



ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

O.A.F.C.C.D. NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2002

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Provincial Updates

Education Services:

The priority activity for school boards this year is the submission of claims for the Intensive Support Amount (ISA) Grants. ISA Grants account for almost half of the special education funding that school boards receive, and it is critical that school boards submit claims as prescribed by the Ministry of Education.

In the last four years the eligibility criteria for ISA 2 and 3 Grants have changed three times. The new criteria and need for extensive documentation for 2001-2 has meant that claims for many students have had to be completely revised.. OAFCCD is concerned that this means a lot of special education resources have been diverted to assessments and paper work rather than intervention services for students. However, we have been assured that this will be the last comprehensive claim process and in future only new claims will need to be documented.

A few parents have called the office to express their concerns about the ISA Claim criteria and the way reports have been written about their child. We want to hear if you have any similar concerns. OAFCCD is able to take these concerns to the Ministry of Education, and a Task Group is monitoring the ISA process.

OAFCCD has expressed concerns about the ISA Grant process and criteria a number of times. However, it is clear the government is committed to the process and will not change course. It has been argued that the process will result in better assessment data and improved Individual Education Plans for students and we certainly hope that it is true.

The Ministry of Education Policy Branch has been continuing to work on provincial standards for special education. To date only the new standards for Individual Education Plans (IEP) and school board

annual Special Education Plans have been released. However, work continues on the program standards for each exceptionality, and Alison Morse will be representing OAFCCD on the Multiple Exceptionality Volunteer Resource Group.

Health Services:

Over the past six months OAFCCD has received a number of calls from families concerned about service reductions by Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) who provide speech and language therapy in schools. Please contact Alison Morse at (519)842-9506 if you have any similar concerns.

It would seem that the funding freeze imposed on CCACs last year is resulting in longer waiting lists, less service, or discharge from the service. OAFCCD has raised the issue with the Minister of Health, but there does not seem to be any plans to resolve the issue.

A number of consumer groups, including the Canadian Hearing Society, have taken the issue of Audiology delisting to the courts. The consumer groups argued that the delisting of Audiology services by OHIP has reduced access for services. A hearing was held in November, but as yet no decision has been announced. (See **September Newsletter for more information on Audiology delisting.**)

Member Survey

In this Newsletter you will find a short survey about OAFCCD. We would like to know which OAFCCD services you think are important and how we can best help and support families.

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey and mail or fax it back by the end of February. The availability of speech and language services has improved in the last ten years and we want to make sure we are still meeting your needs.

Self-Advocacy

A skill that needs to be developed

As our children grow and mature it is natural that they will want to be more independent. As parents we will continue to advocate for their needs, but it is also **important that the child becomes comfortable and effective as a self-advocate**. Parents will not be available in every situation, and our children should have the opportunity to develop the skills they will need to speak up for themselves.

For many students with language disorders, reading and writing are likely to present lifelong challenges. **Students who learn to advocate for themselves are more likely to receive assistance for developing literacy skills, achieving academically, and achieving in life in the broader sense, despite their reading and writing problems.** Family and professionals working with the students should work collaboratively in teaching self-advocacy strategies. Although advocacy activities need to be geared to appropriate developmental levels, **self-advocacy instruction should be part of all intervention programs for students with special needs**, and should be intensified for adolescents.

The transition from Elementary to Secondary school is an important step when the thoughts and opinions of the student should be considered. It is, therefore, important to include the student in the planning and preparation for high school. **Students at secondary schools are expected to be more independent**, and it is important that the student is able to express their needs and ask for help.

At high school peer relationships become more important and many students want to avoid receiving special attention or being treated differently. It is, therefore, important that the **student is comfortable being a self-advocate and that they understand the importance of getting the help they need.**

In order to develop self-advocacy skills the student will need **to learn specific skills** and have opportunities to practice. Younger students may need to learn **how to get an adult's attention**, how to hold a conversation and **how to explain their needs**. For a student with speech problems or a language impairment this may be very difficult. Parents should work with the school staff to identify quick and simple ways for your child to ask for help, and to

provide positive reinforcement when the child uses the technique.

As your teen matures, different strategies may be needed to reflect the greater number of adults involved, and adult expectations of behaviour and communication. Not all teachers will be sympathetic or helpful and it will be important for the student to understand this, and to know who they should contact if they encounter problems. **Ideally each student should have a school staff person they can contact** and who will help them deal with other staff. This may be a home room teacher, a special education teacher or a guidance teacher.

Effective advocacy requires a **good knowledge of the problem**, a **willingness to problem solve** and an **open mind about solutions**. One way to teach these skills is to provide a positive role model. Take the time to talk about problems, show how you negotiate with other adults and discuss how to evaluate different solutions.

Another way that the **student can develop self-advocacy skills is through involvement in the Identification and Placement Review Committee (IPRC) and Individual Education Plan (IEP) process**. Each year the identification and placement of an exceptional student must be reviewed and for many students it is appropriate to involve them in the preparation and planning. High school students can attend the IPRC and IEP meetings, but the school and family will need to work together to make sure the student is comfortable and able to contribute.

Students who are considering further education **at College or University will need both self-advocacy skills and an understanding of their rights and responsibilities** in the education system. Participation in the IPRC and IEP at high school will help them develop the skills and knowledge they will need.

Advocacy skills do not come easily and must be taught and nurtured. However, providing individuals, who have life long disabilities, with these skills will make a big difference in their future prospects.

NOTE: The new ISA eligibility profiles for students with Learning Disabilities require evidence in the IEP that the student's program addresses self-advocacy skills. Ask about including self-advocacy skills in your child's IEP.

Provincial Testing

How you can help

Province wide assessment of students provides information on how individual students are doing and helps school staff, school boards and the Ministry of Education make decisions about improving the school system.

Currently, province wide assessment involves Grade 3 and 6 tests for reading, writing and mathematics, Grade 9 for Mathematics, and the Grade 10 Literacy Test. The **Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)** is responsible for developing and analyzing provincial tests. Testing is based on the Ontario Curriculum and involves a variety of assessment activities.

All students are expected to participate in provincial testing, and **the Grade 10 Literacy Test must be completed and passed to obtain the Ontario Secondary School Diploma.** This is a new requirement in 2001-2002 and it is unclear how students with special education needs will perform in the test. It is, therefore, **critical that parents understand the importance of the Grade 10 Literacy Test** and that they help the student prepare.

Students who need special education programs and services may require **accommodations** in order to participate in the testing. Generally, students are allowed the same accommodations for provincial testing as they would have in their regular classroom setting. However, **accommodations must be identified in advance of the testing and documented in the Individual Education Plan (IEP).**

Some special education students are working on curriculum expectations which have been modified from the usual expectations of students in the same grade and class. **Modification** of the expectations in the provincial testing is not usually permitted. Some students will be **exempted** from the tests.

There are a variety of resources for parents which will help you to be more familiar with provincial assessments. In addition, there are a variety of resources to help you and your child prepare for provincial testing. The EQAO Website at www.eqao.com includes a number of helpful

resources, and most schools have information about the tests, and how they will work with students and families to prepare for the tests.

Valuable Resources for Families:

Policy/Program Memorandum No. 127 (October 5, 2001): *Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test in English Language Secondary Schools - Accommodations, Deferrals, and Exceptions.*

Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO)

Parent Handbook 2000-2001

Be Informed Be Ready - Getting Ready Guide

Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions, Deferrals, and Exemptions

Support Materials for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, Reading Tips and Writing Tips

Resources are available on the Ministry of Education or EQAO Website, or by calling OAFCCD.

Be sure to visit OAFCCD website at
<http://www.cyberus.ca/oafccd>

The OAFCCD Website has links to many resources, including the Ministry of Education and EQAO. The site has parent resource articles as well as copies of OAFCCD Position Papers which have been used to advocate for more speech and language services. If you do not have access to the Internet you can call Alison at (519)842-9506 for an index or copies of any articles.

ATTENTION SLPs!

SUMMER SPEECH CAMPS

OAFCCD will again be including a list of summer camps and programs in the May Newsletter. If any Speech-Language Pathologist, or agency, is planning to offer summer programs for children with speech and language difficulties, please provide the **information to Alison Morse by April 1, 2002.** Information can be mailed to OAFCCD at 13 Segal Drive, Tillsonburg, ON N4G 4P4 or faxed to (519)842-3228.

COMING EVENTS

February 9, 2002 (Ajax) - *Concerned About Your Child's Speech and Language Development?* Free Parent Workshop, 1-3pm with Rebecca Perlin, SLP at Speech, Language & Learning Centre. **Contact: June at (905)686-4800.**

February 14 (province wide) - People for Education are asking families to meet with local MPPs to express concerns about the crisis in Education. **Contact: People for Education at (416)534-0100 or check the Website at www.peopleforeducation.com**

February 27 (Chatham) - Dr. Ian Johnston will address school issues. **Contact: Chatham Learning Disabilities Association (519)352-2024.**

March 6 (London) - *Computers in Special Education.* The latest adaptive technologies - voice recognition, dyslexic style spell checks, etc. MCSS Workshop **Contact: Brenda Pilley (519)858-2774 Ext. 2074**

April 4, 8, 15 (Kitchener) *Special Education Workshops* by Lindsay Moir. Full day and evening presentations to help families understand the special education system and how to work effectively with school staff. Cost: \$15 - \$25, Individual consultations available. **Contact: Carrie Siewert, Developmental Services Access Centre (519)741-1121**

April 10, 17, 24 (Kitchener) *Gaining Insight into the World of Autism*, a series of evening workshops for families of children and adults with autism. Cost: \$10 per family/session. **Contact: Carrie Siewert, Developmental Services Access Centre (519)741-1121**

April 12 (Mississauga) - *Classroom Discourse - A Key to Literacy*, a workshop for Speech - Language Pathologists by Marion Blank Ph.D. **Contact: Susan Bassili/Josie Caron (905)890-1010 Ext. 2147**

April 15 -16 (Thunder Bay) - A two day conference *"What the Eye Doesn't See: Understanding and Managing Learning Disabled Children"* featuring Dr. Maggie Mamen, Psychologist and Author. Cost: \$250. **Contact: Linda VanEs, Learning Disabilities Association of Thunder Bay, (807)622-9741.**

May 7 (Richmond Hill) *School Discipline & the*

Exceptional Student by Lindsay Moir. **Starts at 7pm, donation of \$15 - \$25. Contact: York Region Autism Society (905)780-1590.**

May 31 - June 1 (Toronto) - *"Childhood Apraxia of Speech: Practical Applications for Therapy"* a workshop by Michael A. Crary, sponsored by Expressive Communication Help Organization (E.C.H.O.) **Contact: (905)780-1489**

(Ajax) - Children and Youth Programs, Saturday Sessions include *Language to Literacy, Reading Readiness* (Primary and Junior), *Social Skills* (Primary, Junior and Youth), *Daily Living Skills - Money Management.* **Contact: Speech, Language & Learning Centre (905)686-4800.**

(London) - *"More than just Talking"* and *"Cracking the Code - Enhance School Age Literacy Skills"*, Free monthly parent workshops are offered regularly. **Contact: London Speech and Language Centre, Bonnie Riddolls (519)642-7370**

New and Notable

North Words, the Kenora - Rainy River District Preschool Speech and Language Service System has an innovative radio program. A short information show is heard twice a day on many local radio stations. This is just another example of the innovative approaches to service that have come from the Preschool Speech and Language Initiative.

OAFCCD Annual Meeting

All members of OAFCCD are invited to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in May. Date and location are yet to be decided but a notice will be mailed out in April.

SEAC Reps Needed

Each school board in Ontario has a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), and OAFCCD is eligible to nominate a parent volunteer and Alternate to sit on these committees. We are currently looking for volunteers in many boards, including the Thames Valley board. If you are interested, please call Alison Morse at (519)842-9506 for more information.