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## **LDAO Response to the Demonstration Schools Consultation Report and Ministry of Education Announcements**

August 2016

The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) applauds the Ministry of Education on its response to the Consultation on Provincial and Demonstration Schools, and congratulates The Strategic Counsel on a thorough and well-written Consultation Report.

The Ministry commitment to “pilot intensive reading intervention projects in school boards” is very welcome, and is in line with the recommendations made by LDAO over the last few years, as research continues to support the need for intensive evidence-based interventions, especially in reading, for students with learning disabilities.

The Ministry’s goal of “increasing the availability and responsiveness of supports for students with severe learning disabilities in their local communities” is admirable, and if implemented well by school boards should go a long way toward reducing the secondary effects of learning disabilities on self-esteem and social-emotional functioning.

The commitment to keep all provincial and demonstration schools open over the coming year is also important. The Consultation Report documents the many positive effects of the demonstration schools both for students and for school boards. These effects are shown to go well beyond reading, although the increases in reading achievement in the demonstration school students are dramatic. The Consultation Report notes recurring themes in what stakeholders said provided positive experiences for students with severe learning disabilities. These included specialized teaching focussed on individual learning styles, the supports in the residential program, immersion in the academic and social programs 18 hours a day, and the use of assistive technology, with trained teachers and adequate IT support.

LDAO looks forward to supporting the Ministry in implementing its goals and continuing to advocate for changes that will increase the supports and ultimately success of every student with learning disabilities in Ontario.