

PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee of the Peel District School Board, held in the Inglewood Room, the H. J. A. Brown Education Centre, 5650 Hurontario Street, Mississauga, Ontario on Tuesday, December 17, 2019 at 19:00 hours.

Members present:

Shelley Foster, VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children, Chair
Nicole Buckett, Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada
Barbara Cyr, Association for Bright Children, Peel Chapter
Jennifer Knight, East Seals Ontario
Sue Lawton, Trustee, Vice-Chair
John Marchant, Trustee
Wes McDonald, VIEWS for the Visually Impaired
Carol Ogilvie, Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region
Carol Oitment, Conditional Additional Member
Sinthusha Panchalingam, Canadian Mental Health Association, Peel Branch
Fauzia Reza, Autism Ontario, Peel Chapter
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living
Mary Wright, Down Syndrome Association of Peel

Member absent:

Kathy McDonald, Trustee
Dorothy Peddie, FASworld Canada, Peel Chapter

Also present:

Brad MacDonald, Chair, Peel DSB

Administration:

Shawn Moynihan, Superintendent of Special Education Support Services (Executive Member)
Joy Uniac, Superintendent, Social/Emotional Learning and Early Years (Executive Back-up Member)
Poleen Grewal, Associate Director, Instructional and Equity Support Services
Peter Joshua, Director of Education
Renée Lucas, Senior Internal Auditor

Nicole Fernandes, Board Reporter

1. Approval of Agenda

Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Shawn Moynihan, assumed the Chair and called the meeting to order.

SE-01, moved by John Marchant, that the agenda be approved.

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2. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Superintendent Moynihan noted that this is the first SEAC meeting since the Organizational and Second Meetings of the Board, and he called for nominations for the position of Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee.

Ann Smith nominated Shelley Foster.

There were no further nominations. After observing the standard one minute silence, Superintendent Moynihan declared that Shelley Foster is acclaimed as Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee for 2019 - 2020.

Shelley Foster assumed the Chair and she called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee.

John Marchant nominated Sue Lawton.

There were no further nominations. After having observed the standard one minute silence, Chair Foster announced that Sue Lawton is acclaimed as Vice-Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee for 2019 - 2020.

3. Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

4. Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, November 19, 2019

SE-02, moved by Fauzia Reza, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of November 19, 2019, be approved.

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5. Notices of Motion

There were no notices of motion.

6. Notice of Motion: Carol Ogilvie re Updating the Peel DSB 5-Year Accessibility Plan

SE-03, moved by Carol Ogilvie, that the Special Education Advisory Committee recommends to the Board, that:

Whereas, during the October 19, 2016, Special Education Advisory Committee meeting, request was moved and carried for the Special Education Advisory Committee that an Accessibility update report be included for the month of September for the SEAC Annual Calendar Draft – 2016-2017 Agenda and Goals;

Whereas, as a follow-up to Response of Administration to Former Questions, regarding Submission of Accessibility Report in September, that the question about an accessibility report will be forwarded to the Human Resources Support Services;

Whereas, it was noted that the committee has not met in a while;

Whereas, the 5-Year Accessibility Plan has not been updated since December 2017;

Whereas, during the May 15, 2018, Special Education Advisory Committee meeting, an update on the report was requested;

Whereas, a presentation of the plan was to have been scheduled for either June or September 2018;

Whereas, it was noted that there have been no meetings and there was clarification that the community aspect of the Committee was disbanded due to changes in structure;

Whereas, it was confirmed that the Accessibility Plan is now being handled by the Human Resources and Facilities departments, and that the report will be brought back;

Whereas, during the June 12, 2018 Special Education Advisory Committee meeting, an Accessibility Report update was provided to SEAC;

Whereas, it was advised that the Accessibility Plan for the next 3-5 years will be updated in terms of compliance;

Whereas, a review will be done on library resources and barriers to accessibility in schools, and individual requests are provided for on need basis, such as books in Braille;

Whereas, an updated Plan was to have been made available in late September 2018;

Whereas, during the September 17, 2018, Special Education Advisory Committee meeting, it was requested that the Accessibility Plan 2018 be included in the SEAC Annual Calendar Draft;

Whereas, during the October 16, 2018, Special Education Advisory Committee meeting, SEAC received an update on the Accessibility Plan;

6. Notice of Motion: Carol Ogilvie re Updating the Peel DSB 5-Year Accessibility Plan (Continued)

Whereas, the Board met the deadline of December 31, 2017 to file the accessibility compliance report and that the next date is December 31, 2019;

Whereas, staff are preparing an updated Accessibility Plan Status Report which will be presented in March 2020 to the Special Education Advisory Committee;

Whereas, during the March 5, 2019 Special Education Advisory Committee meeting, SEAC received an Accessibility Plan Status Update – 2018;

Whereas, arising from a member's comment, there was interest expressed to discuss having SEAC representation on the Accessibility Consultation Team;

Whereas, during the May 21, 2019 Special Education Advisory Committee meeting, it was recommended that the working group be comprised of various participants which includes three members from SEAC;

Whereas, SEAC determined the three members through nominations;

Whereas, the Accessibility Consultation Team met September 11, 2019 and November 5, 2019 in which the SEAC representatives expressed concern regarding the auditing and validation of the Accessibility Plan;

Therefore, be it resolved that:

1. Staff update the 5-Year Accessibility Plan in consultation with members of the Accessibility working committee in order to conduct sound auditing of the plan against the compliance;
2. Staff engage the Special Education Advisory Committee regarding the review of the 5-Year Accessibility Plan in order to provide input and acceptance.

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7. Notice of Motion: Carol Ogilvie re Activity and Motion Log

SE-04, moved by Carol Ogilvie, that the Special Education Advisory Committee recommends to the Board, that:

Whereas, during the October 28, 2015 Special Education Advisory Committee meeting, regarding the Terms of Reference – Special Education Advisory Committee 2015-2016, it was advised that some of the Special Education Advisory Committee members had met on September 11, 2015 to discuss revisions of the Terms of Reference;

(Continued overleaf)

7. Notice of Motion: Carol Ogilvie re Activity and Motion Log (Continued)

Whereas, it was noted that SEAC is a legislated Committee of the Board, and trustee members of SEAC need to be involved and included in the informal discussions;

Whereas, regarding the request for a summary of action items to be included in the minutes, it was explained that the SEAC minutes are prepared in accordance with the Board format and consistent with the minutes of other Committees of the Board;

Whereas, it was commended that the idea of having a summary report, and it was proposed that following each SEAC meeting, the Superintendent along with special education staff and SEAC members prepare a chart which can be shared with members through the Chair and Vice-Chair of SEAC;

Whereas, it was moved that the draft revised Terms of Reference-Special Education Advisory Committee 2015-2016, be brought back to the next SEAC meeting for further discussion, before it is recommended to the Board for approval;

Whereas, the recommendation was carried;

Whereas, during the November 17, 2015 Special Education Advisory Committee meeting, that item 9.3, Terms of Reference – Special Education Advisory Committee 2015-2016, was withdrawn from the agenda, and was to have been brought back to a future meeting;

Whereas, during May 16, 2017 Special Education Advisory Committee meeting, there was an inquiry of whether there will be an opportunity next month (June 2017), to review the plan for SEAC's upcoming meeting items, tracking of issues, service orientation and review, in order to create a plan for the new school year and receive input from the larger community;

Whereas, the response that there would be follow-up;

Whereas, during the June 13, 2017 Special Education Advisory Committee meeting, through the Superintendent's Report, it was indicated that the Superintendent has been noting the questions and issues raised during SEAC meetings and brings forth responses or reports on these matters;

Whereas, be it noted that no further discussions have been scheduled or discussed at the SEAC meetings;

Whereas, Committee members have been receiving questions from the public of what SEAC has been doing or accomplishing;

Whereas, in order to answer the public's questions, it is best to have an action and motion logs that are made public;

7. Notice of Motion: Carol Ogilvie re Activity and Motion Log (Continued)

Therefore, be it resolved that, the Special Education Advisory Committee of the Peel District School Board recommends to the Board that:

1. Staff review including in the agenda, an Action Log retroactive to September 17, 2019;
2. Staff review including in the agenda, a Motion Log retroactive to September 17, 2019;
3. Staff review including in the minutes, an Action Log retroactive to September 17, 2019;
4. Staff review including in the minutes, a Motion Log retroactive to September 17, 2019.

..... carried

8. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Shawn Moynihan, referred to the reports on the Secondary Gifted Program Review and the draft Action Plan to Address Equity Issues in Gifted Identification, and he thanked staff involved for their work on the review. Regarding filling the vacant position on SEAC, he reported that all applicants will be advised of the Board's decision by the first week of January 2020. Noting that this is Superintendent of Social/Emotional Learning and Early Years, Joy Uniac's last SEAC meeting, Superintendent Moynihan wished her the best in her retirement. He remarked that it has been a great pleasure working with her and learning from her. Recalling an anecdote, he extended wishes from the Special Education team and thanked Joy Uniac for her support of students with special needs.

SE-05, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the Superintendent's Report (oral), be received.

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9. Guidelines for the Use of Alternative Learning Environments

Coordinating Principal, Special Education, Meghan Echlin, indicated that the above-noted guidelines and an FAQ have been developed to ensure that information is more accessible. Meghan Echlin, and Occupational Therapist, Michelle Zilic, noted that the documents provide information regarding alternative learning environments (ALE) and the students who use them. As needs of students become more complex, a number of schools have Alternative Learning Environments (ALE), and the guidelines provide clear procedures regarding the proper use of these rooms, which include equipment and safety components.

9. Guidelines for the Use of Alternative Learning Environments (Continued)

The types of ALE rooms are: instructional/education; sensory; gross motor; calming/de-escalation, and features and uses were described, including that: sensory rooms can be used by students who chose to go or when are prompted by an adult; equipment for gross motor rooms should be recommended by an Occupational Therapist (OT) or Physiotherapist (PT) and some equipment will require staff to be trained by the OT/PT; de-escalation rooms are purpose built with considerations for safety and to meet Health and Safety guidelines; de-escalation rooms require staff to have training that is student-specific and intervention must require parent consent; detailed communication plan is required when de-escalation rooms are used; use of a de-escalation intervention plan must be documented in the student's Individual Education Plan and Safety Plan; reports are provided to parents after use of a de-escalation room.

Responses to members' questions of clarification included: Safety Plan is developed following in-depth collaborative discussions and is written into the IEP; sensory and calming rooms should never be used for lack of compliance, disciplinary purposes or de-escalation; inclusion of students' consent when they are able, in the development of the safety plan and use of ALE rooms; not all schools have de-escalation rooms, as these are purpose built; accessibility factors are considered; equipment for ALE rooms is purchased with Special Equipment Amount, and are to be recommended by the OT; process in place to purchase SEA equipment and schools do not need to fundraise; Guidelines will provide clarity on the process and help to prevent stigma.

Stating that compliance should be monitored to ensure use of ALE rooms are within the Guidelines, a trustee suggested establishing independent review or audit processes as compliance measures for oversight. The trustee added that such review or audit can take place after a specific number of visits by a student to sensory or de-escalation rooms. He also suggested setting up a committee to review reports of visits to the these rooms, and he spoke of the importance of staff training.

SE-06, moved by Sinthusha Panchalingam, that the report re Guidelines for the Use of Alternative Learning Environments, be received.

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10. Secondary Gifted Program Review

Reporting that the Secondary Gifted Program Review began last year, Marija Glisic, Research Officer, noted that thirteen recommendations arise from the review, which are grouped into five areas, with each recommendation grounded in a significant amount of research and at least seven different data sources. Laura Naismith, Research Officer, and Marija Glisic took turns in reviewing each recommendation. Regarding programming and practices, beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, it is proposed that: the practice of demitting students with a gifted identification who do not attend the Enhanced Learning Program (ELP) will be stopped; all secondary students with gifted identifications will be provided an IEP through a phased implementation; the four Enhanced Learning Program sites will be merged into two sites, at The Woodlands and Heart Lake Secondary Schools; central staff responsible for gifted education will need to be allocated.

10. Secondary Gifted Program Review (Continued)

With respect to information and support for families, it will be recommended that communication and education about program options be improved, communication materials about the ELP be developed for distribution at information nights, and staff work with the Association for Bright Children to increase support for gifted students and families. Professional learning and networking opportunities focused on gifted education and gifted learners, and networking opportunities for gifted students, were proposed. Information was shared on the recommendations relating to student well-being, and reviewing the distribution of gifted students, and the identification process.

A member requested that the staffing and financial implications of the recommendations be provided to the Committee.

SE-07, moved by John Marchant, that the report re Secondary Gifted Program Review, be received.

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11. Draft Action Plan to Address Equity Issues in Gifted Identification

Referring to the SEAC recommendation approved, at the May 28, 2019 Regular Meeting of the Board, Superintendent Moynihan stated that the above-noted report speaks to developing an action plan for addressing self-identified groups currently underrepresented in students with a Gifted exceptionality. He reviewed the report, and invited SEAC input today and in subsequent meetings.

Associate Director of Instructional and Equity Support Services, Poleen Grewal, indicated that the secondary student census data is available on the Board's website. She explained that, in Fall 2020, staff will be able to identify indicators and cross reference these to students' programs. The analysis will indicate whether certain groups are underrepresented, and the actions needed to address the needs. She highlighted the data that will be included in developing a portfolio approach to determine a gifted identification. A trustee spoke about the cultural aspect of the identification process and suggested that Peel develop tools for gifted identification that culturally fit the student demographic. He also suggested exploring federal and provincial funding possibilities, and indicated that there are many school jurisdictions that could be interested in these tools.

SE-08, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the report re Action Plan to Address Equity Issues in Gifted Identification (Draft), be received.

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12. Revised Peel DSB Operating Procedure re Use of Service Animals by Students Who Have Disabilities

Coordinating Principal of Special Programs, Katina Paleologos, thanked Jay Sengupta, Human Rights Commissioner, and Brenda Culbert, Human Rights Officer, for their help in revising the Operating Procedure (OP) on the Use of Service Animals by Students Who Have Disabilities. She noted that the revised OP is aligned with the Ministry’s PPM 163, and the Board’s Policy 51 - Human Rights, Policy 48 – Safe and Accepting Schools, and Policy 54 – Equity and Inclusive Education. The OP will be available on the Board’s website on January 1, 2020. Katina Paleologos outlined the process to request the use of a service animal as an accommodation at school. The student or parents/guardian will complete a “Request for Service Animal Use by a Student” form with the required information. The completed form is placed in the Ontario Student Record. The principal will: refer the request to the In-School Resource Committee for referrals and action, and schedule a case conference with appropriate staff; provide a decision letter to the parent, with a description of other available supports if the request is denied; if approved, communicate the presence of a service animal to staff and students at the school, students of any other class where the service animal is present, the bus company, and students on the bus route travelled by the service animal. Information regarding the transition plan to introduce the service animal into the school community was shared.

Responding to members’ questions of clarification, Katina Paleologos spoke of the expectation that the decision regarding the use of a service animal will be communicated to parents or the student in a timely manner. She confirmed that bus companies were consulted, and the location of a service animal on the bus has been discussed. She indicated that currently, there are approximately 6 service animals in schools. There was a brief discussion regarding competing rights, and it was noted that decisions in this regard will be made on a case by case basis. Brenda Culbert advised that service animals should behave consistently in the role of the service animal and are suitable in an educational setting without being a risk to others. Explaining that there is legislation dealing with guide dogs, and the Human Rights Code has a section on competing rights, she advised that school boards are required to do their best from a Human Rights perspective, and the question of undue hardship may arise. The administration noted that the handler’s responsibilities and the training of the service animal is important in administering the program. There are guidelines on certification of service animals, and the OP outlines the documents that are required annually. With regard to certification, a trustee suggested that, if the Board is aware of agencies providing acceptable certification, this can be shared with the parents or student.

SE-09, moved by Mary Wright, that the report re Revised Peel DSB Operating Procedure re Use of Service Animals by Students Who Have Disabilities, be received.

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13. Children in Crisis, Autism Advocacy Ontario (AAO) Special Education Report – Fall 2019

SE-10, moved by Fauzia Reza, that the report re Children in Crisis, Autism Advocacy Ontario (AAO) Special Education Report – Fall 2019, be received.

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14. Letter from Glenn MacDonell, Special Olympics Ontario to Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Peel DSB

SE-11, moved by John Marchant, that the Letter from Glenn MacDonell, Special Olympics Ontario to Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Peel DSB, be received.

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15. Response to Question from Carol Ogilvie re Parents Reaching Out Grants

SE-12, moved by Carol Ogilvie, that the Response to Question from Carol Ogilvie re Parents Reaching Out Grants (November 19, 2019 Special Education Advisory Committee meeting), be received.

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16. Response to Question from Carol Ogilvie re Mental Health Support for Students

SE-13, moved by Carol Ogilvie, that the Response to Question from Carol Ogilvie re Mental Health Support for Students (November 19, 2019 Special Education Advisory Committee meeting), be received.

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17. Reports from Representatives on Councils/Associations

There were no reports.

18. Question Period

Jennifer Knight noted that gifted students' perceptions regarding inclusion and belonging in the ELP are referenced in the report on the Secondary Gifted Program Review (Item 10 of these Minutes). She asked whether this information is available for other exceptionalities. Associate Director Grewal indicated that student census data will be reviewed, following which committees will be asked as to the types of analyses they would like to receive. She clarified that student census data was not used in the gifted review, but perceptions were gathered through consultation with staff, students and parents. Jennifer Knight asked about the timing for release of the Kindergarten-Grade 8 census data. Poleen Grewal reported that the data will be available in February-March 2020, following which elementary and secondary data will be collated.

19. Public Question Period

There were no public questions.

20. Adjournment

Chair Foster thanked Joy Uniac and wished her well on her retirement. She also wished staff and SEAC members for the holidays.

SE-14, moved by John Marchant, that the meeting adjourn (21:00 hours).

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..... Chair Secretary