



ASSOCIATION FOR BRIGHT CHILDREN OF ONTARIO

www.abcontario.ca

SOCIÉTÉ POUR LES ENFANTS DOUÉS

abcinfo@abcontario.ca

ET SURDOUÉS DE L'ONTARIO

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Toronto, Ontario, M6R 3B5

ANNUAL REPORT 2008

EXECUTIVE 2008-2010

Interim President	–	Dennis Ensing
Vice-President	–	Dennis Ensing
Past President	–	Christine Thammavongsa
Secretary –Treasurer	–	Arsenio Bonifacio

Advocacy

Legislation Liaison	–	Rebecca Hurwitz
Education Liaison	–	David Mason
SEAC Coordinator	–	Patricia Pugh

Outreach

Resource	–	Phyllis Smith
Business Development	–	Marina Magagna
Public Relations	–	Rosanna DelGrosso
Volunteer Development	–	Vacant

Other

Executive Director	–	Claire Collins (eff. February 2009)
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Email Inquiries	–	Gina Heisz
Webmaster	–	Marc Comeau
Bulletin Board	–	Annie Dupuis
2009 Conference	–	TBD

STRUCTURE OF ABC

The members of the Association for Bright Children of Ontario takes this opportunity annually to thank all of our SEAC representatives, chapter presidents, chapter executives, provincial executive, provincial committee chairs and other ABC members who sit on various provincial and local committees. ABC is primarily a volunteer organization based on a self-help and mutual support model and without the efforts of all these members ABC could not serve the needs of our gifted and bright students.

In 2008 a significant change in the organization's business model was introduced and adopted along with a realignment of the Executive roles. We are pleased to announce that two key outcomes have been achieved in the 9 months since the 2008 Annual General Meeting. Membership has already grown from 500 to almost 1,800 families. In January we also recruited and hired an Executive Director, Claire Collins. Please take time to introduce yourself to Claire today.

PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE

Provincial Executive meetings were held by conference call on May 26, 2008, July 2, 2008 & February 15, 2009 and in person on November 15, 2008 in Toronto. To facilitate operation of an Executive that is spread across the province, routine business is conducted throughout the year by telephone and email.

During the year, a committee of the Executive consisting of Dennis Ensing, Christine Thammavongsa, and Arsenio Bonifacio were charged to review, interview and select an Executive Director. Several excellent candidates emerged from the ad posted on the web site from which three candidates were screened and asked to attend a telephone interview. Then two of these candidates were interviewed in person following which a recommendation was made to select Claire Collins.

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

The Provincial Council includes the provincial executive officers, committee chairs and all chapter presidents. SEAC representatives were also invited to attend these meetings. The Provincial Council met once since the 2007 Annual General Meeting on November 15, 2008 in Toronto where they were introduced to the new web site and trained in its capabilities to accept locally generated content. There will be another meeting this spring.

ADVOCACY

Legislative Liaison

The Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) advises the Minister of Education on any matter related to the establishment and provision of special education programs and services for exceptional students, including the identification and provision of early intervention programs for students with special needs. ABC member Becky Hurwitz was appointed by the Minister of Education to serve as the representative for the gifted exceptionality for 2006-2009; ABC has nominated Dave Mason to succeed her. Through MACSE, ABC has given feedback about concerns in district school boards, provided advice on content for a forthcoming publication "Learning for All", and continued to speak up about the need for policies in support of acceleration of gifted students.

A revised edition of DEVELOPING INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLANS FOR GIFTED STUDENTS: Information for Parents, co-authored by Rosann Lacalamita and Becky Hurwitz was completed. The guide is available in its entirety in French; the IEP samples will be available also in Mandarin.

ABC has been an advisor in the development by the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario of an online tutorial on Individual Education Plans. Sylvia Kwan and Becky Hurwitz represented ABC.

In addition to meetings of MACSE and Consortium on Gifted (COG) where ABC regularly has opportunities to meet with high level Ministry officials, ABC has:

- Recommended content for the forthcoming publication “Learning for All,”
- Advocated for parity with respect to dual enrolment opportunities (tuition-free university courses, awarding of dual credits at the secondary level),
- Advocated that the gifted students are included in research initiatives approved by the new research branch, and noted to the Auditor General, following the release of the December, 2008 audit of Special Education that focused on Individual Education Plans but excepted gifted students, that the same standards apply to gifted students.

ABC also requested that the Association of Chief Psychologists with Ontario School Boards reconsider their position with respect to acceleration in view of the strong evidence of the efficacy of acceleration.

SEAC

Advocacy efforts include those of ABC representatives sitting on Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC) at 23 district school boards. Every Ontario School Board should have a SEAC. With the return of an ABC SEAC Coordinator, Pat Pugh, ABC can begin to rebuild and add to our network of SEAC representatives on School Boards across the province and continue to provide a voice for the gifted population at a local level. 2008-2009 has seen the nomination of several new SEAC reps, but there are still many Boards where we have no representation. We are always looking for ABC members, who are willing to assume the important role of SEAC representative. If you are interested in what is involved in SEAC and would like more information, the SEAC Coordinator can be reached at seac@abcontario.ca. SEAC reps can expect regular e-mails containing material, which may be of benefit to the gifted community in their areas. As well, the new website is a wealth of information. SEAC reps can also use the contact e-mail to let the Coordinator know what is happening at their local School Boards, which will help ABC Ontario to better advocate for the province’s gifted population as a whole.

Educational Liaison Report 2008 (David Mason)

It has been a most excellent learning experience to be part of the Executive for Association for Bright Children of Ontario. I am very impressed with the spirit, experience and level of energy that this advocacy group exhibits on behalf of children. As a former teacher of gifted students, I am finding outlets to apply my knowledge to the larger role of advocacy and politics. Given my neophyte background with ABC, you will have to forgive me for the small steps I have taken in the role of Educational Liaison in the current year.

On a local level we have reactivated the Bruce –Grey local chapter of ABC. Piggy backing on this development, I have found a position on the Bluewater School Board’s SEAC. Collectively we hope to make a difference for all special education students in this jurisdiction. It is apparent through my involvement in SEAC, that there is a reductive environment for all special education students. It is also apparent that we have common issues with advocates for other exceptionalities.

Becky Hurwitz has started a data gathering Program for ABC that will clarify what support individual School Boards provide to Gifted Students. I am most pleased to be involved in this collection of data and look forward to the analysis. This data will illustrate a clear baseline of Gifted services and support in Ontario. This data will enable ABC to advocate even more effectively in future years.

If any members have specific ideas, questions or mindsets that you would like to explore, please feel free to contact Dave through the ABC website.

OUTREACH

Resource

In an effort to conserve costs and reinvest in other areas, including the web site, we have moved to electronic distribution of our quarterly News Magazine by email. Resource has focused on developing the electronic newsletter template to use to communicate with members via email. We have broadcast two messages successfully, with only a couple of small glitches that did not affect members. We have started archiving newsletters on the new website, to be joined by past newsletters. We will focus first on newsletters held in an electronic format and will consider how to add older newsletters available only in print later.

Business Development

MAJOR GIFTS AND SPONSORSHIP – In the area of Major Gifts, we have approached two foundations thus far and have a goal of 3 major sponsors to be in place this year. We are currently working on adding e-commerce and sponsorship logos to the website.

In order to connect more individuals and families to the resources they need, ABC Ontario decided in May 2008 to waive its annual \$40 membership fee on a trial basis until August 2009. Although this makes ABC Ontario more accessible to more people, it also increases our reliance on donations. As an essentially volunteer organization, ABC depends on donations in order to accomplish its objectives.

DONATIONS – Last year we transitioned to a donation model with free memberships. This has already broadened the membership base substantially. Our major objective for 2009 is to ensure the financial viability of the organization with a broad base of donation revenue to fully replace the former membership model. As a charitable association, ABC Ontario issues receipts for income tax purposes. We are grateful for financial and goods and services contributions made by our members and by the business community.

GRANTS – Recently ABC received approval for another Parent Engagement Office of the Ministry of Education for Parent Reaching Out (PRO) Grant. This one of \$18,500 will be used to develop a Resource Guide outlining the programs and services available to gifted children in Ontario. This is the third PRO Grant ABC has received since the program was started. Our previous PRO grant of \$15,000 funded a project to develop additional translations plus website infrastructure and resources.

Web Site

ABC Ontario is very excited to begin 2009 with a new website at www.abcontario.ca. The updated website platform allows ABC Ontario to:

- ✓ Share resources with and receive input from members
- ✓ Manage online conference and event registration.
- ✓ Connect members with others who have common goals and interests.
- ✓ Collaborate with volunteers and members on special projects.

Members will be able to:

- ✓ Instantly update their account information online.
- ✓ Locate valuable resources to help them advocate for their children.
- ✓ Communicate with other members.
- ✓ Learn more about gifted education in Ontario.

Members need to register on the site in order to access all of the features of the new site. Eventually, many resources will be available only to registered members. Simple directions are available on the site. If you haven't already, register now!

ABC Ontario is always looking for volunteers. During the year there were a number of opportunities missed to present to various groups on ABC's behalf because someone was not available. Please let us know if there is an area you would like to help in.

CURRENT ISSUES

Currently there is a Governance Review taking place in Ontario. The essence of this review is to consider how the education system is directed by the inherent relationships of the various "players", for example Directors of Education and Trustees. It is also a review of the systems of checks and balances within the System. Currently the Minister can only intervene in a School Board as the result of financial issues. There is a question whether the Minister should be able to intervene in a School Board for Educational reasons. For example, if a jurisdiction found itself in an impasse between parents of gifted children and the School Board, the Minister, with extended power, could intervene by appointing a mediator. I would suggest that ABC members peruse the Governance Review and consider a submission. An individual can generate and forward a submission in a painless manner through the Governance Review Website. This matter is time sensitive as submissions close February 28, 2009. The website can be found at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/grc/>. The submission link is called "Share Your Ideas" and can be found at the bottom of this webpage. Clicking on this link will send you to a new webpage that has a highlighted link, "Online web Form", in the first paragraph. The form will magically appear for your consideration.

Also, as part of the effort to improve Individual Education Plans, the Ministry is posting sample IEPs for each exceptionality. We encourage you to look at the sample posted last month for a gifted student in elementary school (<http://www.ontariodirectors.ca/IEP-PEI/en.html>) and to provide some feedback about the gifted sample (see links at the bottom of the web page). We will post suggested feedback at the ABC Ontario web site. Most importantly, thank them for providing some clear guidance about the education of gifted students.

FINANCIAL REPORT

ASSOCIATION FOR BRIGHT CHILDREN OF ONTARIO
STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED AUGUST 31, 2008

	2008	2007
	\$	\$
REVENUES		
Conference and miscellaneous	31,691	19,404
Membership fees	18,639	13,097
Donations	3,287	15,671
	<u>53,617</u>	<u>48,172</u>
EXPENSES		
Conference and meetings	15,616	10,831
Secretarial and accounting	11,717	10,800
Chapter memberships and donations	7,407	-
Newsletter	6,760	2,776
Telephone office and answering service	6,184	5,207
Printing and postage	4,133	1,134
Liability insurance	3,427	3,173
Professional fees	2,200	1,800
Interest and bank charges	1,089	182
Travel	582	411
	<u>59,115</u>	<u>36,314</u>
EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES, for the year	<u>(5,498)</u>	<u>11,858</u>