

LDAO SEAC CIRCULAR

February 2008

As the new year unfolds, your SEACs will be busy reviewing your Boards' Special Education Plans, and monitoring the progress of a number of ongoing Ministry initiatives, which we will highlight in this SEAC Circular.

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 Review
2. Safe Schools, Bullying Prevention and Progressive Discipline
3. Formal Dispute Resolution Pilots
4. October Reports & Report on CODE Projects
5. OPA Student Assessment Project
6. Assessment and Evaluation Symposium
7. Accommodations on EQAO tests
8. Resource Services Library
9. Educational Opportunities

List of attachments:

1. Review of Special Education Plan Questions
2. EDU Press Release on Safe Schools Implementation
3. Dispute Resolution Key Messages Nov 07
4. Sample questions for SEAC review of OPA Project
5. Excerpt from *Growing Success*

1. Special Education Plan Review

This is the time of year for reviewing your school board's Special Education Plan. This year the board has to only report amendments to the plan, but is required to consult with SEAC in preparing the amendment report. I have attached a list of suggested questions for the review process.

2. Safe Schools, Bullying Prevention and Progressive Discipline

Changes to the Safe Schools Act, and the new Regulations under the Act (outlined in the September and November SEAC Circulars) come into effect on February 1st. A Ministry of Education press release (attached) points out that:

“School boards are now required to:

- Provide programs to students who have been expelled or are on a long-term suspension to allow them to continue their education and access services such as anger management or career counselling
- Treat bullying as an infraction for which suspension must be considered
- Consider mitigating and other factors before students are suspended or expelled
- Respond to all inappropriate behaviours in the most appropriate way instead of automatic suspensions and expulsions (in most cases). This could include a range of consequences such as meetings with parents, referral to a community agency, suspension or expulsion.”

If your SEAC has not had a presentation on the implementation strategies in your board, you should ask for one now.

3. Formal Dispute Resolution Pilots

Implementation plans have been submitted by most of the pilot school boards for the formal dispute resolution pilots. There are 4 English language and 2 French language boards. The names of the pilot boards are not public knowledge, but the boards who are participating have been instructed to involve their SEACs.

There will be an external evaluation of the pilot projects, which will be shared with the Advisory Committee, and these results will inform the development of a Ministry policy on formal dispute resolution processes. Key Messages from the November meeting of the Advisory Committee are attached, and the next Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for March 5th and 6th.

4. October Reports & Report on CODE Projects

Just a reminder that your SEAC should be asking for the information that was submitted by your board for the October Report, and for ongoing updates on the CODE-funded project.

5. OPA Student Assessment Project

School boards should be evaluating the effectiveness of the OPA Student Assessment projects in their boards, and involving SEACs in this process. I have attached some suggested questions. SEACs could help boards gather feedback from parents.

A Promising Practices resource guide is being developed for release in the fall of 2008, and there will be an opportunity in the fall for school boards to get together to share their effective practices and lessons learned.

6. Assessment and Evaluation Symposium

On January 8 and 9, 2008 the Ministry of Education sponsored a very well-attended symposium on assessment and evaluation for all students, including those with special education needs. A booklet was distributed to participants that put together existing Ministry policy statements on various aspects of assessment and evaluation. The Ministry will be consulting over the next 12 to 18 months about issues to be addressed in a new policy on assessment, evaluation and reporting. I have attached a copy of the statement of principles from the booklet, *Growing Success*, as well as the section on Students with Special Education Needs: Modifications and Accommodations.

7. Accommodations on EQAO tests

EQAO tests of reading and writing, including the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, are now available to be ordered in advance in a number of text-to-speech software formats (for those students who have this accommodation in their IEPs and are regularly using this technology in their classrooms). The special versions must be ordered in advance from EQAO by a deadline date, and there is a procedure for schools to follow to download and use the special versions. Students need to have adequate practice using the software, and to have prompt technical support in place on the day of the test. Practice tests in all the software formats will be available on the EQAO website. Unfortunately text-to-speech technology is not yet at a stage of development for use with EQAO math tests.

8. Resource Services Library

SEACs should assure that special educators in their boards know about the Resource Services Library at the W. Ross MacDonald Provincial School. The Resource Services Library (RSL) loans alternate format materials such as Braille, large print, e-text, tape or daisy digital audio to school boards in Ontario, for the use of students who are *print*

impaired. Each student and advisor (school contact) must be registered with the RSL prior to using the services. The RSL maintains a website which contains a searchable catalogue of the books that have already been transcribed into alternate formats. The catalogue is accessible to parents, but the registering of a student and the ordering must be done through the school: <http://rsl.psbnet.ca/rsl2005/Login.aspx>

9. Educational Opportunities

LDAO is sponsoring an Educators Workshop series: www.ldao.ca/news.php

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:

- Conduct SEAC review of Special Education Plans
- Ask for SEAC presentation on board implementation of the new Regulations on suspension, expulsion, bullying prevention and progressive discipline
- Ask for October Report data and ongoing reports on CODE projects
- Participate in school board evaluation of the OPA Student Assessment Project and help boards gather feedback from parents

Questions?

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