
- Provide opportunities for school boards to share information and practices.

Dispute Resolution for Special Education Programs and Services

Following recommendations made by the Working Table on Special Education, the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch initiated a project on informal dispute resolution and mediation. One of the deliverables included a resource guide for parents and educators. Consultations on the guide were held with English and French-language education stakeholders. Participants included: parents, students, educators, parent advocates and mediators. Feedback from the sessions was incorporated into the guide, *Shared Solutions*, released in Fall 2007 along with regional professional development sessions.

A Provincial Advisory Committee was also formed with representation from parents, students, educators and dispute resolution specialists to assist in the development of a formal dispute resolution pilot. This pilot project started in Fall 2007 in selected school boards.

The pilot project that started in Fall 2007 continued in 2008 involving the use of informal and formal dispute resolution mechanisms in resolving disputes between educators and parents regarding special education programs and services. The pilot was evaluated by an external evaluator and the results will inform future policy making decisions.

The Provincial Advisory Committee will also review the results of the pilot and submit a report with recommendations for future policy decision making.

As part of the pilot, training was provided in several boards to educators, parents and community organizations on the conflict prevention and resolution strategies outlined in *Shared Solutions*.

Pilot boards were requested to complete a summary of their projects identifying key findings and lessons learned around effective conflict prevention, and resolution. The pilot concluded at the end of June 2009. The external evaluator will be submitting a report by the end of October 2009 and the Provincial Advisory Committee will submit their report in late Fall 2009.

As part of future actions, the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch plans to engage discussion with other Ministry branches to identify ways in which the strategies from *Shared Solutions* could be taken into account in other Ministry initiatives. The Branch will review the evaluation report from the pilot and the report from Provincial Advisory Committee to inform future direction. The findings will be shared with all district school boards.

Learning for All K -12/L'apprentissage pour tous: de la maternelle a la 12e année

The Special Education Policy and Programs Branch has led the development of draft *Learning for All K – 12 / L'apprentissage pour tous: de la maternelle à la 12e année*. *Learning for All K-12* builds on the guiding principles outlined in *Education for All: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students With Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6* (2005). The resource is based on core concepts of personalization, precision and professional learning communities (PLCs). It is designed to share information with educators about research-informed educational approaches that have proven to be effective in supporting the learning of all students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. These approaches include Universal Design for Learning, Differentiated Instruction and the Tiered Approach. It also presents planning tools such as class and student profiles.

A copy of draft *Learning for All K-12* was sent to all Directors of Education electronically in June 2009. Draft *Learning for All K-12* is scheduled for electronic

posting on the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) website (<http://www.ontariodirectors.ca>) in October 2009.

To support the roll-out of draft *Learning for All K-12* in 2009-10 school year, the Ministry of Education is providing funding to all school boards. Eleven selected lead boards will receive additional funding to implement the approaches and planning tools presented in draft *Learning for All K-12*, coordinate regional professional development through PLCs, participate in a provincial leadership network team, and work with their internal and regional partners to gather information that will inform the finalization of the draft document.

A *Learning for All K-12* Orientation session for all lead boards is scheduled for October 2, 2009. *Learning for All K-12* regional professional development sessions are scheduled for October and November 2009.

Caring and Safe Schools Resource Guide K – 12

The Special Education Policy and Programs Branch has developed this resource guide to support superintendents, principals and vice principals with the implementation of the safe schools strategy. The resource document is intended to assist school and system leaders to promote and support a caring and safe school culture; provide information to help them make decision for students with special education needs, and, suggest strategies and resources that they can use to address behavioural challenges for students with special education needs, with a focus on prevention, early intervention, progressive discipline and consideration for mitigating circumstances. The resource document is currently in edit and is scheduled for released in 2010.

JK – Grade 1 Assessment and Intervention Strategies Project 2009-2010

This project will build on what we learned from the *Education for All K-6* CODE projects from 2005 – 2008. CODE will lead this project. The goals of the project are to:

- Support implementation of effective evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for all students in JK – Grade 1;
- Identify existing effective evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for students in JK – Grade 1;
- Share through leadership networks effective evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for students in JK – Grade 1;
- Build teacher/school board capacity to implement effective evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for students in JK – Grade 1; and
- Develop a monitoring tool to support boards in implementing effective

evidence-informed assessment and intervention strategies for students in JK – Grade 1.

An Advisory Committee comprised of CODE leadership, staff from the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch, the Early Learning Initiative and the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat ensures that the work in this project is aligned with the field. Seven school boards are leading the regional implementation of this project over the 2009-10 school year.

Dedicated Professional Activity Day

On January 30, 2009 a memorandum was released to school boards with information regarding the establishment, in regulation, of two dedicated professional activity (PA) days. The two PA days will be devoted to two provincial priorities: closing the gap in student achievement, and special education. For your information, Ontario Regulation 304 in the *Education Act* - School Year Calendar, Professional Activity Days – can be found at:

www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_900304_e.html

The ministry has committed to support school boards through the use of online resources to enhance and complement their planned professional activity days. Professional development opportunities require that partners at all levels create conditions that provide students with maximum opportunities to learn and reach their potential. Resources available are to support a school board's professional development as well as complement the key concepts found in *Learning for All K-12*. The resources include both sample PA day sessions that various school boards across Ontario have implemented and slide decks to support the development and implementation of Individual Education Plans. Resources are continually being added to support school boards and can be found on the Council for Ontario Directors for Education (CODE) website <http://www.ontariodirectors.ca>.

Protocol for Partnerships with External Agencies for Provision of Services by Regulated Health Professionals, Regulated Social Service Professionals, and Paraprofessionals

A Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM 149) was released to provide direction to school boards concerning the review and/or development of local protocols for partnerships with external agencies in the areas of regulated health professionals and regulated social service professionals (Professional Student Services Personnel and Paraprofessionals). PPM 149 can be viewed at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/149.html>

Local protocols are essential to school boards when partnering with external agencies to ensure:

- That effective inter-ministerial and community based partnerships occur to foster continuous improvement in the seamless delivery of programs and services for students, including students with special needs;
- That the appropriate programs and services are provided;
- That school boards' ability to provide programs and services is supplemented by external agencies and not impeded; and
- The PPM provides requirements for the development and/or review of local protocols. The PPM is accompanied by a Deputy Minister's memorandum to school boards with further direction on the development and/or review of local protocols.

The PPM was released to all school boards in September 2009, with the accompanying Deputy Minister's Memorandum. All school boards are required to post a reviewed or new local protocol on their websites by January 1, 2010.

Ministry Response to the Reference Group on ASD

The government has taken action on all but four of the 34 recommendations. The remaining 4 have policy implications, collective agreement implications, or are beyond EDU's area of responsibility. However, EDU is working with other ministries as appropriate.

The ministry funded and provided training in partnership with Geneva Centre for Autism to support implementation, beginning in the 2007/08 school year, of PPM No. 140, *Incorporating Methods of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) into Programs for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)*.

Since summer 2006 the ministry has invested nearly \$24M for ASD training, and to date more than 13,000 educators have been trained in ABA instructional methods to support students with ASD in our publicly funded schools.

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services jointly supported Phase 1 of Collaborative Service Delivery Models (CSDM) for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders in seven sites involving eight school boards, relevant community agencies, and parents in 2007-08 and 2008-09. Support is continuing in 2009-10 for the Phase 1 boards for the purpose of knowledge dissemination throughout the province.

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services are also jointly supporting CSDM Phase 2, an expansion of Phase 1, beginning in 2009 and in 2009-10. Sixteen school boards have received funding to support implementation of *Connections for Students*. In collaboration with all nine MCYS-funded Autism Intervention Program regional, multi-disciplinary, student-specific, school-based transition teams are being established for school-aged children and

youth who are ready to make the transition from intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) services provided through the MCYS funded Autism Intervention Program (AIP) to applied behaviour analysis (ABA) instructional methods in publicly funded schools. School boards throughout the province are expected to implement transition teams no later than spring 2010 for all children transitioning from intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) therapy services to ABA instructional methods in September 2010 and thereafter.

The ministry provided new funding to school boards in 2009 and 2009-10 to hire additional ABA expertise, to support principals, teachers, and multi-disciplinary transition teams by providing and coordinating ASD training and resources, and facilitating collaboration between service providers and schools. The additional ABA expertise will play an important role in supporting deeper implementation of PPM 140.

As required by PPM 140, the ministry developed an annual process to monitor school boards' implementation of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) instructional methods. Schools complete a snapshot self-assessment survey of 33 indicators of implementation of PPM 140 as of March 1. During the first school-year of implementation of PPM 140, 2007-08, all school boards were asked to randomly select 15% of their schools, elementary and secondary, to participate. In 2008-09 all school boards were asked to involve all schools. This snapshot survey generates a provincial profile on implementation by English-language and French-language school boards that will be shared with MACSE and those members of the former Ministers' Autism Spectrum Disorders Reference Group who wish to be involved, at the October 2009 MACSE meeting.

Training for Teachers' Assistants (TA) who work with Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

In 2006, the government invested \$5 million through Geneva Centre for Autism to provide training for up to 5,000 Teachers' Assistants (TAs) who work or may work with students with ASD. Geneva Centre for Autism has established a Project Advisory Group comprised of researchers, practitioners and key stakeholders to inform the development, implementation, evaluation and public reporting.

The project was completed in 2009: 675 training sessions, including elective sessions were delivered and 10,400 TAs across Ontario have been trained. 97% of TAs who responded to a survey assessing effectiveness of the training felt that the training added value to what participants have to offer as TAs. The training included components for sustainability such as online resources for TAs, teachers and administrators that will continue beyond 2009.

Geneva Centre for Autism 25th Annual Summer Training Institute on August 24-27, 2009

In 2009 the ministry provided funding to Geneva Centre for Autism to cover educators' registration and materials to participate in the Geneva Centre for Autism 25th Annual Summer Training Institute on August 24-27, 2009. The topic of this Summer Training Institute was "Understand Me, Motivate Me, Teach Me: Reaching All Students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder". In addition to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) methods, the sessions covered a broad range of strategies that work for students with Asperger's syndrome, autism and related exceptionalities as well as approaches that could be utilized to build global skills that improve social and behavioural functioning for individuals with Asperger's syndrome and high-functioning autism.

It is estimated that up to 1,200 principals, teachers, teachers' assistants and other educators were able to access this training. Five sessions were organized: one provincial francophone session in Toronto, one face-to-face English session in Toronto and three regional English sessions in London, Ottawa and Barrie. A webinar version of the training was accessible for a limited number of participants located in the Northern Regions who were not serviced by a live site or who could not attend in person.

Supporting English Language Learners with Special Education Needs: A practical guide for Ontario Educators Kindergarten to Grade 12

In winter 2008, *Reach Every Student, Energizing Ontario Education* was released and outlined in this document were the ministry's core priorities:

- High level of student achievement
- Reduced gaps in student achievement, and
- Increased public confidence in publicly funded education.

Supporting English language learners and students with special education needs are priorities and essential to meeting these core priorities. In collaboration, the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Branch are developing a resource guide to support classroom teachers, ELL/ESL teachers and special education teachers. This resource guide will provide Ontario educators with evidence-informed assessment and instructional strategies to support English language learners with special education needs. *Canadian Council on Learning (CCL)* is currently being contracted by the ministry and conducting a comprehensive research study in the form of a literature review. The document is scheduled for release in the spring of 2010.

Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (OSLA)

Since May 2007, the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch has been working with the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (OSLA) to develop a comprehensive resource guide for elementary classroom teachers (Kindergarten to Grade 3). The resource guide will contain evidence-based and curriculum focused differentiated teaching strategies for improving the academic performances of all students but essentially supportive for students with oral language needs.

The Core Project team (CPT) is comprised of both English and French-language Speech-Language Pathologists. In addition, a Provincial Advisory Team (PAT) was formed with both English and French-language representatives to provide feedback and advice to the CPT on a regular basis. The PAT consists of Speech-Language Pathologists, a Special Education Coordinator and Education Officers. At the advice of the PAT, a Teacher Focus Group comprised of K – Grade 3 teachers, English and French from across the province was formed to review and provide feedback on the resource guide throughout its development.

Internal ministry consultation continues to be conducted with staff from SEPPB, LNS, ELL, Curriculum, and the French Language Education Policy and Programs Branch to ensure that the resource guide aligns with other ministry documents.

The resource guide will be available in both English and French, and it is scheduled for release to all school boards Fall 2009.

Individual Education Plan (IEP) Initiative

School Boards continue to implement recommendations from the 2006/07 IEP Collaborative Review to develop and implement effective IEPs.

Selected school boards completed a pilot of the provincial electronic template in June 2009. Input from participants will be collected and summarized. The template is now available to parents and Faculties of Education.

As part of the Ministry's continuing effort to support the development and implementation of effective IEPs and to complement samples found in the *Individual Education Plan (IEP) Resource Guide (2004)*, additional samples have been developed by writing teams from across the province. The samples have been developed using the provincial electronic IEP template and have been posted on the CODE website. They represent the Ministry's exceptionality categories/definitions, as well as samples for non-identified students, both elementary and secondary. There 47 samples posted at this time in English and French at <http://www.ontariodirectors.ca>. Feedback is invited from those using the

samples regarding content and usefulness, as well as to provide a forum to pose any questions that they may have with regard to developing effective IEPs.

The Ministry continues to be available to support school boards' development and implementation of effective IEPs through in-service sessions, as requested. IEP support is also being provided to the Faculties of Education through pre-service and additional qualification courses. Slide decks have been posted on the CODE website to support the school boards' Professional Activity Days dedicated to special education regarding IEPs.

In response to stakeholder feedback, recommendations of the Report of the Office of the Auditor General (2008), decisions made by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and as a next step to the 2006 IEP Review, the Ministry is planning conversations with school boards to be held regionally during the fall of 2009. These sessions will involve school boards (supervisory officers responsible for special education, IEP program leads, principals) and parents/students. The sessions, co-led by the regional offices, will collect feedback on successful practices and challenges with the IEP process. This feedback will also inform policy and resource decisions, including a revised version of the *Individual Education Plan (IEP) Resource Guide (2004)* that is planned for distribution to school boards in the 2010/11 school year.

On-line Support for Parents and Students in the Development of the IEP

Funding has been provided to the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) to work collaboratively with the Ministry of Education and parents across the province to develop a website that will be a resource to parents and students regarding their consultative role in the development and implementation of the IEP.

The website is being designed to reflect the needs of both the English and French-language parents and students. Website development is ongoing and it is anticipated that the site will be live by November 2009.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

This act will set enforceable standards in the areas of: customer service, transportation, information and communications, employment and built environment. The implications of the emerging standards (especially of the information and communications standard) for school board special education services are potentially significant.

Effective January 1, 2010, government as well as the broader public sector (e.g. colleges, universities and school boards) must comply with the new Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. Ministry staff who deal with the public are

currently undertaking in-house training to ensure they understand and can carry out their obligation under the OADA. For updates on the standards and resources for implementation, go to the MCSS website, Accessibility Directorate Office at <http://www.accesson.ca/ado>)

Web Based Teaching Tool (WBTT)

The Web Based Teaching Tool (WBTT) is administered by the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO), with funding from the Ministry of Education. The WBTT provides teachers with early screening tools and intervention strategies to help detect students in JK through Grade 2 who may be struggling with learning and thus may be at risk for later school difficulties.

During the 2008-09 school year a total of 8307 teachers and principals, at 1598 schools in 54 school boards and school authorities, were registered to use the WBTT. Approximately 28,000 students were screened with WBTT screening tools leading to a reported 10,743 (remedial) interventions.

Data from annual evaluations demonstrate a strong link between WBTT use by a teacher and the activation of supports for students who are struggling. Students in JK and SK were twice as likely to receive extra support/resources when compared to students who have not been screened through the WBTT program.

Developments for 2009-10 include the following.

1. Math screening tools are now fully implemented in JK, SK and Grade 1 with suggested interventions provided to teachers for all flagged students.
2. Teachers can now record student's responses to their own (non-WBTT) interventions in the WBTT system.
3. New outcome categories have been added to improve the accuracy of teacher reporting on student's responses to WBTT interventions.
4. A new online training video gives teachers an overview of the WBTT screening and intervention process, including how to analyze results. More videos will be coming soon.
5. It is now possible for student data in the WBTT database to be matched with data in the school board Student Management Systems to permit better tracking of student success following WBTT flagging and interventions.

Barrier-Free Education Initiatives for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

The Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) was provided funding to assist the Ministry of Education with its goals of providing barrier-free education to deaf and hard of hearing students attending Ontario publicly funded schools.

The project is intended to assist school boards in identifying access and accommodation needs of deaf and hard of hearing students, produce gaps analysis and make appropriate recommendations to ensure that students are provided with the tools they need to succeed in classroom. CHS will also deliver professional development opportunities for educators and administrative professionals to enable them to better communicate with students who are deaf or hard of hearing and identify resources and information pertaining to anti-ableism and anti-audism education and strategies. A final report will be provided to the Ministry and will include research findings and recommendations that will assist the Ministry's goal of providing barrier-free education available to all publicly funded schools.

As of September 15, 2009, 14 school boards participated in accessibility reviews and 10 more will participate until November 2009.

The project commenced in October 2008 and will be completed in March 2010.

VOICE Ontario School Board Training and Mentorship Program

Funding has been provided to VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children to deliver an Auditory-Verbal Mentorship Training Program for school boards who have requested support to train teachers of the Deaf in the auditory-verbal approach.

The objective of the VOICE Ontario School Board Training and Mentorship Program is to increase the capacity of qualified professionals and broaden the understanding of decision-makers in Ontario school boards to meet the needs of oral Deaf and hard of hearing students. The mentorship program will provide professional learning opportunities for teachers, administrators and support staff to ensure that students with hearing loss who have learned to communicate through spoken language will have access to appropriate expertise that will help to ensure that their ongoing language, literacy and learning needs are met. The mentorship program will also increase school board capacity to offer the option of auditory-verbal intervention to Deaf and Hard of Hearing students within their Board.

There are 13 boards currently participating in the AV program.

The project commenced in October 2008 and will be completed by January 2012.

Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE)

MACSE last met on June 10th and 11th, 2009.

Council Chair highlighted Council's activities included the following:

- Correspondence sent to stakeholders drafted on behalf of Council members
- Consultations done in relation to the Declining Enrolment Working Group (DEWG)
- Further Ministry consultations on other initiatives including *Learning for All K-12* and *Caring and Safe Schools Resource* documents

Council discussed and was provided with relevant information in the following areas:

- Ministry of Education presentation: Current and Planned Ministry Activities
- Labour Mobility Agreement
- Caring and Safe Schools Resource Document Consultation
- Special Education Board Plans
- Update on Shared Solutions Survey
- Ministry Reports: TCU, MCYS, MCSS and MOHLTC

MACSE also passed three resolutions regarding training in special education for teachers in pre-service programs, release of the draft document *Learning for All* to school boards and the Ontario Skills Passport

The next MACSE meeting is scheduled for February 17th and 18th, 2010.

MACSE Minutes can be obtained by contacting Council Secretary, Mark Agius, at mark.agius@ontario.ca

MACSE's Web site:

http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/abcs/acse/acse_eng.html