



Quarterly Newsletter

April 2021

Spring has sprung! We hope that you are well and enjoying the arrival of some warmer weather. Please see below for important updates and resources from Integration Action for Inclusion and our allies. Be sure to follow us on Twitter @InclusionOnt and visit our [news page](#) for more information.

In this edition, we want to:

- Tell you about how we are working to influence inclusive education policy
- Let you know how you can contribute and support
- Provide you with links to additional resources

Influence:

There are many different ways we can help influence change and promote inclusive education in Ontario. One of those ways is through Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC). All school boards are required to have a SEAC which is responsible for providing important advice on special education to their local board or school authority. SEACs should have representatives from parents/family organizations, including those advocating for inclusive education, however in reality this representation can often fall short.

IAI has been working hard to improve this representation. IAI Board member Natasha Lai was recently accepted as a representative on the York Catholic District School Board SEAC. We are also working on representation in the Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB), and recently wrote a [letter to John McAllister](#), the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Upper Canada District School Board, regarding our concerns about barriers to membership to the SEAC for UCDSB.

Our goal is for more SEACs to have representatives for inclusive education. IAI continues to work with our SEAC representatives and allies, working together on initiatives to best support families in their strive for inclusive education in Ontario. We are continuing with our quarterly meetings with IAI Reps and other SEAC allies. Our last meeting was held in February where we discussed issues pertaining to each locale including accommodations during COVID 19, representation and more. We will host our next meeting in May 2021. If you want to pursue SEAC membership in your district, please let us know and we will work with you.

Support:

In April we celebrate Volunteer Appreciation week – we would like to take this opportunity to thank our dedicated volunteers without whom IAI would not be where it is today! If you are interested in volunteering with IAI please fill out and submit our [Volunteer Sign Up form](#). There are many ways to contribute – big and small: sharing your story, blogging, organizing local events, organizing a local IAI chapter, helping expand IAI membership, mentoring other parents, and becoming a SEAC representative to name a few. And of course, [donating funds](#) to support new initiatives. We will reach out as volunteer jobs, including supporting our new community initiatives, become available. We can find something that meets your skills and time available.

In the coming months, IAI will be teaming up with community groups to work on special projects and initiatives. For example, IAI recently engaged in a collaborative effort with the founder of [Thorncliffe Park Autism Support Network](#) (TPASN). TPASN was founded by parents of children with neurodevelopmental disorders. It is a non-profit organization providing developmental community based integrated services in the East York area for children and youth with autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders. TPASN is a new group, founded in July 2019, that serves over 20 families with representatives from diverse communities: newcomers, refugees, single parents, etc. TPASN families need education, support and peer mentoring to learn how to access and navigate the Ontario educational system and services.

A great way you can support and advocate for inclusive education in your area is to form a local IAI chapter. Local chapters help spread the message about inclusive education, provide local community support and help us understand the different needs of different areas. For more information on Local Chapters please visit [our website](#).

Additional Resources:

Article: Policy Snapshot by Community Living Ontario titled [The Myth of Economies of Scale in Developmental Services](#) regarding congregated care for people living with developmental disabilities.

COVID 19 Vaccine Information: See the Government of Ontario's announcement [Populations Eligible for Phase Two COVID-19 Vaccination](#) as well as Inclusion Canada's page for [COVID 19 and Disability Resources](#) for further information.

Important Bulletin: The Ontario government is keeping thousands of children waiting for help on a Special Services at Home (SSAH) waitlist. People for Personalized Funding (PFPF) have created an advocacy kit for increasing Special Services at Home. Please see full bulletin [here](#). You can help by contacting your MPP and let them know that Ontario's 2021-22 Budget must enhance SSAH funding so that the waiting list is eliminated, and all children and youth are supported as soon as they become eligible. You can download the advocacy kit including a sample message and information on finding your local MPP on their [Resource Page](#).

Please also see our Global News interview on this subject from July 2020: [Family of boy with rare neurological disorder pleading with Ontario government to release funding](#)

Online Resource Centre: Community Living Ontario has launched a new page dedicated to Inclusive Education. Visit the page [here](#) for further resources and listed allies (including IAI).

Article: This article from Edutopia titled [Students with Limited Verbal Capabilities Can Thrive in Inclusive Classrooms](#) provides an in-depth look at augmented and alternative communication (ACC) and inclusive education.

Video Series: The Down Syndrome Association of Ontario has released a number of videos featuring [yoga instruction](#) and music therapy which can be accessed via their [YouTube Channel \(subscribe here\)](#). Head to the playlists tab to see listed videos by category!