

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, June 13, 2017 at 19:00 hours.

Members present:

Shelley Foster, VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children, Chair
Sue Lawton, Trustee, Vice-Chair
Namarata Balsara, Canadian Mental Health Association, Peel Branch
Thomas Corbett, Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario
Barbara Cyr, Association for Bright Children, Peel Chapter
Jennifer Knight, Easter Seals Ontario
Nancy Leaton, Autism Ontario, Peel Chapter
Wes McDonald, VIEWS for the Visually Impaired
Suzanne Nurse, Trustee
Carol Oitment, Tourette Syndrome Association of Ontario
Dorothy Peddie, FASworld Canada, Peel Chapter
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living
Abeer Zuberi, Down Syndrome Association of Peel

Members absent: (apologies received)

Barbara Byers, Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada
David Green, Trustee

Also present:

Karen Del Ben, Educational Resource Facilitators of Peel

Administration:

Ted Byers, Superintendent of Special Education Support Services
Scott Moreash, Associate Director of Instructional and Equity Support Services

Nicole Fernandes, Board Reporter

1. **Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was slightly reordered to facilitate personnel present.

SE-50, moved by Wes McDonald, that the agenda be approved.

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2. Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

3. New Assistive Technology Resources - Update

Casimir McGeown, Special Education Consultant on Assistive Technology, and Reena Taeput, Assistive Technology Resource Teacher, provided information on the hardware and software equipment available to assist children with special needs. They described the updated technology being introduced in special education classrooms, including finger-touch software that can create an interactive classroom, smart boards installed in 35 classrooms that provide finger-touch manipulation, differentiated instruction and access to various types of technology, Epson Easi Teach interactive white boards, and Apple TV. The technology supports 21st Century collaboration, sharing of ideas and student leadership. Based on system feedback to find a better alternative to Kurzweil, staff are conducting a pilot with Google Read and Write Chromebooks involving eight elementary and two secondary schools. Providing a demonstration, the presenters highlighted its capabilities regarding speech to text, text to speech, and word prediction, which has had a positive impact on student productivity and engagement. Plans to create collaborative networks of special education teachers to be released for professional learning were reviewed, and details regarding the group sessions and networking sessions were shared. It was confirmed that the technology can be used at home.

In response to members' questions of clarification, Casimir McGeown advised that with adequate support provided to students, the intention is for Google Chromebook to replace Kurzweil but also to allow some students to continue using Kurzweil through single user licenses. It was confirmed that the total number of active Kurzweil users in the Board will be determined. Casimir McGeown clarified that assistive technology funding permits only contained special education classes to be equipped with smart boards. Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Ted Byers, further clarified that the Special Equipment Amount has two funding streams, a per pupil amount, and a classroom-based amount. The classroom-based amount is determined through recommendations of equipment needed to support special education students.

SE-51, moved by Wes McDonald, that the oral update report re New Assistive Technology Resources, be received.

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4. Teachtown Demonstration

Special Education Coordinator, Nora Green, recalled that SEAC was advised about changes to the Ontario Autism Program and that the Board is receiving transition funding over two years to implement the changes. She indicated that members were provided information on the areas to which funding will be directed, including the purchase of licenses for Teachtown, a computer-led teaching program.

4. Teachtown Demonstration (Continued)

Nora Green and Special Units Itinerant Teacher, Andrea Dowell, noted that Teachtown provides computer delivered instruction combined with teacher-led classroom-based generalization lessons. The software addresses skills at ten different levels across six learning domains, and is appropriate for students up to 12 years old. The software can be accessed through any computer device, and determines the appropriate skill level of the student based on performance. Further features and capabilities of Teachtown were highlighted. Nora Green clarified that 250 licenses of Teachtown have been purchased and, as there is no possibility for a Board-wide license, limited numbers of students can work with Teachtown at any given time. The objective is to recommend through professional reports that funding be obtained through SEA, which is then accessed by a greater number of students. Nora Green noted the number of Primary Transition Program (PTP), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), intermediate ASD, and secondary Developmental Disabilities classes at Applewood and Parkholme Schools that currently use Teachtown. Parent engagement and training is a significant aspect, and it was confirmed that Teachtown staff will return in September and November for further training. A brief demonstration of Click Share was provided.

SE-52, moved by Sue Lawton, that the oral report re Teachtown Demonstration, be received.

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5. Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, May 16, 2017

SE-53, moved by Sue Lawton, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of May 16, 2017, be approved.

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6. Advancing Equity and Inclusion in the Peel District School Board: A Study of Teaching Assistant Staffing Practices in Special Education

Superintendent Byers provided a progress update report on the work of the Steering Committee struck to finalize the action plan, arising from the recommendations of the study of Teaching Assistant staffing practices in special education. Noting that the action plan is still in the draft stage, he reported that the Steering Committee is meeting next week, and further input will be incorporated into the action plan. He acknowledged the work of the Committee, especially Carol Oitment, who represents SEAC on the committee.

Reviewing a PowerPoint presentation, Superintendent Byers explained that the action plan is divided into three phases over three years, and he outlined the overall and specific goals, as well as the action items for each phase. A 'Frequently Asked Questions' document will be prepared, and it is expected that, at the beginning of the next school year, the printed action plan and FAQ will be distributed widely to the system and to SEAC. Over the summer, writing teams will be identified to collate the materials required for Phase 1, which will begin before September 2017. Carol Oitment remarked on the importance of ensuring consensus on definitions and basic interpretations, as well as the means to evaluate the success of the action plan.

6. Advancing Equity and Inclusion in the Peel District School Board: A Study of Teaching Assistant Staffing Practices in Special Education (Continued)

Chair Foster queried whether the action plan calls for a change in philosophy with regard to equity and inclusion. Superintendent Byers agreed that there are philosophical aspects to the action plan, and that a fundamental next step is relevant professional learning. Carol Oitment spoke about incorporating collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants and including teaching assistants in the development of the Special Education plan. Another member suggested drawing attention to the distinction between integration and inclusion, and Nora Green noted that the work of the writing teams includes reviewing research with regard to inclusion models, and balancing inclusivity and independence.

SE-54, moved by Dorothy Peddie, that the oral report re Advancing Equity and Inclusion in the Peel District School Board: A Study of Teaching Assistant Staffing Practices in Special Education, be received.

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Abeer Zuberi retired from the meeting (20:30 hours).

7. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Byers thanked Associate Director of Instructional and Equity Support Services, Scott Moreash, for taking on the Executive Member role at the previous SEAC meeting. Noting that this is the last meeting of the school year, on behalf of the Board and the administration, he expressed appreciation for the advocacy and advice of SEAC members, and their commitment of time and dedication in supporting students with special needs. Special mention was made of members who participated on other committees or projects, and staff were thanked for their work during the school year.

Referring to questions raised at the previous meeting, Superintendent Byers stated that budget consultation has been added to the draft SEAC Annual Calendar for 2017-2018 (Item 8 of these Minutes). He noted that the Budget for 2017-2018 will be approved at the June 19, 2017 Regular Meeting of the Board, and that he will email SEAC members with the highlights. He advised that he will bring back information on the work done to facilitate more authentic discussions during the budget consultation process. Circulating a copy of business cases submitted by him to the budget process, Superintendent Byers indicated that special education is one of the Board's priorities and trustees have been very supportive.

Associate Director Moreash noted that, at the May 16, 2017 SEAC meeting, the draft Special Education Programs and Services 2017-2018 – Amendment report was brought forward. He advised that the section on "Mandate" of the Committee contained information that, upon review, was not in accordance with Board By-law and legislation. He explained that it is the Board's responsibility to set the schedule of meeting dates taking into consideration holy days, holidays, and organizational needs. In addition, legislation requires SEAC to meet at least ten times in each school year.

7. Superintendent's Report (Continued)

Referring to the motion that was passed at the previous SEAC meeting that the Board consult and receive approval of the Committee when meeting dates are changed from the third Tuesday to another date, Associate Director Moreash advised that the motion is out of order as it is not in accordance with Board By-law. A trustee member stated that Board members are similarly affected as Board meeting dates are also changed from the established schedule to consider holy days, holidays and organizational needs. Another trustee member explained that the entire list of system meeting dates are reviewed by Director's Office staff and are finalized by them taking into account these consideration. While the finalized list of Board meeting dates is approved by the Board, trustees do not set the dates.

Superintendent Byers indicated that he has been noting the questions and issues raised during SEAC meetings, and brings forward responses or reports on these matters. He reported on the recent announcement by Minister of Children and Youth Services, Michael Coteau, regarding the Ontario Autism Program, under which a broader range of services will be made available, and children will continue to receive services beyond age 5. Further details will be obtained and brought to the next Committee meeting. Ted Byers confirmed that copies of Special Education department newsletters will be provided to SEAC members.

SE-55, moved by Thomas Corbett, that the Superintendent's oral report be received.

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8. SEAC Annual Calendar - Draft

Superintendent Byers reviewed the draft SEAC Annual Calendar, noting that this is a compilation of suggestions from the Provincial Parent Association Advisory Committee (PAAC) on SEAC, members, and staff. He requested members to provide input and comments, and feedback included update reports on the Board's Accessibility Plan, and Special Needs Strategy, as well as group discussions during meetings on priorities identified by members or associations. Chair Foster invited members to send further feedback to Superintendent Byers.

SE-56, moved by Dorothy Peddie, that the report re SEAC Annual Calendar - Draft, be received.

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**9. Special Education Programs and Services 2017-2018 – Amendment /
Special Education Plan 2017-2018**

Superintendent Byers highlighted the revisions to the Amendment to the Special Education Programs and Services 2017-2018. He reported on changes resulting from the pupil accommodation review and repurposing of Gordon Graydon Memorial Secondary School, with regard to Enhanced Learning Program locations. He noted that some errors and omissions are corrected in this Amendment report, and he confirmed that the SEAC membership list will be updated with corrected information. Ted Byers advised that, following approval of the Budget, there may be changes to allocations, and that the Special Education Programs and Services 2017-2018 – Amendment is to be submitted to the Ministry.

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SE-57, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the meeting go beyond 21:30 hours to complete the agenda.

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2/3rds' majority

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Barbara Cyr stated that the Association for Bright Children, Peel Chapter is concerned about the Special Education Plan and will be submitting a minority report.

SE-58, moved by Thomas Corbett, that the report re Special Education Programs and Services 2017-2018 – Amendment, be received.

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SE-59, moved by Namarata Balsara, that the report re Special Education Plan 2017-2018, be received.

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10. Communications

1. Message from the Director of Education, Tony Pontes

Trustee Lawton read an email sent to SEAC by Tony Pontes, Director of Education, who will be retiring on August 31, 2017. He conveyed regret that he was unable to attend the meeting but wanted to express his thanks to SEAC members for their dedication to students with special needs. Stating that SEAC is an important voice in special education and a significant partner with the Board, parents and students, he reaffirmed the Board's commitment to special education students.

11. Reports from Representatives on Councils/Associations

Sue Lawton expressed appreciation to Barbara Cyr for her work on the Parent Involvement Committee and, reporting that the nomination request was sent in to PIC, Trustee Lawton thanked her for her interest in continuing to represent SEAC on PIC.

11. Reports from Representatives on Councils/Associations (Continued)

Thomas Corbett reported on a Kidz Connect event that will be held in Brampton, and noted that Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region (LDAPR) will continue to provide support through libraries. He requested volunteers from the Board on LDAPR.

12. Question Period

Barbara Cyr noted that a report on Graduation Rates was brought to the Regular Meeting of the Board held on May 29, 2017, which included graduation rates for special education students. On her request, Superintendent Byers confirmed that the report will be brought forward, and that the Research department will be asked about providing additional information.

Trustee Nurse indicated that the IPRC appeal process is legislated through the Education Act. She asked whether a simplified version of the legislation is available, that parents may find easier to understand in the event they wish to file an IPRC appeal. Barbara Cyr noted that the IPRC guide is posted on the website and links are included in the Special Education Plan 2017-2018 (Item 9 of these Minutes). She commented that the brochure does not explain the appeal process, and responsibilities are not clearly mentioned in the guide or brochure. Superintendent Byers confirmed that the information can be made available, and Trustee Nurse suggested that this information be added to the website link. Chair Foster requested that, as SEAC was involved in writing the guides, the Committee be invited to participate in developing a guide on the appeals process as well. Superintendent Byers indicated that a draft guide can be brought to the Committee for discussion and input.

13. Further Business

1. Staff Announcements

Superintendent Byers noted that Therese Fitzpatrick has been appointed as Principal of Parkholme School, effective September 2017. On behalf of SEAC and staff, he thanked her for her commitment and dedication to special needs students. A trustee member announced that Associate Director Moreash is retiring, effective September 30, 2017. She expressed appreciation for his depth of knowledge of the system, and she thanked him for his commitment and guidance.

14. Public Question Period

There were no public questions.

15. Adjournment

SE-60, moved by Dorothy Peddie, that the meeting adjourn (21:45 hours).

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..... Chair Secretary