

April 27, 2015  
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, April 27, 2015 at 19:00 hours.

Members present:

Shelley Foster, VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children, Vice-Chair  
Carrie Andrews, Trustee  
Nancy Bratkovic, Canadian Mental Health Association, Peel Branch  
Barbara Cyr, Association for Bright Children, Peel Chapter  
Nokha Dakroub, Trustee  
Jennifer Knight, Easter Seals Ontario  
Nancy Leaton, Autism Ontario, Peel Chapter  
Brad MacDonald, Trustee  
Wes McDonald, VIEWS for the Visually Impaired  
Carol Ogilvie, Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region  
Carol Oitment, Tourette Syndrome Association of Ontario  
Dorothy Peddie, FASworld Canada, Peel Chapter  
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living  
Mary Wright, Peel Caring Network for Challenged Kids

Absent: (apologies received)

Barbara Byers, Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada, Chair

Administration:

Louise Sirisko, Superintendent, Special Education Support Services (Executive Member)  
Scott Moreash, Associate Director, Instructional Support Services  
Joy Uniack, Superintendent of Education (Executive Backup Member)

Lorelei Fernandes, Board Reporter

### 1. **Approval of Agenda**

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

SE-27, moved by Carol Ogilvie, that the agenda, be approved.

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**2. Special Presentation – Special Needs Strategy – Service Coordination**

Lorie Grant, Chief Speech-Language Pathologist introduced Marian Pitters, Special Needs Strategy Facilitator, to present information on the parent engagement strategy for Ontario special needs students. Using a PowerPoint presentation, Marian Pitters spoke of the cooperative effort by four Ministries, Children and Youth Services, Community and Social Services, Education, and Health and Long-Term Care, towards service coordination. Stating that navigating the network of services to find the right service providers can be difficult, Marian Pitters advised that Coordinated Services Planning involves a multi-sector level of services, and that the Ministries have analyzed reports, established advisory focus groups, and published an online survey to seek parent input and advice. She reviewed six key themes that emerged: too many consent forms, organizations, and individuals involved, and a need to streamline service; access to services and waitlist management; complications in finding the right help especially in cases where there is no diagnosis or needs are complex; parents' level of stress when transitioning to next level; family and youth engagement; easy access of service information literature and meeting cultural and linguistic needs. Marian Pitters reviewed flowcharts showing the evolution of family-centered coordinated services and explained how service was provided. She highlighted the importance of relationships between families and agencies to assist with crisis or coordinated support required, and the possibility of accessing a higher level of service coordination if needed. Marian Pitters advised that 34 communities are bringing forward proposals for service planning coordination and she explained the proposed new model of service which has been reviewed by focus groups. Marian Pitters reviewed the draft Service Pathway and invited questions, input and ideas from members.

Feedback and questions of clarification responded to included: implementation of coordinated services may free up some resources but may not reduce waitlists; tools for families to navigate the system easily could include online input of information and a common intake form; process of coordinating services across four ministries gets complicated; training and monitoring of services; assistance for families seeking intensive service model; voting process used for selecting ErinoakKids as the Coordinated Service Planning agency; draft Service Pathway charts or documents will be provided.

**3. Conflict of Interest**

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

**4. Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, March 31, 2015**

Barbara Cyr noted that she had sent regrets for the meeting on March 31, 2015.

SE-28, moved by Dorothy Peddie, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of March 31, 2015, be approved.

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**5. Parkholme School: Supporting Students with Developmental Disabilities at the Secondary Level in Inclusive and Enabling Environments**

Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Louise Sirisko, advised that over the past four years she has met with members from Community Living in Mississauga and Brampton, engaging in discussions on supporting students with Developmental Disabilities (DD) at secondary level. She noted that at the elementary level, a majority of special needs students are schooled in mainstream classroom placement, and some qualify for placement in DD or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in elementary, but at secondary level the vast majority of students attend Applewood or Parkholme Schools, or T. L. Kennedy Secondary School.

Louise Sirisko reviewed the report, providing background information and history of the programs. She commented on accommodation pressures at Applewood and Parkholme Schools and help for students at secondary level. Superintendent Sirisko referred to the recommendations approved at the February 24, 2015 Regular Meeting of the Board, and the tables showing creation of satellite classes in phases, for the 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2017-2018 school years, in order to meet the accommodation challenges at Parkholme School and create more inclusive environments for students. She explained that instead of creating a large environment for special needs students, as done at T. L. Kennedy Secondary School, a space for special needs students will be created closer to their home school. With regard to increasing inclusion, Louise Sirisko explained the decoupling initiative and future class locations and class types, which will be phased in, occurring no sooner than 2017-2018. These will be referred to as District Programs. She noted that the objective of these changes is to expand the number of staff who have knowledge, skill, and empathy to support students with developmental disabilities as well as to expand opportunities for increased integration. Louise Sirisko reviewed the professional development proposals. She spoke of budget implications, advising that the Board's annually designated \$1 million accessibility fund will be used for site improvements.

Referring to the decoupling initiative, a trustee inquired about ensuring standardization of service in classes that will be decoupled from the main site and located at other schools, given that they will be managed by school administrators at each site. Louise Sirisko will bring back a response. A member inquired about the possibility of a program for all special needs students being accommodated at the home school. She suggested that information is shared with all parents to provide them the opportunity to make the right choices for their children. Superintendent Sirisko spoke briefly about different types of existing DD classes and proposed that, Ana Pauchulo, Coordinating Principal, Special Education Support Services, prepare a presentation for SEAC, to explain different types of classes for students with DD. In response to another member's query regarding \$1 million for renovation and how accessibility requests for incoming students will be handled, Superintendent Sirisko replied that top priorities will be reviewed in consultation with Associate Director for Operational Support Services, Jaspal Gill, to provide accessibility accommodations required for schools.

SE-29, moved by Nokha Dakroub, that the report re Parkholme School: Supporting Students with Developmental Disabilities at the Secondary Level in Inclusive and Enabling Environments, be received.

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**6. Special Education Plan Review: Summary of Elementary Contained Class Changes 2015-2016**

Special Education Coordinator, Donna Zuccato, explained that the decision for opening new classes or closure of classes at elementary level is made after reviewing data with superintendents of education. The data includes student enrolment, gender, student profile, and fill rate. She reviewed the tables showing a summary of elementary contained class changes for 2015-2016. In response to a trustee's question regarding enrolment trends, Louise Sirisko agreed that enrolment growth is stagnating, but noted that the need for special education is continuing to increase significantly. Chief Psychologist, Jack Kamrad advised that with new diagnostic rules, fewer students will be diagnosed due to stricter criteria and as practitioners get familiarized with the new rules, it can be anticipated that the number of students diagnosed will decrease slightly. Responding to a member's question regarding availability of space for new students to enroll, Louise Sirisko explained that if spaces are all filled, a request for approval to open another class will be made and she clarified that when two classes are only half full, driving distance is considered when deciding to close a class.

SE-30, moved by Dorothy Peddie, that the report re Special Education Plan Review: Summary of Elementary Contained Class Changes 2015-2016, be received.

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**7. Communications**

SE-31, moved by Nokha Dakroub, that the following communications be received:

1. Letter to Minister Liz Sandals from SEAC Chair, Upper Grand District School Board Re: Mandatory Special Education Courses for Teachers;
2. Letter to Minister Liz Sandals from SEAC Chair, Northeastern Catholic District School Board Re: Ontario Regulation 274/12 Hiring Practices;
3. Letter to Minister Liz Sandals from SEAC Chair, Greater Essex County District School Board Re: Ontario Regulation 274/12.

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Referring to Item 7.1, Letter to Minister Liz Sandals from SEAC Chair, Upper Grand District School Board Re: Mandatory Special Education Courses for Teachers, a member recalled that in the past SEAC had discussed the topic of all special education teachers completing additional qualifications for special education. She requested that SEAC write a similar letter to the Minister. Some members supported the idea of advocating for comprehensive special education theory and practice as a mandatory component of the two-year Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) program. Further to a comment to review the difference between the one and two-year programs, Superintendent Sirisko indicated that a professional development session for SEAC members can be organized by Coordinator for Special Programs, Gillian Kajganich, who has completed Special Education Parts 1, 2, and 3, along with a representative from OCT, to provide more information to members.

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SE-31

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## 8. Question Period

Nancy Bratkovic stated that with the pending strike of secondary school teachers, there is anxiety and concern about how special needs students will be supported. She inquired about transition plans and what measures schools will be taking to support these students. Associate Director of Instructional Support Services, Scott Moreash advised that in the event of strike action expected on May 4, 2015, secondary schools including Applewood School, Parkholme School and T. L. Kennedy Secondary School will be closed, in view of student safety. He added that as there will not be sufficient staff, students will be expected to stay home. Scott Moreash spoke of the Ministry's concern regarding the highest needs students who are deemed eligible for Special Incident Portion (SIP) claims and advised that he is working with principals, to ensure that parents are aware and seek assistance from community partners and service coordinators.

Ann Smith stated that Community Living does not have additional funding to support parents. Scott Moreash advised that the Ministry has indicated that if agencies can support the very high needs students, funding transfers will be worked out. Louise Sirisko explained that, as done with some other school boards, the Ministry will identify a central agency to receive funding. However, the funding will not support the needs of all students registered at the special needs sites, and she advised that agencies have been asked to communicate directly with families seeking out resources and support. The school board's role is to ensure that parents are kept informed, and information is being translated into various languages.

Wes MacDonald asked about maximum duration of the strike according to labour law. Scott Moreash stated that in matters of safety and security the government can legislate essential services back to work. Louise Sirisko advised that Teaching Assistants will be assigned to support students in the elementary panel. With regard to school credits completion, Scott Moreash stated that the Ministry has indicated that credits will not be withheld.

Shelley Foster expressed concern with regard to disruption for students who are transitioning to post-secondary programs and not engaging in the curriculum. Associate Director Moreash advised that students' mid-term marks have been transmitted to the Ontario Universities Application Centre and Ontario Colleges Application Centre. He stated that the Ministry has met with University Registrars to ensure that no student will be disadvantaged; however, the issue that students are not in class and missing part of the curriculum cannot be addressed at this point.

Barbara Cyr asked about Grade 8 students who need IPRCs to transition to secondary school. Katie Levalds advised that provisions have been made for most of the students to transition to Grade 9 and course selections are being done.

Dorothy Peddie asked for clarification on the role of Teaching Assistants. Louise Sirisko clarified that secondary Teaching Assistants will be assigned to elementary schools to assist and they will return to their positions once the strike ends.

Nancy Leaton inquired whether students will be able to log in to Desire2Learn (D2L) and she asked about the possibility of obtaining mathematics books to work from home. Scott Moreash replied that students will have access to D2L on a view only basis but will not have access to the calibration tools. He advised that students are not allowed to take additional resources to work from home.

**8. Question Period (Continued)**

Carol Ogilvie asked about the likelihood of elementary teachers going on strike. Scott Moreash advised that Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) has received a No Board Report at the provincial level.

**9. Public Question Period**

Ramona Siddiqui, a parent, inquired about the process of reporting an incident witnessed in an elementary school GLD class. Louise Sirisko advised that first reporting is to the principal and then to the superintendent of education. She offered to speak to the parent after the meeting.

**10. Adjournment**

SE-32, moved by Nokha Dakroub, that the meeting adjourn (21:00 hours).

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