

AUTISM AND EDUCATION: WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT DOING NOW?

<p style="text-align: center;">THE GOVERNMENT'S TALKING POINTS:</p> <p>http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/special_ed_update.html#_Toc445455677</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">THE OAC'S RESPONSE:</p> <p>http://www.ontarioautismcoalition.com</p>
<p>TRAINING</p> <p>In 2016-17, the Geneva Centre for Autism will provide a combination of face to face and online training as follows:</p> <p>The Summer Institute in Toronto (August 25-26, 2016) will address both the needs of educators newer to autism and provide specialized training to educators supporting youth with ASD to successfully transition through secondary school and beyond. In addition, an invited keynote speaker will share best practices in supporting students with ASD. It is expected that up to 500 educators will benefit from this in-class training opportunity.</p>	<p>TRAINING</p> <p>Staff working with children with autism in school should have the same level of training as the ones working in the Autism Programs.</p> <p>This type of introductory knowledge would be appropriate to be demonstrated by Principals, Vice Principals, SLPs, OTs and other members of Student Support Teams. Classroom staff, however, should be required to complete at least the equivalent to RBT training for the beginning) and later to be provided with ongoing support (supervision) by.</p> <p>MCYS offers a “Grant Assistance Program for Autism Professionals” in order to increase the number of qualified staff in the Autism Intervention Programs and ABA-based services. Eligible training programs under this grant must be provided by Accredited Ontario Colleges or Universities. Training programs like what is offered by the Geneva Centre for Autism would not meet the eligibility requirements for this grant. MCYS recognizes that more extensive quality training is required for professionals working with children with autism. Why doesn't the Ministry of Education meet this standard?</p> <p>“It's a nice start, but it's nowhere near enough. It's like sending B.Sc. university students for a weekend workshop on cardiac surgery and saying that they can be cardiologists. Ongoing oversight of ABA programs whether in the schools or in treatment centres requires specific professionals to be involved on an ongoing basis.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Parent Comment</p>
<p>PILOT PROJECT</p> <p>In the 2015/16 school year, the ministry provided \$250K to the Ontario Education Services Corporation (OESC) to support a pilot, Conscious Classrooms (CCs) supporting well-being of students with ASD, developmental disabilities and other exceptionalities, including the prevention and de-escalation of challenging student behaviours, in four district school boards. The pilot began in spring 2016. The pilot evaluation is underway.</p>	<p>Students get a sense of well-being from their success as learners. Teaching students with ASD using ABA techniques should be the first priority, and pilot projects for “nice ideas” should be farther down the list.</p> <p>“Let ABA professionals have a say on that.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Parent Comment</p>

<p>COLLABORATION WITH MCYS</p> <p>On March 29, 2016, MCYS announced the new Ontario Autism Program which will provide children and youth with critical interventions faster, and provide services that are better matched to their needs. As part of the MCYS announcement to redesign autism services, the Ministry of Education has committed to introduce new measures to better align community-based ABA services and school-based instructional ABA (e.g., information-sharing expectations, best practice guidelines, training).</p>	<p>We aren't talking about taking kids out of class to do ABA programming in a room down the hall, or waiting until after school to work on social skills. We want ABA training for classroom staff so that they can use the best evidence-based teaching methods when working with our kids.</p> <p>"In the TDSB, Autism classes are teaching students with average or below average cognitive development only, who are able to demonstrate learning abilities at the grade level. "Typically non-verbal students with ASD and those with cognitive delay are not getting quality ABA programming, even if they have demonstrated meaningful improvement in IBI." <p style="text-align: right;">—Parent Comment</p> </p>
<p>KEY FACTS</p> <p>The total number of students formally identified as having an ASD by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) in publicly funded district school boards, including school authorities, as of the 2013-14 school year is 18,899.</p>	<p>IPRC meetings may be delayed for up to a year, even when the student has a formal diagnosis from a doctor. IPRCs are not just about placement and exceptionality designations, they are also about programs and supports and needs. Individual Education Plan (IEP) creation takes longer, and there is no guarantee that what the IEP states that the student needs will be provided.</p> <p>This year (2016-17) there are more than 20,000 students with an ASD diagnosis. In this environment, cuts to the number of Education Assistants makes no sense whatsoever.</p> <p>"When I asked questions about more details regarding the IPRC, I was told that the meeting was only five minutes long and if I wanted to make a separate appointment they can go into more detail." <p style="text-align: right;">—Parent Comment</p> </p>
<p>THE CONNECTIONS PROGRAM</p> <p>All district school boards and Ministry of Children and Youth (MCYS) funded Autism Intervention Program (AIP) providers are implementing <i>Connections for Students</i> model across the province.</p> <p>The <i>Connections for Students</i> model is centred on multi-disciplinary, student-specific, school-based transition teams that are established approximately six months before a child prepares to transition from intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) services provided through the MCYS funded AIP to ABA instructional methods in school, and continue for six months after entry or continuing in school</p>	<p>Well, our opinion on that is in the OAC Education recommendation reports. It's not working.</p> <p>"The Connections worker actually could have made a difference, and she had extensive experience. Even with an experienced worker, nothing was implemented because the school wasn't bound to follow through. She told me off the record that we had an "implementation" problem. It comes down to the implementation - you can have a BCBA, (we did) - they can graph, follow a CAPS, take data, etc. etc. but when the board is pulling supports and offering untrained supports - the best documented programming will fall flat." <p style="text-align: right;">—Parent Comment</p> </p>

<p>PPM 140</p> <p>In 2007, the Ministry of Education released PPM 140. School boards have been directed through this PPM to use ABA methods with students with ASD where appropriate and in accordance with students' IEP. As required by PPM 140, the ministry has developed and implemented an annual process to monitor implementation of PPM 140 by district school boards.</p>	<p>The Ministry of Education likes to say that their parent survey shows that PPM 140 is being applied. The problem is that they don't offer a "not being used at all" answer option.</p> <p>When a student has a diagnosis of ASD, ABA should be considered mandatory.</p> <p>"The school denying ABA programing to kids who are not very 'high functioning,' is a very freestyle interpretation of who may benefit from ABA. No more alternative facts, please!" —Parent Comment</p> <p>"ABA programs are not only for kids who are able to progress at grade level.?" —Parent Comment</p> <p>"There's no benefit to the Ministries' "process to monitor implementation of PPM140" if there is no requirement to actually implement it." —Parent Comment</p> <p>"Even PPM 140 comes back to training and qualified supports. I've observed that many staff haven't even heard of the PPM, and they also don't understand what the directives even mean." —Parent Comment</p>
<p>FUNDING</p> <p>Beginning in 2008-09 all district school boards received new funding to hire additional board level ABA expertise professionals to support principals, teachers, and multi-disciplinary transition teams by providing and coordinating ASD training and resources, and facilitating collaboration between service providers and schools. Funding allowing school boards to hire additional board level ABA expertise professionals has been transferred into the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) through the Behaviour Expertise Amount (BEA) beginning in 2010-11. The total 2016-17 BEA amount is approximately \$11.7M.</p>	<p>Wait times for board level teams to visit a student are rising. There is no requirement that their recommendations are followed, and no supervision if they are.</p> <p>It's time to use the funding to train the classroom staff, because they are where the action is.</p> <p>"If the government really wants this to work, they need one ABA expert per school." —Parent Comment</p>