

Integration

LDAO advocates that integration in education be defined as the process of delivering to all students a quality education in the most enabling educational placement, determined on the basis of identified strengths and needs and by informed parental choice.

Rationale

Integration is not a specific placement, but rather a long term process, whereby individuals are assisted to develop the requisite skills and strategies so that eventually they can function to the best of their ability in the mainstream of society.

Integration is not the same as mainstreaming or inclusion (see policy G7). Some students with learning disabilities do well in a regular age appropriate classroom, provided that they have access to the requisite accommodations and differentiated teaching methodologies set out in their IEP. Many students are most successful if the regular classroom placement is augmented by regular withdrawal into a smaller unit for the purposes of more direct small group instruction. Others may benefit considerably from an individualized program, delivered in a small class setting by a teacher knowledgeable in the field of learning disabilities. For others with complex and severe needs, access to an even more intensive program, such as those offered by the demonstration schools, is the only way to affect positive changes which in the long run will facilitate true integration. As such, the most enabling environment may not in the short term be the “least restrictive”.

There is no doubt that integration into the mainstream is the ultimate goal for all members of society, regardless of their special needs at a given time. However, the time when an individual is ready for that integration will depend on a number of factors, intrinsic to the individual.

Range of Special Education Placement Options

LDAO advocates that, in accordance with Ontario legislation and Ministry of Education directions, a full range of special education placement options, including referral to a Demonstration School, self-contained special education class, withdrawal programming, in class resource support from a special education teacher and regular class placement, be available to all students with learning disabilities for the purposes of special education program delivery, regardless of the currently offered placement options at his/her school board.

Rationale

Different students require different special education placements to ensure that their strengths and needs are met. Although Regulation 181/98 states that integration, i.e. regular classroom placement, be the first choice of the IPRC, this is only deemed appropriate if such a placement meets the needs of the students and is in accordance with parental wishes. Most school boards have eliminated their self-contained special education classes, citing the IPRC Regulation and the lack of adequate funding, as the reasons for this step. However, Regulation 298, s31 still sets out maximum class sizes for self-contained special education classes, s170 of the Education Act holds school boards accountable for the provision or purchase of appropriate special education programming for their exceptional students and the Ministry's funding formulae include a process for funding small classes as well as forms of special education program delivery.

Inclusion

LDAO does not support inclusion as a goal, when this term is interpreted as the exclusion of all other special education placement options. LDAO has also not supported integration, mainstreaming or the placement of all students with learning disabilities into self-contained classes at all times. LDAO advocates that special education placement should always be determined based on the needs of the child and parental wishes.

Rationale

Inclusion has become the goal for certain individuals and groups who oppose any and all forms of special education programming that is categorical or may take place in a congregated setting rather than in a regular age appropriate classroom. Some students with learning disabilities do well in a regular age appropriate classroom, provided that they have access to the requisite accommodations and differentiated teaching methodologies set out in their IEP. Many students are most successful if the regular classroom placement is augmented by regular withdrawal into a smaller unit for the purposes of more direct small group instruction. Others may benefit considerably from an individualized program, delivered in a small class setting by a teacher knowledgeable in the field of learning disabilities. For others with complex and severe needs, access to an even more intensive program, such as those offered by the demonstration schools, is the only way to affect positive changes which in the long run will facilitate true integration. As such, the most enabling environment may not in the short term be the "least restrictive" or the most inclusive.

Excerpt from Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario Public Policy Manual, 2002
www.ldao.ca/aboutLDAO/public_policy_manual.php