

LDAO SEAC CIRCULAR

November 2007

The provincial election is behind us, and Kathleen Wynne is once again the Minister of Education, so we look forward to more progress on the initiatives in the Special Education Transformation document. Developments in these and other areas will be described below.

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. IEP Review Process
2. Bullying Prevention and Progressive Discipline PPMs
3. Shared Solutions handbook/professional development and Formal Dispute Resolution initiatives
4. October Reports
5. CODE Professional Development Projects
6. OPA Student Assessment Project
7. SEAC Training Opportunities

List of attachments:

1. Dispute Resolution Key Messages Sept 07
2. LDAO Online SEAC Course Application
3. LDAO Online SEAC Course Requirements

1. IEP Review Process

A reminder that SEACs should have seen the specific feedback report to their board from the IEP Collaborative Review. SEACs should ask to be involved in the planning for response and follow-up to the feedback report.

As mentioned in September, SEACs should find out how their board is planning to use the new provincial IEP Template.

2. Bullying Prevention and Progressive Discipline PPMs

The September SEAC Circular reviewed **PPM 140**, [School Board Programs For Students On Long-Term Suspension](#), and **PPM 141**, [School Board Programs For Expelled Students](#).

Since that time the Ministry has released two new PPMs that deal with Safe Schools initiatives. **PPM 144**: [Bullying Prevention and Intervention](#) and **PPM 145**: [Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour](#).

PPM 144 states that “*School boards in Ontario are required to develop and implement policies on bullying prevention and intervention, and are required to have their policies in place by February 1, 2008. Boards that already have bullying prevention and intervention policies in place must review their existing policies and any other relevant board policies to ensure that they are consistent with the policies in this memorandum.*”

In developing policies, boards are directed to consult with various groups, including school councils and SEACs. Boards are required to “*take into account the needs of individual students by showing sensitivity to diversity, to cultural needs, and to special education needs in their policies*”.

Policies must have prevention strategies, intervention strategies, training for members of the school community, communication and outreach strategies, monitoring and review procedures. All schools must have their own bullying prevention and intervention plans, and a safe schools team.

PPM 145 states that” *School boards are required to develop and implement policies on progressive discipline and are required to have their policies in place by February 1, 2008. Boards that already have a progressive discipline policy in place must review their existing policy to ensure that it meets all of the requirements set out in this memorandum.*”

“*In developing their policies on progressive discipline, boards ... should draw upon evidence-based practices that promote positive student behaviour ... must take into account the needs of individual students by showing sensitivity to diversity, to cultural needs, and to special education needs*”. Again, boards are directed to consult with groups including school councils and SEACs.

Progressive Discipline policies should include prevention, early and ongoing intervention strategies, as well as strategies for addressing inappropriate behaviour. *“When inappropriate behaviour occurs, schools should utilize a range of interventions, supports, and consequences that are developmentally appropriate, and should include opportunities for students to focus on improving behaviour.”*

“For students with special education needs, interventions, supports, and consequences must be consistent with the student’s strengths, needs, goals, and expectations contained in his or her Individual Education Plan (IEP).”

SEACs should have an integral role in the development of their board’s policies on bullying prevention and progressive discipline, since both issues are very relevant to students with special education needs. Perhaps a subcommittee of SEAC could work with board staff on the policy development.

3. Shared Solutions handbook/professional development and Formal Dispute Resolution Initiatives

In late September the Ministry released **Shared Solutions: A Guide to Preventing and Resolving Conflicts Regarding Programs and Services for Students with Special Education Needs**, www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/shared.pdf

Regional professional development sessions have taken place around the province in October and early November, and representatives from each SEAC should have been in attendance. The ideas in **Shared Solutions** are very well presented and if adopted by school boards would help to create a culture of collaboration among parents and schools. It should be noted that the book affirms the importance of parents having access to parent advocates who can *“help improve communication between parents and educators, and prevent or limit the scope of a potential conflict.”* P.27.

Of course not all conflicts will be settled using the techniques outlined, so an additional process of more formal dispute resolution is being piloted in a few provincial school boards. The Dispute Resolution Advisory Committee, on which PAAC on SEAC is represented, will be helping to develop a provincial policy based on the outcomes of these pilots (see attachment).

SEACs should ask for a presentation of information from the Shared Solutions professional development sessions, and should be involved in plans for sharing these approaches with educators, parents and students throughout the board.

On page 26 of **Shared Solutions** you can find an example of a consultation protocol for parents, i.e. a sequence of persons to talk to about issues and concerns. SEACs could take on a project of developing a sequence of steps for parents in their boards.

4. October Reports

In his presentation on the SEAC Training webcast in September, Bruce Drewett, Director of the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch, spoke about the changes to the way statistical information is reported to the Ministry in the new Ontario Student Information System format. Eventually the new system will make it possible to break down data in various ways to look at trends. Some boards may take a while to figure out the new way of reporting, but Bruce assured SEAC members that the October report information should still be available to SEACs. In the same webcast, Lynn Ziraldo suggested that SEACs make a motion asking the school board to provide them with the October Report statistics.

5. CODE Professional Development Projects

The report on the CODE Special Education Project 2006-2007 and a list of 2007 -2008 projects can be found at: www.ontariodirectors.ca. The report looks at progress in the second year of the project compared to the first year, as reflected in the responses on questionnaires. In addition, in 2006-2007 each district was asked to track and report on the progress of ten students and the growth of ten teachers in professional learning. In terms of sustainability, the reports states that *“the CODE project over two school years has worked towards the development of a province-wide professional learning community of superintendents responsible for special education”* and that it has *“resulted in the creation of collaborative professional practices within schools and boards”* P.17.

SEACs should continue to have regular reports on their board’s CODE project. SEAC members might ask for evidence of how their board has created collaborative professional practices.

6. OPA Student Assessment Project

A report on the Status of School Board Assessment Capacity Building and Summary of School Board Monitoring Responses can be found at: www.psych.on.ca/ . It is interesting to read the sampling of responses to questions about *enabling factors* and *challenges* to implementing the projects in school boards. The report summarizes: *“school boards have stated in powerful and positive terms that in order for them to enhance the assessment process, high priority must be given to improving collaboration among assessment process stakeholders; to improving the pre-referral screening process and building the capacity of multi-disciplinary in-school teams; to empowering teachers and support staff in delivering recommendations made in professional reports; and to providing user friendly professional reports that inform student programming”* P.8.

In addition to regular updates on their board’s participation in the Student Assessment Project, SEACs can ask how the project is progressing in meeting these priorities.

There will be best practice guidelines for assessment produced as part of the Student Assessment Project. In addition, the Ministry of Education is hosting the **Assessment**

and Evaluation, Kindergarten to Grade 12 Provincial Symposium in early January. I will forward more details when they are available.

7. SEAC Training Opportunities

Congratulations to Alison Morse and her colleagues on their production of the SEAC Training webcast that was available for viewing until the end of October. Those of you who had a chance to view it should have found it very useful.

The LDAO Online SEAC Training Course has been postponed, and will now begin **January 16th**. It runs for 8 weeks, with small weekly assignments, an interactive bulletin board, and a final assignment to be submitted in order to receive a certificate of completion. Participants get most benefit when they share ideas with each other on the bulletin board. There will be a fee of \$70 for LDAO representatives or alternates, and \$100 for representatives or alternates of other organizations.

An application form and an outline of the course requirements are attached. Please complete the application form and return to dianew@ldao.ca by **December 14th**. Fees will be due by January 9, 2008.

Ministry of Education SEAC Learning website: www.seac-learning.ca/index2.htm

ACTION ITEMS:

SEACs should ask to be involved in the planning for response and follow-up to the IEP Collaborative Review feedback report to their board.

SEACs should find out how their board is planning to use the new provincial IEP Template

SEACs should have an integral role in the development of their board's policies on bullying prevention and progressive discipline

SEACs should ask for a presentation of information from the Shared Solutions professional development sessions, and should be involved in plans for sharing these approaches with educators, parents and students throughout the board.

SEACs could take on a project of developing a consultation protocol with a sequence of steps for parents in their boards.

SEACs can make a motion asking the school board to provide them with the October Report statistics, if these are not automatically received.

SEACs should continue to have regular reports on their board's CODE project. SEAC members might ask for evidence of how their board has created collaborative professional practices in special education.

In addition to regular updates on their board's participation in the Student Assessment Project, SEACs can ask how the project is progressing in meeting the priorities outlined in the OPA report.

Questions?

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