

LDAO SEAC CIRCULAR

April 2008

Happy April everyone! I hope we will have spring soon. Here are some topics that your SEAC should be looking at. 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 Budgets
2. OPA Student Assessment Project
3. IEP Resource Project for Parents and Students
4. Safe Schools, Bullying Prevention and Progressive Discipline
5. Resource Guide for Elementary Classroom Teachers (Kindergarten to Grade 3)
6. Educational Opportunities

List of attachments:

1. Education Funding B Memo 08-09 (PDF)
2. The Student Assessment Project – SEAC Input 08
3. Perspectives on the OPA Student Assessment Project (PDF)
4. OAEA Conference Brochure (PDF)

1. Special Education Budgets

At this time of year your school board will be developing its budget for 2008-2009 and your SEAC should ask for a presentation. In order to participate in the board's budget process and review the financial statements of the board relating to special education, SEAC members should be provided with full detailed information regarding the funding

of special education programs and services by the school board, including: the total number of students in the board, the number of students with special education needs, the total allocation of funds, the special education allocation, and the funds required to meet the needs of identified exceptional students, in accordance with the programs and services described in the board's special education plan.

The Ministry has issued a B Memo to school boards on the education funding which will be available in 2008-2009 through Grants for Student Needs (GSN). A copy of is attached or you can find it at: http://bmemos.edu.gov.on.ca/Memos/B2008/B_02.pdf. Because a new collective agreement with teachers is being negotiated, there may be further changes, and the information in the memo is subject to the approval of a new regulation by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The information on special education starts on page 5 of the memo.

2. OPA Student Assessment Project

Recently, as PAAC on SEAC members, Alison Morse, Provincial Co-ordinator with the Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders (OAFCCD), and I met with representatives from the Ontario Psychological Association (OPA) Ministry of Education Project, *Student Assessment Project: Kindergarten to Grade 4*. At the meeting, the importance of parent engagement in the process for professional assessments (psychological, speech and language or occupational therapy assessments) was discussed.

To support parent engagement in the project and assist SEAC members in their role, we are sending you a list of discussion questions (see attachment) that focus on parent engagement. The questions are intended to inform and focus SEAC discussion, and are more detailed than the suggested questions sent to you with the February LDAO SEAC Circular. It is important that SEAC members identify processes and resources (including consent forms, communication tools, assessment templates, or parent feedback surveys, etc.) that are helpful to parents. You can ask your school board to share these with the provincial committee of the OPA Student Assessment Project for inclusion in the *Promising Practices Resource Guide*.

The OPA published a special issue of *Psychology Ontario* with articles about the student assessment project, and I have attached a copy for your information.

3. IEP Resource Project for Parents and Students

LDAO has just received funding from the Ministry of Education for an exciting project that will ultimately result in the development of a web based resource for parents and students about their consultative role in the development of Individual Education Plans (IEP). The project addresses the need to inform parents, guardians and students about their roles and responsibilities in the creation and implementation of IEPs for students with special education needs. The goals of the project include:

- Supporting the Ministry of Education's (MOE) objectives of promoting cooperative connections between parents and schools and parent collaboration in the education of their children.
- Helping parents understand the importance of the IEP in meeting their children's special education needs, resulting in higher levels of student achievement.
- Outlining and explaining the MOE policy on IEPs in language parents can understand.
- Encouraging students themselves to become involved, in a gradual process, as this becomes age-appropriate.

To achieve these goals, LDAO has brought together a Reference Committee consisting of representatives of a number of provincial parent associations to review and develop materials for the IEP resource. The project will be completed by the end of March 2009 and then the Ministry of Education will translate the materials into French.

4. Safe Schools, Bullying Prevention and Progressive Discipline

On March 27 and 28, 2008, the Ministry of Education hosted a two-day Safe Schools Symposium to provide a forum for school boards to discuss implementation of the new legislative amendments and policies. It featured workshops of topics including Bullying Prevention, Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour, and Community Partnerships. School boards were invited to send five representatives. SEACs should ask for a presentation from representatives who attended the symposium.

The Safe Schools Action Team has had its mandate expanded to review issues of gender-based violence, homophobia and sexual harassment.

5. Resource Guide for Elementary Classroom Teachers (Kindergarten to Grade 3)

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. It is anticipated that resource guide will be available in both English and French, and distributed to all school boards in the fall of 2008.

6. Educational Opportunities

The *Ontario Association of Educational Advocates* (OAEA) will be holding a one day conference on Saturday, April 26, 2008. Speakers will include Julian Falconer, human rights lawyer and author of a report on violence in TDSB schools, Judy Finlay, Assistant Professor in Ryerson's School of Child and Youth Care and until recently Ontario's Child

Advocate, and Barbara Roberts, Coordinator of the Post-secondary Accessibility Team at Queen's University. A conference brochure is attached,

VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children has sessions on parent advocacy and collaboration in the IEP development process at their annual conference on May 3rd:
www.voicefordeafkids.com/article_pop.asp?artID=65

ACTION ITEMS:

- Ask for a presentation on your school board's special education budget, including the total number of students in the board, the number of students with special education needs, the total allocation of funds, the special education allocation, and the funds required to meet the needs of identified exceptional students, in accordance with the programs and services described in the board's special education plan.
- identify processes and resources (including consent forms, communication tools, assessment templates, or parent feedback surveys, etc.) that are helpful to parents and ask your school board to share these with the provincial committee of the OPA Student Assessment Project.
- Ask for a presentation from representatives of your school board who attended the Safe Schools Symposium.

Questions?

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