

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, March 19, 2019 at 19:00 hours.

Members present:

Shelley Foster, VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children, Chair
Sue Lawton, Trustee, Vice-Chair
Nicole Buckett, Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada
Barbara Cyr, Association for Bright Children, Peel Chapter
Jennifer Knight, Easter Seals Ontario
Michelle Lewis, Canadian Mental Health Association, Peel Branch
John Marchant, Trustee
Kathy McDonald, Trustee
Carol Ogilvie, Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region
Carol Oitment, Tourette Syndrome Association of Ontario
Fauzia Reza, Autism Ontario, Peel Chapter
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living
Mary Wright, Down Syndrome Association of Peel

Members absent: (apologies received)

Wes McDonald, VIEWS for the Visually Impaired
Dorothy Peddie, FASworld Canada, Peel Chapter

Also present:

Nancy Leaton, Autism Ontario, Peel Chapter (Alternate)
Laura Smith, Educational Resource Facilitators of Peel
Balbir Sohi, Trustee

Administration:

Shawn Moynihan, Superintendent of Special Education Support Services (Executive Member)
Joy Uniac, Superintendent, Social/Emotional Learning and Early Years (Executive Back-up Member)
Peter Joshua, Director of Education

Marina Amin, Board Reporter

1. Approval of Agenda

SE-25, moved by Sue Lawton that the agenda be approved.

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2. Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

3. Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, February 19, 2019

SE-26, moved by Carol Oitment, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of February 19, 2019, be approved.

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4. Superintendent's Report – Autism Spectrum Disorder Update

Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Shawn Moynihan reported that additional clarification is awaited from the Ministry regarding the revised funding for Autism, and the amount of \$12,300 expected for each new student with Autism entering the system during the remaining months of the 2018-2019 school year. He invited Katina Paleologos, Coordinating Principal, to provide an update report on the changes to Ontario's Autism Program.

Providing an overview of Ontario's Autism Program in existence since 2016 for students under 18 years, Katina Paleologos, reported that, as of April 2019, the government has introduced new Childhood Budgets that will provide families with the ability to directly access the services they require. She noted that this change will impact 23,000 wait listed children. Katina Paleologos explained that families will get up to \$20,000 annually, to a total of \$140,000 for children below 6 years, and \$5,000 a year for children 6 – 18 years of age. She indicated that families with a combined income of \$55,000 or less will receive full funding. Indicating that the government is doubling the funding to diagnostic hubs, she indicated that this will facilitate diagnoses sooner, and will allow children to access the supports they need earlier. Katina Paleologos reported that a new agency will be created to assist families register in the program, assess their funding eligibility, and offer assistance in choosing the required service. She stated that out of the approximately 3034 students in Peel, 1,978 are in main stream programs, and 1,056 children in contained programs. It is estimated that approximately 10% of these students are receiving Intensive Behaviour Intervention (IBI) supports about once or twice a week, and approximately 20 students would be accessing full time IBI supports. It was noted that staff will work closely with the schools and families to provide the necessary resources and supports as students requiring full time IBI support return to Peel schools. A member reported on assistance being provided by Autism Ontario as families navigate the newly introduced changes to the Autism Program.

4. Superintendent’s Report – Autism Spectrum Disorder Update (Continued)

Superintendent Moynihan advised that, as indicated in his communication to members, budget consultation will be deferred to the Committee meeting in April 2019. He also advised that a Special Education newsletter will be distributed at the end of this meeting.

SE-27, moved by Jennifer Knight, that the Superintendent’s oral update report on Autism Spectrum Disorder, be received.

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5. Elementary Special Olympics Presentation

Superintendent Moynihan introduced teaching staff from Hazel McCallion Senior Public School, Angelika Ford, Nicole Ferreira, and Claudia Goncalves, who provided an overview of the Special Olympics event being hosted at the school since the past seventeen years. The event is organized by staff and student volunteers, and is open to students in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Developmental Disabilities (DD) programs in middle schools across the Region of Peel. With a PowerPoint presentation, the presenters highlighted the collaborative efforts, interaction, inclusivity, fun aspects, etc. that mark the Special Olympics event at Hazel McCallion Senior Public School. They expressed appreciation for the time and efforts of all the volunteers, the generous contributions from local vendors and businesses, and thanked Special Olympics Ontario with whom an agreement has been signed that will allow them to support these events in the future.

Responding to a member’s question about involvement of para-athletes, Angelika Ford, explained that the event was organized on a status quo basis this year. The plan is to expand the event to other schools in collaboration with Special Olympics Ontario, in order to provide access to a greater number of students, including students with different developmental disabilities. Joe Grdisa, Health and Physical Education and Extracurricular Athletics Coordinator, indicated that, at the middle school level, para-athletes can participate in Track and Field events. In response to a request for an information brochure, Joe Grdisa stated that staff are in the process of collecting information from schools, and efforts are being made to organize and geographically locate events in Brampton, Caledon, and Peel. When available the information brochure will be sent to SEAC members. A trustee expressed appreciation, and assured his support for future events.

SE-28, moved by John Marchant, that the presentation re Elementary Special Olympics, be received.

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6. Secondary Special Olympics Presentation

Joe Grdisa introduced Paul Freier, Principal of Brampton Centennial Secondary School, and Chris Mehak, Program Developer for School and Youth Programs, Special Olympics Ontario (SOO).

With a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the positive aspects and value of Special Olympic events, Joe Grdisa reported that a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Board and Special Olympics Ontario to further expand and grow the Special Olympics program in the Peel District School Board. Chris Mehak provided details, and highlighted the benefits of various programs offered to children with intellectual disabilities by Special Olympics Ontario, namely, Active Start, Fundamentals, Secondary School Championship, Unified Sport, Healthy Athletes, Sport Festival, etc. He also spoke positively about the Invitational Youth Games being hosted May 14 – 17, 2019, which brings athletes from around the world to Toronto to compete in various unified sports. With a video display of “Changing the World Through Sport,” Chris Mehak showcased the significance of building values of inclusion and respect for all individuals through meaningful competitive sport. Noting the importance of unified sport, and the positive impact it has on all players, he spoke of opportunity to extend this program to elementary schools as well. Chris Mehak expressed appreciation for the monetary support and time provided by donors and volunteers in the community, which are integral to running these programs. Responding to a trustee’s query about funding for the program in Peel schools, he confirmed that the only support SOO would request from the Board would be the provision of space, and approximately 20 volunteers to run the events in local schools. Joe Grdisa reported on the Fitness Friends Program operating at Applewood School, which involves the interaction of mainstream students and students with special needs. He stated that efforts are being made to create more opportunities and initiatives for students to be more active.

SE-29, moved by Kathy McDonald, that the report re Secondary Special Olympics, be received.

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7. Accessibility Plan Status Report - 2018

Superintendent Moynihan reported that the Accessibility Plan Status Report for 2018 was shared with members of the Physical Planning and Building Committee on March 5, 2018, and stated that updated information will be brought to SEAC on an annual basis.

Meghan Echlin, Coordinating Principal, indicated that accessibility standards for information and communication, employment, transportation and the design of public spaces were enacted under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR). She noted that the IASR requires the Board to develop multi-year accessibility plans for identification, removal, and prevention of barriers that may interfere with accessibility as required under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). The multi-year plan must be reviewed and updated every five years with annual status reports on the progress of implementation of strategies for accessibility. Meghan Echlin advised that the Accessibility Status Report which is developed to fulfil this obligation, delivers an update on the Board’s AODA and other accessibility related accomplishments, as well as a review of plans to achieve additional AODA and accessibility related goals and objectives for 2019.

7. Accessibility Plan Status Report – 2018 (Continued)

The administration responded to members' questions of clarification re: ongoing status indicates areas receiving upgrades and changes throughout the year; efforts are being made to ensure accessibility of website content, in line with AODA requirements for 2021; the suggestion to provide a list of projects to be undertaken in the following year was taken under advisement for the next Accessibility Plan Status Report. It was noted that concerns about accessibility challenges are brought to the attention of Central Board staff through the school principal, staff, or parents. Central Board staff also review and anticipate areas of need. The administration clarified that Peel is ahead of other school boards on accessibility, in view of the many new schools being constructed, while older buildings are renovated and updated to accommodate accessibility needs. Board Vice-Chair, Sue Lawton, spoke of potential challenges in funding availability next year to meet as many of the renovation needs as required. It was noted that student accessibility to the neighbourhood school is a foremost priority. David Dadd, Project Coordination Manager, advised that accessibility needs are prioritized during budget development, and that there is flexibility to meet priority requests to support students with exceptional needs. In response to a question about tracking and managing accessibility challenges, Superintendent Moynihan provided details about efforts being made to process claims quicker so as to get the required equipment to students sooner. He stated that the next Accessibility Plan Status Report will include other areas as well to provide a fuller picture on progress of implementation of strategies for accessibility. Arising from a member's comment, Shawn Moynihan expressed interest discussing SEAC representation on the Accessibility Consultation Team.

SE-30, moved by Jennifer Knight, that the report re Accessibility Plan Status Report – 2018, be received.

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8. Ministry of Education Update: Special Education Funding in 2018-2019

Superintendent Moynihan explained that the purpose of the Ministry memo is to summarize the changes in Special Education funding allocation amounts. Reviewing the Differentiated Special Education Needs amount allocation, he noted that allocation has been determined using more recent census data that reflects the reality of Peel's communities. The Multi-Disciplinary Supports Amount, is used for the Board's intensive behavior support classes, where a multi-disciplinary team of professionals attend to students with multi-disciplinary needs. Joy Uniac, Superintendent of Social/Emotional Learning and Early Years provided details about the high level of professional supports provided in classes that accommodate children with high functioning needs. She reported on plans to increase the number of classes this year, and to geographically locate them to facilitate access, and coordinate clinical support with teacher support. Shawn Moynihan reported on the Special Education Per Pupil Amount allocation and reduction in the Special Incidence Portion maximum claim amount, noting that the Behaviour Expertise Amount (BEA), and Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) allocation remain status quo.

8. Ministry of Education Update: Special Education Funding in 2018-2019 (Continued)

In response to a member's question about training funds for Board Certified Assistant Behaviour Analysts, it was advised that training is offered through the Geneva Centre for Autism. Staff are working with the Board's ABA Facilitators and Behaviour Consultant to determine training needs. Regarding class size changes, Superintendent Moynihan responded that staff are in the process of determining the implications, and do not have specific information yet about impact on teaching staff.

SE-31, moved by Mary Wright, that the Ministry of Education Update report re Special Education Funding in 2018-2019, be received.

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9. Response to Questions from Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region (LDAPR) Representative

Superintendent Moynihan stated that there were questions raised at the last meeting regarding Policy Program Memorandum (PPM) 151 which was updated in January 2019. As outlined in the report, he stated that PPM 151 was amended on March 11, 2019, and specific details are awaited. Regarding Professional Development, he noted that Special Education department staff are collaborating with colleagues in other departments to ensure that special education is a component of all three mandatory Professional Activity days. Shawn Moynihan advised that the December 14, 2018 communication addresses other meaningful programs that the Ministry will not be funding. Funding for the Multi-Disciplinary Team has been used to support the Board's Intensive Support classes and hiring of a Behaviour Consultant.

SE-32, moved by Carol Ogilvie, that the Response to Questions from Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region (LDAPR) Representative, be received.

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10. Reports from Representatives on Councils and Associations

Carol Ogilvie reported that the Parent Involvement Committee's Annual Parent Conference will be held on March 30, 2019, and she requested members to forward their association brochures to her, if any, before the event, or to drop them off at Louise Arbour Secondary School on the day of the event.

Jennifer Knight reported that March is Easter Seals Month, and that various campaigns and programs are organized to create awareness about accessibility.

11. Question Period

Jennifer Knight asked about the accessibility issues faced by some students during the student census. Superintendent Moynihan indicated that, in following up with the Research Department, he was advised that additional time was required to collate the results, and that details about the accessibility challenges will be available after reviewing the data. He stated that, should there be agreement among members, this topic can be discussed sooner, possibly in April, when partial information on the census will be available. A trustee indicated he would like to know the reason for the delay, and requested that a potential timeline for preliminary results be provided to members of the Committee.

12. Public Question Period

There were no questions.

13. Adjournment

SE-33, moved by Jennifer Knight, that the meeting adjourn (20:50 hours).

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..... Chair Secretary