

LDAO Comments on Draft *Special Education in Ontario*

April 2018

The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) and its community-based chapters represent the interests of persons with learning disabilities (LDs) throughout Ontario. In the publically funded school system, students with LDs make up about 40% of students receiving special education supports and services, and many students with LDs go on to postsecondary studies at colleges or universities.

LDAO welcomed the release in August 2018 of the draft ***Special Education in Ontario: Kindergarten to Grade 12 (Policy and Resource Guide)***. While the Guide has a great deal of useful content, LDAO is pleased to have the opportunity to review all the sections of the Guide and provide feedback and recommendations for improvements to the draft version.

The following comments, and recommendations for changes in wording, are offered for your consideration, on behalf of the LDAO Legislation and Policy Committee. The relevant sections of the Guide are indicated in parentheses.

Part A Legislation, Policy and Funding

- It is good to see PAAC on SEAC, along with MACSE, listed under Advisory Committees **(A17)**

Part C Early Identification, Assessment, and Transition Planning

Planning Entry to School

- The language around transitioning from preschool programs needs to be strengthened, e.g. “The question of the continuation of existing support may be considered when the parents first discuss their child’s enrolment with the principal.” – ‘should’ would be stronger than ‘may’ **(C5)**

The In-School Team and Out-of-School Resources

- There needs to be more direction on the involvement of parents when their child is referred to the In-School Team, e.g.
 - “As circumstances require, the in-school team may also seek assistance from parents and other family members” – “as circumstances require” is unnecessary and does not promote parent involvement. **(C23)**
 - “The active involvement of parents and the student enhances the effectiveness of the school team. Parents and students have important information to share with

- members of the team and should be invited to meet with the team when necessary or as appropriate” – The words “when necessary or as appropriate” diminish th the importance of parent involvement. **(C23)**
- Parents should always be informed when their child is referred to the school team (vs. “Some school boards have a practice of notifying parents prior to the meeting about their specific concerns.”) **(C24)**
 - Parents should receive a copy of the school boards **Special Education Guide** when their child is referred to the in-school team, not just when a referral is made to an IPRC. **(C23)**
 - “Throughout the screening and intervention process, the teacher should keep the student’s parents informed about the student’s progress and the planned program adjustments.” – this statement is stronger and should serve as a model for other statements about parent involvement in the in-school team process. **(C24)**
 - “Decisions about interventions and accommodations are best made at the in-school team meeting” –LDAO believes that it is important for the parent, and sometimes the student, to be present for decision-making. **(C25)**

Transition Planning

- “In planning programs for a student with special education needs who is transferring from another board, the new board should use any assessments available from the originating board” – there should be some discussion of portability of IEPs and IPRC identifications across boards. **(C31)**
- There should be a section on transition to and from **Provincial and Demonstration Schools**.
- Transition planning to postsecondary studies should provide information about the requirements of postsecondary institutions in order to provide accommodations (e.g. updated assessments, diagnoses rather than identifications). **(C33)**
- It would be useful to link the **Transition Resource Guide for Students with Disabilities** (<http://www.transitionresourceguide.ca/>) developed by the **Regional Assessment & Resource Centre (RARC)** . Information could also be included about RARC (www.queensu.ca/rarc/) and the **Northern Ontario Assessment and Resource Centre** (www.noarc-cerno.ca/).
- Parents and students need to be involved in development of behaviour support plans, which should take into account the effects of the special education needs on behaviour. **(C38)**

Part D The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) Process

- The section on **Mediation** has been removed, and there is no mention of mediation processes. Mediation at the appeal and tribunal levels is an important option that should be outlined in the document.

Part E The Individual Education Plan

- While parental and student involvement is discussed in this section, there are several places where it could be reinforced:

The IEP Process

- Overview of the IEP Process
 - “Establish a collaborative approach”- add “including with parents” **(E8)**
 - “Adjust the IEP as necessary (recording any changes in goals, expectations, teaching strategies, and other accommodations, etc.” – leave out “other” since the rest of the list are not accommodations. **(E9)**
- Review and Update the IEP
 - Add “Include parents, and students if appropriate, in review and update of the IEP”. **(E10)**

The Special Education Program

- Add examples from Sample IEP in ***The Individual Education Plan (IEP): A Resource Guide*** (2004), for Reading Print as an Alternative Program, under:
 - Current Level of Achievement -- Students with Alternative Programs **(E23) and**
 - Annual Program Goals -- Students with Alternative Programs **(E26) and**
 - Learning Expectations – Students with Alternative Programs **(E35)**

Transition Plans

- Transition planning to postsecondary studies should providing information about the requirements of postsecondary institutions in order to provide accommodations (e.g. updated assessments, diagnoses rather than identifications).
- It would be useful to link the **Transition Resource Guide for Students with Disabilities** (<http://www.transitionresourceguide.ca/>), developed by the **Regional Assessment & Resource Centre (RARC)** . Information could also be included about RARC (www.queensu.ca/rarc/) and the **Northern Ontario Assessment and Resource Centre** (www.noarc-cerno.ca/).
- “the special education office of the college or university” – this term is not used at the postsecondary level. The offices are called ‘offices for students with disabilities’ or ‘accessibility offices’. They do not provide special education.**(E49)**

Parent/Student Consultation (E50)

LDAO supports the emphasis on parent/student consultation in this section. This could be a model for other sections

Recording Ongoing Revisions to the IEP

- The previous year’s IEP should be retained in the OSR to enable year-to-year tracking of student progress, by both parents and educators **(E62)**

Preventing and Resolving Conflicts Regarding IEPs

- It would be good to include some examples from ***Shared Solutions***, in addition to linking the document. **(E63)**

Part F Other Programs and Services

- This section is informative, but it should include discussion of parent involvement in processes for accessing all of the programs and services.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into revisions of ***Special Education in Ontario: Kindergarten to Grade 12 (Policy and Resource Guide)***, on behalf of the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario Legislation and Policy Committee.