



Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CSDC Goal for 2008-09:

To provide an open and structured communication between chapters, the CSDC, the LDAO staff and LDAO Board that is inclusive of all parties with respect to decisions about future directions for chapter and provincial level support.

Rationale:

This will strengthen the Association through facilitation of knowledge transfer/skills development in a variety of service model delivery strategies to and between chapters and LDAO.

Outline of the Conference Call

a) Roll Call

To introduce the participants to each other

b) Introduction and Protocol for the Meeting

To make sure that everyone understands the purpose of the meeting and to ensure a discussion process that allows input from everyone

c) Review of the Annual General Meeting Evaluation Forms

To provide participants with a guide to how the proposed pieces of the Plan of Action were developed

d) Presentation of the Proposed Plan of Action for 2008-09

To allow the participants the opportunity to discuss the proposed plan and to offer any suggestions for further activities for the group to consider

e) Set Dates for Future Conference Calls

To ensure that Chapters can schedule the relevant staff and/or volunteer participation for each meeting and review any materials sent as part of the discussion at each meeting

f) 2008 Annual General Meeting Format

To ensure that chapters have input to the format and content of the AGM, in order to allow them to meet their needs for skills development/information sharing opportunities

g) Chapter Access Site, Update on Shared Information/Services and HR Policies

The Chapter Access site is designed to be used by the Chapters to share or access information on a variety of topics of interest to chapters, therefore it is important that LDAO understand how and why (or why not) chapters do use or wish to use this restricted online site. This would include sample templates designed for different types of orientation manuals, HR policies and practices, etc.

h) Set Agenda for the Next Meeting

To ensure that the chapters are driving the discussions for future conference calls and that agenda items for each subsequent meeting are agreed to in advance.

Actions Resulting from the Conference Call

- a) An email will be sent to chapters asking Chapter staff and boards to signal their choice of AGM format based on several options discussed in the conference call
- b) LDAO will advise the chapters of the dates for future conference calls
- c) LDAO will provide chapters with a comprehensive report of the conference call, with a list of all participants by chapter
- d) LDAO will start to compile materials for the next conference call, based on the agreed agenda.

Details of the Conference Call

1. Roll Call – Howard/Quinn

A list of all participants and their chapter affiliation will be prepared and mailed out to all chapters with the summary of the meeting.

2. Introduction – Howard

Ms. Howard thanked chapter participants for giving up their lunch and some office time to attend this initial meeting. She also thanked Maggie Wygant and Karen Quinn for all their efforts to put together a draft Plan of Action for 2008-09 that was approved by the Operational Support and Development Committee (OSDC) in February 2008.

LDAO and the OSDC recognize the need for consistent and clear communication between LDAO and the chapters that recognizes and reacts to the different levels of strengths of all chapters. We believe that having regularly scheduled conference calls is a first step towards creating a Plan of Action for Chapter Support Activities that reflects the needs of Chapters and accepts that not every chapter will participate in each call, depending on the agenda items for that particular meeting.

It is really important for these meetings to work and that the Etiquette outline provided for the meeting be adhered to, so that comments can be made in an organized manner and people have the ability to respond to issues raised during the discussions. It is also important to remember that all ideas and comments are welcome and to be treated with respect.

3. Information from the 2007 AGM Evaluation Forms – Wygant

Ms. Wygant thanked those chapters who sent back the evaluation form. After reading through the returns, it was apparent that the foundation for a plan of action for the coming fiscal year could be found in the results of the evaluation forms.

The report was circulated prior to the meeting so Ms. Wygant went quickly through the responses received. There were several points that arose out of the responses that were touched on in more depth:

- The chapters who had staff with over 3 years experience at the chapter level had differing needs for skills development and information sharing than those chapters with newer or part time staff
- That chapters believe it is essential for them to be involved in the content and design of training, regardless of what areas of strengths/weaknesses are identified as the most important
- That underlying all needs for training, the issue of sustainability is the single most identified concern for all chapters

Chapters expressed their appreciation for getting feedback from LDAO on things like the AGM evaluation, the annual chapter survey, etc.

4. Presentation of the LDAO Proposed Plan of Action for Chapter Support and Development in Fiscal 2008-09 - Howard

The plan was circulated prior to the meeting so that chapters had the opportunity to collect thoughts from their boards and staff about the proposed chapter support and development activities in the next 12 months.

Ms. Howard opened the floor to comments and discussion by the chapters and below is a summary of the comments/observations of participants.

- Chapters are encouraged by the efforts of the provincial office to set in place a chapter support and development program
- Chapters like the information that is coming from the provincial office that informs all of them but they appreciate also having access to specific information relevant to their personal situations
- Conference calls are a good way to get some of the administrative aspects of chapter support and development covered off, but they do not replace on-site, hands-on training geared to more local or chapter-specific issues. LDAO acknowledges that there will likely always be two levels of support and/or training to address the needs of those chapters requiring more intensive continuous support vs a role for the more established, effective chapters as mentors and leaders in innovative program/service delivery.
- As clarification, the chapter visits are not intended to impose undue provincial authority but rather an opportunity for a chapter to receive more specific support or to recognize and showcase the work of the chapter in their communities. Visits will be prioritized on need and the available budget of the provincial office.
- Chapters are excited about the opportunities for on-site visits and/or in-person training workshops
- Chapters believe this plan will make both levels of LDA stronger

Before closing this discussion, Pam ascertained from those participants who had no comments that they were not withholding their comments because they did not support the document. As pointed out at the beginning of the meeting, all opinions are valued and to be respected.

5. Set Dates for Future Conference Calls - Howard

It is important to know from the chapters how they feel about the scheduling (dates and times) of future conference calls. LDAO has budgeted for quarterly calls. The balancing act for setting a time convenient for staff and volunteers to participate will not always be attainable. What is important is that at each conference call chapters strive have one person participate, that the agenda be tightly structured and the call not to exceed 1 ½ hours. After some discussion, the following was decided:

- Wednesdays are the best day of the week to hold conference calls
- For the most part, it will be staff participating therefore during business hours is a better time to hold the calls
- Dates for the conference calls will be:
 - Wednesday, June 4, 2008
 - Wednesday, September 10, 2008
 - Wednesday, December 10, 2008
 - Wednesday, March 11, 2009

6. 2008 Annual General Meeting – Date and Format - Wygant

The AGM for 2008 is scheduled for the weekend of October 17-18, 2008 in Toronto. The Proposed Plan of Action outlined a suggested format from LDAO and this was put on the table for discussion by chapters. The issues

- **Travel time** – because the AGM involves volunteers, it is hard for them to take a full day off work to attend workshops if they are scheduled for a week day – in some instances, it would be two days for those chapters in the north and for staff, it is always difficult to ask them to give up part of their weekend also.
- **Expenses** – chapters do not have the funds to put themselves up in hotels for two nights pay for travel costs – LDAO has budgeted to cover the expenses of all chapters for travel and at least one night's accommodation so that even the local chapters are able to stay in the city to do networking with the other chapters
- **Workshops** – there are competing agendas for participants – volunteer board members are looking for ways to learn to be more effective in their leadership roles and the staff is looking to find or share program and service delivery models, to gain specific skills in leadership management. LDAO recognizes this and it is one of the reasons that we feel it important for the chapters to have input to the workshop content at the AGM and are looking to confirm workshop opportunities by the end of May 2008.

LDAO has proposed a format that would entail one full work day (Friday) for workshops and the AGM on Saturday morning. The chapters proposed an alternative format that would help them to ensure that they are able to fully participate in both the business and training aspects of the AGM.

Chapter Recommendation: Hold the AGM for an hour on the Friday night (Oct 17th) and then have an organized networking session on a variety of topics for chapters to choose from. Everyone would be staying overnight so leaving time to travel home and back in the morning for local chapters would not be an issue. There would be workshop streams on the Saturday from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM to allow for people to start for home in daylight.

ACTION PLAN:

Chapters were uncomfortable with confirming support for either format for the AGM without talking to their board members first. It was agreed that LDAO would send out a survey to the chapters, presenting them with their option preferences.

7. Chapter Access Site

This is an information item for Chapters. LDAO staff member, Jeff Clayton, is working with Karen Quinn to revamp the Chapter Access site to make it more relevant and useful for Chapters. A very rough outline of the site was sent to chapters prior to the meeting. Chapters agree that this could be a very useful tool for them if the site is kept up to date and they are advised directly that new information has been uploaded to the site. Suggestions:

- Chapters receive an email at the end of each week that new information is posted to the site. It could be in conjunction with a newsletter that updates chapters on relevant LDAO projects, etc.
- Chapter board members have access to the site so that they can look around and see what is happening or use some of the Tips and Tools material for their own skills development

- LDAO made an offer to chapters that do not have a web site. LDAO would develop a simple site for them that would link to the LDAO website until such time as there were more resources at the chapter level to expand their site.
- The idea of a secure bulletin board site for chapters was raised and there was considerable discussion. It was the consensus of the participants that this item should be referred to a future meeting

8. HR Policies – Wygant

Human Resources skills are becoming an important component of the necessary skills development for not for profit groups. It is an area that is quite complicated and LDAO will be putting together a document which outlines the fundamental basics of HR policies and practices. Because of the legal issues involved, we will be vetting any documents with legal counsel before sending out to chapters. The point was made that some chapters have already got legally approved HR Policies and what was the provincial office policy about that. LDAO would like to see the Policy documents in any chapter to ensure that it conforms generally to LDAO policy, but do not see any problems arising for those chapters. Many chapters do not have any policies and due to past experience in some chapters with legal issues as a result, we want to ensure that everyone is working from the same premises. The document, once created, will serve as a guide and not constitute a legal opinion. If a chapter found itself in trouble, legal counsel would need to be sought and retained. Chapters were asked to share their existing policies with LDAO so that the template could reflect those approved policies already in existence.

9. Update on Shared Information/Services – Quinn

With the email that went out to chapters with all the other meeting documents, LDAO included sample templates of an annual activities calendar, Board orientation manual table of contents, and a new employees orientation manual table of contents. OSC committee members have reported at our meetings that inquiries about such manuals have come up from time to time and would LDAO be creating sample manuals for distribution.

Many chapters already have board orientation documents and some have supplied LDAO with electronic copies, which we are happy to send out to any interested chapters. These materials are simple to show chapters what types of information should and/or could be included in such packages. The new employee orientation manual will contain some of the same information but also have sections that relate to HR policies. The template on Components of a Personnel Policy Manual is more complicated. This is the area where LDAO will try to do most of the legwork for chapters and put together a document. Chapters will be kept apprised of how this project will proceed.

10. Agenda for the Next Meeting – Howard

Ms. Howard asked each chapter to give the group suggestions for future agenda topics and each did so. There was significant overlap in some areas and with a minimum of twenty-five ideas, discussion turned to how to manage these topics and yet keep all listed to remind ourselves of topics not yet addressed.

It was the group consensus that we tackle three items on the next agenda and that all supporting documentation related to those items be forwarded to chapters with time to get feedback from chapter staff and board.

The Agenda items for Wednesday, June 11, 2008 are

- Finalize the AGM workshop format and presentations
- Fundraising/Sustainability
 - Some of the areas under this topic will include
 - ✓ LDAO funding policy – what is it, what are restrictions for chapters and how can both levels support each other
 - ✓ Ethical fundraising
 - ✓ Successful fundraising/sustainability programs

Other topics that were suggested and need to be recorded for future discussion are:

- Process for sharing of information between chapters re programs
- Advocacy/SEAC services
- Moderated Message Board
- On-Site Training – schedules and topics
- Public Awareness
- Creating partnerships between chapters and/or outside agencies re programs, services, etc.
- Web site development
- Assistive technology
- Accreditation programs for chapter staff in a variety of areas – resource facilitation, advocacy, volunteer development, health & safety

Adjournment

Ms. Howard thanked all the participants for taking the time to participate in this first conference call and hope that they found it useful as a means to start building dialogue and cooperation between the provincial office and the chapters and chapter to chapter.