

LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

SEAC CIRCULAR

February 2007

Welcome to 2007, and a special welcome to all the new SEAC representatives and alternates. I will try to keep you updated with new and continuing initiatives that your SEAC should be dealing with.

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 Transformation Initiatives
 - a) IPRC process
 - b) IEP Review
 - c) Special Education Plans
 - d) Informal Dispute Resolution Process
4. Ministry of Education/OPA partnership for assessments
5. CODE Professional Development Projects
6. Provincial Parent Board
7. Model Projects to Promote Positive Student Behaviour
8. SEAC Workshop

List of attachments:

1. Special Education Memo to Directors November 06
2. LDAO letter to Minister Wynne January 07
3. OPA Memo to Directors November 06
4. List of 2006-07 CODE funded projects

5. Positive Student Behaviour Memo to Directors December 06

1. Special Education Transformation Initiatives

a) IPRC process

In December I sent out an e-mail that contained a follow-up memo to Directors of Education from Deputy Minister Ben Levin. I have attached it again for those who may have missed that e-mail. The memo attempted to clarify the Ministry policy on IPRCs, stating that “a parent’s right to an IPRC concerning their child is to be respected and acted upon consistent with the letter and spirit of Regulation 181/98.” However, the memo still questions whether an IPRC is necessary when parents and school agree on placement in a regular class and the supports to be provided. It is the position of many groups, including LDAO, that it is important for parents to participate in the IPRC process and to be fully informed of their rights. LDAO wrote a letter to Minister Wynne (attached) outlining our positions, and LDAO SEAC reps should refer to the positions stated in this letter in any discussions about IPRCs.

b) IEP Review

In the November SEAC Circular I outlined the Ministry plans for review of sample IEPs. In the LDAO letter to Minister Wynne, we commended the Ministry initiative to review a selection of school board IEPs. However, we strongly recommended that the current review be followed up by random sampling, to compare to the IEPs selected by the boards, and to exemplars of IEPs that demonstrate good practice. Once again we reiterated our concern that any provincially mandated IEP template not be used as a cookie cutter approach, as evidenced in some of the IEP engines.

c) Special Education Plans

The November Memo to Directors from Dr. Levin informed school boards that they only have to report amendments to their 2006-07 Special Education Plans, instead of preparing a report based on a full review. SEACs should ask for a copy of the amendments that their boards submit to the regional offices. The memo further states that in the future “*school boards’ special education plans will be aligned with other Ministry reporting requirements and transformed so they focus on target setting and improvement panning that is related to students achievement and program effectiveness.*” The LDAO Legislation and Policy Committee is developing a set of recommendations to the Ministry on the future direction of special education plans, and the final version will be shared with SEAC reps.

d) Informal Dispute Resolution Process

The Ministry is currently conducting focus groups to help prepare a handbook for school boards about creating 'welcoming schools' and informal dispute resolution processes for issues to do with special education programs and services. PAAC (Provincial Parent

Association Advisory Committee) on SEAC will be involved in a Focus Group on February 15th. The Ministry is also looking at creating guidelines for more formal dispute resolution processes, e.g. with mediators, when informal talks do not resolve issues. None of these dispute resolution processes are to replace formal appeal mechanisms for identification and placement issues.

SEACs should ask to be consulted in the development of dispute resolution processes at their boards.

The Ministry has been referring to an informal dispute resolution process developed in Manitoba. You can download the Manitoba document at:
www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/problem_solving/index.html.

4. Ministry of Education/OPA partnership for assessments

The attached Memo to Directors of Education from the president of the Ontario Psychological Association outlines the process for funding of assessments. School boards were asked to create *Assessment Capacity Building Plans* to describe strategies, key activities, resources, timing and estimated costs to achieve project objectives of:

- reducing wait time for students in JK to grade 4 requiring professional assessments
- enhancing teacher capacity to provide effective programming for students provided with professional assessments
- improving literacy/numeracy for students provided with professional assessments
- sustaining assessment process improvement for the long term.

The period for the Assessment Capacity Building Plans is up until August 31, 2008, and the plans had to be submitted by January 15, 2007. The attached memo provides much more detail about the process. SEACs should ask for a copy of their board's Assessment Capacity Plan. I would hope that SEACs have already been consulted in the development of the plan.

5. CODE Professional Development Projects

I have attached a list and description of the all the professional development projects funded by the Council of Directors of Education (CODE) for 2006-2007. An executive summary of the research on the 2005-2006 CODE Special Education Project is on the CODE website, www.ontariodirectors.ca/. SEACs should be getting an update on their board's CODE project at each meeting.

6. Provincial Parent Board

The Ministry is creating a Provincial Parent Board to advise the Minister on issues related to parental involvement. Applicants must have at least one child in the publicly funded school system, and applications must be in by *February 15th*. You can find further information and an application form at www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/ppb/index.html.

7. Model Projects to Promote Positive Student Behaviour

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services are co-sponsoring an initiative to expand or enhance existing programs and practices that promote positive student behaviour. Regional Working Sessions were held in January and school boards were invited to submit proposals for funding for 2006-2007. I have attached a copy of the memo and proposal guide. SEACs should ask for a copy of any proposals submitted by their boards, and ask to be updated about progress of the projects. This initiative is a follow-up to the report of the Safe Schools Action Team, and both the memo and the Proposal Guide talk about “actively involving students, parents, the school and community”.

6. SEAC Workshop

The LDAO Online SEAC workshop is finally ready. It will be available to LDAO SEAC representatives and alternates as a pilot starting February 12th, and should be available to other SEAC reps in April. LDAO reps will be contacted by e-mail with instructions for registration.

ACTION ITEMS

- SEACs should ask for a copy of the amendments to School Board Special Education Plans that their boards submit to the regional offices.
- SEACs should ask to be consulted in the development of dispute resolution processes at their boards.
- SEACs should ask for a copy of their board's Assessment Capacity Plan submitted to the Ontario Psychological Association.
- SEACs should be getting an update on their board's CODE project at each meeting.
- SEACs should ask for a copy of project proposals submitted by their boards to the *Model Projects to Promote Positive Student Behaviour* initiative, and ask to be updated about progress of the projects

Questions?

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