

June 19, 2012
Special Education Advisory Committee:lf

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, June 19, 2012 at 19:00 hours.

Members present:

Barbara Byers, Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada, Chair
Brad MacDonald, Trustee, Vice-Chair
Stan Cameron, Trustee
Barbara Cyr, Association for Bright Children
Shelley Foster, VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children
Nancy Leaton, Autism Ontario Peel Chapter
Wes McDonald, VIEWS for Blind and Visually Impaired Children
Sandy Milakovic, Canadian Mental Health Association, Peel Branch
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):

Lynne Cramer, Community Living Mississauga
Deanna Henderson, Easter Seals Ontario
Meredith Johnson, Trustee

Also present:

Marg Fishbein, Educational Resource Facilitators of Peel
Sue Lawton, Trustee
Marilyn Matis, Association for Bright Children (Alternate)
Janet McDougald, Trustee
Suzanne Nurse, Trustee
Linda Standish, Educational Resource Facilitators of Peel
Jeff White, Trustee

Administration:

Louise Sirisko, Superintendent, Special Education Support Services (Executive Member)
Pam Tomasevic, Associate Director, Instructional Support Services

Lorelei Fernandes, Board Reporter

1. Approval of Agenda

SE-59, moved by Wes McDonald, that the agenda be approved.

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2. Authorization of Member's Absence

Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Louise Sirisko, reported that Deanna Henderson is unable to attend today's Special Education Advisory Committee meeting. Deanna Henderson was absent at the April 17, 2012 and May 15, 2012 meetings. Under the Education Act and the Board's By-laws, members absent from three consecutive meetings must vacate their seats if the absence is not authorized by resolution.

SE-60, moved by Ann Smith, that Deanna Henderson's absence from the Special Education Advisory Committee Meetings of April, May and June 2012, be authorized.

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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, May 15, 2012

SE-61, moved by Carol Ogilvie, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, held May 15, 2012, be approved.

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5. SEAC Appointment to Parent Involvement Committee

Barbara Cyr indicated that her appointment to the Parent Involvement Committee has come to an end and a SEAC representative is required on the Committee for a two-year term. Ann Smith nominated Barbara Cyr, and there were no further nominations.

SE-62, moved by Ann Smith, that Barbara Cyr be re-appointed as SEAC representative to the Parent Involvement Committee.

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6. SEAC Meeting Structure

Superintendent Sirisko referred to the re-structured SEAC draft agendas contained in the report which are based on suggestions made by small groups in May 2012. She invited members' feedback on the re-structured agenda.

SE-63, moved by Shelley Foster, that the report re SEAC Meeting Structure, be received.

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7. SEAC Draft Annual Calendar for 2012-2013

Superintendent Sirisko advised that the format of the draft calendar is focused on policy, allotting more time to program focus, including SEAC's input regarding impact on students and families, assessments, and phased programs. She indicated that changes could be made, if needed.

SE-64, moved by Sandy Milakovic, that the SEAC Draft Annual Calendar for 2012-2013, be received.

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8. Special Education Programs and Services Report 2012-2013 - Draft

Superintendent Sirisko advised that this is a working document of an annual report. The Ministry of Education has requested that it be published in hard copy as well as on the website by the end of June 2012. She invited feedback on the report, prior to publishing. Louise Sirisko highlighted the work being done by Special Education Support Services for elementary schools, including: supports to schools for additional programs, one Kindergarten Transition Language class will change to full day since it will be in a Full Day Kindergarten Learning site, adding two new Kindergarten Transition Language classes, two additional Intermediate Enhanced Learning classes, two additional intermediate Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) classes, an additional ASD Resource Team Itinerant Teacher, and an additional Hard of Hearing (HOH) Itinerant Teacher. For the secondary level, an additional ASD resource teacher, four additional classes at T. L. Kennedy Secondary School and Parkholme Public School for Developmental Disabilities, and additional sections for Castlebrook Secondary School have been added. Class ratios are being reviewed for additional staff requirements.

Superintendent Sirisko invited Coordinator of Data and Standards, Barb MacRae, and Special Education Coordinators Donna Zuccato and Katie Levalds to speak about the Special Education Plan. Barb MacRae reported that the Teaching Assistant Allocation Committee has reviewed the number of existing special needs students and available supports, and have made arrangements to ensure that all children with special needs will be supported next year. She reviewed the Teaching Assistant (TA) Allocations for 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. She thanked Marilyn Matis and Shelley Foster for participating in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) review which will be put together for September 2013.

8. Special Education Programs and Services Report 2012-2013 – Draft (Continued)

In response to a trustee’s question, Louise Sirisko provided clarification with regard to the TA allocation, stating that in addition to 1419.5 TAs, the Board has approved 50 additional Long Term Occasional TAs.

Donna Zuccato reviewed allocations for Elementary Programs and Regional Special Programs, Summary of Programs by Field Offices, and highlighted re-locations and program changes. Katie Levalds reviewed the report with regard to Secondary Programs with Learning Support Levels 1 and 2, Secondary In School Support Program, and Section 23. She provided details of changes in staffing allocations for these programs.

Louise Sirisko outlined the projects planned for the coming year and advised that in October all department goals will be presented for the years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. The focus will be on the Open Minds Healthy Minds initiative and board-wide mental health program. The projects included: implementing recommendations of the Gifted Review; increase in system alignment to Ministry and Board standard; supporting transitions of students with special needs; building capacity of administrators and staff to support special needs students; implementing recommendations of Behavior review, and enhancing communication standards for special education.

In response to a members’ question, Louise Sirisko provided clarification that an additional teacher has been added to the Developmental Disability allocation in order to provide a better distribution of supports and for safety reasons. In reply to the member’s comment regarding this report normally being received in April or May, Katie Levalds clarified that due to the evolving process, the report is being presented as a unit rather than over a series of SEAC meetings. Donna Zuccato provided an explanation to another member’s inquiry regarding In-School Enhanced Learning Program (ISELP) and In-School Support Program (ISSP) teacher allocations based on student population, by family of schools.

SE-65 moved by Shelley Foster, that the Special Education Programs and Services Report 2012-2013 Draft, be received.

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9. Annual Accessibility Plan 2012-2013

Superintendent Sirisko advised that the Annual Accessibility Plan 2012-2013 will be presented to trustees in September 2012 and subsequently to SEAC members. She informed that for first time in Peel the Board has hired Jennifer Miller as Accessibility Coordinator, who will be starting in the near future, and more frequent updates will be provided.

SE-66, moved by Carol Ogilvie, that the oral update report on the Annual Accessibility Plan 2012-2013, be received.

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10. 2012-2013 Budget

Louise Sirisko reported that the Board has approved a balanced budget for Special Education, which included receiving 50 Long Term Occasional TAs for students with special needs. Additionally there will be 3.5 TAs as part of Special Education staff, and there will be the option of dispatching an itinerant TA from the Central Board Office (CBO) when a student with special needs enrolls, to act as leader among TAs, review structures within schools, and make recommendations for students with regard to support. She noted that recommendations may be made for additional training, or to facilitate transition of the student.

SE-67, moved by Lorraine Yuill, that the oral update report on 2012-2013 Budget, be received.

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11. Open Minds Healthy Minds: Progress to Date

Louise Sirisko invited Jim Van Buskirk, Chief Social Worker to present on the Open Minds Healthy Minds (OMHM) initiative. Jim Van Buskirk advised that Maureen MacKay, Coordinator of Student Well-Being is one of 15 mental health leads in school boards. Peel receives the support of School Mental Health ASSIST (Awareness, Strategy Selection and Implementation Support Team), a group of mental health professionals helping school boards move forward with a plan around mental health literacy and providing consistent development of mental health services to school boards.

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Jim Van Buskirk reviewed the definition of mental health, mental health capacity continuum, level of awareness required by the general community, expertise of professional service staff, and developing a system of care for all students. He reported that in 70% of cases mental health problems arise before the age of 18 but in some cases before age of 14. Estimates vary between 18 and 23 percent or 1 in 5 cases. He reviewed the range of emotional difficulties such as sadness, anxiety, social withdrawal; problems such as conduct, substance use and addiction; symptoms and co-morbidity such as depression, anxiety or ADHD; and contributing factors such as biological influence and early life experiences. Mental health problems amongst children and youth have an effect on academics, social relationships, self esteem, and sometimes lethal consequences such as suicide. He stated that stigma is slowly reducing with the help of media reports. He noted that mental health problems are preventable and treatable. Programs, practices, evidence-based strategies, and medication are available to treat children at risk, to bolster kids, and prevent spiraling. The ASSIST group will help the Board to select evidence-based practices. Using a diagram of tiered support, he explained universal, targeted and intensive supports, the opportunity for school staff to influence students academically and socially by promotion, prevention, identification, and integration with community partners initiated by the Student Support Leadership Initiative (SSLI). He outlined the steps towards better mental health and academic outcomes by working with community agencies. He advised that a survey has been sent to all schools to help identify concerns and strengths.

11. Open Minds Healthy Minds: Progress to Date (Continued)

A trustee noted the need to focus on awareness and identification of mental health issues as it was not recognized by schools, only by parents. He supported the necessary steps to be taken throughout Peel schools. A member expressed the hope that ASSIST will be reviewing the mental health report in Canada and spoke of the importance of providing all levels of support for mental health concerns, given the high number of cases. Jim Van Buskirk mentioned that coordination between the support groups is still being worked out. Louise Sirisko suggested that the member contact Maureen MacKay for further communication. Responding to a member's question, Jim Van Buskirk confirmed that the programs include service to children with disabilities and autism. Another member expressed concern about information received from parents in the community with regard to lack of recognition of mental health issues by principals, in spite of producing a medical note. She recommended that principals be open and aware of the information present .

SE-68, moved by Shelley Foster, that the report on Open Minds Healthy Minds: Progress to Date, be received.

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12. Special Education Funding Plan: Progress to Date, Year One

Superintendent Louise Sirisko advised that the Board has requested administration to report annually on the effectiveness of the Special Education Funding Plan, using six indicators for students receiving special education support: improved monitoring and tracking of students; increased level of achievement; reduced over-expenditure; increased funding in Special Incident Portion (SIP) and in High Needs Amount (HNA); and more effective redeployment of teaching assistants for students transitioning between schools and boards.

Louise Sirisko reported on the progress to date summarizing the three broad areas: adequate funding for Special Education, review of programs and practices, and collection and use of accurate data. Stating that Peel remains under funded in its Special Education Grants (SEG), she outlined administration actions which included: hiring a Coordinator for Data and Standards who works with Learning Technology Support Services (LTSS) to improve accuracy of data collection; reducing expenditures over the course of next year; adding staff to support student need; adding ASD itinerants to maintain ratio of staff to students; additional occasional TAs approved by Board; financial supports; \$ 5,000,000 introduced for Kindergarten special needs students; hiring additional TAs over time; increasing the number of SIP claims annually; and increase in HNA funding. Louise Sirisko noted that in reviewing programs and practices, the focus is on student achievement in classrooms and EQAO data shows disparity between province and Board averages. She explained that the data highlights that there are fewer Peel students on Individual Education Plans (IEP) and expressed the need to ensure effective use of staff time to support programming and to consider assessments in determining students with special needs.

12. Special Education Funding Plan: Progress to Date, Year One (Continued)

Superintendent Sirisko spoke about: consulting with stakeholders; professional development for teachers; supporting lead ISSP elementary teachers; \$ 7,000,000 budget to install new information technology system in schools; Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) initiative to encourage assistive technology; exploring the use of I-Pads and e-books. She explained how the collection and use of data working with the IT department and Student Information System helps to track the number of students with exceptionality and the process of tracking non-identified students. For the future, she expressed the hope to provide seamless support for students by maximizing efficiencies in the Board, developing short term goals and assessment plan for special education students in various exceptionalities and settings, building better communication, obtaining most current information, need for professional development plan for all students, and enhancing the Student Information System.

Louise Sirisko responded to questions and clarifications which included: all students in ISELP will have an IEP; identification and support for students identified by mental health and social workers; acronyms for Tier Three Review Committee (TRC), Teaching Learning Critical Pathway (TLCP) and Professional Learning Cycle (PLC).

SE-69, moved by Sandy Milakovic, that the report on Special Education Funding Plan: Progress to Date, Year One, be received.

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13. Communications

SE-70, moved by Shelley Foster, that the following communications, be received:

1. Memorandum to Directors of Education from Barry Finlay, Ministry of Education re: Annual Autism Summer Training Institute in August 2012
2. Summit on Children and Youth Mental Health – 2012
3. Letter to Minister John Milloy from SEAC Chair, Upper Grand District School Board re: Transition process for students to Developmental Services Ontario (DSO)
4. Letter to Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee regarding the Recommendations of the Special Education Advisory Committee, May 29, 2012, received by the Board at the Supplementary Meeting of the Board on June 5, 2012

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14. Question Period

Barbara Cyr inquired whether the SEAC agenda will only be available electronically. Trustee MacDonald clarified that in view of going paperless and some staff using I-Pads and electronic devices, it will be available electronically as well as in hard copy.

Ann Smith thanked Heidie Kazman for her work in the Special Education department and conveyed best wishes on her retirement.

15. Public Question Period

There were no public questions.

16. Adjournment

SE-71 moved by Barbara Cyr, that the meeting adjourn (20:20 hours).

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