



Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders OAFCCD

Ontario Psychological Association *Student Assessment Project: Kindergarten to Grade 4*

In 2006, the Ministry of Education provided \$20 million to the Ontario Psychological Association (OPA) to reduce current waiting times for students who require assessments and to enhance teachers' capacity to provide effective programs for students in Junior Kindergarten to Grade 4. Every school board was required to determine their professional assessment needs, which may have included: psychological; speech and language and occupational therapy and apply for funding for their board projects. The board projects are to be completed by August 1, 2008.

Over the last two years school boards have been able to implement a variety of projects to meet the OPA goals to:

- a. reduce current wait times for students in junior kindergarten to grade 4 requiring professional assessments,
- b. enhance teacher capacity to provide effective programming for students provided with professional assessments,
- c. improve literacy/numeracy for students provided with professional assessments, and
- d. sustain these assessment process improvements for the long term.

The OPA established a provincial advisory group that includes educators, psychologists, occupational therapists and speech/language pathologists to inform the project development. Results from the first year of the projects are posted on the OPA website at: www.psych.on.ca

What Does This Mean for Parents?

The OPA project allowed for each school board to establish their own priorities and develop their own project. School boards have selected a broad range of activities and the impact on parents may include:

1. Improved early identification of students with learning problems that may require additional intervention → More students getting help earlier.

2. Referral processes for professional assessment that are well understood and used appropriately → Shorter wait times for professional assessments.
3. Professional development of professionals to better understand the needs of teachers and classroom practices → Assessment reports that are relevant and useful for Classroom Teachers.
4. Joint professional development for all staff on the development of effective Individual Education Plans (IEPs) → Assessment reports that use common language and improve IEPs.
5. Professional development for teachers to understand the value and role of professional assessments → More appropriate referrals for assessments and improved understanding of assessment reports
6. Classroom literacy and numeracy strategies that integrate assessment results and evidence based intervention → Professional assessments support efforts to improve students reading and math skills.
7. Improved assessment report formats in plain language → Reports that are easier for parents and teachers to understand.
8. Detailed feedback sessions with parents to discuss the assessment results → Improved understanding of the assessment results by parents.
9. Collaborative feedback sessions involving teachers, professionals and parents for the development of effective classroom programming for the student → Classroom strategies that are able to be implemented by teachers.
10. Follow up meetings between professionals and teacher to monitor results → Opportunity to change or improve strategies to help students.

As a parent you may not see all of these changes at your child's school, but the development of these strategies and the sharing of the information will result in gradual improvements to the system.

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