

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 15, 2019 at 19:00 hours.

Members present:

Shelley Foster, VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children, Chair
Sue Lawton, Trustee, Vice-Chair
Nicole Buckett, Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada
Barbara Cyr, Association for Bright Children, Peel Chapter
Jennifer Knight, Easter Seals Ontario
Michelle Lewis, Canadian Mental Health Association, Peel Branch
John Marchant, Trustee
Carol Ogilvie, Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region
Carol Oitment, Tourette Syndrome Association of Ontario
Fauzia Reza, Autism Ontario, Peel Chapter
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living
Mary Wright, Down Syndrome Association of Peel

Members absent: (apologies received marked *)

Kathy McDonald, Trustee *
Wes McDonald, VIEWS for the Visually Impaired
Dorothy Peddie, FASworld Canada, Peel Chapter

Also present:

Stan Cameron, Chair of the Board
Will Davies, Trustee
Shireen Gul, Peel Elementary Occasional Teachers

Administration:

Shawn Moynihan, Superintendent of Special Education Support Services (Executive Member)
Joy Uniac, Superintendent, Social/Emotional Learning and Early Years (Executive Back-up Member)
Peter Joshua, Director of Education

Nicole Fernandes, Board Reporter

1. Approval of Agenda

Chair Foster acknowledged Stan Cameron, Chair of the Board, and Trustee Will Davies, who were present at the meeting.

SE-09, 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 18, 2018

Referring to the minutes, Barbara Cyr noted that, during Question Period, she had asked about the process for appointing, and qualification of, members to the Identification Placement and Referral Committee. With regard to gifted students, she had asked for information by grade or division, broken down for exceptional students in OnSIS reports. The minutes will be amended.

SE-10, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of December 18, 2018, as amended, be approved.

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4. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Shawn Moynihan, wished everyone a happy and healthy 2019.

Two handouts regarding exclusions were circulated. Noting the recent media attention on the subject of exclusions, Superintendent Moynihan remarked that exclusion is a complex issue of competing rights between a student's right to attend school and the right for students to be safe in school. He stated that every instance of exclusion will be different and evolving, and principals have a number of duties, such as the duty to provide meaningful access to education, as stated in the Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities, and the duty to ensure safety of students and workers as outlined in Workplace Violence in School Boards: A Guide to the Law. Superintendent Moynihan advised that, under Section 265 of the Education Act, principals have a duty, subject to an appeal to the Board, to refuse to admit to the school or classroom a person whose presence in the school or classroom would, in the principal's judgment be detrimental to the physical or mental wellbeing of other students. He noted that exclusion is applied to circumstances when a student is not allowed to attend school because of significant safety concerns, and a certified teacher provides instruction at home for the length of the exclusion. Parents are advised verbally and in writing about the exclusion and the appeal process.

4. Superintendent's Report (Continued)

Superintendent Moynihan outlined instances that are not covered by the term 'exclusion', including students who are not attending school as a result of a mutual agreement between the school and parent, either due to mutual consent, to enable resource and training to be provided, or to facilitate appropriate resources can be deployed. He stated that the goal is to reach full attendance as soon as possible, and that staff are committed to improving communications in circumstances where there is mutual consent. He then read the Exclusion FAQ that was circulated, which included responses on the description of exclusion, reasons, process, appeal, and length of exclusion, as well as circumstances when students are not attending but are not excluded.

Superintendent Moynihan responded to members' questions of clarification, noting that the wait for home instruction depends on whether it is the first instance of exclusion, or the student is already connected with the home instructor. He explained the distinction between home schooling, when the family does not want the child participating in school, and home instruction, when the child is provided an instructor by the Board. Further responses included: expenditure on home instruction is from the Special Education budget; importance of ongoing and timely communication to build trusting relationships between the school and parent; detailed information is provided to parents whose child is excluded; information documented in Individual Education Plan (IEP) for students who are not attending based on mutual agreement; teachers share effective practices. A member spoke about the impact of exclusion on families, with parents having to stay home, and students not participating in learning at a young age and experiencing feelings of rejection. She stated that some students who are excluded from one classroom or one environment may be successful with different teaching staff whose abilities are better at handling these students. She suggested that training provided to teachers with exposure to different circumstances may help to avoid exclusions, and some members speaking agreed with the suggestion. Responding to a question, Superintendent Moynihan confirmed the need to improve data collection through the IEP with regard to frequency of parents being called, and information on safety plans, behavioural plans, and plans of care.

SE-11, moved by Fauzia Reza, that the Superintendent's Report, be received.

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5. SEAC Orientation: Information

Superintendent Moynihan reviewed the slide presentation which provided members with the first part of the three-part orientation on the role of SEAC and the Board, and the Ministry and Board policies, in relation to special education. The orientation best practices outlined by PAAC on SEAC includes annual training sessions, joint orientation sessions with other school boards, and developing a SEAC orientation manual or handbook for all members. Superintendent Moynihan highlighted Ontario Regulation 464/97 which provides the duties, roles, responsibilities and processes for SEACs. These responsibilities include making recommendations to the Board regarding the establishment, development and delivery of special education programs and services, and participating in the annual review of the Special Education Plan, and the annual budget process as it relates to special education.

5. SEAC Orientation: Information (Continued)

The Committee's terms of reference were explained by Superintendent Moynihan, and he noted suggestions made by members with regard to various resources that can be included in the manual or handbook. He described the role of a representative on SEAC, and he provided outlines for the orientation sessions at the February and March SEAC meetings.

SE-12, moved by Mary Wright, that the report re SEAC Orientation: Information, be received.

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6. Focus on Poverty: Action Plan

Director of Education, Peter Joshua, introduced Kim Bennett, Research Officer, Assessment and Accountability, Jaspreet Pabla, Workplace Equity Partner, and Craig Caslick, Principal of Lorne Park Secondary School, and he acknowledged the work of Superintendent Moynihan, Joy Uniac, Superintendent of Education – Social/Emotional Learning and Early Years, and Jim Van Buskirk, Chief Social Worker, who are members of the Focus on Poverty Working Group.

Director Joshua stated that the work on this initiative is grounded in assisting students to avail themselves of every opportunity, and that poverty is not a factor in the achievement of success. He reviewed the Board's Plan for Student Success with its four goals, including the goal of equity and inclusion, which aims to achieve inclusion for all through continuous progress on equity, and a key project relates to developing a comprehensive strategy to support students living in poverty. Jaspreet Pabla and Craig Caslick spoke about their attendance at meetings of the Peel Poverty Reduction Committee (PPRC) over the past two years, to ensure that the Peel DSB's perspectives are included in discussions. They reported that the Poverty Reduction Strategy 2018-2028 is focused on three priority areas: income security; economic opportunity; well-being and social inclusion. Describing the work of supporting students and families living in poverty, Craig Caslick and Jaspreet Pabla noted four categories: early years – Camp SAIL (Summer Adventures in Learning); school years – mentoring program; strategies to engage parents/guardians – Parent Reaching Out (PRO) grants; strategies to encourage community involvement – Peel Newcomer Strategy Group.

With regard to measuring the effectiveness of these programs, Kim Bennett described the eight indicators that were outlined in the Poverty Indicators report to track and monitor the progress and effectiveness of poverty amelioration programs and interventions. Introducing the Action Plan, Director Joshua spoke about the importance of maintaining the dignity and respect of students in poverty, and Superintendent Moynihan noted that destigmatizing poverty is also an important value. Director Joshua highlighted the five action areas of the Action Plan: awareness and understanding the impact of poverty; support for families living in poverty; equitable allocation of human and material resources; equitable participation in programs; student success and well-being. The Logic Model outlining the actions and activities, short-term, intermediate term and long-term outcomes, and ultimate goal for each of the action areas, was described in detail by the presenters.

6. Focus on Poverty: Action Plan (Continued)

Responses to members' questions of clarification included providing details of the Peel Learning Foundation, and methods to avoid the stigma that may accompany identifying students in poverty.

SE-13, moved by Carol Oitment, that the report re Focus on Poverty: Action Plan, be received.

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7. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) – Part 3

Archie Kwan, Senior Psychologist, and Meghan Echlin, Coordinating Principal – Special Programs, were introduced. Archie Kwan noted that earlier reports in this three-part series on FASD outlined factors that led to determining gaps in the system. Information was presented on the core goal of developing collaborative supports and resources with community partners, including strengthening community partnerships with Erinoak Kids, the FASD Clinical Team in Peel and the Collaborative Network. The second core goal of developing a framework and resources to conceptualize student profiles led to creating the Understanding the Learning Profile placemat that was circulated to members at the December meeting. Referring to the slide presentation, Archie Kwan indicated that this session will provide information on the three remaining core goals: develop a system of FASD support and Implementation Plan; identification of resources and supports within Peel DSB; develop an FASD IPRC process. Advising that a guiding principle was to consider existing staff and resources, he explained that professional development will help to build capacity in the system, and the process will need to be closely managed to achieve success. Archie Kwan reviewed the chart outlining the process to provide support to students with FASD, from the principal contacting the FASD Central Team and including a referral to ISRC. He explained the individual student profile form, and responsibilities of the Senior Psychologist which includes providing FASD professional learning and supports to school team as needed, referring students to the Erinoak Kids FASD worker for accessing community support, and consulting with members of the Central FASD Team. The chart detailing the composition of the Central FASD was reviewed.

Advising that students with FASD can access supports without the IPRC process being initiated, Meghan Echlin reviewed the chart highlighting the supports, as needed, accessed through the Itinerant Teacher and Occasional Teacher (Special Programs). Students with FASD have very different needs, and staff will ensure that students are receiving a variety of supports, including Special Equipment Amount, SNAF, case management, transportation, and Special Incidence Portion claim. Meghan Echlin noted that there is opportunity to liaise with the Erinoak Kids FASD worker, and consult with the principal. She reported on the checklist for principals, and listed the additional supports that students can receive with the referral to ISRC. Regarding the IPRC, she explained that students can be identified through the school process, but there is a separate process in situations where there are multiple exceptionalities. She then highlighted the professional development provided to staff.

SE-14, moved by Carol Oitment, that the report re Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) – Part 3, be received.

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8. Communications: Learning Disabilities' Association of Peel Region – Winter 2019 Group Programs

The member from the Learning Disabilities' Association of Peel Region, Carol Ogilvie, noted that there are still some spaces left on the above-noted programs, which are filling up quickly. She expressed her appreciation to the Board for communicating this information to staff and students.

SE-15, moved by John Marchant, that the communications item re Learning Disabilities' Association of Peel Region – Winter 2019 Group Programs, be received:

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9. Question Period

Chair Foster reported that she and Barbara Cyr attended the introductory meeting of the Gifted Review Committee, and spoke positively of the meeting.

Vice-Chair Lawton reported on the student transportation situation, stating that, while there are a few students who are still experiencing difficulty, the situation has improved significantly.

10. Public Question Period

There were no questions.

11. Adjournment

SE-16, moved by Mary Wright, that the meeting adjourn (21:05 hours).

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