

**LDAO SEAC CIRCULAR**

**June 2020**

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

The following are some topics that your SEAC should be looking at. Action items and/or recommendations for effective practices will be underlined.

Feel free to share any of this information or the attachments with other SEAC members. As always, when you are planning to introduce a motion for the consideration of SEAC, it is particularly important that you share all related background items with your fellow SEAC reps.

 **Topics covered by this SEAC Circular:**

1. The continuing role of SEAC during school closures

2. IPRCs and IEPs during school closure

3. Engagement with students and parents

4. Assessment, evaluation and reporting during school closure

5. Plans for summer learning

6. Planning for fall opening of schools

**List of Supplementary Materials:**

1. May 27, 2020 Additional Guidance on Special Education and Mental Health

2. May 27, 2020 Ministry Guidance on Assessment, Evaluation & Reporting During the School Closure Period

3. May 19, 2020 Continuity of Learning Plan

4. May 29, 2020 Summer School & Summer Learning Opportunities Memo

5. PAAC on SEAC Community Collaboration to MACSE

**Note:** You can access the SEAC Circular and supplementary materials at
[www.ldao.ca/about/public-policy-advocacy/seac-circulars/](http://www.ldao.ca/about/public-policy-advocacy/seac-circulars/).

You can access Ministry funding (B & SB) memos by date at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/memos/>

**1. The continuing role of SEAC during school closures**

It is encouraging that many SEACs are finding ways to meet virtually. However, a number of SEACs have had one or more meetings cancelled and not all school boards are making up for missed SEAC meetings. Regulation 464/97 requires that SEACs hold 10 meetings per school year, and more importantly, cancelled SEAC meetings are resulting in insufficient opportunities for review of Special Education Plan and Special Education budget changes.

SEACs need to ensure that there is a mechanism for meaningful review of changes to the Special Education Plan, as well as a mechanism for SEACs to have meaningful input into budget planning, after the GSN is released. Since the GSN for 2020-21 has not yet been released, this will require some creative solutions.

**2. IPRCs and IEPs during school closure**

The May 27, 2020 **Additional Guidance on Special Education and Mental Health** memo states: “As indicated in our previous memo, IPRCs should continue to conduct annual reviews. Any initial IPRC decisions that were in progress at the start of the school closure period should also continue. Going forward, as set out in Ontario Regulation 181/98, initial IPRCs may be requested by parents and/or initiated by boards following the appropriate processes.” The previous April 21, 2020 **Continuity of Learning for Students with Special Education Needs and Mental Health Supports** memo also stated “In the event that there is an appeal of an IPRC decision, boards should also consider options for holding appeal board hearings remotely.”

SEACs should ask how their boards are following the Ministry direction on holding IPRCs.

The April 21, 2020 **Continuity of Learning for Students with Special Education Needs and Mental Health Supports** memo states “To support access to learning for students with special education needs, IEPs should continue to remain in effect as continuity of learning strategies are implemented. In situations where existing accommodations, modifications, or alternative programming are not feasible, boards should work collaboratively with students and families to determine workable solutions on a case by case basis.” This is the time of year when IEPs are reviewed, and for students who are transitioning to a new academic setting, having an up-to-date IEP is very important. SEACs should ask their boards what provisions are being made for review of IEPs.

**3. Engagement with students and parents**

The May 27, 2020 **Additional Guidance on Special Education and Mental** memo provides “effective practices that boards are encouraged to consider, in consultation with your Special Education Advisory Committees”, including:

* Education workers joining classroom teachers in any online class meetings and staff meetings to discuss classroom planning and social/emotional learning skills and strategies.
* Checking in with families on a regular basis to provide an opportunity to listen and answer questions.
* Developing clear communication plans with families that include roles for teachers and education workers and a plan for ongoing follow-up communication.
* Holding live video chats between Educational Assistants (EAs) and students, based on protocols developed with local labour partners.
* Using platforms that are fully accessible to persons with disabilities to engage.

There are many other effective practices outlined in the memo, and in a previous May 8, 2020 **Updates on Continuity of Learning for the Extended School Closure Period** memo, Minister Lecce made it clear that “it is the ministry’s expectation that synchronous learning be used as a part of whole class instruction, in smaller groups of students and/or in a one-on-one context” and further that “it is insufficient for educators to communicate with their students in one interaction per week”.

SEACs should ask how educators working with students with special education needs are monitored to make sure they are able to connect effectively with their students and parents.

**4. Assessment, evaluation & reporting during school closure**

The attached May 27, 2020 **Ministry Guidance on Assessment, Evaluation & Reporting During the School Closure Period** document outlines in detail procedures for educators to follow in evaluating progress and recording marks and comments on report cards. For elementary students, the information on report cards will be based primarily on the period from the beginning of Term 2 to March 13, but “evidence collected during the school closure period that shows improvement in learning may be taken into consideration by the teacher when assigning a final grade/mark in a strand or subject.” Secondary student evaluations are more complicated, and there are a number of options and provisions outlined, especially for students in a graduating year.

**5. Plans for summer learning**

The May 19, 2020 **Continuity of Learning Plan** outlined plan for summer learning, including:

* Focused programming for students with special education or mental health needs, including dedicated learning supports such as access to EAs and existing after-school programs that could be delivered through summer school.
* Summer programming in Provincial and Demonstration **Schools** to focus on continued learning for our students with particular needs and specialized integrated programming.

The May 29, 2020 **Summer School & Summer Learning Opportunities** **Memo** provides school boards with more details on funding for summer learning programs, including:

“$22 million, funded through the Priorities and Partnership Fund (PPF), to provide supports to students with special education needs and mental health concerns over the summer. This will allow schools boards to offer voluntary summer employment to supporting staffing in the summer months.”

Funding will be available for:

* regulated mental health professionals to provide direct supports to students on existing caseloads and to respond to crisis situations ($8million),
* staffing resources to support students with special education needs in both expanded and new summer program offerings including special education resource teachers and educational assistants ($6.4 million),and
* in person transition back to school programs and/or supports in the two weeks prior to the start of the 2020-21school year for students with special education needs and mental health concerns ($7.6 million).

SEACs should ask their school boards about their plans for summer learning programs and in- person transition back-to-school programs for students with special education needs. They should ask whether and how these programs will be made available to any students with special education needs who would benefit. Many students of various exceptionalities will have difficulties transitioning back to the routines of school.

**6. Planning for fall opening of schools**

There was also discussion in the May 19, 2020 **Continuity of Learning Plan** of considerations for possible return to school in the fall, including the need to plan for fluidity between face-to-face and online delivery.

Note the PAAC on SEAC recommendations to MACSE:

* Development of a comprehensive strategy for students with special education needs for summer and fall learning, which allows for individualization based on needs
* Prioritize the option of in-school education for students with special education needs, subject to parental wishes
* Continued access to synchronous learning in the fall for students whose parents want to keep them home
* Investigate opportunities for professional support staff to go into homes if there is a prolonged period of school closure
* More supports for students who are on Home Instruction for medical reasons
* Training for educators to support social and emotional needs of students at home and when they return to class.

SEACs should ask what contingency plans their board is making for students with special education needs in the fall.

NOTE: You can provide a written submission on the **Continuity of Learning Plan** with your input, ideas or data by sending an email to EDUconsultation@ontario.ca.
Make sure to:

• include your name and the name of your organization

• use “Ontario’s Plan to Reopen Schools” in the subject line

• attach your submission as a PDF or Word document

**Questions?** Email Diane Wagner at dianew@LDAO.ca