

June 5, 2012
Supplementary Meeting of the Board:nf

PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Minutes of the Supplementary Meeting of the Board, held in the Brampton Room, the H. J. A. Brown Education Centre, 5650 Hurontario Street, Mississauga, Ontario on Tuesday, June 5, 2012 at 17:20 hours.

Members present:

Janet McDougald, Chair	Meredith Johnson (17:30)
Suzanne Nurse, Vice-Chair	Steve Kavanagh
Stan Cameron	Sue Lawton
Beryl Ford	Harinder Malhi
David Green	Rick Williams

Members absent: (apologies received)

Brad MacDonald
Jeff White

Administration:

Jan Courtin, Superintendent of Education
Rebecca Crouse, Superintendent of Education, Secondary School Support
Patrika Daws, Superintendent of Education
Wendy Dowling, Superintendent of Education
Anthony Edwards, Superintendent of Education
Ina Fournier, Superintendent of Education
Jaspal Gill, Controller, Facilities and Environmental Support Services
Carla Kisko, Associate Director, Operational Support Services
Hazel Mason, Superintendent of Education
Scott Moreash, Coordinating Superintendent
Shawn Moynihan, Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction Support Services
David Neale, Controller, Transportation and Corporate Support Services
Patricia Noble, Superintendent of Education
Tony Pontes, Director of Education
Patricia Rossall, Superintendent of Education, Alternative Programs
Louise Sirisko, Superintendent, Special Education Support Services
Marion Smith, Executive Assistant
Carol Speers, Superintendent of Education
Shirley-Ann Teal, Superintendent of Education, Early Learning Program
Pam Tomasevic, Associate Director, Instructional Support Services
Randy Wright, Controller, Planning and Accommodation Support Services

Nicole Fernandes, Board Reporter

1. Approval of Agenda

The following items were added to the agenda:

Item 4.2 Delegation: Liane Seckington re Proposed Changes to the Elementary Gifted Identification and Program Placement Model

Item 4.3 Delegation: Ron Salapatek re Proposed Changes to the Elementary Gifted Identification and Program Placement Model

Item 4.4 Delegation: Terry Siow re Proposed Changes to the Elementary Gifted Identification and Program Placement Model

Item 4.5 Delegation: Karen Kennedy re Proposed Changes to the Elementary Gifted Identification and Program Placement Model

Item 4.6 Delegation: Shannon Nigalis re Proposed Changes to the Elementary Gifted Identification and Program Placement Model

Resolution No. 12-156 moved by Steve Kavanagh
seconded by Suzanne Nurse

Resolved, that the agenda, as amended, be approved.

..... carried
2/3rds' majority

2. Conflict of Interest

There was no conflict of interest declared.

3. Written Questions

There were no written questions.

4. Notices of Motion / Petitions

There were no notices of motion or petitions.

5. Retirements

Resolution No. 12-157 moved by Beryl Ford
seconded by Harinder Malhi

Resolved, that the report of retirement of staff, be received.

..... carried

6. Delegation of Liane Seckington re Proposed Changes to the Elementary Gifted Identification and Program Placement Model

Speaking from a brief, which was later provided to the administration, Liane Seckington provided background information about herself, and stated that she is speaking in support of maintaining the gifted program in Peel. She commented on the benefits of the gifted program, with its focus on training and exploring, where teachers are aware of students' strengths. Through Individual Education Plans, classes are tailored to the needs of the students and an environment is created to provide students with the best opportunity for learning.

Advocating to maintain the gifted program, Liane Seckington remarked that some students are over-energetic or are distracted in class because their ability in subjects such as mathematics, science or social sciences is not being challenged. In the enhanced program, students are encouraged to ask questions and explore topics at a deeper level. She described the extracurricular activities or participation in science projects which gifted students can avail themselves of, and which allows students to explore and develop. She commented that this is an advantage compared to some popular programs like the International Baccalaureate, which are more marks-oriented. She then spoke about the sense of belonging and her friendships in the gifted program. Liane Seckington commented that curriculum should not be a constraining factor in providing every student the opportunity to learn. She suggested that the recommendation to change the gifted program may be due to funding. Trustees clarified that the administrative recommendation regarding the gifted program, being brought for trustees' approval tonight, does not propose doing away with the gifted program or saving money.

7. Delegation of Ron Salapatek re Proposed Changes to the Elementary Gifted Identification and Program Placement Model

The speaking notes of Ron Salapatek were provided to the Board ahead of his delegation. Ron Salapatek indicated that he has two children, both of whom have been identified as gifted. He stated, however, that one child is a confident student with high marks, while the second child gets inconsistent marks and is easily distracted. Reporting that his second child has also been identified with a learning disability in communication, and a diagnosis of ADHD, Ron Salapatek remarked that this child's behaviour may prejudice one's perception of his abilities.

Ron Salapatek expressed concern regarding the administrative recommendation to include the Gifted Rating Scales (GRS) as a component for identification of giftedness. He provided information regarding the development of GRS for the New York Department of Education, and he spoke about the lack of support from independent researchers for the GRS. He stated his concern regarding the use of the GRS analysis for twice-exceptional students or those with ADHD or similar diagnoses. Also of concern to Ron Salapatek is the GRS developers' acknowledgement of teacher bias in the difference in scores between boys and girls. He asked regarding such teacher bias on the evaluation of twice-exceptional students or those with ADHD. Reporting that his personal experience is that these students are often misunderstood, he commented that the potential for bias can also affect children with very high intellectual ability who become bored, and disengaged from the standard curriculum. He added that the potential for bias could increase when the GRS is completed by one teacher only as per the proposal.

7. Delegation of Ron Salapatek re Proposed Changes to the Elementary Gifted Identification and Program Placement Model (Continued)

Ron Salapatek reported that the New York Department of Education stopped using the GRS one year after its adoption, based on feedback from parents and teachers. Acknowledging that there is no perfect test for evaluation by teachers, and that GRS can serve as one of a number of inputs for assessment, he stated, however, his opposition to any plan that includes the GRS as a 'must-pass' criteria for identification. In concluding, he reported that his twice-exceptional child has new enthusiasm for school in his contained Enhanced Learning Class (ELC) class, and he requested the Board not to approve the current proposal, but consider revisions to ensure that no exceptional children are denied access to programs they deserve.

8. Delegation of Terry Siow re Proposed Changes to the Elementary Gifted Identification and Program Placement Model

Terry Siow delegated the Board from speaking notes, which were later provided to the administration. He reported that he is the father of three children, two of whom have been identified as intellectual – gifted. He spoke about his experiences regarding psycho-educational assessments for two of his children, which were then done by private psychologists. One of his sons was placed in an In School Enhanced Learning Program (ISELP) class, although the private psychologist had recommended that he be placed in an enhanced contained class. Terry Siow indicated that this son considered the ISELP class to be poorly scheduled and not helpful since it took him away from regular class time. This son was eventually placed in a contained class in Grade 5, and Terry Siow commented that it was the right decision for his son. He provided details regarding the placement of his second son, and indicated that both children are doing well in school. He remarked that, without private assessments, his children would have been placed in ISELP classes which, in his opinion, are not helping students with learning potential and another exceptionality.

Terry Siow expressed the hope that changes are made to the ISELP. He stated that, in his experience, not all teachers are able to identify giftedness, especially those with additional exceptionalities. Advising that the teachers did not indicate to him that his children needed to be assessed, he stated that inadequately dealing with children with learning potential is as harmful as not dealing with the issue. He concluded his presentation by stating that the contained ELC offers the best learning environment for students with learning potential.

9. Delegation of Karen Kennedy re Proposed Changes to the Elementary Gifted Identification and Program Placement Model

Karen Kennedy delegated the Board, speaking from a brief that was provided to the Board. She noted that her career as a research scientist has made her aware of the need for evidence-based research to drive change and implement policies in any field. She stated that she has concerns about the proposed changes to the gifted identification and placement model, and is disappointed that the new criteria does not address the range of complexities that gifted children display.

(Continued overleaf)

9. Delegation of Karen Kennedy re Proposed Changes to the Elementary Gifted Identification and Program Placement Model (Continued)

Karen Kennedy related the difficulties she faced during the implementation of the identification and placement process for her child which, in her view, were: lack of transparency and consistency regarding options for placement; lack of an objective assessment of the evidence; inefficient communication. She commented that the process was time-consuming and resource-draining. She noted that her child has been placed in the ISELP for the past two years; however, she remarked that the program is ineffective in meeting the complex needs of giftedness and another exceptionality, as well as supporting gifted characteristics. She expressed the belief that the ISELP support and classroom teacher are overwhelmed by other students' needs, and the gifted needs are being largely overlooked. Karen Kennedy indicated that her child is currently coping without sufficient academic challenge and is showing signs of regression in social skills. She remarked that the current services do not match his needs, and other options need to be explored. She asked trustees to vote against the proposal, mainly because she does not foresee that children with complex special needs will be matched with appropriate special education services under the new model.

10. Delegation of Shannon Nigalis re Proposed Changes to the Elementary Gifted Identification and Program Placement Model

Shannon Nigalis provided a copy of her speaking notes to the administration. She outlined brief background information about her education and career, and she stated that if she had not attended the gifted program, her life would have taken a different course. She advised that she was bullied in Grade 3, which did not stop until she was placed in the gifted program class. She indicated that her intelligence was one of the reasons she was bullied, and that being identified as gifted was a boost for her academically and socially.

Shannon Nigalis reported that, in the gifted Mode 4 program, she met like-minded students, with whom she is still friends. Teachers helped her to learn how to think at a higher level, and she was in an environment that matched her intellectually. She stated that the gifted program helped her and other students who were different, and helped children to develop their intellect. Shannon Nigalis remarked that making the program inaccessible or below standard is a disservice to students of higher intellectual ability. In response to a trustee's question, she stated that the gifted program would be different if the assessment criteria changed.

11. Response to Delegation by Barbara Cyr, Special Education Advisory Committee Representative, re Proposed Elementary Gifted Identification and Program Placement Model

Resolution No. 12-158

moved by Steve Kavanagh
seconded by Rick Williams

Resolved, that the response to the delegation by Barbara Cyr, Special Education Advisory Committee Representative, re Proposed Elementary Gifted Identification and Program Placement Model (Regular Meeting of the Board, May 22, 2012), be received.

..... carried

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

Superintendent Sirisko stated that the administrative recommendation arises from the 2009 review of gifted education in Peel, and is being brought forward with the intention that the proposed changes will improve gifted education and all students in Peel are given every opportunity to be successful. She highlighted that the Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test (CCAT) will continue to be offered in Grade 4, and schools will continue to nominate students to write CCAT before Grade 4. Discussions with teachers at the ISRCs will help to increase awareness regarding giftedness. Louise Sirisko clarified that the teacher will be asked to fill in the GRS, which will help to complete the student profile. Students who have a recognized need beyond the classroom setting will go through the In School Review Committee (ISRC) process. The GRS will be reviewed to determine if the student scores above average on one or more of the scales pertaining to motivation, curiosity, creativity, or academic capability. Students who have a demonstrated need for program enhancements beyond that of an In-School Enhanced Learning Program (ISELP) will be referred for an individual psycho-educational assessment. The results of this assessment will be reviewed by the ISRC and a referral may be made to the Identification and Placement Review Committee (IPRC) for consideration of an identification of giftedness, and an offer for a contained enhanced learning class may be made. Superintendent Sirisko stated that the use of a psycho-educational assessment in the identification of giftedness is consistent with the process at several school boards. She advised that, throughout the process of reviewing and bringing forward the recommendation, the voice of the Association for Bright Children (ABC) has been valued, and the Board looks forward to continued collaboration with the ABC.

Jack Kamrad, Chief Psychologist, and Special Education Coordinator, Donna Zuccato, then presented detailed information on the proposal, and on the questions raised by the delegations. Current students who are identified as intellectually gifted and are in contained classes will not lose their identification or be demitted from their programs. ELCs will not be discontinued. Students who demonstrate need will be provided enhancements through the ISELP, and it is anticipated that more students will get extensions and enhancements. If a student needs a psycho-educational assessment, the ISRC will recommend the student for an assessment. Assessments from private qualified psycho-educational assessors will continue to be accepted. It was confirmed that the new criteria is aligned with the Ministry's guidelines and regulations. Outlining cost factors, it was noted that the cost for administering the CCAT will remain the same. Start-up costs for GRS for manuals and forms will be approximately \$2,500 in the 2011-2012 school year, and the annual cost estimate for replacement GRS forms is \$624.

Jack Kamrad responded to some concerns raised by the delegations. Clarifying that the new criteria will continue to identify students who are twice-exceptional, he spoke of the importance of being more responsive to students' needs and abilities, and recognizing the needs of any student who is learning differently, regardless of exceptionality. Referring to the GRS, he stated that it is a norm-referenced measure that is co-normed with the Weschler Scale used for psycho-educational assessments. Jack Kamrad remarked that it is thought to improve the screening method, and is unmatched with any similar instrument of its kind. While CCAT is a screen, it is not an individual assessment. GRS enhances the usefulness of both tools. Creativity, curiosity, and intellectual ability is proposed to be at one standard deviation above average, and does not require that students score highly on the whole scale that GRS provides.

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

GRS increases the knowledge about the student profile so that individualized decisions can be made for students and families. In concluding the presentation on the report, Superintendent Sirisko stated that the proposal is student-centred and the focus of the ISRC is on the student's needs.

Resolution No. 12-160 moved by Suzanne Nurse
seconded by Sue Lawton

Resolved that, effective September 4, 2012, the revised elementary gifted identification and program placement model, be implemented. (APPENDIX I)

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A trustee requested a recorded vote on the motion.

In response to a trustee's question of clarification regarding addressing situations where a student does not meet the cut-off on the GRS, Jack Kamrad explained that the system is flexible. Students who score high on the CCAT and GRS will automatically be considered for a placement. Students who do not score very high on CCAT but are noticed by the teacher to be gifted in some areas will be assigned to the ISELP. Some students who do not score high on CCAT and are not noticed by the teacher would not be assigned to the ISELP. In reply to the trustee's question about identification of students with complex needs, Superintendent Sirisko explained that, through research, it has been noticed that some students in contained classes are not achieving success. The In School Review Committee (ISRC) process will help to create the student profile and refine the provision of supports to the students.

The trustee then noted that, with the proposed GRS system, teachers will be given forms to fill. He remarked, however, that teachers are not psychologists and may not see potential in some students. He asked whether appropriate training will be provided and the cost for such training. Donna Zuccato clarified that Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs) at the elementary level have knowledge of the GRS, and experience in working with the ISELP and with classroom teachers in responding to the questionnaire. The preliminary data from the survey showed that teachers found it easy to work on, and the average time to complete it was approximately 20 minutes. With regard to costs, Superintendent Sirisko explained that SERTs will interact with teachers, the SharePoint application will be used to build the skills for teachers to differentiate instruction. The trustee remarked that he still had concerns about the proposal and that the report did not provide sufficient detail to help him make an informed decision. He added that, until he has more information and there is more research on how this proposal will help students with complex needs, he would not support the recommendation.

Another trustee raised a point of order with regard to the Joint Meeting of the Instructional Programs / Curriculum Committee and the Physical Planning and Building Committee, scheduled to start at 18:00 hours today. He noted that the scheduled start time be delayed until after this meeting is adjourned, in order to continue the Joint Meeting to a later hour. Chair McDougald agreed to the request.

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

The trustee referred to today's delegations and the emails received by trustees, and he noted that a recurring concern is with regard to the ISELP, and remarked that more students should be streamed into contained classes. Superintendent Sirisko acknowledged that the gifted review confirms that the ISELP needs to be reviewed. She indicated that the recommendation outlines the process by which a determination is made, and she reiterated the Board's commitment to review the ISELP.

Donna Zuccato reported that SERTs will be working with classroom teachers, and a team has been set up to develop online resources. In the Fall, classroom teachers and support teachers will be provided with professional development to help them to develop a stronger ISELP. The trustee asked about timelines when teachers will be skilled in providing the ISELP. Louise Sirisko explained the Board's commitment to work with teachers and provide resources to enhance skills. In reply to the trustee's question about ABC's participation in the gifted education review, she indicated that the ABC had recently distanced itself from the review, but it is staff's understanding now that the Association has had some concerns.

A trustee expressed support for the proposed revised model, but stated that she had concerns about the ISELP and whether there would be financial resources dedicated to that program. Providing details, Superintendent Sirisko spoke about the release of a lead ISSP teacher, and hubs for teachers to talk about differentiated instruction and assessment. Another trustee commented that he has spoken to students who have benefited from being in a contained class environment. On the other hand, the ISELP does not appear to help students. He asked why the administration is not recommending that the identification process stop after the GRS, but is requiring a percentage of children to undergo a psycho-educational assessment. Superintendent Sirisko indicated that the professional opinion of the psychologists is that CCAT is a good screening tool, but may not be a valid assessment of cognitive ability. Jack Kamrad explained the difference between screening and individual assessment. He stated that screening may be able to identify a small percentage of the student population in a manner that could be quite prejudicial, because of the lack of a relationship between the screening tool and the examinee. Individual assessments have been repeatedly demonstrated as being more reliable, equitable, and valid. They also help to identify students who do not score at the 98 percentile of the CCAT, but who deserve the enhancements and extensions. This is especially true for students with English speaking challenges, or those with reading disabilities. Superintendent Sirisko stated that the gifted education review showed that, while contained ELC is a vital component of the program, it does not meet the needs of all students who are in contained classes.

The trustee then spoke about the conversations he has had with many of the stakeholders in gifted education. Recognizing that the recommendation is a positive statement of change, he noted, however, that the more people he spoke to and the more he studied the proposal, he is unsure that the proposal would work. He indicated that with so many additional students receiving ISELP, he had concerns regarding planning for PD, timelines, costs, etc. The trustee stated that, after his discussions and research, he will not be supporting the recommendation.

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

In response to another trustee's question of clarification whether, given the complexity and variation of the gifted student profile, teachers would be able to identify gifted students, the administration advised that teachers will not be asked to identify students, but to be aware of their educational needs. The experience to identify students is with the ISRC, where the teacher is asked complex questions to develop the profile of the student. Filling out the questionnaire for the GRS is an assessment task, and the psychologist is available to answer questions.

A trustee referred to a delegation's comment that there is no unbiased evaluation of the GRS, and no independent research on the scale. Jack Kamrad explained that expert panels of scientific journals are not aware of the authors of the research since submission of research to a scientific journal is done without the authors names attached. In reply to the trustee's question, Superintendent Sirisko stated that strengthening the ISELP is part of the implementation phase of the review.

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Chair McDougald called for a recorded vote.

Resolution No. 12-160

Yeas	Nays	Abstentions
Trustees Lawton, Malhi, Ford, McDougald, Nurse, Williams, Kavanagh	Trustee Green, Cameron, Johnson	□
	 carried (7-3-0)

14. Question Period

There were no questions.

15. Public Question Period

Helen stated that she has a child in the Gifted program. She indicated she had heard about the rigour in identification of gifted students, but she has not heard about the rigour to be applied to the ISELP. She asked whether that will also be dealt with in a similar fashion. Chair McDougald responded.

Diane indicated that she is a Board employee with a child in the Gifted program, and she spoke about the waiting lists for contained classes. She asked regarding raising the CCAT cut-off from the 97th to 98th percentile. The administration responded.

15. Public Question Period (Continued)

Terry Siow stated that he is not a member of the ABC, but is speaking as a parent. He expressed concern about the ISELP. He asked how long it will take to improve the ISELP, remarking that there are students falling behind. He also asked about the process for parents to appeal the identification. Chair McDougald replied to the questions.

Gurvinder commented about the waiting time for psycho-educational assessments done in the school. She queried the process of identification for students who do not score well on the assessments because of complex needs. Chair McDougald and the administration responded.

Rajvith stated that he has two children studying in the Board. He requested information regarding evaluation of the program and the timelines for such evaluation. He asked about plans to make the community more aware of the program through newsletters, etc. He indicated that parents are being told that CCAT results are available in the next year. Chair McDougald responded.

16. Adoption of the In Committee Report

Resolution No. 12-161 moved by Beryl Ford
seconded by Harinder Malhi

Resolved, that the report of the In Committee Session regarding: Resignations; Retirements; Secondary Vice-Principal Assignments and Appointments; Secondary Principal Assignments and Appointments, and Elementary Vice-Principal Assignment, be received, and that the recommendations contained therein, be approved.

..... carried

17. Adjournment

Resolution No. 12-162 moved by Steve Kavanagh
seconded by David Green

Resolved, that the meeting adjourn (19:20 hours).

..... carried

..... Chair Secretary

RESOLUTIONS APPROVED IN IN COMMITTEE SESSION – JUNE 5, 2012

Members present:

Janet McDougald, Chair
Suzanne Nurse, Vice-Chair
Stan Cameron
Beryl Ford
David Green

Steve Kavanagh
Sue Lawton
Harinder Malhi
Rick Williams

Members absent: (apologies received marked *)

Meredith Johnson
Brad MacDonald *
Jeff White *

PART B

1. Approval of Agenda

That, the agenda be approved, as amended.

2. Resignations

That, the report of resignations of teaching staff, be received.

3. Retirements

That, the report of retirements of staff, be received.

4. Secondary Vice-Principal Assignments and Appointments

That, the report of the Secondary Vice-Principal Assignments and Appointments, be received.

5. Secondary Principal Assignments and Appointments

That, the report of the Secondary Principal Assignments and Appointments, be received.

6. Elementary Vice-Principal Assignment

That, the report of the Elementary Vice- Principal Assignment.