

LDAO Public Policy Manual 2002

Section M: Curriculum and Evaluation

The policies in this section relate to curriculum issues, including social education and services for Francophone students. Policies address the need for accommodation as a means to achieving the same learning outcomes in all aspects of testing (both in and outside the school system) rather than a “watering down” of curriculum. Policies also address standardized testing and the need for inclusion and accommodation of students with learning disabilities.

Policies

M1 Curriculum

M2 Social Education

M3 Services for Francophone Students

M4 French Immersion

M5 Curriculum Outcomes I

M6 Curriculum Outcomes II

M7 Curriculum Outcomes III

M8 Student Testing I: Accommodations for tests administered by the Education Quality Accountability Office (EQAO)

M9 Student Testing II: Participation in the Grade 10 Literacy Test

M10 Student Testing III: Exemption from High Stakes Testing

Policy M1 – Curriculum

1.1 LDAO advocates that students identified as having learning disabilities be taught the same standardized curriculum as their non-exceptional peers.

1.2 LDAO advocates that students identified as having learning disabilities be provided with the requisite strategies, modifications, accommodations and remediation techniques to achieve the same outcomes as their non-exceptional peers.

Rationale

Students with learning disabilities have, by definition, average to above average intelligence and can achieve educational success. Learning disabilities rarely affect every aspect of a student’s learning potential. Every effort must be made to identify, encourage and cultivate a student’s areas of academic strength. At the same time, areas of need must not be neglected because of the impact of learning disabilities.

Students must not be denied an effective substantive education in the process of overcoming a learning disability.

References

Regulation 181/98

“For the love of learning”, Report of the Royal Commission on Learning, 1995

Response to the report of the Royal Commission on Learning, LDAO, 1995

Policy M2 – Social Education

LDAO advocates that students identified as having learning disabilities be provided with the same

curriculum and information as their non-exceptional peers in non-academic subjects, such as drug and alcohol education, sex and AIDS education, conflict resolution and peacemaking, safe schools, and other social issues.

Rationale

Students identified as having learning disabilities are subject to the same social and peer pressures as their non-exceptional peers and require the same information and coping strategies to succeed. As in other areas, teachers must be prepared to modify the pace, the process, and the outcomes of the educational program based on the student's identified strengths and needs.

References

Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior, Ministry of Education, 1984
Memorandum #115, grade 9, Ministry of Education, 27 June 1994
"For the love of learning", Report of the Royal Commission on Learning, 1995
Response to the report of the Royal Commission on Learning, LDAO, 1995

Policy M3 – Services for Francophone Students

LDAO advocates that Francophone students identified as having learning disabilities be guaranteed full access to special education programs and services in French in the same way as their Anglophone peers are served in English. All Francophone school boards must comply fully with the Education Act and related regulations.

Rationale

French language education is mandated under legislation arising from the British North America Act, 1867. Students in French language education must be guaranteed the same rights, including those rights afforded exceptional students, as their Anglophone counterparts. Such equality of access is enshrined in Canadian and Ontario legislation.

References

British North America Act, 1867
Ontario Human Rights Code, 1981
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982

Policy M4 – French Immersion

LDAO advocates that students with learning disabilities have the same access to French Immersion programs as non-exceptional students. LDAO further advocates that students in French Immersion programs be provided with all necessary accommodation, support and services to meet their identified educational needs.

Rationale

A student identified as having learning disabilities must not be barred from entering or continuing in a French Immersion program solely because of his or her learning disabilities. The interest and aptitude of the student must be the most important considerations.

The decision whether to continue with such a program should be made by the IPRC, considering all relevant factors and in consultation with parents. If it is determined that the student remain in the French Immersion program, all necessary services and supports must be instituted to ensure that the student can achieve academic success.

References

“For the love of learning”, Report of the Royal Commission on Learning, 1995
Response to the report of the Royal Commission on Learning, LDAO, 1995

Policy M5 – Curriculum Outcomes I

LDAO advocates that students with learning disabilities be provided with the requisite accommodations and have access to appropriate teaching and learning strategies such that they can achieve the same learning outcomes or expectations as are specified within the Ontario curriculum for all students.

Rationale

The Education Act guarantees the right of every student to attend school without the payment of fees and to receive an appropriate education, such that he or she is able to reach his or her potential. The Ontario Human Rights Code guarantees the right to freedom from discrimination and the right to have a disability accommodated. Based on these legislated rights, students with learning disabilities have the right of access and equity of outcome. The new Ontario curriculum specifies the expected outcome for each grade level and subject area. Sometimes, students will require a differentiation or alteration of the teaching and learning process, but not of the curriculum outcomes. In other words, the standards that the student achieves in terms of both knowledge and skills are the same as for other students, although how those standards are demonstrated may be different for the exceptional student. For example, the teacher may find it useful to break the content into smaller segments or allow the student some extra time to gain mastery of a particular skill. For other students it may be helpful to speed up the process of content delivery and broaden the range of the topics covered by the curriculum. These types of strategies do not alter the learning outcomes of the curriculum.

References

Ontario curriculum guides and deliverables, Ministry of Education, 1998-2001
Response to the consultations on secondary school reform, LDAO, 1996-2001
IEP Standards Document, Ministry of Education, 2001

Policy M6 – Curriculum Outcomes II

LDAO advocates that all curriculum guides for all subject areas in both elementary and secondary school and all related teacher guides clarify the curriculum outcomes in terms of the expected standards and how the teaching and learning process may be altered to facilitate student learning without altering the curriculum expectations by lowering expected standards.

Rationale

The Education Act guarantees the right of every student to attend school without the payment of fees and to receive an appropriate education, such that he or she is able to reach his or her potential. The Ontario Human Rights Code guarantees the right to freedom from discrimination and the right to have a disability accommodated. Based on these legislated rights, students with learning disabilities have the right of access and equity of outcome. The new Ontario curriculum specifies the expected outcome for each grade level and subject area. Sometimes, students will require a differentiation or alteration of the teaching and learning process, but not of the curriculum outcomes. In other words, the standards that the student achieves in terms of both knowledge and skills are the same as for other students, although how those standards are demonstrated may be different for the exceptional student. For example, the teacher may find it useful to break the content into smaller segments or allow the student some extra time to gain mastery of a particular skill. For other students it may be helpful to speed up the process of content delivery and broaden the range of the topics covered by the curriculum. These types of strategies do not alter the learning outcomes of the curriculum.

References

Ontario curriculum guides and deliverables, Ministry of Education, 1998-2001
Response to the consultations on secondary school reform, LDAO, 1996-2001
IEP Standards Document, Ministry of Education, 2001

Policy M7 – Curriculum Outcomes III

LDAO advocates that the Ministry of Education, as part of its exceptionality specific program standards development, clarify and differentiate between modified and/or alternative curriculum expectations and the provision of differentiated teaching strategies.

Rationale

The new Ontario curriculum specifies the expected outcome for each grade level and subject area. Sometimes, students will require an alteration of the teaching and learning process, but not of the curriculum outcomes. In other words, the standards that the student achieves in terms of both knowledge and skills are the same as for other students, although how those standards are demonstrated may be different for the exceptional student. For example, the teacher may find it useful to break the content into smaller segments or allow the student some extra time to gain mastery of a particular skill. For other students it may be helpful to speed up the process of content delivery and broaden the range of the topics covered by the curriculum. These types of strategies do not alter the learning outcomes of the curriculum. These types of differentiated teaching strategies are sometimes confused with the modified and/or alternative curriculum expectations that are specified in the ISA eligibility profiles.

In an educational setting, modified curriculum expectations are usually defined as ways in which the learning expectations, curriculum content, materials used, standards demanded and/or outcomes may be changed - usually lowered. This is why modifications are not acceptable during the administration of standardized tests and examinations, (including high stakes tests such as those administered by the Education Quality Accountability Office in the Province of Ontario). Alternative curriculum expectations do not only call for lowered standards but also usually mean program components, content, knowledge areas and skills to be taught that are substantially different from the regular curriculum. In fact, students who follow an alternative curriculum will not be able to progress towards a secondary school graduation diploma of any kind.

References

Ontario curriculum guides and deliverables, Ministry of Education, 1998-2001
Response to the consultations on secondary school reform, LDAO, 1996-2001
IEP Standards Document, Ministry of Education, 2001

Policy M8 – Student Testing I: accommodation for tests administered by the Education Quality Accountability Office (EQAO)

LDAO advocates that the Ministry of Education's Accommodation Policy for Students with Special Needs, approved in 2000 for the purposes of the Grade 10 standardized literacy test which is now a secondary school graduation requirement in Ontario, be mandated to be applicable for all testing carried out by the Education Quality Accountability Office, including standardized high stakes tests, e.g., the Grade 10 literacy test, the standardized Grade 3 and 6 tests, the Grade 9 standardized mathematics tests and the newly announced provincewide testing in core subjects from Grades 3 to 11, with school boards being held fully accountable for compliance with the policy.

Rationale

LDAO has always supported the requirements for academic standards. It has also long advocated enhanced accountability within the school system. Therefore, LDAO also supports the various tests that are administered by the EQAO, provided that students with learning disabilities and other students with special needs are assured the right to have their needs accommodated in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code. The Ministry of Education's Accommodation Policy for Students with Special Needs is an adequate reflection of how this process should be managed, in accordance with the accommodations required being set out in the student's IEP. However, in many cases the IEP does not adequately reflect the student's accommodation needs for testing. In other cases, the required accommodations are not provided during the testing process. It is essential that for all testing students be guaranteed their right to have their needs appropriately accommodated. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with EQAO should insist on school board compliance and accountability.

References

Ministry of Education Accommodation Policy for Students with Special Needs, 2000
Procedures for Administering EQAO Tests, 2000-01
Correspondence with EQAO, LDAO, 1998-2001
Correspondence with Ministry of Education re EQAO testing, LDAO, 1998-2001
Response to consultation on secondary school reform and graduation requirements, LDAO, 1996-2001
Response to Bill 30, LDAO, 1995
Guidelines for Assessing Accommodation Requirements for Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Citizenship, 2001

Policy M9 – Student Testing II: participation in the Grade 10 literacy test

LDAO advocates the participation of all students with learning disabilities in the Grade 10 literacy testing provided that all students are provided with the requisite accommodations as set out in their IEPs. School boards must be held accountable for the provision of accommodations and for compliance with the Ministry of education's Accommodation Policy for Students with Special Needs.

Rationale

LDAO has always supported the requirements for academic standards. It has also long advocated enhanced accountability within the school system. Therefore, LDAO also supports the various tests that are administered by the EQAO, provided that students with learning disabilities and other students with special needs are assured the right to have their needs accommodated in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code. The Ministry of Education's Accommodation Policy for Students with Special Needs is an adequate reflection of how this process should be managed, in accordance with the accommodations required being set out in the student's IEP. However, in many cases the IEP does not adequately reflect the student's accommodation needs for testing. In other cases, the required accommodations are not provided during the testing process. It is essential that for all testing students be guaranteed their right to have their needs appropriately accommodated. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with EQAO should insist on school board compliance and accountability.

References

Ministry of Education Accommodation Policy for Students with Special Needs, 2000
Procedures for Administering EQAO Tests, 2000-01
Correspondence with EQAO, LDAO, 1998-2001
Correspondence with Ministry of Education re EQAO testing, LDAO, 1998-2001
Response to consultation on secondary school reform and graduation requirements, LDAO, 1996-2001
Response to Bill 30, LDAO, 1995
Guidelines for Assessing Accommodation Requirements for Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Citizenship, 2001

Policy M10 – Student Testing III: exemption from high stakes testing

LDAO advocates that students with learning disabilities only be recommended for exemption from high stakes tests such as the Grade 10 literacy test under the most rigorous conditions, such as circumstances where participation in the testing would create a significant adverse long term impact on the student's mental health and where the student and the parents are in full agreement with the proposed exemption. In most cases deferral of the testing to a subsequent year may be a more appropriate step, rather than exemption, which will prevent the student from graduating from secondary school and proceed to postsecondary education.

Rationale

Students with learning disabilities can learn if they are taught appropriately. They can demonstrate their competencies and their mastery of skills and curriculum content provided that the evaluation process is appropriately structured and they have access to the accommodations set out in their IEPs. Participation in provincial testing is an integral part of all students' education and an established requirement for secondary school graduation. Students identified as having learning disabilities should be afforded the opportunity to participate in such testing except in circumstances where the potential benefits would be clearly and unalterably outweighed by perceived adverse consequences. Exemption should not be recommended by the school as a matter of course for students who have difficulties with literacy as a result of their learning disabilities.

References

Ministry of Education Accommodation Policy for Students with Special Needs, 2000
Procedures for Administering EQAO Tests, 2000-01
Correspondence with EQAO, LDAO, 1998-2001
Correspondence with Ministry of Education re EQAO testing, LDAO, 1998-2001
Response to consultation on secondary school reform and graduation requirements, LDAO, 1996-2001
Response to Bill 30, LDAO, 1995
Guidelines for Assessing Accommodation Requirements for Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Citizenship, 2001