

March 29, 2016
Special Education Advisory Committee:lf

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, March 29, 2016 at 19:00 hours.

Members present:

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
Cheri Hearty, Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region
Jennifer Knight, Easter Seals Ontario
Sue Lawton, Trustee
Nancy Leaton, Autism Ontario, Peel Chapter
Wes McDonald, VIEWS for the Visually Impaired
Carol Oitment, Tourette Syndrome Association of Ontario
Dorothy Peddie, FASworld Canada, Peel Chapter
Harkirat Singh, Trustee
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living
Mary Wright, Peel Caring Network for Challenged Kids

Absent: (apologies received)

Barbara Byers, Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada, Chair

Also present:

Karen Del Ben, Educational Resource Facilitators of Peel

Administration:

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

Lorelei Fernandes, Board Reporter

1. Approval of Agenda

In the absence of the Chair, Vice-Chair Foster chaired the meeting.

The following items were added to the agenda:

Item 1.2 Special Presentation – Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region
Item 1.3 Special Presentation – Easter Seals Ontario

SE-25, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the agenda, as amended, be approved.

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2/3rds' majority

2. Special Presentation – Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region (LDAPR)

Executive Director of Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region, Barbara Wallace, circulated information packages and presented an overview of the association and its work using PowerPoint slides. She stated that LDAPR is the local chapter of Learning Disabilities Association of Canada and the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, and is a charitable, non-profit organization, dedicated to improving lives of children in Peel. The Association is funded by United Way of Peel Region, a grant from the Region of Peel, and ongoing fundraising activities. Barbara Wallace reviewed the LDAPR mission and listed the key strategic outcomes expected to be achieved by 2020. She provided information on a variety of supports and services available to families, such as, annual memberships to access services, workshops, resource counselling, academic support, computer skills, one-on-one tutoring, reference library, assistive technology, positive conflict resolution, youth empowerment and building social skills. Barbara Wallace highlighted the Summer Camp Program, Kidz Konnect and the Summer Youth Leadership Program, Youth Konnect which are successfully run in Mississauga and Brampton. She invited everyone to participate in the Second Annual Charity Golf Tournament Fundraiser to be held in Caledon on June 28, 2016. A member noted that LDAPR also welcomes children who are not diagnosed with learning disabilities but may have challenges with social skills.

Responding to questions of clarification from members, Barbara Wallace advised that public awareness of programs is created through distribution of brochures to elementary and middle schools in Peel region and special education department staff, community outreach and information on the website. She advised that there will be nine satellite model programs, which will include two schools in Mississauga, Mississauga Library, and Caledon Parent-Child Centre, and a fundraising event in Mississauga is planned for the Fall. Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Ted Byers, expressed appreciation for the information presented and commented that Peel DSB actively participates in United Way fundraising to support families in Peel region.

3. Special Presentation – Easter Seals Ontario

Jennifer Knight, of Easter Seals Ontario, circulated flyers and a brochure providing background information on Easter Seals and statistics on 2015 programs and services. She stated that Easter Seals has been helping children, youth and young adults with physical disabilities since 1922. Jennifer Knight advised that the organization does not receive any government funding and is run solely on funds raised through sponsors, donors, and fundraising events such as a Gala Ball, auctions and 10K runs. She stated that Easter Seals provides financial assistance for mobility equipment, accessibility aids, communication and writing supports, orthotics, incontinence supplies, and post-secondary scholarships. Other assistance includes funding for camps and summer recreational programs, and providing two accessible camps at Woodeden and Merrywood in Ontario.

3. Special Presentation – Easter Seals Ontario (Continued)

Using PowerPoint slides, Jennifer Knight provided detailed information on registration eligibility, caseload and diagnostic groups, scholarship funds granted in 2015, and top-up grant programs administered on behalf of Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. She stated that Easter Seals is a voice for children and youth with special needs through participation on various boards, such as, SEAC and PAAC on SEAC, as well as updating parents through websites such as Alison's Blog. Jennifer Knight described some of the challenges faced by students as, physical accessibility, access to walkers and personal care supports, communication, therapy, and attitudes. She stated that priorities in education include accessibility in schools, washrooms, access to assistive technology equipment and speech-language technology, support for children with fine gross motor challenges, accessible transportation to school and field trips, technology-trained teachers, integrated planning for home life and family life, and reduced wait times for therapy. She advised that more information is available on the Easter Seal's website.

4. Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

5. Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, February 16, 2016

A member referred to Item 7, Question Period, of the Minutes, regarding the Numeracy and Beyond Parent Conference and requested that brochures be brought to Rick Hansen Secondary School by April 1, 2016 as the conference takes place on April 2, 2016.

SE-26, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, held February 16, 2016, be approved.

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6. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Ted Byers, advised that Kathy Moores has been hired as his new assistant since March 10, 2016 and her contact information will be emailed to SEAC members. He provided information on her background and experience in Peel DSB.

Superintendent Byers circulated a draft brochure on SEAC. He advised that SEAC's contact email address will be added on the first page. He asked for input and inquired whether Committee members want their contact information printed in the brochure. Following discussions, it was decided that members will email updated contact information to Ted Byers for inclusion in the brochure, which will be distributed at this weekend's Numeracy and Beyond Parent Conference 2016. Ted Byers commented that including contact information will be helpful as the conference is well attended by parents and there is opportunity to increase community awareness of Board programs.

6. Superintendent's Report (Continued)

Ted Byers reported on an instructive workshop he attended last week in Toronto, hosted by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Ontario Network of Expertise (FASD ONE). He advised that the presenters included staff from Keewatin-Patricia District School Board in northern Ontario. The presentations included information on FASD programs in their community, the need for more supports, and impact on students with learning disabilities. A member commented on: the need for seamless transition for better outcomes; misdiagnosis of little children; the need to know if the mothers were exposed to alcohol; challenges for caregivers and adoptive parents due to lack of information and late diagnosis.

SE-27, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the Superintendent's Report (oral), be received.

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7. Special Education Plan: Revision Update and Schedule

Superintendent Byers referred to a link to the newly constructed Special Education Plan webpage and reviewed the proposed schedule for building the content of the plan. He recalled discussions and review of the plan over the past few months and invited input and feedback from members regarding content. He explained that the work on the webpage is still in progress. He advised that half of the information is expected to be uploaded by May 2016 and the rest by May 2017. He expressed appreciation to staff and SEAC members for their involvement in the design of the Special Education Plan, visioning, establishing priorities, etc. to revise the format. The administration responded to questions and comments from members regarding: completion of the 2016 Special Education Plan by May 2016; prioritizing topics and beginning with a framework; follow up with a Fall review; sufficient time to review the plan prior to approval at the meeting. Superintendent Byers explained that the existing Special Education Plan document will be retained in its current format until the new one is complete.

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Trustee Green retired from the meeting. (20:15 hours)

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SE-28, moved by Jennifer Knight, that the report re Special Education Plan: Revision Update and Schedule, be received.

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8. Professional Development Plans for Special Education Staff - Elementary

Instructional Coordinator, Tracy Bardell, recalled an earlier presentation at SEAC by Special Programs Coordinator, Gillian Kajganich, outlining professional development (PD) plans, and advised that the draft Special Education Plan includes input from discussions with special education resource teachers, SEAC concerns, gap analysis, and how training is provided to staff. With the help of a slide presentation, Tracy Bardell provided information on cost sharing arrangements and partnerships with community agencies such as, Trillium Health Centre, Erinoak Kids, Geneva Centre for Autism, and Kerry's Place. She stated that SEAC is consulted and kept informed by way of monthly Committee and individual meetings with members, and concerns raised at SEAC meetings are tracked. Feedback from attendees at boardwide PD sessions are noted, and capacity building for SEAC members is supported in the form of presentations and collaborative discussion.

Tracy Bardell advised that the Board's focus on PD is established by initiatives outlined in the yearly Board Improvement Plan, which includes: building capacity for teaching and learning; job embedded PD focusing on mental health; equity and inclusive practices; 21st century learning; support through Growing Success; collaborative inquiry through the Teaching-Learning Critical Pathways and Professional Learning Cycle to meet needs of individual students. She highlighted the partnership with Geneva Centre for Autism and the Ministry of Education to support teacher training in Applied Behaviour Analysis. Tracy Bardell reviewed the tiered approach to PD, as described in the report, and she explained the universal, targeted, and intensive levels of support and how they apply to staff groups. She listed ways in which the Board's PD opportunities are offered to staff through newsletters, social media, online registration system, Board website, SharePoint sites, SEAC and staff meetings. Responding to a member's query as to why the Empower program is offered only in Communication (COM) classes, while other Boards offer it to mainstream students, Tracy Bardell explained that Peel has 60 COM classes with Empower trained teachers and based on funding, support is provided to students with highest level of needs.

SE-29, moved by Cheri Hearty, that the report re Special Education Plan : Staff Development Plans - Elementary, be received.

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9. Special Equipment Amount (SEA) – Project Overview

Superintendent Ted Byers, stated that Special Equipment Amount (SEA) funding is provided on per pupil basis, and in addition, funding is available through grant application which has increased over the past few years. He introduced Assistive Technology staff, Cas McGeown, Consultant, and Resource Teachers, Reena Taeput and Gina Luongo, as the presenters. Cas McGeown stated that the Special Equipment Amount funding is provided to support special education student needs for specific equipment recommended by qualified professionals. The equipment provides accommodations required to access the curriculum and alternative programs. Using a PowerPoint presentation, he listed the goals for this year which include training and professional development, implementation of Kurzweil 3000 program, pilot projects, and SharePoint sites. He reviewed responsibilities of the consultant and resource teachers, and outlined tasks of Learning Technology Support Services staff for testing and installing software. Cas McGeown noted an increase in SEA funding from \$ 5.4 million in 2014-2015 to \$ 6.3 million in 2015-2016.

9. Special Equipment Amount (SEA) – Project Overview (Continued)

Gina Luongo and Reena Taeput explained the process for SEA applications and approvals. They reviewed a graph showing the number of laptops allocated over the past five years indicating a significant increase from 193 laptops in 2010-2011 to 819 in 2014-2015. They noted that there has been a 493% increase in SEA claims since 2010. They spoke about the partnership with Bridges Canada which trains Peel students and teachers, training hours allocated for students, professional development (PD) for teachers, job embedded PD, resources offered through SharePoint, Assistive Technology presence on social media, video tutorials, and sites offering resources for parents. Cas McGeown shared information on the Take Home initiative, a successful pilot project done in six schools and Google Read and Write project which was tested in two schools for text to speech software. Videos demonstrating use of Eye Gaze, a new eye tracking technology for students with voluntary muscle movement challenges were shown. The presenters provided information on Interactive Whiteboards and SMART Boards installed in special needs classrooms and the Apple TV project accompanied by teacher training which has shown significant increase in equipment used in classrooms. They demonstrated how the Apple TV Show and Share app is used to showcase students' work and explained how assistive technology supports EQAO assessments. Cas McGeown stated that Peel continues to collaborate with other Ontario school boards to develop an understanding of SEA practices regarding equipment and software, as well as updating and upgrading current technology.

The administration responded to questions of clarification regarding training of secondary teachers, considering train-the-trainer model, ISSP teacher training, and whether training is mandatory or optional. With regard to the comment on significant increase in equipment and how it affects EQAO results and student performance, Superintendent Byers explained why it is challenging to track data of students using assistive technology over a long period of time spanning elementary and secondary schooling.

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Cheri Hearty retired from the meeting. (21:20 hours)

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Responding to members' concerns about classrooms where the teacher does not use the technology provided and possible loss of benefits to students for whom equipment has been purchased, Superintendent Byers stated that technology is used on daily basis and there are required expectations of staff; however, knowledge and experience of teachers may vary.

SE-30, moved by Sue Lawton, that the report re Special Equipment Amount (SEA) – Project Overview, be received.

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10. Question Period

Barbara Cyr spoke about the upcoming Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) Conference in April 2016 and suggested that SEAC members be invited to attend.

11. Further Business

Superintendent of Education, Pertia Minott, advised that the 2016 Summit on Children and Youth Mental Health is scheduled for April 7 and 8, 2016. She extended an invitation to fund two SEAC members to attend the summit. Interested SEAC members were asked to contact Superintendent Ted Byers.

12. Public Question Period

There were no public questions.

13. Adjournment

SE-31, moved by Mary Wright, that the meeting adjourn (21:30 hours).

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