



MEMORANDUM

Memo No. 19-043

TO: Trustees
Student Trustees

FROM: Camille Williams-Taylor, Director of Education and Secretary of the Board
Peter Symmonds, Superintendent of Learning Support Services

DATE: 15 March 2019

RE: **Impact of Changes to Ontario Autism Program (OAP)**

This memo is in response to a request from Trustees to develop a plan to assess the impact of the announced changes to the Ontario Autism Program (OAP). It is anticipated that this is the first of a series of memoranda which will be developed for trustees as new and updated information continues to emerge.

Provincial Government Announcements

Date	Ministry Responsible	Summary of Announcement
6 February 2019	Children, Community and Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reform to existing OAP to eliminate wait lists and provide equality and sustainability to support children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
11 March 2019	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fully subsidized ASD-specific Additional Qualification (AQ) course for teachersDouble funding to the Geneva Centre for Autism to provide training for educators and Educational Assistants (EAs), including access to the Registered Behaviour Technician (RBT) courseFund behaviour expertise and student supportsExpand after school skills development programs for students with ASDSupport students transitioning into school through the Connections for Students modelFund school boards for each newly enrolled student with ASD to an average of \$12,300

Initial Planning Phase

Following the announcement of changes to the OAP, staff from Learning Support Services (LSS) contacted the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) which holds responsibility for managing the funding for children receiving Intensive Behaviour Intervention (IBI) / Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) therapy in our region. CHEO has advised that they are aware of 28 students who are receiving funding for therapy greater than 20 hours per week and whose funding envelope will change between 1 April - 1 July 2019. We have also been notified that there are presently 146 students who are receiving any level of therapy and an additional 369 students on the waitlist for therapy services.

This data represents children whose parents have informed CHEO that their designated home school district is the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB). It does not include children whose parents have not declared a school district (e.g., kindergarten aged students where attendance at school is optional), children whose parents may be paying for therapy privately, or children whose parents may elect to change school districts as a result of the changes to the OAP.

At this time, there is no central way of tracking who these students are and their present attendance schedule. CHEO is working with the OCDSB to help support families facing a transition as a result of the changes to the OAP. A letter will be distributed to the families of children receiving direct service through CHEO asking them to connect with their child's school well in advance of changes to school attendance.

It is more difficult to communicate directly with families of children who are receiving IBI/ABA therapy through private providers (either directly funded through CHEO or paid for privately by families). CHEO will support the distribution of a letter to the private providers and LSS will provide instructions regarding distribution of those letters.

The District will communicate via social media requesting that parents/guardians speak to their child's school principal well in advance of any anticipated changes in attendance patterns. In addition to reaching students identified above, it is hoped that this strategy will also reach those families who would be attending the OCDSB but are paying for IBI/ABA therapy privately.

Finally, LSS has requested information from the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) regarding the number of students on small vehicle transportation. There is a potential that there may be changes to the costs associated with transportation as a result of new students enrolled in the District.

Initial Data Gathering Phase

LSS continues to develop a plan to gather the necessary information to inform future decision-making and to ensure that students' needs are being met. With the information known to date, it is difficult to determine how the announced changes will affect families, students and schools. Some critical information is required to ensure as seamless a transition as possible to the new OAP. Information needs include identifying by name who the students are who will be impacted by the changes. Developing an awareness of the level of IBI/ABA therapy the student was receiving prior to 1 April 2019 as well as the

therapy provider, therapy type (IBI or ABA), and number of days in therapy/school will help inform our understanding of the impact following the implementation date of the reformed OAP. Of critical importance, also, is the effective date of any changes in attendance to ensure that appropriate supports are in place for the student. The chart below outlines some of the planned data gathering methods based on the information known to date.

Area of Impact	Timeline	Data Source / Methodology	Purpose / Potential Implications
Number of current students with ASD receiving IBI/ABA therapy	April - June 2019 Fall 2019	Survey to principals/ Learning Support Teachers (LSTs)	Some students with ASD have their needs met in the regular classroom (some with additional support) while others are placed in specialized program classes (depending on student need and they attend school more than half-time)
Changes in attendance patterns for existing students with ASD	April - June 2019 Fall 2019	Survey to principals/ Learning Support Teachers (LSTs); OSTA	EA support if in regular program; Transportation
Number of new students with ASD	April - June 2019 Fall 2019	Survey to principals/ Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) ASD Team database	Need for additional ASD specialized program classes; Need for additional EAs
ASD Team	April - June 2019 Fall 2019	Number of referrals, intake procedures and students who have pre-registered for the upcoming year; <i>Connections for Students</i> tracking	Develop clearer sense of student need
Transportation	April - June 2019 Fall 2019	OSTA; Number of students on small vehicle transportation; Number of students on solo transportation;	Transportation funding envelope

		Number of days small vehicle transportation provided	
Current Staff Capacity	April - June 2019	Human Resources; Numbers of staff with special education and AQ of <i>Teaching Students with Communication Needs</i>	LSS plans for future professional learning; Access to AQ course for teachers; Planning for 2019-2020 PA Day focused on supporting students with ASD; Planning for 2020-2021 PA Day for all educators in supporting students with ASD
New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP)	Fall 2019 - Winter 2020	Human Resources; Numbers of teachers involved in NTIP program 2019-2020	Planning for increased ABA-based training opportunities for NTIP teachers
ASD Specialized Program Classes	June - October 2019	LSS Analysis; Update numbers of specialized program classes and associated supports	Special education funding envelope; Academic, support and professional support staffing
Student Achievement and Well-Being	April - June 2019 Fall 2019	Stakeholder feedback; Brief survey of impacted schools	To develop a deeper understanding on the impact of changes to the OAP at the school level

Future Action

Using the data gathered, LSS will engage in an assessment of the impacts on student learning and well-being as a result of the changes to the OAP. Ongoing evaluation of student needs and the impact on schools will be required in order to determine the efficacy of our existing structures and processes to support students with ASD. Longer term planning will be required in an effort to inform the 2020-2021 budget planning process.

LSS will continue to monitor how families use the funding provided under the new OAP. Early understanding of the reformed OAP indicate that families will have greater choice in how they utilize the funding. While families may choose to use the funds to purchase IBI/ABA therapy, there may also be families who choose to use their funding for respite care or after school and weekend social skills programs that are offered in the community.

Potential Future Impacts

The above plan and data gathering strategies are designed with what is known about the proposed changes to the OAP at the current time. It is important to recognize that parents, CHEO, IBI/ABA therapy providers and school districts are awaiting a clear indication of what the full changes to the OAP will entail.

Further analysis of Memorandum 2019:B07 is required to understand the impact, if any, of the existing special education funding including the Behaviour Expertise Amount (BEA), Special Incidence Portion (SIP), Special Equipment Amount (SEA) and the Multi-disciplinary Team (MDT) funding as well as the reference to an average funding of \$12,300 per pupil.

In addition, the OCDSB is in its third year of the After School Skills Development pilots which have provided support for students with autism utilizing the CHEO programs Art of Play and Art of Conversation and UCLA's Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS®). An analysis of the continued implementation of these programs will be conducted once funding levels are confirmed by the Ministry. While the Ministry has indicated the continuation of the RBT online training module, the Dedicated Space pilot which provides space for private IBI/ABA therapy providers to serve students directly in school has not been confirmed.

Concurrently, the District is expecting communication from the Ministry regarding the results of their consultation on class size and kindergarten on 15 March 2019. In addition, further impact may be realized once the Grants for Student Needs are announced on 11 April 2019.

As indicated above, further information will be provided as it becomes available.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Peter Symmonds at peter.symmonds@ocdsb.ca

cc Senior Staff
 Manager, Board Services
 Special Education Advisory Committee
 Corporate Records