

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 18, 2014 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
Shelley Foster, VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children
Meredith Johnson, Trustee
Jennifer Knight, Easter Seals Ontario
Brad MacDonald, Trustee
Carol Oitment, Tourette Syndrome Association of Ontario
Fauzia Reza, Autism Ontario Peel Chapter (Alternate)
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living
Lorraine Yuill, Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region

Absent: (apologies received marked*)

Nancy Leaton, Autism Ontario Peel Chapter*
Wes McDonald, VIEWS for Blind and Visually Impaired Children*
Dorothy Peddie, FASworld Canada – Peel Chapter
Mary Wright, Peel Caring Network for Challenged Kids

Also present:

Carol Ogilvie, Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region (Alternate)
Linda Standish, Educational Resource Facilitators of Peel

Administration:

Joy Uniac, Superintendent of Education, (Executive Backup Member)
Marina Amin, Board Reporter

1. Approval of Agenda

Item 9.3, Draft letter from SEAC to the Minister of Education in support of the Board's Fix the Formula Campaign, was added to the agenda.

SE-28, moved by Meredith Johnson, that the agenda, as amended, be approved.

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(2/3rds' majority)

2. Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

3. Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, February 18, 2014

It was noted that Nancy Bratkovic, representative for Canadian Mental Health Association, was present at the meeting.

SE-29, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of February 18, 2014, as amended, be approved.

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4. Service Animals

Coordinating Principal, Ana Pauchulo, reported that the Board's guidelines are being revised to comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, Customer Service Standard, which supports bringing service animals into facilities to help persons with disabilities. She provided an overview of the Board's pilot project initiated at Port Credit Secondary School and the protocol for bringing a non-traditional service animal into the school for students with special needs. Ana Pauchulo then invited Emily Sweet, a student at Port Credit Secondary School, to share the experience of her participation in the pilot project. Emily Sweet spoke positively of the effect of having her service dog accompany her to school, highlighting the improvement in her attendance and overall behaviour, as well as the positive effect the dog's presence has on other children in the classroom. She indicated that, for her, it has been a life changing experience for the better. Ana Pauchulo stated that the current guidelines are being reviewed, and a new Operating Procedure is being drafted, which, when finalized, will be brought to the Committee for information. A classroom video was viewed, depicting the service dog's ability to anticipate stress and anxiety, and to react swiftly to calm its owner.

A member asked about protocol to deal with allergic reactions. Ana Pauchulo explained that, when a request is received by the principal to bring a service animal into school, a letter about the request will go out to the community. She noted that there is a process to respond to allergic reactions, and the principal of the school will be available to problem-solve with parents who express concerns in this respect.

A trustee commended Emily Sweet for sharing her story, and for her initiative in steadfastly advocating for her needs.

SE-30, moved by Ann Smith, that the report re Service Animals, be received.

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5. A Case for Inclusion: Toronto District School Board – Feedback from SEAC

A copy of the Policy Statement on Educational Inclusion for Students with Learning Disabilities was circulated by the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario.

At the last SEAC meeting, the Toronto DSB document, A Case for Inclusion, was shared with members, who were asked to review the document and provide feedback using the graphic organizer, Here's What, So What, Now What. Gillian Kajganich, Coordinator of Special Programs, handed out copies of the graphic organizer and Committee members broke into groups to discuss and record their suggestions. Following discussion, groups provided input which included: it is important to maintain a full range of options for all students; new ideas for inclusion are always welcome, but progress needs to be monitored; timeframe for implementation to be determined; implementation model to be developed; staff need to be trained; develop a plan to get everyone from the grassroots level in each school to understand the value of an inclusive model such as this. A member expressed appreciation for the pilot initiative by the Board, commenting that students in inclusive settings are more inclined to find employment, and feel independent and valued. Gillian Kajganich advised that, members can also email suggestions to Louise Sirisko, Superintendent of Special Education Support Services.

SE-31, moved by Ann Smith, that the report re A Case for Inclusion: Toronto District School Board - Feedback from SEAC, be received.

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6. Student Well-Being in Peel

Information about Systems Improvement through Service Collaboratives was circulated.

With a PowerPoint presentation, Maureen MacKay, Coordinator – Student Well-being, provided an overview of the Board's Open Minds, Healthy Minds initiative and the work being done collaboratively to support children and youth in Peel. The goal is to provide access to high quality service; closing critical service gaps for children and youth in transition; early identification and intervention. She provided details of the Youth and Family Crisis/Safety Plan, a pilot project that the Board is implementing between now and the end of June 2014. Maureen MacKay spoke of a 24/7 crisis centre, and the provision of Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training to staff. She advised the Committee of steps being taken to change perception and decrease the stigma associated with mental illness. Maureen MacKay stated that the Ministry of Education has developed resources for administrators, that include curriculum and training, to teach students resiliency skills and provide the support required to deal with mental health issues. She noted that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services is interested in a partnership with the Board in the area of youth suicide prevention. Maureen MacKay spoke about plans to work in partnership with the William Osler Health Centre and mental health nurses to develop a discharge plan that will ease student entry back into the system, and continue the required support. She highlighted the lead role played by Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in developing the local Service Collaborative, which Regional Implementation Teams will support through the process of implementation and assessment.

6. Student Well-Being in Peel (Continued)

Maureen MacKay provided details of the formation of Mental Health Priority Groups, comprised of members from diverse groups within the Board, to work together to further support the mental health initiative.

A trustee suggested that the list of service options provided to Faith leaders be checked for accuracy with respect to contact numbers. Maureen MacKay will follow up on this matter.

SE-32, moved by Shelley Foster, that the report re Student Well-Being in Peel, be received.

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7. Special Education Advisory Committee April 29, 2014, Meeting

Chair Byers suggested that this item be deferred in the absence of background information. Members agreed to the deferral.

SE-33, moved by Meredith Johnson, that the report re Special Education Advisory Committee April 29, 2014 Meeting, be deferred.*

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8. OnSIS Report

Gillian Kajganich indicated that the report provides data regarding the number of special education students, by exception, over the last five years. She reported a total of 23,426 students receiving special education support, as of October 2013, which includes identified as well as non-identified students. Using a PowerPoint presentation, Gillian Kajganich reviewed statistical data by exceptionality contained in the report and she noted that the information continues to be discussed and analyzed to ensure that the most accurate data is recorded. A member asked about the 13% drop in the number of gifted students, and highlighted the significant difference between the number of gifted boys and girls. She also indicated that there could be some gifted students that are non-identified. Gillian Kajganich confirmed that students in the In-School Enhanced Learning Program, and those receiving itinerant support, are reported in the non-identified category.

SE-34, moved by Carol Oitment, that the OnSIS Report, be received.

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*Note: Following the meeting, Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Louise Sirisko, clarified to Committee members that the April SEAC meeting date had to be revised to April 29, 2014, because it was originally placed on a high holy day.

9. Draft letter from SEAC to the Minister of Education in support of the Board's Fix the Formula Campaign

Committee members reviewed the draft letter developed by the Communications department, and requested additional time to review and provide their input for the final letter. Vice-Chair Cameron stated that letters have been sent to each municipality in Peel, as well as to Chambers of Commerce. He noted that the Board is overspent on the special education funding envelope and a collective voice on the Board's Fix the Formula Campaign is required from the SEAC membership. Another trustee highlighted the need for SEAC members to personalize the letter. Following discussion, it was agreed that members will meet to finalize the letter to the Minister.

SE-35, moved by Ann Smith, that the information re the Draft letter from SEAC to the Minister of Education in support of the Board's Fix the Formula Campaign, be received.

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10. Communications

SE-36, moved by Brad MacDonald, that the following communications, be received:

1. Letter from David Suzuki Secondary School Council to Vic Dhillon, MPP regarding The Funding Formula for the Special Education High Needs Amount
2. Letter from SEAC Chair, Rainbow District School Board to the Ministries regarding Speech and Language Services for school aged children in Ontario.

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11. Response of Administration to Former Questions

At the SEAC meeting held on February 18, 2014, a member had asked about the participation of Peel secondary schools in the School Support Initiative. Joy Uniac, Superintendent of Education, provided a response on behalf of Patricia Rossall, Superintendent of Education, Alternative Programs, indicating that funds are targeted for schools where student achievement is a concern. Criteria to receive funding is based on EQAO tests and past fail rates at the school. Superintendent Uniac stated that schools involved in this initiative have shown improved results. Two more schools are being added to the project, as of this year, which takes the total number of schools to nine.

12. Question Period

Barbara Cyr asked about follow up action on the suggestions made by SEAC members regarding the promotion process for principals. Ana Pauchulo advised that the process is being reviewed by the Leadership team to align it with the government's Ontario Leadership Strategy. She noted that the interview package is also being reviewed and revised.

13. Public Question Period

There were no public questions.

14. Further Business

1. Stage Performance on Autism

Vice-Chair Cameron shared details from a letter he had received from the Executive Director of Autism Ontario, Simcoe County, which provided information on the play “The Misunderstood Struggle of Autism” being staged by students of St. Joan of Arc, Barrie, on April 11, 2014.

2. Autism Showcase

Coordinating Principal at the Central Board Office, Therese Fitzpatrick, reported that the Autism Showcase will be held in the Board Room on May 22, 2014. Committee members will be provided with more information once details are finalized.

15. Adjournment

SE-37, moved by Brad MacDonald, that the meeting adjourn (21:00 hours).

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