

May 29, 2012
Special Education Advisory Committee:nf
Supplementary

PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Minutes of a Supplementary 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, May 29, 2012 at 19:00 hours.

Members present:

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

Absent:

Stan Cameron, Trustee
Lynne Cramer, Community Living Mississauga
Nancy Leaton, Autism Ontario Peel Chapter
Meredith Johnson, Trustee
Sandy Milakovic, Canadian Mental Health Association, Peel Branch
Lorraine Yuill, Learning Disabilities Association of Mississauga

Also present:

Sue Lawton, Trustee
Marilyn Matis, Association for Bright Children (Alternate)
Janet McDougald, Trustee
Suzanne Nurse, Trustee
Jeff White, Trustee

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

SE-56, moved by Ann Smith, that the agenda be approved.

..... carried

2. Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

3. Gifted Education in Peel: Elementary Identification and Placement

Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Louise Sirisko, thanked SEAC members for their attendance at tonight's supplementary meeting, and stated that the Board values collaboration and shared solutions. She indicated that the above-noted report is once again before SEAC for receipt, and that the recommendation arising from the report will go to the Board for approval.

Providing background information, Superintendent Sirisko indicated that the report being considered today arises from the review of the Gifted program in 2009. Representatives from the Association for Bright Children (ABC) were participants in the process, and updates were provided to SEAC in June and September 2009. Following this, many meetings were held with ABC to discuss the recommendations of the review. Louise Sirisko stated that this consultation has been highly valued by the administration. She noted, however, that there remains a difference of opinion between the administration and SEAC representatives of ABC. She advised that, as part of the consultations, she had spoken to Barry Finlay, Director of the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch, who had shared his approval of the approach being considered with Gifted education in Peel. The Ministry appreciates that the Board has taken into account the Ministry guideline highlighting that giftedness is defined as cognitive ability that requires differentiation beyond that provided in the regular school program. Superintendent Sirisko spoke of the importance for school staff to see that the revisions to the elementary identification and placement model are collaboratively endorsed by SEAC.

Chief Psychologist, Jack Kamrad, and Donna Zuccato, Special Education Coordinator, provided further details of the model in response to questions raised by Barbara Cyr, ABC representative on SEAC, in her delegation to the Board on May 22, 2012. The change in the criteria for identifying gifted students in Peel was one of the recommendations of the Gifted Review. The proposed revised model will include standards for group administered assessments, individual assessments, qualitative and quantitative indicators of academic achievement, social, emotional and behavioural factors, and professional teacher ratings. The current gifted identification process was viewed by stakeholders as lacking rigour, and more stringent identification criteria was suggested, including increasing CCAT cut-off scores, and administering individual assessments.

(Continued overleaf)

3. Gifted Education in Peel: Elementary Identification and Placement (Continued)

The rationale for proposing a Gifted Rating Scale (GRS) was explained in detail. The current teacher checklist is used by the In School Review Committee (ISRC) and the Identification and Placement Review Committee (IPRC), but has not been very strongly considered in the decision-making process. In practice, it is the CCAT scores that usually guide the IPRC decision. Jack Kamrad reported on the findings of a recent teacher survey regarding completion of the GRS. Nineteen teachers responded, and only one respondent felt that the GRS was not easy to complete. With regard to costs and diversion of professional skills and resources under the proposed revised model, Donna Zuccato confirmed that \$2,500.00 is the cost for the initial purchase of manuals and forms for the GRS, and \$624.00 is the approximate annual cost for replacement forms. Psychoeducational consultants attend ISRCs where data from the CCAT and GRS are shared and can be reviewed. Individual assessments required for some students can be done at times in the year when there is less demand for other assessments and will be completed more quickly than most other assessments. It was noted that all students are entitled to the resources, including students who may be in need of enhancements to their programming.

Referring to a question raised by the delegation on information about the new criteria being clearly, accurately and openly shared, Jack Kamrad clarified that information on the new model will be available in September 2012 on the Board's internet site. Parents will be encouraged to discuss the issues at their child's school, and will be invited to contact the special education resource teacher or board staff when clarification is required. Donna Zuccato responded with clarification about whether students are required to be in the In School Enhanced Learning Program (ISELP) for three months prior to an IPRC. She noted that this is not a policy, although this may at times be communicated to parents. It will be expected that each student's profile will be reviewed on an individual basis related to demonstrated need, and some students may require a more differentiated form of enhanced programming in less than 3 months, while others may take longer. Information regarding the student's response to enhancements provided as part of the ISELP will assist the IPRC in its decision-making.

Regarding more timely reporting of CCAT results, it was noted that under the proposed new process, Grade 4 CCAT results will be reviewed while the student is in grade 4, and a GRS completed, if needed. The feasibility of delivering the CCAT assessment earlier in the school year will be considered, but is dependent on staff availability. Donna Zuccato highlighted that data collected by staff at different levels of the process will be reviewed in order to evaluate whether the new criteria for identification and placement are meeting the needs of Peel's gifted students. Jack Kamrad noted that parents can discuss their interests and concerns regarding enhancements for their child's classroom program with school staff.

With respect to best serving the needs of students who are gifted, the difference of opinion between ABC SEAC representatives and the administration was explained. ABC representatives have expressed that they believe gifted students' needs are often best met in a contained Enhanced Learning Class. Peel administration supports both ISELP and ELC as program options for students in need of enhanced learning. Donna Zuccato quoted from the Ministry guidelines and the Gifted Education Program Review report and stated that the ISELP is the first level of service for the student.

3. Gifted Education in Peel: Elementary Identification and Placement (Continued)

Discussion ensued, and a member expressed his preference for psycho-educational assessments before a student can be in a contained class, commenting that all gifted students are not alike. He noted that the ISELP will benefit students who would like to pursue other interests within regional learning choices programs, while at the same time receiving enhancements to their program. In response to a member's question, Superintendent Sirisko explained that all Grade 4 students sit for the CCAT, which helps to identify students who need enhancements. The CCAT is an important screen, and like all exceptionalities, if there are scores in the test that recommend a closer look at the student's profile with regard to cognitive ability, a GRS is conducted, and the ISRC can recommend a psychoeducational assessment.

Replying to a member's question about the stakeholders involved in the Gifted Review, Donna Zuccato indicated that the individuals who completed the survey included teachers, parents and students, and it was confirmed that there were 1100 parent respondents to the survey. The member commented that there was no parent focus group. The member then remarked that the teacher checklist is not completed or used. Jack Kamrad clarified that the checklist is completed by the teacher but, currently, the IPRC is not clear on how to weigh the checklist because it does not provide any rating or review. He stated that the GRS has been in use for some time in other jurisdictions. It was developed and co-normed with the WISC4, and provided a broader set of scores to enable it to be a valid, scientific measure under the proposed model. The GRS will provide a fuller profile of the student, which is not reflected in the CCAT scores. In reply to another question, Jack Kamrad mentioned that, based on survey results, it would appear that teachers feel that there are a significant number of students who should not be in contained classes.

The member commented that teachers' additional professional qualifications may not give them enough information to complete the forms. Superintendent Sirisko indicated that the questions on the form are framed to assist the teacher. The member asked whether staff will have time to complete the GRS, and what would be considered timely, bearing in mind that there are students in Grade 6 who are still waiting for the CCAT scores.

Donna Zuccato confirmed that Grade 4 results will be reviewed in Grade 4 and the GRS is then undertaken. In reply to the member's question whether it is anticipated that more or less kids will be identified, Jack Kamrad stated that kids who need enhanced learning experience will be identified. Donna Zuccato indicated that the data will be collected and carefully reviewed to evaluate the revised proposed model. There was a brief discussion regarding the percentage of girls identified as gifted, and she noted that, based on the October report submitted to the Ministry, there is a 18% difference between the percentages of identified boys and girls in the elementary panel.

The SEAC member from ABC, Barbara Cyr, advised that ABC is proposing a model for identification and placement of gifted children. She stated that the Education Act does not mandate a psycho-educational assessment for identification of giftedness. Jack Kamrad confirmed that the Ministry does not require a psychoeducational assessment for the IPRC, but this is also not required for other exceptionalities. He stated that this is a best practice representing an effective use of time and resources for all exceptionalities, and is standard practice across Ontario. It was noted that the proposed model will include more students who require enhancements and more students will receive the enhancement in the classroom, but students in contained classes will be required to undergo more stringent assessments.

3. Gifted Education in Peel: Elementary Identification and Placement (Continued)

Superintendent Sirisko indicated that the model is not being proposed due to funding reasons, but to provide support to students who need it. Not all students need contained classes, and some students' needs will be met in clusters in their own school.

SE-56, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the Special Education Advisory Committee recommends to the Board:

That, Special Education Support Services staff evaluate and report to the Special Education Advisory Committee on the proposed Gifted Education in Peel: Elementary Identification and Placement (APPENDIX I), existing criteria 2001, and the alternate proposal from the Association for Bright Children (APPENDIX II), with regard to the following factors:

- a) projected identification rates
- b) placement outcomes
- c) administrative workload
- d) professional services workload
- e) costs, such as fees for test instruments, and other directly incurred expenses

..... carried

Superintendent Sirisko commented that difference of opinion is another aspect of collaboration. Providing reassurances that the administration will not be proposing the model for identification and placement of gifted students if it was not backed by thorough assessments, she stated that the concerns voiced by SEAC have been noted, and staff will determine what improvements should be made. She remarked that the relationship and collaboration with SEAC is very important to the Board.

SE-57, moved by Brad MacDonald, that the report re Gifted Education in Peel: Elementary Identification and Placement, be received.

..... carried

4. Public Question Period

There were no public questions.

5. Adjournment

SE-58 moved by Shelley Foster, that the meeting adjourn (20:00 hours).

..... carried

..... Chair Secretary