

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, April 16, 2019 at 19:00 hours.

Members present:

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
Wes McDonald, VIEWS for the Visually Impaired
Anju Mistry, Down Syndrome Association of Peel
Carol Ogilvie, Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region
Carol Oitment, Tourette Syndrome Association of Ontario
Dorothy Peddie, FASworld Canada, Peel Chapter
Fauzia Reza, Autism Ontario, Peel Chapter
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living

Member absent: (apologies received)

Shelley Foster, VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children, Chair

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
Nicole Fernandes, Board Reporter

1. Approval of Agenda

In the absence of Chair Foster, Vice-Chair Lawton chaired the meeting.

SE-34, moved by Jennifer Knight, 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, March 19, 2019

SE-35, moved by John Marchant, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of March 19, 2019, be approved.

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4. Notice of Motion

Barbara Cyr submitted the following notice of motion:

Whereas, during the June 5, 2012 Supplementary meeting of the Board, regarding the current gifted identification criteria, staff stated that, "the proposed changes will improve gifted education and all students in Peel are given every opportunity to be successful";

Whereas, during the May 15, 2012 Special Education Advisory Committee meeting, it was clarified that when programs are implemented and do not have the intended impact, revisions are always considered to better suit and support students;

Whereas, the introduction of the 2012 criteria has had the following impact:

1. The number of identified gifted students in the Peel District School Board has fallen to 0.8%, a greater than 50% reduction – the gifted student population has fallen to the 4th largest special education population in Peel District School Board, while province-wide it is 2nd,
2. Gifted girls continue to be under identified,
3. The current process takes too long to identify and provide appropriate programs, as seen by the number of Intermediate Enhanced Learning Classes available for the 2018/2019 school year, the majority of students are not being brought to an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee until grades 6 or 7.
4. Disproportionately fewer gifted students come from low income families as seen in the Peel District School Board Poverty Indicator, February 2018;

Whereas, the criteria (Matrix) predetermines whether or not the student is identified as gifted and the placement that will be offered;

Whereas, a September 24, 2001, Ontario Special Education Tribunal, in its decision noted that, "a single factor should not be used to identify a child similarly, one factor alone is insufficient to rule out giftedness in a child", and a February 12, 2007, Ontario Special Education Tribunal commented in its decision that, "Identification, Placement, and Review Committee decisions must always be made with a focus on the strength, needs and best interests of the student";

Whereas, gifted students who are not achieving at their predicted ability, as measured by an IQ test, are at greater risk for social or emotional problems than other students. The most common component of the various definitions of underachievement in gifted students involves identifying a discrepancy between ability and achievement (Baum, Renzulli, & Hebert, 1995a; Butler-Por, 1987; Dowdall & Colangelo, 1982; Emerick, 1992; Redding, 1990; Rimm, 1997a; Supplee, 1990; Whitmore, 1980; Wolfle, 1991);

4. Notice of Motion (Continued)

Whereas, at the Supplementary Meeting of the Board, June 5, 2012, Superintendent of Special Education stated that, "schools will continue to nominate students to write the Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test before grade 4", and the Peel District School Board Gifted Literature Review, 2009 states; "giftedness can be observed in the first three years of life. Rapid progression through the developmental milestones during these three years should be taken seriously, as evidence of giftedness. Although Silverman agrees that children and adults can be assessed for giftedness at any age, the ideal time frame for testing is between the ages of 5 and 8 years. After 9 years of age, gifted children may hit the ceiling of tests, and gifted girls may be socialized to hide their abilities. Regardless, it is believed that early identification of giftedness is as essential as early intervention in order to promote optimal development (Silverman 2007)";

Be it resolved, that the Special Education Advisory Committee of the Peel DSB recommends that the Board:

1. Direct staff to discontinue the use of the Matrix currently used to identify and determine placement for student who are or might be gifted,
2. Direct In-School Review Committees and Identification, Placement, and Review Committee members to use the Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test, the Gifted Rating Scale, Achievement tests (e.g. Woodcock-Johnson III, Kaufmann-Test of Educational Achievement 3rd Edition) and Ability tests (e.g. Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children - Fifth Edition) as information only in the decision-making process.
3. Direct staff to inform parents of Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test and/or Gifted Rating Scale scores before the end of a student's grade 4 year.
4. Direct In-School Review Committees and Identification, Placement, and Review Committee members to consider input from the parents, and the social emotional needs of the student in the decision-making process.
5. Direct staff to make every effort to bring students who might be gifted to an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee before the end of their grade 4 year.
6. Direct staff to nominate students for gifted identification and programs before grade 4."

A member requested that background and supporting information to the motion be provided to Committee members ahead of the next meeting.

5. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Shawn Moynihan, reported that the Minister of Education has made several announcements regarding changes to education funding, including for Autism. Local Priorities funding will be discontinued, which will impact budget. As a result of increase in class size, approximately 120 central assignments were cut, including 10 central positions in the Special Education department. Affected staff were notified last week. Superintendent Moynihan commented that these changes provide opportunities to bring out the best in people, drive innovation and strengthen relationships.

5. Superintendent's Report (Continued)

With regard to projects, Shawn Moynihan reported on successful professional development for principals and vice-principals on A4 resources, the upcoming ISSP Institute, and the Steering Committee on the Secondary Gifted Program Review. With regard to the Gifted review, Barbara Cyr indicated that the Steering Committee had discussed the procedure for collecting data and information from stakeholders. It was agreed to extend the deadline to December 2019 in order to include student census data in the review. Superintendent Moynihan described the initiatives on professional learning for Field Office IPRC chairs, and revising the process for allocation of teaching assistants. Referring to the discussion at the previous meeting regarding students home by mutual consent, he noted that more timely data on students on modified school day is required, and a more accurate tracking system is in the process of being developed. Later in the discussion, a trustee spoke about an assessment of the retention rates in regional programs, for students transitioning from Grade 8 to Grade 9. She stated that the Gifted program at Heart Lake Secondary School indicated a decrease in enrolment, and the report on poverty suggests a significant disparity between Mississauga and Brampton. She noted that there are 66 spaces in Heart Lake Secondary School, and she asked about steps being taken to expand the Gifted program north of the 401. Another trustee reported that many students enroll in the International Baccalaureate program. Superintendent Moynihan suggested that this information will be part of the review of the secondary gifted program.

Members speaking requested details of staffing cuts relevant to Special Education students. The administration explained that staffing for the next school year is being finalized and specifics will be known when the Grants for Student Needs are announced by the Ministry at the end of April. It was noted that Local Priorities funding had allowed for flexibility in previous years, but the funding has been discontinued. Vice-Chair Lawton explained that the reassignment of central positions to schools is to ensure that schools are minimally affected as a result of staff cuts.

Superintendent Moynihan reported that a working group consisting of staff and principals will be reviewing the needs, and secondary principals are planning their course offerings in view of increased class size. He provided details of the reassigned ten central Special Education department positions, and confirmed that an update report on staffing will be brought to SEAC. In response to a member's question as to whether changes are being contemplated to the current model of each Braille user being assigned a primary itinerant teacher, Meghan Echlin, Coordinating Principal, advised that the case load is carefully managed, and existing levels of support will continue. She noted that the case load and level of support is reviewed with the help of a standardized tool to ensure that all students who are assessed receive the level of support they need.

SE-36, moved by Dorothy Peddie, that the Superintendent's oral report, be received.

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6. Accessibility Plan Status Report 2018 – Follow-up

Superintendent Moynihan recalled that status update reports on the Accessibility Plan were brought to SEAC in the past. He commented that these, however, did not appear to meet members' needs in terms of information presented, and he suggested that a working group be established to develop a report template that is relevant to members' needs with regard to format and content. Referring to the composition of the working group, as outlined in the report, a member recommended including Transportation staff. In response to a question, Superintendent Moynihan indicated that the framework for the working group can be finalized by the end of the school year, and members can decide on details of meetings. Names of three SEAC representatives will be requested at the next Committee meeting.

SE-37, moved by Dorothy Peddie, that the report re Accessibility Plan Status Report 2018 – Follow-up, be received.

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7. Consultation on 2019-2020 Budget

Superintendent Moynihan noted that Ontario Regulation 464.97, Special Education Advisory Committees requires school boards to provide SEAC with an opportunity to participate in the annual budget process. A facilitated small group discussion was held, with guided questions to focus the conversations. Feedback was recorded by Special Education staff, and Superintendent Moynihan reported that this will be collated and sent to members, who can email additional input to him. A further feedback session will be scheduled at the May meeting, at which time SEAC may make recommendations to the Board.

SE-38, moved by Kathy McDonald, that the report re Consultation on 2019-2020 Budget, be received.

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8. SEAC Consultation on Peel DSB's Focus on Poverty Year One Action Plan – Follow-up

Superintendent Moynihan reported that the Board's Focus on Poverty Year One Action Plan was shared with SEAC at the January 2019 meeting, and feedback was collected by staff, which is contained in the above-noted follow-up report. He asked to the Committee to review that the feedback clearly reflects SEAC input, and indicated that, following confirmation from members, the feedback will be shared with the Focus on Poverty Working Group.

SE-39, moved by Wes McDonald, that the report re SEAC Consultation on Peel DSB's Focus on Poverty Year One Action Plan – Follow-up, be received.

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9. Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder – Eligibility, Funding and Financial Reporting Requirements

Katina Paleologos, Coordinating Principal, referred to the Ministry memo dated April 5, 2019 contained in the report. She indicated that there are approximately 3,000 students with Autism in the Board, with almost 10% receiving offline Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) therapy, and approximately 20 students receiving full time IBI therapy. She explained that these 50 students will be receiving extended therapy until mid-November 2019. Staff are working with IBI teachers to update this information.

SE-40, moved by Michelle Lewis, that the report re Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder – Eligibility, Funding and Financial Reporting Requirements, be received.

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10. Ministry of Education Consultation: Service Animals in Schools

Katina Paleologos recalled that information regarding service animals in schools has been shared with the Committee in the past. She reported that, on October 25, 2018, the government proposed changes to the Education Act that will, if passed, permit service animals being brought into schools and classrooms to provide students with the support they need. She noted that school boards are responsible for developing and implementing policies governing service animals in schools. Katina Paleologos indicated that, as part of the consultation, the Ministry created an online survey inviting feedback on the specific policies that will be required to improve the process for families making requests for service animals, and provide a process that is consistent and transparent. Once the survey results are collated the Ministry will report back on the consultation before policy direction is released. The Ministry would like to hear from families, students, staff, unions and community partners. Katina Paleologos noted the draft Policy/Program Memorandum is included in the report, and she encouraged members to complete the online survey.

In response to a member's questions, Katina Paleologos reported that the Board has an operating procedure on service animals, and currently there are five service animals, specifically dogs, supporting students. She advised that the Ministry will require boards to post their policy or operating procedure regarding service animals, on their websites. Superintendent Moynihan explained that, following the release of the PPM, Peel's operating procedure will be reviewed and revised, with input from SEAC.

SE-41, moved by Jennifer Knight, that the report re Ministry of Education Consultation: Service Animals in Schools, be received.

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11. Updated Special Education Advisory Committee Member List

SE-42, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the Updated Special Education Advisory Committee Member List, be received.

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12. Communications

SE-43, moved by John Marchant, that the following communication items be received:

1. Letter from Valerie Adamo, SEAC Chair, Durham Catholic DSB, to Minister of Education, Lisa Thompson
2. Letter from Stan Cameron, Chair, Peel DSB, to Minister of Education, Lisa Thompson
3. Letter from Jodi Lloyd, Chair, Simcoe County DSB, to Minister of Education, Lisa Thompson and Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, Lisa MacLeod
3. Letter from Kevin Barry, SEAC Chair, and Brandy Rafeek, SEAC Vice-Chair, Simcoe County DSB, to Minister of Education, Lisa Thompson and Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, Lisa MacLeod

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There was discussion on the suggestion that SEAC write a letter to the Minister. Vice-Chair Lawton reported that the Ontario Public School Boards' Association has submitted a position paper to the Ministry of Education on funding changes to education, and the administration confirmed that the Ministry is accepting input from stakeholders. There was consensus that SEAC write a letter to the Ministry, with Special Education staff providing a first draft and background information. Superintendent Moynihan confirmed that the draft will be circulated by email to SEAC members for feedback and quicker finalization. A trustee suggested that SEAC representatives advise their associations to participate in the consultation.

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SE-43 carried

13. Invitation to Attend Humber River Hospital's 10th Annual Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Clinical Day on June 7, 2019

SE-44, moved by Kathy McDonald, that the report re Invitation to Attend Humber River Hospital's 10th Annual Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Clinical Day on June 7, 2019, be received.

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14. Reports from Representatives on Councils and Associations

Carol Ogilvie reported that information at the SEAC table at the March 30, 2019 Parent Involvement Committee's (PIC) Annual Parent Conference, was well received. She stated that a question was asked whether SEAC had a Twitter account, and she noted that a table cloth is required. With regard to Twitter, the administration indicated that Communications department can provide guidance, and Carol Ogilvie offered to manage the account on behalf of SEAC. Barbara Cyr reported that positive feedback was received regarding the Conference, and that she will check with PIC for funding for a table cloth. Trustee Marchant reported that the Conference was well attended and, responding to his suggestion that SEAC member associations be encouraged to attend, it was confirmed that the schedule of PIC meetings will be shared.

15. Question Period

Trustee McDonald spoke of the passing of Wayne Lee, Principal of Centennial Senior Public School. Stating that the community is still in shock, she indicated that he was a champion of special education, and an outstanding principal who worked passionately for student success.

Carol Ogilvie referred to the four eLearning credits that the Ministry is expected to introduce, and she asked whether there has been any announcement with regard to exemptions for special education students. Explaining that this plan is still in the proposal stage, Director of Education, Peter Joshua, reported that a teleconference was held with the Deputy Minister when it was indicated that the Ministry will engage in discussions on the plan over the course of next year. He confirmed that the member's comment will be shared with the Ministry, and he stated that, while eLearning is a valuable choice for some students, this method of learning is not for all students. He noted that, at this point, the Ministry intends that eLearning is mandatory, and he indicated that in the current technology environment this does can be self-directed or collaborative learning.

Carol Ogilvie asked whether there has been Board participation in discussions on the proposal for Mississauga's separation from the Region of Peel. Indicating that school boards are distinct from the region or municipality, and Peel DSB currently deals with the three municipalities, Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon, Trustee Marchant commented that the Government can introduce changes at any time, and Director Joshua reported that the Ministry has spoken about amalgamating smaller boards.

16. Public Question Period

There were no questions.

17. Adjournment

SE-45, moved by Ann Smith, that the meeting adjourn (20:55 hours).

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