

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE  
February 2010**

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

## **KEY SPECIAL EDUCATION INITIATIVES**

### **Mental Health and Addictions**

SEPPB is the lead in the Ministry of Education (EDU) with regard to student mental health. SEPPB is representing 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](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/mentalhealth/minister_advisgroup/minister_advisgroup.html)

SEPPB has lead a series of stakeholder consultations across the province on *Every Door Is the Right Door*. Four of these stakeholder consultations took place in collaboration with MCYS and MOHLTC. The feedback gathered from these consultations has been rolled up and was presented to MOHLTC for inclusion in their draft mental health strategy.

SEPPB is reviewing the feedback from the provincial consultations in regard to setting priorities and developing an action plan to support the government's ten year mental health and addictions in collaboration with MCYS, MOHLTC and other ministries.

### **Early Learning Program**

SEPPB is working closely with the Early Learning Division regarding year 1 implementation and beyond on the opportunities and impacts for students with special education needs in the Early Learning Program. Stakeholder consultation is planned for sometime in February 2010.

## 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 the 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 SEG. 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 SIP and the SEA allocations was conducted by a consultant group for EDU 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**

In 2009-10, SEPPB has been working with the Literacy and Numeracy and Student Success/Learning to 18 Branches of the Student Achievement Division and consulting with stakeholders to draft a model that aligns special education reporting with other reporting and improvement planning processes for school boards, such as the K-12 Board Improvement Plans (BIP).

## **Assessing Achievement in Alternative Areas**

In response to recent recommendations from the Auditor General of Ontario and to further support EDU's core priority to improve the achievement of all students, including students with special education needs, SEPPB is supporting collaborative efforts in school boards to enhance provincial assessment processes for students with special education needs who do not access the Ontario curriculum and do not participate in EQAO assessments. In 2009-2010, SEPPB has:

- Consulted with external stakeholder groups;
- Distributed draft provincial guidelines to school boards on Assessing Achievement in Alternative Areas;
- Funded regional projects in boards to enhance assessment practices and inform the finalization of the provincial guidelines; and
- Conducted provincial webinars to provide details to school boards on the guidelines and regional projects.

## **Dispute Resolution for Special Education Programs and Services**

Following recommendations made by the Working Table on Special Education, SEPPB 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 submitted a report in December 2009 and the Provincial Advisory Committee will submit their report in early 2010.

As part of future actions, SEPPB 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 à la 12e année**

SEPPB is leading the development of the draft resource guide entitled *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). This resource is based on the core concepts of personalization, precision and professional learning communities (PLCs). The resource guide 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 including class and student profiles.

A copy of the draft *Learning for All K-12* resource guide was sent to all Directors of Education electronically in June 2009. The draft *Learning for All K-12* resource was posted 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, EDU provided funding to all school boards. Eleven lead boards received additional funding to begin using the approaches and planning tools presented in draft *Learning for All K-12* in selected schools in their board. *In addition* each lead school board is using their funding to:

- coordinate sharing and professional development with the school boards in their region;
- participate in a Provincial 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 the lead boards was held on October 2, 2009, to launch the resource and to establish a Provincial Network Team. This Provincial Network Team continues to meet bi-monthly throughout the 2009-2010 school year. *Learning for All K-12* orientation sessions were held regionally in October and November 2009. Regional networking opportunities will continue throughout the 2009-2010 school year. Feedback opportunities are being facilitated throughout the 2009-2010 school year.

## **Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario: Supporting Students With Special Education Needs Through Progressive Discipline, Kindergarten to Grade 12 (Former working title: Caring and Safe Schools Resource Guide K – 12)**

SEPPB 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 formatting and is scheduled for released in spring 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 SEPPB, the Early Learning Initiative and the Literacy and Numeracy Branch 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**

The ministry continues to support school boards through the use of online resources to enhance and complement their planned professional activity days for the 2009 -10 school year. We have received positive feedback from school boards about the resources available and how school boards are using them to support professional development. We continue to provide opportunities for school boards to submit effective practices and resources to share with others across the province. Updated resources can be found on the 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**

Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM 149) was released on September 25, 2009 to provide direction to school boards concerning the review and/or development of a local protocol 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>

A local protocol is 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.

The PPM provides requirements for the development and/or review of a local protocol. The PPM is accompanied by a Deputy Minister's memorandum to school boards with further direction on the development and/or review of a local protocol.

All school boards were 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 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.

EDU and MCYS are also jointly supporting the *Connections for Students* which is a joint strategy to support school-aged children transitioning from IBI therapy services delivered through the Autism Intervention Program (AIP) funded by MCYS to ABA instructional methods in publicly-funded schools. The *Connections for Students* model is centred on multi-disciplinary, student-specific, school-based transition teams that are established approximately six months before a child prepares to transition from the AIP to school and continue to support the child for six months after entry to school. The *Connections for Students* model has been developed and is being implemented in response to the Ministers' Autism Spectrum Disorders Reference Group's recommendations.

Sixteen boards received funding to implement the *Connections for Students* model in 2009, which is called the *Collaborative Service Delivery Models (CSDM) Phase 2*. In collaboration with all nine MCYS-funded AIP 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 AIP to ABA instructional methods in publicly funded schools. School boards throughout the province are expected to implement *Connections for Students* model no later than spring 2010 for all children transitioning from IBI therapy services to ABA instructional methods in September 2010 and thereafter.

The development of the *Connections for Students* model was informed by Collaborative Service Delivery Models for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (CSDM) Phase 1 that was supported by EDU and MCYS in seven sites involving eight school boards, relevant community agencies, and parents in 2007-08 and 2008-09. Support of the Phase 1 boards is continuing in 2009-10 for the purpose of knowledge dissemination throughout the province.

The ministry provided 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 plays 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 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 was shared with MACSE and those members of the former Ministers' Autism Spectrum Disorders Reference Group who wished 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**

The Summer Training Institute of Geneva Centre for Autism is a week-long training event with specific themes. From 2007 to 2009, the ministry provided funding to Geneva Centre for Autism to cover educators' costs to participate in the Summer Institute. More than 5,000 school board personnel have benefited from these training opportunities.

The topic of the 2009 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.

In 2009, participants rated the Summer Training Institute as follows, as reported by Geneva Centre for Autism:

- 98% of respondents rated the calibre of presenters from good to excellent;
- 96% of respondents rated the applicability of what they learned to their work from positive to very positive; and
- 92% of respondents reported that the training event met their expectations.

### **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, SEPPB and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Branch (CAPB) 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)* has completed a comprehensive literature review to support the development of this resource document.

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

Since May 2007, SEPPB 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, LNB, ELL, CAPB, 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 Spring 2010.

## **Individual Education Plan (IEP) Initiative**

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

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 are 48 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 Provincial Network Team continues to meet bi-monthly throughout the 2009-2010 Commission, and as a next step to the 2006 IEP Review, the Ministry completed a provincial review of the IEP process. These conversations with school boards were held regionally during the fall of 2009 and involved school boards (supervisory officers responsible for special education, IEP program leads, principals) and parents/students. The sessions, co-led by the regional offices, collected feedback and resource samples regarding successful practices and challenges with the IEP process.

This feedback is also informing 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 EDU 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 during the spring of 2010.

## **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 EDU. 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 over 8300 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 over 10,700 reported (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.
6. A Research Advisory Working Group has been formed to review the reliability and predictive validity of the existing WBTT screening tools to evaluate whether or not they are still the best early screening tools for educators.
7. LDAO has been working with Curriculum Services Canada to redevelop the WBTT training model to ensure it is effectively training educators and supporting their use of the tool throughout the school year.
8. A new Board Contact Site has been developed to provide WBTT Board Contacts with aggregate results for each of their schools.
9. LDAO has been working with the SEPPB to create a system that will validate WBTT student data with the Ontario Education Number (OEN) database.

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

The Canadian Hearing Society (CHS) was provided funding to assist EDU 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 Ministry's goal of providing barrier-free education available to all publicly funded schools. As of January 15, 2010, 44 school boards are participating in the accessibility reviews. Board reports will be forwarded to the Ministry as completed.

The project commenced in October 2008 and completion deadline has been extended to June 2011.

## **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.

Training is now complete in the four pilot boards and VOICE is currently training in 9 boards. Two additional boards are scheduled to begin training in September 2010 and January 2011. VOICE is in discussion with other boards interested in the remaining 8 spots. The project commenced in October 2008 and will be completed by January 2012.

## **Qualification for Teaching Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing**

SEPPB continues to be consulted by the Ontario College of Teachers as they prepare guidelines for an Additional Qualification (AQ) course for teachers wishing to teach students who are Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing.

Successful completion of the program qualifies a teacher to be assigned as a teacher of the Deaf or Hard of Hearing in Ontario. Teachers may specialize during the program earning a qualification as either: Teaching Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing – ASL/ LSQ Communication, or Aural and Oral Communication. A draft of the qualifications is expected for release in late January/early February at which time stakeholders will have an opportunity to review the draft document online and provide feedback to the College for a period of 90 days.

## **Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE)**

MACSE last met on October 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Meeting highlights included the following:

The Hon. Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Education and MACSE members discussed outreach to Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs), parent engagement, student mental health and transitions. The Council Chair highlighted MACSE's appreciation for the Minister's ongoing support to students with special needs.

Council members divided into two working groups to focus on two priority areas.

### Building Capacity of SEACs

Members of this working group met with staff from the Parent Engagement Office. Discussion centred on Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, commitment to parent engagement and MACSE's role in engaging SEACs. The working group developed a proposed action plan for building capacity of SEACs that was submitted to the Minister on October 19, 2009.

In response to MACSE recommendations for the Minister, a work plan has been developed by SEPPB to address the recommendations.

### Student Mental Health

Members of this working group met with SEPPB and MOHLTC staff. Discussion focussed on the Mental Health and Addiction Strategy. The working group wrote a paper, *Mental Health Collaboration, Building the Village – Guiding Principles*, that was submitted to the Minister on December 9, 2009.

SEPPB supports the recommendations in the MACSE report with the following qualifications. The recommendations in the report would require significant collaboration and coordinated funding between EDU, MOHLTC and MCYS. In addition some of the recommendations would require new funding to be allocated.

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

- Special Education Update including All Day Early Years Program and Funding
- Ministry Reports: MTCU, MCYS, MCSS and MOHLTC;
- Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) / Implementation of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) methods by school boards; and
- Various presentations and discussions including: Special Incidence Portion (SIP), Special Equipment Amount (SEA), Transitions, Assessing Achievement in Alternative Areas, Safe Schools, Student Success, Learning for All, Special Education Plans/School Effectiveness Framework and Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

MACSE's Web site: [http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/abcs/acse/acse\\_eng.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/abcs/acse/acse_eng.html)