**De-streaming issues for students with special education needs

Issues and Comments**

* Students in elementary grades often work toward modified curriculum expectations on their individual education plan. When this is started in early grades and continued through elementary school they will not have adequate academic preparation to do de-streamed courses in grade 9.
* Every attempt should be made throughout elementary grades to keep options open for all pathways in high school.
* Students in elementary grades may be working toward modified curriculum expectations when they could be working on grade level curriculum if they received adequate accommodations. For example, students with reading disabilities could make use of electronic versions of books or text-to-speech technologies to study grade level curriculum.
* Students in grade 9 will only be offered the option of a de-streamed course or a locally developed course. If parents or teachers decide that they are not likely to be successful in a de-streamed course, then a locally developed course may be seen as the only option.
* As an additional option to taking Learning Strategies 1 in the first semester or concurrently to a grade 9 de-streamed course, students should have the option to take a locally developed course to build their skills before taking the de-streamed course, e.g. in two consecutive semesters.
* It will be important to maintain and facilitate transitions from applied to academic levels beyond grade 9. Requirements to retake a course at academic level when a student has already earned a credit for the applied course at the same grade level is a barrier to changing pathways.

**Questions**

* Will students who have been working toward modified curriculum expectations in elementary grades be allowed modifications in de-streamed grade 9 courses and still receive credit? Currently students in high school are allowed only minor modifications to curriculum if they are to receive a credit.
* If students decide to take the grade 9 de-streamed course and are not successful, what options will be available to them?
* Will students who took applied math courses in 2020-21 have to take the mathematics transfer course this summer in order to have an option to transition to academic math in Grade 10? What will happen after August 31st, 2021 if a student was not able to do the transfer course over the summer?

**For Grade 9 math de-streaming specifically**:

* Much attention will need to be made to building foundational math skills, and making sure they are understood, in elementary grades. There will need to be options for upgrading skills at all grades for students who are struggling.
* There will need to be opportunities at the beginning of the course to fill knowledge gaps that students may have from lack of appropriate math support in previous years.
* Teachers in de-streamed grade 9 math courses will need to have professional development on how to use universal design for learning (UDL) principles and how to differentiate instruction for students with different learning needs, in addition to having expertise in teaching math concepts.
* Support staff who work in de-streamed math classes should have professional development in math instruction, in addition to UDL and differentiated instruction.
* If there is no intention to lower class sizes for de-streamed math courses, a second teacher with math experience should co-teach, in order to provide extra support and differentiation.
* The curriculum should support skills needed for entering various pathways following secondary school (life, work, volunteer, academic, apprenticeship).
* Access to workplace math courses should be continued, with curriculum relevant to career and life paths.

**Other issues:**

* de-stigmatizing the need for extra support and differentiation
* improving educator understanding of brain differences in supporting learning
* changing educator bias favouring academic pathways, so that all pathways are considered

PAAC on SEAC strongly supports the guidelines that families should be treated as partners in their children’s education and equipped with the skills and knowledge to actively participate in their children’s choices and learning. *Engaging with grassroots community organizations should include parent organizations that support parents of students with special education needs***.**

*School boards should consult with their Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs) in planning supports for students with special education needs in de-streamed classes, and use SEACs to help communicate with parents about these supports.*

PAAC on SEAC strongly supports the need for wrap-around supports to address learning gaps before grade 9, including early math and reading intervention programs. This will be essential for successful de-streaming grade 9, in addition to wrap-around supports going into grade 9 (e.g. summer bridging programs) and during grade 9.

Respectfully submitted,

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of behalf of the member associations of PAAC on SEAC

**Provincial Parent Association Advisory Committee on Special Education Advisory Committees (PAAC on SEAC)**

**Members:** • Association for Bright Children • Community Living Ontario • Down Syndrome Association of Ontario • Easter Seals Ontario • Epilepsy Ontario • Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Ontario Network of Expertise • Hydrocephalus Canada • Integration Action for Inclusion in Education and Community • Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario • Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders  • VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children

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