

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 17, 2013 at 19:00 hours.

Members present:

Barbara Byers, Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada, Chair
Stan Cameron, Trustee, Vice-Chair
Nancy Bratkovic, Canadian Mental Health Association
Barbara Cyr, Association for Bright Children
Meredith Johnson, Trustee
Jennifer Knight, Easter Seals Ontario
Brad MacDonald, Trustee
Carol Oitment, Tourette Syndrome Association of Ontario
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living
Mary Wright, Peel Caring Network for Challenged Kids
Lorraine Yuill, Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region

Absent: (apologies received marked*)

Nancy Leaton, Autism Ontario Peel Chapter*
Shelley Foster, VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children*
Wes McDonald, VIEWS for Blind and Visually Impaired Children*
Dorothy Peddie, FASworld Canada – Peel Chapter

Also present:

Sue Lawton, Trustee
Janet McDougald, Board Chair

Administration:

Louise Sirisko, Superintendent, Special Education Support Services (Executive Member)
Joy Uniac, Superintendent of Education (Executive Backup Member)

Nicole Fernandes, Board Reporter

1. **Approval of Agenda**

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

SE-01, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the agenda be approved.

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2. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Superintendent Sirisko indicated that this is the first SEAC meeting since the Organizational and Second Meetings of the Board, and she provided brief information on the Board By-laws relating to the election of the SEAC Chair and Vice-Chair. She called for nominations for the position of Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee.

Ann Smith 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 2013 - 2014.

Superintendent Sirisko called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee.

Meredith Johnson nominated Stan Cameron.

There were no further nominations. After observing the standard one minute silence, Stan Cameron was acclaimed Vice-Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee for 2013 - 2014. Barbara Byers assumed the Chair.

3. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

4. Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, November 19, 2013

SE-02, moved by Mary Wright, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, held November 19, 2013, be approved.

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5. Support Student Transition in Peel

Ana Pauchulo, Coordinating Principal, recalled an earlier presentation on effective transitions for students with special needs over age 14, and noted that the mandate for this initiative is provided by PPM 156, Transition Planning for Young People with Developmental Disabilities. She reported that PPM 156 is to be implemented effective September 2014, and the Board's implementation plan will be available in the Spring, along with the plan for the Integrated Transition Protocol. Ana Pauchulo provided information on the Board's participation on the Transitions Advisory Committee, and explained that, while a service coordinator contact at the school will be named, the transition plan for a student can be initiated by anyone, including the parent.

5. Support Student Transition in Peel (Continued)

Special Education Coordinator, Katie Levalds, introduced Ryan Machete, Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Transition Facilitator, who highlighted some of the initiatives introduced in the area of transition planning. Noting that transition planning through the IEP is one of the main areas of focus of PPM 156, he indicated that a baseline is being created for special education students and some standardized elements are being developed. The baseline focuses on findings, inputs, meetings with community partners and service providers, etc. Schools can review the baseline for Years 1 to 7 as well as specific goals and actions, or can use them to provide a central focal point for the IEP. With regard to myBlueprint, Ryan Machete indicated that, while this is a good resource for students to track courses to align with their post-secondary options, it is not much help to special education students who are not proceeding for post-secondary studies. He stated that he will find out whether myBlueprint can include community pathways, including community involvement, and a link to the IEP. He indicated that he is working collaboratively on a central database of community partners. In response to a member's question, Superintendent Sirisko confirmed that a second presentation to SEAC on myBlueprint can be scheduled.

Speaking on co-op placements, Ryan Machete reported on concerns faced by co-op teachers and he noted that they are being provided knowledge on job carving and job creation. He explained the rationale for encouraging schools to build business within the school as students can learn skills necessary for the job, thereby increasing their employability. Ryan Machete reported on the Trillium Foundation funding which facilitated the purchase of iPads, and gift cards to buy videos demonstrating jobs and skills. He highlighted interest shown by Royal Bank of Canada to expand its co-op program with Applewood School students. He advised that there have been discussions on jobs and industries that can drive the development of corresponding curriculum and programs. Ryan Machete expressed the hope that this can be initiated with Royal Bank of Canada, who have agreed to review a variety of jobs for special education students.

Ryan Machete spoke of the challenges with regard to transporting students in Caledon to co-op placements, due to lack of public transit, non-eligibility for students to access the Caledon Community Services' transportation, and Caledon taxi services not subscribing to Scrip services and not accepting transport vouchers. He and Ann Smith will be drafting a letter to Caledon Community Services' Board of Directors requesting that students be permitted to access its transportation services. Ryan Machete indicated, however, that three Brampton taxi services will accept the vouchers and transport the Caledon students.

SE-03, moved by Ann Smith, that the oral report re Support Student Transition in Peel, be received.

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6. Mental Health Update

Special Education Coordinator, Maureen MacKay introduced Donna Sherman, Client Services Managers, Mental Health and Addictions, Community Care Access Centre. Maureen McKay noted that the Government's Open Minds Healthy Minds has a 10-year strategy and is funding nurses for mental health services in schools.

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Donna Sherman, highlighted that the Mental Health and Addiction Nurses (MHAN) program is a tri-Ministry initiative, supported by the Ministries of Education, Child and Youth Services, and Mental Health and Long Term Care. She indicated that the MHAN has been successfully operating in Peel in identifying and referring students with mental health or addiction issues, and liaising with community mental health and addiction agencies. Speaking about the coordination with family care practitioners, and transition for students from care to school, Donna Sherman noted that the goal is to decrease admission and recidivism rates and keep students in school. She indicated that CCAC works with the student, family and school to develop the right program and, in partnership with service providers in the community, provide the support to students. Donna Sherman highlighted the transfer of knowledge through sharing medical diagnoses, health education with students, families and school teams, and multi-disciplinary approach in treating mental health and addiction. She reported that 144 nurses were assigned by the Province across various regions. Peel Region was provided with five registered nurses and two registered practical nurses. A 0.5 nurse manager or nurse leader was also assigned to the region, but this was changed to a full-time position.

Maureen MacKay explained that the Board has been working in north Peel with William Osler Health Centre as students transition back into school, and a referral pathway is being developed to create a closer partnership with the hospital. She stated that the nurses have been able to reach out to students and families, and may help to facilitate a higher level of access to hospital services for some students. Schools have been advised that students can be directed to the T3RC Committee who may refer them to the nurses, or superintendents of education may contact Superintendent Sirisko. Maureen MacKay acknowledged the work of Senior Psychologist, Archie Kwan, who has been coordinating with the nurses on this initiative. She then provided statistical information regarding the number of cases being handled by the nurses, referrals to hospitals, gender and grade breakdown, field office split.

In response to a member's question regarding the success of the program, Maureen MacKay confirmed that students in the program are observed over time, and they and their families are provided support and resources. She noted, however, that the focus is on awareness and early intervention. It was noted that one of the Government's targets for this program is reduction in recidivism visits to emergency units, and the outcomes are being monitored. Donna Sherman indicated that numerical and qualitative data will be collected from students, families and other stakeholders. The objective is to bring the different partners together who can provide support and intervention in meeting the Ministries' targets. A member requested that information on the program be provided by an link on school websites.

SE-04, moved by Carol Oitment, that the oral update report on Mental Health, be received.

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7. Updated Special Education Advisory Committee Member List

Members reviewed the list. Contact information for Carol Ogilvie will be updated.

SE-05, moved by Carol Ogilvie, that the Updated Special Education Advisory Committee Member List, be received.

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8. DSM-5: Intellectual Disability

Chief Psychologist, Jack Kamrad, provided an overview of the changes made to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of Mental Disorders, version 5, in respect to intellectual disabilities, which was released in May 2013. He noted that there is a change to the definition of intellectual disability, with the definition provided by the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities having significant influence over the change. He indicated that this change brings DSM in alignment with terminology used by ICD and other professional disciplines and organizations.

Jack Kamrad highlighted that DSM-5 emphasizes the need for clinical assessment as well as standardized testing of intelligence, with the severity of impairment based on adaptive functioning rather than IQ test scores. He provided information on the three classifications of differential diagnosis under DSM-5, and the three criteria for a diagnosis of intellectual disability. Noting that there are no specific cut-off points/scores, Jack Kamrad advised that clinicians need to use judgement and that the decision cannot be based solely on a statistical calculation. He described the requisites of clinical judgement, including, training, expertise and experience. An explanation was provided on adaptive behaviour, with its emphasis on performance, rather than potential. The assessment based on adaptive behavior will include a review of family and medical history, school records, and interviews with clinicians and parents. Jack Kamrad highlighted the specifiers used by DSM-5, and cautioned about the use of labels and scores that compare adults to children.

In response to a member's question about a Ministry review of developmental disability, Superintendent Sirisko confirmed that there has been a Ministry announcement of a working table that will begin to review mild intellectual disability, developmental disability and gifted exceptionalities.

SE-06, moved by Ann Smith, that the report re DSM-5: Intellectual Disability, be received.

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9. Fix The Formula: Fund Peel Students Fairly – The Facts on Special Education Funding

Superintendent Louise Sirisko invited Janet McDougald, Chair of the Board, to present the report and speak about the Fix the Formula campaign. Board Chair McDougald recalled that, a few years ago, the Board had undertaken a campaign to change the funding formula. She noted that the engagement of all stakeholders was considered important and, as a result, school councils, SEAC, MPPs, faith leaders, etc. had been solicited to support the Board in requesting the Ministry to fund Peel fairly. She reported that the campaign resulted in the Board receiving an increase of \$12 million in the Learning Opportunities' Grant (LOG). Janet McDougald advised that this increase represented 25% of the LOG, and was therefore significant.

Chair McDougald advised that the Board has been historically underfunded on special education, and receives one of the lowest per pupil special education funding amounts across school boards in Ontario. She stated that the gap between the highest and lowest funded school board is widening, which the Board of Trustees finds unacceptable. Noting that Peel DSB received the lowest High Needs Amount (HNA) funding of \$339 per pupil, she provided comparative information, and contrasted this amount to \$375 per pupil received by the coterminous board, which serves the same community. She noted the highest HNA funding is \$1700, and advised that Toronto DSB receives \$522 and Halton DSB receives \$601, which is almost twice the amount that Peel receives.

Chair McDougald provided background information, explaining that the benchmark for the funding amounts is the ISA funding model, which had required school boards to identify and submit data to the Ministry for each instance of special education needs. However, since the collection of this data there has been no change. The data is out of date, and does not acknowledge the number of special education students that the Board currently serves. Janet McDougald indicated that the Board is requesting support from SEAC regarding fair funding for Peel students. She stated that this issue not only affects special education students, but impacts the approximately 154,000 students enrolled in Peel DSB. She noted that there are approximately 22,000 special education students, of which approximately 13,000 have an identified exceptionality, while approximately 8,000 are non-identified but receive some special education support. From 2006 to 2014, there has been a 109% increase in the number of Peel special education students.

Chair McDougald reported that, in June 2013, Director of Education, Tony Pontes and she met with the Minister of Education, Liz Sandals, when the Minister acknowledged that the funding formula is outdated and unfair. The Minister asked for a solution to fix the formula, and Peel took on the challenge. Director Pontes reviewed the current statistical prediction model and is recommending its increased implementation for funding purposes. Janet McDougald advised that the Ministry currently uses the model to calculate the MOV component of special education funding and international experts in special education support this model. The model considers socio-economic and demographic aspects of a community, e.g. family income, immigrant status, level of education, etc., and predicts the incidence of special education needs in a community. Chair McDougald noted that, if the model is applied, Peel could expect to receive \$14-16 million special education funding, and points to the fact that the issue is not an overspending, but an underfunding problem.

9. Fix The Formula: Fund Peel Students Fairly – The Facts on Special Education Funding (Continued)

Janet McDougald reported that the campaign was launched at Great Start, a school council event. She stated that packages were provided to school councils, which contain form letters, contact and other information needed to write and advocate to the Ministry. She noted that participation by school councils on the campaign is voluntary, but the Board believes that this issue is very important and similar action by the community in the past has been effective. Chair McDougald reported that each trustee has been asked to meet with their MPP, so that they can understand the issues and concerns. She indicated that she has met with one MPP, and has an appointment with another. She asked SEAC to consider supporting this cause, convey the concerns to their associations, and play an important role.

A trustee member expressed support for the campaign, remarking that this is a human rights issue. He commented that the previous campaign to increase the Learning Opportunities' Grant was difficult and, while additional funding was received, it was phased in over four years. He stated that the additional funding advocated for under this campaign will be coming from other school boards, and he expressed the opinion that asking for funding in a confrontational manner may yield better results. Janet McDougald confirmed that there is no additional money available from the Government, but that this campaign calls for a fair and equitable reallocation of current funding, which can be phased in. Vice-Chair Cameron thanked Chair McDougald and Director Pontes for their leadership on this campaign.

SE-07, moved by Brad MacDonald, that the report re Fix The Formula: Fund Peel Students Fairly – The Facts on Special Education Funding, be received.

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10. Communications

SE-08, moved by Carol Oitment, that the following communications, be received:

1. Letter from the Canadian Mental Health Association re nomination of Nancy Bratkovic as its representative, replacing Sandy Milakovic on the Special Education Advisory Committee
2. Letter to Sandy Milakovic from Janet McDougald to confirm Peel Branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association's resignation from the Special Education Advisory Committee
3. Letter to Nancy Bratkovic from Janet McDougald to confirm Canadian Mental Health - Peel Branch as the representative to the Special Education Advisory Committee
4. Letter to Minister Liz Sandals from SEAC Chair, Near North District School Board re Special Education Funding Model

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11. Response of Administration to Former Questions

1. Bias-Free Training

Superintendent Sirisko indicated that she will follow-up with Superintendent of Leadership Development and School Support Services, Jerry Powidajko, regarding bias-free training.

12. Question Period

There were no questions.

13. Public Question Period

Janet McDougald, Board Chair, requested that, due to short timelines, SEAC add to its next meeting agenda the information provided by her regarding Fix The Formula: Fund Peel Students Fairly – The Facts on Special Education Funding (Item 9 of these Minutes). It was confirmed that packages will be provided to SEAC members prior to the winter break.

14. Adjournment

SE-09, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the meeting adjourn (20:55 hours).

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