

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, December 15, 2015 at 19:00 hours.

Members present:

Nancy Bratkovic, Canadian Mental Health Association, Peel Branch
Barbara Byers, Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada
Barbara Cyr, Association for Bright Children, Peel Chapter
Shelley Foster, VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children
David Green, Trustee
Jennifer Knight, Easter Seals Ontario
Sue Lawton, Trustee
Nancy Leaton, Autism Ontario, Peel Chapter
Wes McDonald, VIEWS for the Visually Impaired (19:10)
Carol Ogilvie, Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region
Carol Oitment, Tourette Syndrome Association of Ontario
Dorothy Peddie, FASworld Canada, Peel Chapter (19:05)
Harkirat Singh, Trustee
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living
Abeer Zuberi, Peel Caring Network for Challenged Kids (19:15)

Also present:

Karen Del Ben, Educational Resource Facilitators of Peel
Janet McDougald, Chair, Peel District School Board

Administration:

Ted Byers, Superintendent of Special Education Support Services (Executive Member)
Scott Moreash, Associate Director of Instructional Support Services

Nicole Fernandes, Board Reporter

1. **Approval of Agenda**

Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Ted Byers, assumed the Chair and called the meeting to order. He welcomed newly elected trustee members, David Green, Sue Lawton and Harkirat Singh, and he thanked them for volunteering to sit on the Committee.

The following items were added to the agenda:

Item 1.3 Special Presentation – Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada
Item 9.4 a) Superintendent's Report (oral)

1. Approval of Agenda (Continued)

SE-01, moved by Ann Smith, that the agenda, as amended, be approved.

..... carried
2/3rds' majority

2. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Superintendent Byers noted that this is the first SEAC meeting since the Organizational and Second Meetings of the Board. He briefly reviewed the Board by-laws relating to the election of Chair and Vice-Chair, and he reported that Renee Lucas, Senior Internal Auditor, will act as scrutineer in the event of a vote by secret ballot. Ted Byers called for nominations for the position of Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee.

Barbara Cyr nominated Barbara Byers.

There were no further nominations. After observing the standard one minute silence, Barbara Byers was acclaimed Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee for 2015 - 2016.

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

Carol Ogilvie nominated Shelley Foster
David Green nominated Sue Lawton

There were no further nominations. After having observed the standard one minute silence, Committee members voted to elect the Vice-Chair of SEAC. Following the counting of the ballot, Chair Byers declared Shelley Foster elected as Vice-Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee for 2015 - 2016.

3. Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

4. Special Presentation – Fragile X Foundation of Ontario

Chair Byers introduced Carlo Paribello, Family Physician and Chair of the Fragile X Foundation of Ontario. Providing an overview of his presentation, Carlo Paribello reported that Fragile X syndrome is caused by a single gene defect in the FMRI gene located on the X chromosome. He stated that developmental problems include learning disability, behaviour management challenges, and mild to severe cognitive impairment.

4. Special Presentation – Fragile X Foundation of Ontario (Continued)

Further information was provided by Carlo Paribello on the cause and diagnosis of Fragile X syndrome. He explained that treatment is mainly about intervention, and he highlighted the symptoms of Fragile X, which include, hypersensitivity, motor planning, sequencing, cognitive and attention difficulties, anxiety, challenges with physical transitions, and communication difficulties. Describing the strengths and idiosyncrasies of children with Fragile X, he noted that these include their excellent visual memory, simultaneous and incidental learning ability, and ability to retrieve facts more effectively through contextual cues. Carlo Paribello advised that many of the behaviours exhibited by children with Fragile X syndrome are a direct manifestation of a nervous system that does not function effectively, and that their strengths should be utilized by identifying the functions of undesirable behaviour and providing alternative learning. Highlighting physical characteristics, and educational, medical and other interventions required, he provided a detailed description of the molecular and cellular aspects of Fragile X syndrome, and he noted that research is helping to develop new medication or use existing medication to positive effect.

Carlo Paribello spoke about the Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada, a charitable organization run by volunteers, which raises money to fund research aimed at finding a cure for Fragile X syndrome. The Foundation raises public awareness of this medical condition, interacts directly with researchers, and funds research at the Hospital for Sick Children and the University of Toronto.

SE-02, moved by Nancy Leaton, that the Special Presentation – Fragile X Foundation of Ontario, be received.

..... carried

5. Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, November 17, 2015

SE-03, moved by Shelley Foster, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of November 17, 2015, be approved.

..... carried

6. Special Education Plan Development Consultation

Superintendent Ted Byers, noted that, during the October and November Committee meetings, members reviewed the table of contents of the Board's Special Education Plan to identify priorities and topics for further discussion and consultation at SEAC meetings. Special Education Coordinator, Gillian Kajganich, reviewed the list of priorities, as well as the areas that members identified as gaps in the Special Education Plan.

(Continued overleaf)

6. Special Education Plan Development Consultation (Continued)

Superintendent Byers referred to the draft Annual Calendar for SEAC included in the report, and he stated that, for today's meeting, projects included in the Special Education Plan will be discussed. He reported that the topics of Teaching Assistant (TA) allocation and TA professional development will be discussed at the January 2016 meeting. Referring to the report on TA allocation that was brought to the October meeting, he stated that additional information will be brought to the January meeting and members will have the opportunity to ask further questions. He reviewed items for discussion in February and March and he stated that the calendar can be adjusted based on members' suggestions or further priorities. A member asked for regular update reports on accessibility training, and she reported that the Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region will be making a special presentation in March. Another member suggested that updated information on specific projects can also be brought on a regular basis.

SE-04, moved by Dorothy Peddie, that the report re Special Education Plan Development Consultation, be received.

..... carried

7. Special Education Plan – Discussion on Other Ontario School Board Plans

Superintendent Byers recalled the activity at the November 2015 meeting, when the special education plans for four Ontario school boards, Halton, Ottawa Catholic, York Region, Toronto DSBs, were reviewed and feedback provided. He noted that the report lists the feedback, and he confirmed that the administration will consider the members' request regarding locating all information on the Plan in one document.

Tracy Bardell and Sharon Cook, Special Education Coordinators, reviewed the feedback, noting the similarities in the special education plans of the four boards. Members were invited to sit on the working group that will review the current structure of the Plan and propose a revised structure. Ann Smith indicated here interest to be included in the group, and other members can email Sharon Cook if they are interested.

SE-05, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the report re Special Education Plan – Discussion on Other Ontario School Board Plans, be received.

..... carried

8. Special Education Plan Projects: 2014-2015 and 2015-2016

Ted Byers referred to the list of projects contained in the report and he asked members if they had questions or needed clarification on any project.

Members' comments included: continuation of 2014-2015 projects with no new projects planned for 2015-2016; how do projects relate to Ministry projects and what are the outcomes; explain each project in detail and how SEAC can help in implementation or monitoring; provide update, progress and evaluation reports on projects.

8. Special Education Plan Projects: 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 (Continued)

On a member's question about capacity building, Tracy Bardell provided information on sunrise seminars, mentor seminars, and presentations on IPRC and ISRC, and she confirmed that professional development is an ongoing project as there are frequent staff and administrator changes in schools. Superintendent Byers thanked members for their feedback, noting that it will help to reimage the Special Education Plan.

SE-06, moved by Ann Smith, that the report re Special Education Plan Projects: 2014-2015 and 2015-2016, be received.

..... carried

9. October Report Data

Reviewing the report, Gillian Kajganich advised that OnSIS obtains data from school boards in October, which is verified only in February and, as a result, data contained in the above-referred report is not verified. She noted that the number of identified special needs' students is declining slightly, which is in line with the decrease in enrolment. However, the number of non-identified students is growing.

Charts outlining October 2015 data by exceptionality, and trend of identified students by exceptionality from 2007 to 2015 were reviewed. Information was provided regarding: an IPRC is provided to facilitate a special class placement or program placement; students with speech impairments generally do not need a special placement as the exceptionality can be managed in a normal classroom setting; ISELP data is collected at the school level and collated for this report. In response to a member's question, it was clarified that the data in this report aligns with exceptionalities set by the Ministry and, therefore, students with Tourette's syndrome are not shown separately, as well as are not identified for a behavioural exceptionality at the secondary level. Another member suggested that the chart on October data by exceptionality also include percentages.

SE-07, moved by Ann Smith, that the information re October Report Data, be received.

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10. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Ted Byers thanked Superintendent of Education, Pertia Minott, for taking his place at the last meeting. Referring to the question asked at that meeting, he confirmed that emails directed to the SEAC email address are routed to the SEAC Chair, who can forward the email if needed.

(Continued overleaf)

10. Superintendent's Report (Continued)

Referring to the EQAO presentation at the previous SEAC meeting, Superintendent Byers indicated that there were a number of questions raised by members regarding the performance of Peel's special education students at the Grade 10 OSSLT being lower than that for the province. He noted that, over the past five years, results for Peel and the province's special education students in EQAO tests have been relatively unchanged, with Peel's results being consistently below provincial results. However, the overall results for Peel have been consistently higher than provincial results. Superintendent Byers advised that the reasons for the variance is being investigated, and data will be examined, including: circumstances under which students are deferred from writing the exam; 3% Peel students deferred compared to 10-11% provincially; data for identified and non-identified students and accommodations provided to students. In response to members' questions, Ted Byers explained that the outcome of the analysis will be brought back to the Committee as soon as it is available, and he confirmed that one of his goals is to positively impact achievement of special education students.

Referring to the letter from community representatives on SEAC regarding the 2015-2016 Special Education Report (Item 12.4 of these Minutes), Superintendent Byers explained that the letter expresses some sincerely held beliefs on how SEAC can support the Board. He also acknowledged the emails circulated with regard to the letter and the messages conveyed in the emails. He stated that he reaffirms his commitment to authentic collaboration with SEAC, particularly on the Special Education Plan. He noted that Items 6 to 8 of these Minutes focus on consultation with SEAC on the Board's Special Education Plan development. He expressed the hope that members feel that their voices are being heard with regard to establishing priorities and the format of the Special Education Plan, as well as on the plans and actions of the Special Education department. He spoke about his belief in open dialogue, consultation, and accessing the expertise and commitment of SEAC members in supporting special education students.

A trustee member explained that the three new trustees on SEAC have chosen to become members of the Committee, and wish to build relationships and work to support each other on the Committee. Extending his support of Superintendent Byers' statements, he stated that he looks forward to a collaborative, respectful and transparent partnership with members, and to making sure that SEAC's voice is communicated to the Board of Trustees.

SE-08, moved by Dorothy Peddie, that the Superintendent's Report (oral), be received.

..... carried

11. Updated Special Education Advisory Committee Member List

A correction to the list was noted.

SE-09, moved by Carol Ogilvie, that the Updated Special Education Advisory Committee Member List, be received.

..... carried

**12. Letter to OPSBA President from SEAC Chair, Ottawa Carleton DSB re Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
Community Living Ontario re Together We're Better Contest
Community Living Ontario re 7th Annual Commence Conference
Letter from Community Representatives re 2015-2016 Special Education Report of the Peel DSB**

Community Living Ontario representative, Ann Smith**, spoke about the association's 7th Annual Commence Conference which focuses on being part of and belonging to the community, as well as discussions to explore strategies for employment of youth with a learning ** disability. She recommended that a staff member of the Special Education department attend the conference.

SE-10, moved by Carol Oitment, that the following communication items, be received:

1. Letter to OPSBA President from SEAC Chair, Ottawa Carleton DSB re Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
2. Community Living Ontario re Together We're Better Contest
3. Community Living Ontario re 7th Annual Commence Conference
4. Letter from Community Representatives re 2015-2016 Special Education Report of the Peel DSB

..... carried

13. Reports from Representatives on Councils/Associations

Barbara Cyr reported that SEAC has been asked to conduct a workshop at the Numeracy Conference, scheduled on April 2, 2016, at Rick Hansen Secondary School. She invited members to indicate their interest by tomorrow. She stated that she is also trying to obtain a table at the Conference to display brochures. Gillian Kajganich indicated that the Special Education department has requested three tables, and one could be used by SEAC.

Barbara Cyr advised that she is a member of the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC), and that she is coming to the end of her third two-year term. She invited any member from SEAC to attend a PIC meeting to consider whether they want to sit on the Committee.

14. Question Period

Carol Ogilvie apologized for the cancellation of the Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region's Parent/Adult Workshop. She reported that not enough people had registered for the workshop.

**Note: At the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting, held January 19, 2016, the following amendments were made:

"Community Living Ontario representative, Ann Smith" amended to "Brampton-Caledon Community Living representative, Ann Smith"
"learning" amended to "intellectual"

14. Question Period (Continued)

Carol Ogilvie asked about plans by the Board to look after refugee students and families, with regard to costs, funding, etc. Associate Director of Instructional Support Services, Scott Moreash, circulated a report that was received by the Board at its meeting on December 8, 2015, which outlines plans developed to welcome refugees into Peel schools and is a first look at understanding the issues relating to the refugee situation. Associate Director Moreash reviewed the report in detail, noting that it outlines some of the significant challenges that are involved in helping the refugees. He indicated that temporary housing, potentially for up to two months, will be provided in some neighbourhoods. Stating that children who attend schools will be welcomed and integrated into Peel culture, he advised that many of them will be suffering from the loss of family, trauma, and speech, language and learning issues. He explained that children may not have attended school regularly or at all, or have little to no English speaking ability. In order to deal with the challenges, Scott Moreash reported that the Board has struck the Inspire Hope Action Team, who will inventory existing supports and services, and identify needs and areas that require provincial funding. Work has begun on: curriculum resources and supports for schools specifically to assist ELD services; tip sheets for principals and school staff; secondment of staff with experience in ESL; clothing and bedding collection by We Welcome The World Centres; collaboration with child care partners; developing a formal partnership with the Canadian Centre for Victims of Terror; working on free or low cost technology; health and dental screening; providing sessions for parents in Arabic regarding the educational system and other issues; making Arabic-speaking MSEP workers available at the welcome centres. Associate Director Moreash advised that the Ministry has asked boards to track some of the expenses being incurred, and the Board has offered Ashgrove and Lakeview Park school facilities to the Region of Peel. Trustee Green suggested that SEAC members and their agencies speak to their local MPs about the need for funding to support refugees. Dorothy Peddie expressed concern regarding service delivery, and she queried how the Board will be able to effectively provide a high level of services, and staff will equip themselves to provide support.

15. Public Question Period

There were no public questions.

16. Adjournment

SE-11, moved by Carole Ogilvie, that the meeting adjourn (21:30 hours).

..... carried

..... Chair Secretary