

2.12: Staff Development

Overall Goal

Professional development of all staff is critical for the improvement of instruction. The Lambton Kent District School Board has made a commitment to ensure that all staff is informed about Ministry of Education directives, current trends and topics related to best practices for learners with special needs.

Regular in-service opportunities for administrators, teachers and educational assistants are planned each year, in a variety of ways. The focus is related to both general education curriculum and special education approaches to meeting instructional needs. Due to the size of the district, many presentations are repeated in two or more locations for easier access by staff. Mandatory meetings regarding Ministry or Board initiatives are offered during the workday. Voluntary workshops for development of strategies and techniques are offered after school hours.

Ways in Which Staff Provide Input

Input to the Board's staff development plan is sought through informal needs assessments from teachers and administrators, from conversations with staff and from evaluations completed at each after-school voluntary workshop. Input is requested when groups of educators meet or when issues about Special Education arise.

Ways in Which SEAC is consulted about staff development

SEAC members can make inquiries about staff development and bring forward suggestions at the monthly SEAC meetings through Association Reports. Also, staff development priorities are often a direct result of recommendations from Program Review Committees and each committee has SEAC representation. SEAC is also informed about ministry initiatives and plans for staff in-service.

- As a result of input received and suggestions put forward, a sampling of the offerings to staff are listed below:
 - workshops cover such topics as autism, ABA, giftedness, learning disabilities, assessment and evaluation, and assistive technologies
 - networking meetings for teachers of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities
 - in-service for Educational Assistants regarding strategies, resources and interventions
 - focus on inclusion through regional committee membership
 - information sharing with principals and teachers in a variety of ways and venues (e.g., Area Principal Meetings, Area Resource Team Meetings, Multi-disciplinary Team Meetings, etc.)

Determining Priorities

Priorities for staff development are determined in a variety of ways:

- as an outcome of program reviews
- as recommended by SEAC for specific program initiatives or procedural issues
- in response to Ministry of Education initiatives in general and special education
- as requested by staff or community agencies
- from evaluations submitted by teachers attending workshops
- Area Principals' Meetings

Staff are made aware of these opportunities through memos and e-mails online through PD Place. In addition, staff are encouraged to contact their Special Education Coordinator with requests for professional development, or with recommendations of speakers or topics.

In-Service Training and Other Professional Development Activities

Staff development is provided through system in-service to ensure an understanding of legislation and ministry policy on special education. Annual procedures such as the IPRC, the Special Education Equipment Amount (SEA) process, and other Ministry directed changes of legislation, policy or practice are presented to all school administrators and special education staff. At times, workshops must be planned on an extremely short timeline in order for staff to meet Ministry of Education deadlines. New teachers are provided with an overview of special education legislation and policy at an orientation session at the beginning of the school year. New administrators are offered a workshop on legislation, regulations, policy and legal issues.

Each month Principals, Resource Teachers and other Special Education staff are provided with a Special Education Update is placed on the staff web Portal, with a link being provided via email. Networking meetings are scheduled for teachers on a regular basis throughout the year. Through these area resource team meetings, informal discussions with staff, and new developments from the Ministry, ongoing staff development needs are identified, and professional development plans are revised throughout the school year.

After-school workshops are available and included in PD Place. Evaluations from these workshops are used to determine future topics.

In addition, individual or groups of schools' schedule professional activity day workshops, and staff attend voluntary conferences and workshops offered by outside agencies or organizations. Special Education issues are often a topic for discussion or presentation at many regularly scheduled staff meetings.

Periodic memos are circulated to Principals and school staff, as appropriate, in order to provide current information regarding Ministry and Board initiatives and procedures. Staff are given copies of regulations, memorandum, checklists and resources in order to assist them meet the challenges of Special Education administrative requirements. Appendices provide a summary of staff development offered by the Lambton Kent District School Board:

Appendix 2.12.1	Long term overview of Special Education staff development
Appendix 2.12.2	After-School and Other Workshops Offered with a Special Education Focus from the 2012-2013 school year through to the 2018-2019 school year
Appendix 2.12.3	Professional development day offerings for educational assistants

In addition, there have been half-day workshops for teachers and administrators on IEPs, Hearing and Vision Awareness, Legal Issues, and Administrative Procedures.

Budget Allocation for Staff Development in Special Education

Although there is no specific funding in the Special Education grants for staff development, we offer a number of opportunities for professional development through grants to other areas in the budget. We work cooperatively with the Program Department to offer in-service for shared initiatives such as early intervention and access relevant in-service applicable to both special education and curriculum.

Ways Staff are made aware of the Report and of Opportunities

Staff are informed of the plan and of professional development in a variety of ways:

- A monthly Special Education Update is uploaded to the Web Portal; a link to the document is provided to special education staff
- at in-service and area meetings
- through the Board's website
- School Council Meetings
- Area Resource Teacher Meetings