



Idak • Learning Disabilities Association of Kingston

The right to learn, the power to achieve

FALL 2023 UPDATE

OCTOBER IS LD AWARENESS MONTH...

...and there's a lot going on! What a lovely summer we just had! We hope you and your families had lots of fun! We hope the kids are happy to be returning to school routines, with many positive changes happening in our local school boards. There's a lot going on, and a lot more coming, and LDAK will be doing our best to keep the community informed about how these changes might affect you and your children.

Literacy Education in both boards has shifted to a Science of Reading based curriculum in response to the *Right to Read Report* and Ministry directives. This means that students, especially K-5 students, will be learning to read based on research supported strategies rather than historical approaches. Hopefully this cross-province shift will significantly reduce the over 30% of public students who currently leave school without attaining functional literacy. At the same time, the Ministry has recommended, but not mandated, that students receive **literacy assessments in grades 1-3**, with adjustments to teaching and accommodations based on those assessments. Because the assessments are recommended but not mandated, not all students across the province will receive them (funding constraints and collective bargaining issues are factors). However, our boards are committed to assessing as many students as possible and will respond to family concerns about the need for assessing their children. If you have concerns that your child is struggling with learning to read and want to know whether they have had an assessment, or how to ensure they are assessed, talk to the classroom teacher.

Inclusive Education is another initiative both Kingston school boards are engaging in. We are so happy to see this happening, and commend the boards for their commitment to educating every student. Inclusive education (go to <https://www.ldakingston.com/post/speak-up-for-ability-2023-webinar-recording-and-resource> for information on this topic) is a huge challenge in terms of resource requirements (more educators per student, smaller class sizes, accommodating a range of learning needs within a single classroom) and these types of initiatives are not funded adequately (to say the least). So hats off to our boards for using their imaginations and commitment to teaching to come up with innovative practices. One of the benefits of an inclusive classroom should be reduced need for individual student accommodations and program modifications

(e.g. IEPs), however, there is also the risk that students might still fall through the cracks if their specific learning needs are not directly supported. In the meantime, IEPs are still the standard intervention. This is a developing story that we will follow and talk about.

Mental Health Initiatives continue to be a prime focus of interest among our community as evidenced by the uptake of our social media and visits to our website. The Limestone board is implementing a new program in schools (Student Mental Health in Action) that educates students about mental health issues and provides support for dealing with and finding resources for their individual challenges. It was piloted successfully in winter 2023 and will be expanded to the lower grades during the current school year. We plan to offer another webinar on mental health this fall. Stay posted.

What's Up With Us?

We are planning to hold a webinar on mental health issues, hopefully in November, and we are hoping that we can engage the lead of Limestone's new Mental Health Initiative to present on that program and on general tips for supporting children's mental health. Stay posted for the date. We are, as always, continuing to pursue funding opportunities (we could use more help here), monitoring the world as it pertains to learning disabilities, and sending information out to all of you. We are planning for our Spring Speak Up for Ability forum, a workshop on dysgraphia (difficulty writing), and a couple of webinars based on interests expressed by the community. We're looking forward to an active 2024, hopefully with stable funding and all of our wonderful volunteers on hand.

Supporters

