

LDAO SEAC CIRCULAR

April 2025

The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) SEAC Circular is published 5 times a year, usually in September, November, February, April, and June.

This circular highlights key topics for your SEAC to consider. Where applicable, action items, questions to ask, and/or recommendations for effective practices will be included under each topic.

Feel free to share any of this information and any attachments with other SEAC members. As always, if you plan to introduce a motion for the consideration of SEAC, it is particularly important that you share all relevant background materials with your fellow SEAC reps.

Topics covered by this SEAC Circular:

1. Ministry of Education Updates:

- Special Education Budgets 2025-2026
- Special Education Plan

2. Mental Health and Learning Disabilities

- Additional resource: [Myths and Facts](#)
- Additional resource: [School Mental Health Ontario - Resources for Parents](#)

3. Key Takeaways: April 2025 SEAC Circular

List of Supplementary Materials:

1. [Technical Guides for School Boards - Budget Structure](#)
2. [PAAC on SEAC Resource Guide for Budgets 2024](#)
3. [The Right to Read - Year Two](#)
4. [Accessible Transitions for Students with Disabilities \(K-12\)](#)
5. [Development of Proposed K-12 Standards - Final Recommendations](#)

Note: You can access the [SEAC Circular](#), [LDAO SEAC Policies](#), [LDAO Policy Statement on Educational Inclusion](#), and [PAAC on SEAC Effective Practices Handbook](#).

You can access Ministry funding (B & SB) memos by date at: [Ministry Funding](#).

1. Ministry of Education Updates

a) Special Education Budgets

Background and Context

SEAC plays a critical role in advising school boards on the development and allocation of special education funding. As part of this responsibility, SEAC members participate in budget planning and review to ensure that resources are directed toward supporting students with exceptionalities.

School boards will soon receive their 2025–2026 budget allocations, allowing them to plan accordingly. Under [Regulation 464/97](#), school boards must provide SEAC with the opportunity to:

- “participate in board’s annual budget process under section 231 of the Act, as that process relates to Special Education” (Section 12 (2))” and
- “review financial statements of the board, prepared under section 252 of the Act, as those statements relate to Special Education.” (Section 12 (3))”

Ontario school boards are actively moving through their budget processes in preparation for the 2025–2026 school year. While they await their **Core Education Funding** allocations—typically announced in the spring—they continue planning based on projected needs. Given demographic shifts, including an aging population and evolving immigration trends, school boards may need to assess how these factors influence enrollment and funding needs.

With the new government now in place following the recent election, funding announcements are expected to resume in the near future. Boards will adjust their budgets accordingly once the allocations are received.

Implications for Students with Special Education Needs

Budget decisions directly impact the availability and quality of special education services. A delay and/or decrease in funding allocations could:

- Affect the ability of boards to plan, hire, and retain specialized staff, including educational assistants (EAs), special education teachers, and resource staff.
- Delay decisions on Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention supports, which are critical for students with learning disabilities who require direct, specific instruction and/or intensive support.

- Influence the continuity of special education programs, as boards may face financial constraints that impact services.
- Result in potential shifts in staffing allocations, leading to uncertainty for families and students who rely on consistent support structures.

Potential Action Items, Questions to Ask, and/or Recommendations:

- SEAC members should monitor any changes to special education programs and advocate for a full continuum of supports to ensure that students with disabilities continue to receive appropriate services. If programs are being modified or removed, SEAC reps should inquire about:
 - What alternative supports are being put in place to address the needs previously met by the program.
 - How Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports are being provided to ensure students receive timely and effective interventions.
 - How staff, including specialized educators and support personnel, are being allocated to support significant changes and transitions in service delivery.
- SEAC should advocate for maintaining and enhancing special education staffing, including specialized educators, educational assistants (EAs), and support staff, to meet student needs effectively. Given anticipated funding constraints, SEAC should inquire whether staffing levels will be impacted and what steps are being taken to ensure continuity of support.
- SEAC members should be familiar with key findings from the Ontario Human Rights Commission's (OHRC) *Right to Read - Year Two Update*. While progress has been made in areas like curriculum revision and early screening, there are significant ongoing challenges, particularly in:
 - **Access to interventions:** Despite improvements, not all students have access to Tier 2 and Tier 3 evidence-based interventions. SEAC should inquire about how boards are ensuring equitable access to interventions across schools.
 - **Accommodations:** Many students are still relying on accommodations (e.g., assistive technology) rather than receiving early interventions. SEAC should ask whether schools are balancing accommodations with direct instruction in foundational literacy skills.
 - **Professional assessments:** Long wait times for assessments continue to be a barrier. SEAC should advocate for transparent criteria for prioritizing assessments and for timely intervention supports while students wait.

- **Teacher preparedness:** Many educators lack the necessary training to implement accommodations effectively. SEAC should ask how the board is supporting teachers with job-embedded professional learning to ensure they can implement structured literacy approaches.

b) Special Education Plans

Background and Context

Each Ontario school board is required to develop and maintain a Special Education Plan, outlining how special education programs and services will be delivered to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities. The Ministry of Education mandates an annual review of these plans to ensure they align with current policies, funding structures, and best practices.

SEAC plays a critical role in this process by advising, reviewing, and advocating to ensure that plans reflect the diverse needs of students receiving special education services. SEAC members should work to identify gaps, promote best practices, and advocate for resources that enhance student support.

SEAC's role includes:

- **Advising school boards** on the establishment, development and delivery of special education programs and services. This includes making recommendations to improve the services offered.
- **Participating in the annual review** to ensure that the plan is updated and aligned with student needs.
- **Advocating for transparency and accountability** in how special education services are provided. Advocacy is essential for students and families, and SEAC members play a vital role in ensuring their voices are heard, represented, and considered in decision-making.

Implications for Students with Special Education Needs

A comprehensive and well-developed Special Education Plan ensures that students with disabilities receive:

- **Timely and appropriate interventions** that address their unique learning needs.
- **Access to a full continuum of supports**, including classroom accommodations, interventions, specialized programs, and assistive technology.

- **Consistent staffing and resources**, ensuring students receive support from trained professionals such as educational assistants (EAs), special education teachers, speech-language pathologists, and mental health professionals.
- **Structured transition planning**, whether between grades, schools, or into post-secondary education, ensuring that students move through the system with the necessary support.

Potential Action Items, Questions to Ask, and/or Recommendations

- Are Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention supports clearly outlined in the plan to ensure that students receive targeted and intensive support as needed?
- How is parent and student feedback incorporated into the development and revision of the plan?
- What data and outcome measures are being used to evaluate the effectiveness of special education programs?
- Are staffing levels and resources sufficient to implement the plan effectively, particularly given potential funding constraints?

2. Mental Health:

Background and Context

School boards receive dedicated funding to support student mental health, enabling the implementation of the School Mental Health Initiative. This initiative includes:

- Professional resources and practical tools for educators.
- Ongoing professional learning to ensure staff can effectively support students.
- Collaboration with community partners to enhance mental health services.
- Additional funding to address emerging local concerns, such as cannabis use and body image issues.

Mental health support is critical for students with learning disabilities. Research indicates that over half of students with learning disabilities experience anxiety and depression. Without proper mental health interventions, these challenges can negatively impact academic performance, social development, and overall well-being.

SEAC members play a vital role in advocating for equitable and proactive mental health supports. Promoting positive mental health within schools helps to reduce stigma, foster

inclusivity, and support student achievement.

Implications for Students with Special Needs

Students with exceptionalities, particularly those with learning disabilities, ADHD, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and other neurodiverse conditions, often face higher rates of mental health challenges. Without timely and accessible mental health support, these students may struggle with:

- **Increased Anxiety & Depression:** Many students with special education needs experience heightened academic stress, social anxiety, and low self-esteem.
- **Emotional Dysregulation:** Difficulty managing emotions can lead to behavioral challenges, school avoidance, or disengagement from learning.
- **Impact on Learning:** Mental health concerns can hinder focus, executive functioning, and motivation, making it harder to access and benefit from special education supports.
- **Barriers to Accessing Services:** Many families experience long wait times for mental health assessments and interventions, delaying critical support.
- **Intersection with Bullying & Stigma:** Students with exceptionalities are at higher risk of social exclusion, bullying, and feelings of isolation, which further impact their well-being.

Potential Action Items, Questions to Ask, and/or Recommendations:

- How is the school board ensuring that mental health supports reach students with exceptionalities, particularly those with learning disabilities?
- What steps are being taken to ensure that school-based mental health initiatives are accessible, culturally responsive, and tailored to students with diverse needs?
- How is student and family feedback being incorporated into mental health program improvements?
- What data is being used to track the effectiveness of mental health supports for students with special education needs?
- What additional training is being provided to special education staff, including Educational Assistants (EAs) and Special Education Teachers, on mental health literacy and trauma-informed practices?

3. Transitions:

Background and Context

Transition planning is essential for students with learning disabilities and other exceptionalities. Transitions occur at multiple levels, from daily micro-transitions (e.g., moving between subjects and classrooms) to major educational shifts, such as: grade 8 to high school; high school to post-secondary education, employment, or apprenticeship programs.

A well-structured transition plan ensures that students move smoothly between educational environments, reducing anxiety and disruption. However, poorly planned transitions can create significant barriers to success.

Students with learning disabilities often experience heightened stress during transitions, making emotional support, self-advocacy skills, and tailored accommodations essential. SEAC members play a crucial role in advocating for individualized transition plans to support students with exceptionalities effectively.

The Ministry of Education has provided funding to support transition planning, and LDAO strongly advocates for the continuation and expansion of these resources.

Implications for Students with Special Needs

Transitions can have a profound impact on students with exceptionalities, particularly those who require structured routines, predictable environments, and specialized supports. Without proper transition planning, students may experience:

- **Disrupted Learning & Regression:** Sudden changes in environment, expectations, or support systems can lead to learning setbacks, especially for students who thrive on structure and consistency.
- **Increased Anxiety & Stress:** Uncertainty around new settings, peers, and expectations can trigger heightened anxiety, reluctance to engage, or school avoidance.
- **Lack of Appropriate Accommodations:** Transitioning without continuity in Individual Education Plans (IEPs), assistive technology, or support staff can jeopardize academic progress.
- **Social and Emotional Challenges:** Changes in social environments may cause feelings of isolation, particularly if students struggle with communication or self-advocacy.



- **Parental Involvement Gaps:** Families play a critical role in transitions, yet they are often left out of decision-making processes. Ensuring parental engagement leads to stronger, more effective transition plans.
- **Need for Educator Training:** Educators and support staff require ongoing professional development to ensure they can effectively support students through transitions.

Potential Action Items, Questions to Ask, and/or Recommendations:

- How is Ministry funding being used to support transition planning, and what measurable impact has it had at the student level?
- What plans are in place to strengthen transition work for the next school year?
- How is the effectiveness of transition planning being monitored, and what metrics are used to assess success?
- How are families involved in the transition process, and what steps are taken to ensure their concerns and insights are considered?
- What professional development opportunities are provided to educators and support staff to ensure they are well-equipped to implement effective transition plans?

4. Key Takeaways: April 2025 SEAC Circular

- **Advocacy for Special Education Funding:** SEAC members play a vital role in ensuring that special education funding is used effectively. They should actively participate in budget discussions and advocate for a full continuum of supports to meet the diverse needs of students with exceptionalities.
- **Staffing & Specialized Support:** Maintaining and enhancing staffing levels for special education teachers, educational assistants (EAs), and support personnel is essential. SEAC members should inquire about staffing allocations and advocate for continuity in specialized support services.
- **Special Education Plans & Policy Oversight:** SEAC members should participate in the annual review of their board's Special Education Plan, ensuring that it aligns with evidence-based practices, student needs, and equity-focused approaches.
- **Mental Health & Well-being:** Positive mental health is essential for student success. SEAC should advocate for:
 - Increased access to mental health supports tailored to students with learning disabilities and other exceptionalities.
 - Professional learning opportunities for educators on mental health literacy and trauma-informed teaching.
 - Data-informed evaluations of the impact of mental health initiatives at the school board level.
- **Effective Transition Planning:** Students with learning disabilities require structured, well-supported transitions at all levels (e.g., grade-to-grade, high school to post-secondary/work). SEAC should:
 - Ensure individualized transition plans are in place for students with exceptionalities.
 - Advocate for early planning, educator training, and parental involvement in the transition process.
 - Monitor how school boards evaluate and improve transition supports to reduce anxiety and ensure continuity of services.

A Note to SEAC Representatives

LDAO SEAC Representatives are encouraged to share this resource with other SEAC members in their school board. By spreading awareness and building collective understanding, we can strengthen advocacy efforts and improve outcomes for students with learning disabilities across Ontario.

About the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO)

The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) has been a trusted voice for over 60 years, supporting individuals with learning disabilities and ADHD—as well as their families, educators, and communities. We provide expertly curated resources, advocate for systemic change, and promote equity in education and beyond.

Our signature initiatives—LD@school, TA@l'école, LD@home, and LD@work—reflect our commitment to supporting individuals across the lifespan, from early learning through to adulthood and employment.

Learn more at www.LDAO.ca