

## PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee of the Peel District School Board, held in the Brampton Room, the H. J. A. Brown Education Centre, 5650 Hurontario Street, Mississauga, Ontario on Tuesday, January 17, 2012 at 19:00 hours.

### Members present:

Barbara Byers, Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada, Chair  
Stan Cameron, Trustee  
Lynne Cramer, Community Living Mississauga  
Barbara Cyr, Association for Bright Children  
Shelley Foster, VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children (19:10)  
Deanna Henderson, Easter Seals Ontario  
Meredith Johnson, Trustee  
Wes McDonald, VIEWS for Blind and Visually Impaired Children (19:30)  
Carol Ogilvie, Learning Disabilities Association of North Peel  
Carol Oitment, Tourette Syndrome Association of Ontario  
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living  
Lorraine Yuill, Learning Disabilities Association of Mississauga

### Absent: (apologies received)

Joyce Lang, Autism Ontario Peel Chapter  
Brad MacDonald, Trustee, Vice-Chair  
Sandy Milakovic, Canadian Mental Health Association, Peel Branch

### Also present:

Marg Fishbein, Educational Resource Facilitators of Peel  
Marilyn Matis, Association for Bright Children (Alternate)  
Linda Standish, Educational Resource Facilitators of Peel

### Administration:

Louise Sirisko, Superintendent, Special Education Support Services (Executive Member)  
Carol Speers, Superintendent of Education  
Pam Tomasevic, Associate Director, Instructional Support Services  
  
Nicole Fernandes, Board Reporter

### 1. **Approval of Agenda**

Special Education Coordinator, Katie Levalds, introduced Barb MacRae, newly appointed Coordinator of Data and Standards, and Jim Van Buskirk, Chief of Social Work, introduced Maureen McKay who has been appointed Coordinator of Student Wellbeing.

SE-12, moved by Deanna Henderson, that the agenda be approved.

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## **2. Special Presentation re Using Empower in Schools**

Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Louise Sirisko, reported that she had been invited by Susan Bassili, Chief of Speech and Language Pathology, to observe the Empower Reading program in schools at Willow Glen Public School. Providing background information, Susan Bassilli reported that, in 2006, the Government announced one-time funding to enhance psycho-educational, and speech and language assessments as a component of early intervention, which came to be known as the OPA project. With the funding, the Learning for All program was developed in Peel.

Susan Bassilli indicated that the Empower Reading High School program fits in with the Learning for All program since it supports improvement in students' literacy skills. Karen Steinbach from the Hospital for Sick Children was introduced, and Susan Bassilli reported that the Empower Reading program was developed at the Hospital for Sick Children, with Maureen Lovett as a the lead researcher. It is an extensively researched reading remediation program that takes a scientific approach to reading, and has helped to better understand core learning strategies for reading. Research indicates that a child can develop basic skills needed for reading. The program is designed to teach the child identification skills and decoding strategies, and to promote the effective use of these strategies. Through the Board's partnership with the Hospital for Sick Children, some Peel teachers have been trained to help students with substantial reading and learning difficulties.

The Empower Reading program has a number of components, and teachers use technology in class with the final goal of teaching the student to read independently. It is offered in the In School Support Program (ISSP), and communication classes. Details of the program were highlighted by Susan Bassilli, including: it has been introduced in 10 elementary schools, and one secondary school; costs of \$5000 include equipment, training, and on-going support for the teacher; training is two full days at the start and three additional days during the year; 110 hours of literacy instruction throughout the year.

A video presentation of the Empower Reading program in a primary communication class, junior communication class, and at the secondary level were shown. Robert Stancu, Principal of Willow Glen Public School, then spoke about the program at the school. He introduced school staff, Julie Skeoch, Robin Doupe, Anna Edwards, and Michelle Riviere. He noted that teachers and parents are noticing results in the reading skills of students. He reported that a student who had the benefit of being in the program had improved to a level that no longer qualified for a communication class placement. Robert Stancu stated that the program also lends itself to the IEP because specific measurable goals about the student's reading skills can be included.

Questions of clarification asked by SEAC members were responded to by the administration and the presenters. It was noted that, after the 110 hours of literacy instruction, students achieve the skills to decode, but some students may require additional support and recovery.

(Continued overleaf)

**2. Special Presentation re Using Empower in Schools (Continued)**

Replying to members' questions about implementation of the program in all schools and making it accessible to all students in need, Superintendent Sirisko stated that the Board would like to expand the program to all schools; however, the program is costly. She noted that developing the skills of teachers is an area where investment should also be directed. She commented that the development of teachers' skills through training in the Empower Reading program, and the collaboration between teachers, as in the case of Willow Glen Public School, needs to be replicated in other schools. It is intended that the program is introduced first in communication classes and then in the ISSP.

Karen Steinbach confirmed that the program can be extended to students with dyslexia and to ESL and ELL students. Chair Byers' suggestion to provide training as a summer program for teachers and students will be explored. A teacher from Willow Glen Public School expressed appreciation for the high level of support received from the Hospital for Sick Children, and great depth of detail included in the instruction package.

Karen Steinbach commended the work and devotion of Peel's special education teachers.

SE-13, moved by Lynn Cramer, that the Special Presentation re Using Empower in Schools, be received.

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**3. Conflict of Interest**

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

**4. Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, December 20, 2011**

Arising from the Minutes, it was clarified that Heidie Kazman provided details of the Special Education for Administrator's course that she will be presenting during January-July 2012 (Item 14, Question Period).

SE-14, moved by Ann Smith, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, held December 20, 2011, be approved.

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**5. Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, Policy and Program Requirements 2011**

Superintendent Sirisko reported that the above-noted document from the Ministry is a policy document for Kindergarten to Grade 12 which consolidates in one document the range of policies and programs affecting education, including special education. She advised that the Ministry of Education has indicated that there are no policy changes. However, Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Shawn Moynihan has noticed that there are some changes, and special education staff are reviewing the document for changes. Superintendent Sirisko asked SEAC members to also review the document and bring back their comments and queries to the next meeting.

**5. Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, Policy and Program Requirements 2011 (Continued)**

In response to a member's questions of clarification, Louise Sirisko noted that the Ministry of Education will be posting the policy document online, but has not indicated whether copies will be provided to schools. Further questions and comments included: Grade 8 students taking secondary courses; e-learning for student with special education needs.

SE-15, moved by Shelley Foster, that the report re Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, Policy and Program Requirements 2011, be received.

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**6. Memorandum to Directors of Education from the Ministry of Education re Electronic Release of the Revised Draft "Learning for All, K-12"**

Superintendent Sirisko reported that the Ministry has announced the electronic release of the Learning for All, K-12 revised draft. She explained that Ministry funding was provided to school boards under this initiative, and that the Peel DSB was identified as a 'lead' board, for which additional funding was received. Louise Sirisko noted that Learning for All underscores universal design and differentiated instruction in helping students succeed. She indicated that she will update SEAC with further information in the coming months.

In response to a question, Superintendent Sirisko confirmed that Peel has been a 'lead' board, along with the coterminous board, and Halton DSB. She reported that school boards were invited to ask teachers to lead action research that will apply to all special education departments based on specific criteria. She clarified that the Ministry has advised that this will not become a policy; however, requests to make this a policy may be made to the Ministry. A member expressed concern with the statement in the draft document that effective intervention is time limited, and that students subsequently progress without ongoing extra support.

SE-16, moved by Lorraine Yuill, that the Memorandum to Directors of Education from the Ministry of Education re Electronic Release of the Revised Draft "Learning for All, K-12", be received.

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**7. Memorandum to Directors of Education from Barry Finlay, Ministry of Education, re Categories of Exceptionalities**

Superintendent Sirisko advised that this memorandum was sent to boards to clarify the categories of exceptionalities. Students with exceptionalities that have a demonstrated impact on their learning would be brought to an ISRC meeting, and appropriate supports will be put in place. She noted that the Board will always support students with demonstrated challenges in schools.

**7. Memorandum to Directors of Education from Barry Finlay, Ministry of Education, re Categories of Exceptionalities (Continued)**

SE-17, moved by Lynne Cramer, that the Memorandum to Directors of Education from Barry Finlay, Ministry of Education, re Categories of Exceptionalities, be received.

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**8. Conference on Advancing Vocational Opportunities for Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders, February 2-3, 2012 / Conference on Using Applied Behaviour Analysis to Support Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders in General Education Classrooms, May 4, 2012**

SE-18, moved by Deanna Henderson:

1. That, the report re Conference on Advancing Vocational Opportunities for Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders, February 2-3, 2012, be received.
2. That, the report re Conference on Using Applied Behaviour Analysis to support students with Autism Spectrum Disorders in General Education Classrooms, May 4, 2012, be received.

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**9. Copy of Letter to Minister of Education, Laurel Broten, from SEAC Chair, Renfrew County DSB re Funding Model for Special Education**

SE-19, moved by Lynne Cramer, that the Copy of Letter to Minister of Education, Laurel Broten, from SEAC Chair, Renfrew County DSB re Funding Model for Special Education, be received.

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**10. List of Members of Peel DSB's Standing and Legislated Committees and List of Trustee Representatives on Ad Hoc Committees**

Referring to the list of Ad Hoc Committees, a member asked for information on the Learning Choices Committee. Superintendent of Education and Chair of the Learning Choices Committee, Carol Speers, indicated that regional programs such as Sci-Tech, Information and Business Technology, Arts, International Baccalaureate, are offered at the secondary level or the senior elementary level. She noted that, historically, these programs have been in schools with declining enrolment. As a result, there are many regional programs in schools in Mississauga, and fewer in Brampton. In order to provide a more equitable distribution of the programs, the Learning Choices Committee, made up of trustee, superintendent of education, and principal representatives, is exploring the replication of existing programs in secondary and senior elementary schools in order to have a wider geographic spread of these programs. In addition, members have also been asked to bring forward new ideas for programs.

**10. List of Members of Peel DSB's Standing and Legislated Committees and List of Trustee Representatives on Ad Hoc Committees (Continued)**

Superintendent Speers advised that there is high interest in these programs among parents who perceive that they add value to their children's education. As an example, she noted that the administration is considering a regional arts program where enrolment is by interest rather than audition. Programs that offer multiple pathways to college, apprenticeship, workplace, or university, are also being explored. Katie Levalds confirmed that there has been a review of the current audition process for the regional arts program, in relation to students with special needs.

SE-20, moved by Lynne Cramer, that the List of Members of Peel DSB's Standing and Legislated Committees and List of Trustee Representatives on Ad Hoc Committees, be received

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**11. Working Together for Children: A Collaboration of Peel's Child Abuse Review Team, 2010 – 2011**

Head of Social Work, Jim Van Buskirk, reported that Peel Children's Aid is mandated under the Child and Family Services Act to establish a Child Abuse Review Team, comprised of representatives from several community and government groups, including the education system. He stated that the Team reviews cases of abuse, and members work together to prevent child abuse. Jim Van Buskirk noted that this confirms that children's wellbeing is a community responsibility, and does not rest solely with Children's Aid. In reply to Chair Byers' comment that the Office of the Children's Lawyer is not represented in that group, Jim Van Buskirk advised that the Child Abuse Review Team is required to have representation from the Office of the Crown Attorney, but there are groups which are not represented.

SE-21, moved by Lynne Cramer, that the report re Working Together for Children: A Collaboration of Peel's Child Abuse Review Team, 2010 – 2011, be received.

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**12. Conference re Commence – Celebrating Your Past and Creating Your Future, February 8-9, 2012**

Ann Smith reported that funding for the above-noted conference is provided by Community Living Ontario. The conference is aimed at students with disabilities, and the information has been provided to schools. It was suggested that a presentation relating to the conference be scheduled at a future meeting.

SE-22, moved by Lynne Cramer, that the report re Conference on Commence – Celebrating Your Past and Creating Your Future, February 8-9, 2012, be received.

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**13. Question Period**

Barbara Cyr referred to the Parent Literacy Conference and noted that SEAC has been once again asked to participate this year. She asked if members were interested, and advised that she can again request a Ministry representative to assist. Ann Smith suggested that Barbara Cyr once again take the lead in organizing the workshop. Barbara Cyr agreed, and Superintendent Sirisko noted that the Ministry contact person is Joanna Roberto.

**14. Public Question Period**

There were no public questions.

**15. Adjournment**

SE-23, moved by Lynne Cramer, that the meeting adjourn (20:30 hours).

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