

## 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, January 19, 2016 at 19:00 hours.

### Members present:

Barbara Byers, Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada, Chair  
Shelley Foster, VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children, Vice-Chair  
Nancy Bratkovic, Canadian Mental Health Association, Peel Branch  
Barbara Cyr, Association for Bright Children, Peel Chapter  
David Green, Trustee  
Jennifer Knight, Easter Seals Ontario  
Sue Lawton, Trustee  
Nancy Leaton, Autism Ontario, Peel Chapter  
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 (19:10)  
Harkirat Singh, Trustee  
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living  
Mary Wright, Peel Caring Network for Challenged Kids (19:10)

### Administration:

Ted Byers, Superintendent of Special Education Support Services (Executive Member)  
Pertia Minott, Superintendent of Education (Executive Member Back-up)  
Wendy Dowling, Superintendent of Education, Early Years  
Scott Moreash, Associate Director of Instructional Support Services

Nicole Fernandes, Board Reporter

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

SE-12, moved by Sue Lawton, 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, December 15, 2015**

Arising from the Minutes, with regard to Item 9, October Report Data, a member clarified that she wanted to know whether there was any other system to track students with Tourette Syndrome.

Referring to Item 12, Community Living Ontario re 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Commence Conference, Brampton-Caledon Community Living representative, Ann Smith, stated that the conference will include discussions to explore strategies for employment of youth with intellectual disabilities. The minutes will be amended.

SE-13, moved by Nancy Leaton, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, held December 15, 2015, as amended, be approved.

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**4. Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Ted Byers, reported that the Ministry document, "Including Students with Special Education Needs in French as a Second Language Programs" is being reviewed by Special Education staff, and will be brought to a future agenda.

Noting the differences in French language programs offered in Peel, Superintendent Byers indicated that French as a Second Language is offered in Grade 4, French Immersion in Grade 1, and Extended French in Grade 7. For French Immersion and Extended French, 50% of the program is delivered in French. Stating that the Ministry document is specifically designed for special education students, Superintendent Byers read brief extracts, related to promoting inclusiveness, and participation and engagement of special education students in French as a Second Language programs. He highlighted the principles advocated throughout the document, including: all students can succeed; addressing the learning needs of each student; Ontario's Equity and Inclusivity Strategy; all students and parents are welcomed and respected. The document encourages asking questions as to why and under what circumstances special education students do not participate in the French as a Second Language program.

SE-14, moved by Harkirat Singh, that the Superintendent's Report (oral), be received.

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## **5. Special Education Plan Development – Action Plan**

Special Education Coordinator, Sharon Cook, reviewed the standards for school boards' special education plan, explaining that one of the purposes of the plan is to provide information to the Ministry of Education and the public about the special education programs and services offered by the Board, in accordance with legislation and ministry policy. She highlighted feedback from the community as well as SEAC in developing and modifying the plan, and the various components of the Special Education Plan, including Board philosophy, early identification procedures and intervention strategies, IPRC process and appeals, special education placements, IEPs, special education staff and staff development, and SEAC.

Special Education Coordinator, Tracy Bardell, drew members' attention to the overview of the York Region DSB Special Education Plan, and the outline of the main topics covered within each section. She referred to discussions at previous meetings on this subject, when members had indicated a preference to include the Board's belief statement. She stated that, in reviewing the York Region DSB plan in detail, it was noticed that Peel's Special Education Plan, although presented in a different format, contained most of the information provided by the York plan. Members were asked to discuss with a partner the outline of the York Special Education Plan and consider whether additional information is to be included, for example, appendices, glossary, list of acronyms, etc.

Members offered several suggestions and comments, including: feedback can be emailed to staff who will provide this to the sub-committee being set up to look at modifying the plan; bring back the outline populated with Peel data; include protocol on children in need of protection; include a table of contents, organizational chart and responsibility chart; provide more details regarding assessments.

SE-15, moved by Dorothy Peddie, that the report re Special Education Plan Development – Action Plan, be received.

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## **6. Teaching Assistants (TA) Allocation Process**

Superintendent of Education – Early Years, Wendy Dowling, described her role and responsibilities, which include reviewing and refining the TA allocation process and capacity building.

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Coordinating Principal, Ana Pauchulo, reported that TAs are assigned to schools where there are students who are identified with significant needs, which may include personal care needs, physical/medical/health needs, social/emotional needs, behavioural needs or communication needs. TAs provide support in three main areas of need: Behavioural TA (BTA) support for integrated/mainstream students with significant behavioural issues; Special Needs TA support for regional programs including Section 23 classes; Special Needs TA support for integrated/mainstream students with special needs.

## **6. Teaching Assistants (TA) Allocation Process (Continued)**

Ana Pauchulo noted that, after careful consideration of a student's needs and all the resources currently available within the school, the principal may decide to make a formal application for TA support. Information regarding the Student Needs Assessment Form (SNAF) was provided, and the application process was described in detail. It was clarified that, regardless of whether a student is new to the system, new to support, or is currently receiving support, the SNAF is filled in or reviewed each year. With the electronic process, reports can be generated and details regarding the number of TAs assigned to each school, list of students with SNAFs, itinerant or consultants' caseload, and Board-wide allocation summaries can be viewed. Superintendent Dowling noted that the process helps to review information from different perspectives, and assists with the most effective use of limited resources. A feedback sheet was circulated, and she invited SEAC members to share their perspective of the allocation process, to provide recommendations for enhancing the process, or to ask for more information.

A lengthy discussion ensued. A member asked whether the use of the TA is tied to the student. Ana Pauchulo explained that, when a TA is assigned to a school, based on the shared support model, the principal allocates the services of the TA depending on priority and needs in the school. Superintendent Dowling noted that the TA allocation committee reviews the need and assigns TAs to the school, and the principal will receive a list of students who were considered in the TA allocation. She remarked that, keeping in mind the imperative to optimize human resources support within the school, the principal considers shared support, as well as itinerant support. Staff also recognize that the needs of the student are to be balanced against the need for the student to develop independence. Special Education Coordinator, Gillian Kajganich added that the electronic process makes it possible to check the immediate need and support, and change the allocation.

Several questions were asked and comments offered by SEAC members, including: whether the allocation is quantifiable, and whether there are checks and balances to ensure that the student gets the TA support that they have been allocated; whether information regarding the allocation of support to the student is shared with the parents; are parents advised as to whether the school receives full support for the student; some parents indicate that the process of obtaining TA support for their child is contentious, inconsistent, without much oversight in using the support within the school, and with too much reliance on the professional judgment of the principal; some parents feel there is not enough clarity in how and where the support is applied to their child; recourse available to parents in the event of a disagreement; whether TAs track their time during the day, to provide an audit of the allocation process; feasibility of a student having the same TAs over a longer period, if it is in the best interests of the student; language barriers to conveying information to parents about the TA allocation.

Superintendent Dowling confirmed that parents are advised of the support provided to the student. She commented that school administrators have to effectively utilize resources, so support needs to be flexible, and aspects such as IEP, curriculum, staffing, and learning, are to be taken into account. She noted that TAs do not track their time, but will use their time as per the allocation, with flexibility in the event they are called upon by the administration to help out in special situations. Gillian Kajganich added that, in addition to the principal, Special Education Resource Teachers are also involved in the review of the SNAFs, and Ana Pauchulo advised that input from meetings with itinerants and consultants also help with checks and balances of the allocation process.

**6. Teaching Assistants (TA) Allocation Process (Continued)**

In reply to a question, Superintendent Dowling indicated that the TA Allocation Review Committee consists of staff from the Special Education department, itinerants supporting the student, coordinating principals, etc. A member commended TAs for their dedication to their students, and stated that, as a trustee, he is aware that special education in Peel has been consistently underfunded, with approximately \$6 million spent on special education over what is being received from government funding. With the Fix the Formula campaign, he noted that the Board received additional funding last year, which reduced the over-expenditure by \$3 million. He stated that, in most other boards, special education expenditure is restricted to funding received, with the belief that other students should not be disadvantaged. He suggested that SEAC members speak to their local MPPs about the underfunding. Superintendent Byers echoed the remarks about the excellent work of TAs in schools. He thanked members for their comments and suggestions which, he stated, will have an influence on improving the TA allocation process.

SE-16, moved by Mary Wright, that the oral report re Teaching Assistants (TA) Allocation Process, be received.

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**7. Professional Development for Teaching Assistants (TAs)**

Reviewing the PowerPoint presentation, Gillian Kajganich reported on data for elementary and secondary TA and BTA allocations. Noting that the number of TAs has been consistently increasing each year, she indicated that this has allowed Peel to develop a vision and expand professional development opportunities for TAs. She highlighted information contained in the report outlining the seven compulsory modules that TAs have to complete, with specific modules to be taken every few years. Gillian Kajganich stated that, in addition to the mandatory training, TAs are also offered ongoing skills development for meeting specific student needs, job-embedded training for individual student and team support, and training in speech and language areas. Professional development opportunities for all staff are also available to TAs.

Superintendent Dowling reported that there have been discussions with the TA union about ensuring that staff participate in and benefit from the professional development. She stated that attendance is taken during workshops, and the information is collected centrally. Noting that she has now been able to collect this attendance data for all TAs, LTO and casual TAs, she advised that letters have been sent to more than 1,700 TAs and BTAs, with copies to principals regarding the status of mandatory training. Superintendent Dowling indicated that principals are appreciative of the information as this helps them to support their TAs to complete the compulsory modules. She remarked that the Board has high expectations for professional learning, and administrators should guide TAs in their professional development.

SE-17, moved by Mary Wright, that the report re Professional Development for Teaching Assistants, be received.

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**8. Question Period**

Carol Ogilvie referred to the additional PD day provided by the Ministry, and she asked about the date and plans for the PD day. Superintendent Byers responded that April 11, 2016 has been scheduled as the PD day, and the focus will be on numeracy.

Carol Ogilvie stated that she has sent an email with links to workshops that the Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region is offering.

**9. Public Question Period**

There were no public questions.

**10. Adjournment**

SE-18, moved by Nancy Bratkovic, that the meeting adjourn (21:10 hours).

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..... Chair ..... Secretary