

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, May 17, 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
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
Harkirat Singh, Trustee
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living
Mary Wright, Peel Caring Network for Challenged Kids

Absent: (apologies received)

Sue Lawton, Trustee

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 Backup Member)
Scott Moreash, Associate Director of Instructional Support Services

Marina Amin, Board Reporter

1. Approval of Agenda

Clarifying meeting rules of order, Chair Byers stated that an alternate representative of an association, will not sit at the table, if that association's member representative is present, as only the SEAC membership sits around the table. She also clarified that a representative of a recognized group, who is present at the meeting, will identify and take a seat around the table. Members of the public will not be seated at the table.

SE-39, moved by Nancy Leaton, 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, April 18, 2016

Arising from Item 7 of the Minutes, Pupil Accommodation Review Report, a member requested that the statement, “a member commented on the absence of Enhanced programs in schools in the north and south ends of Mississauga” be amended to, “a member commented on this creating the absence of Enhanced programs in schools in the north-east of Mississauga.” The minutes will be amended.

SE-40, moved by Carol Oitment, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, held April 18, 2016, as amended, be approved.

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4. Links to Literacy

A copy of the PowerPoint presentation was circulated.

Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Ted Byers, introduced the presenters, Instructional Coordinator, Zaiba Beg, Speech-Language Pathologist, Susan Bernstein, Chief Speech Pathologist, Lorie Grant, and Research Officer, Aimee Wolanski. He noted that staff will describe the work being done to support literacy for children in grade one, and the positive results of a research study undertaken to determine the effectiveness of this in-house developed literacy program.

Reviewing the presentation, Susan Bernstein provided a brief background of Links to Literacy (L2L), and outlined its goals and the purpose of providing differentiated instruction to a small identified group of students requiring early literacy support, with respect to phonological awareness and reading and writing skills to meet grade level expectations. She highlighted the collaborative spirit of the program which includes coordination between the Grade 1 classroom teacher, In-School Support Program (ISSP) staff, English as a Second Language (ESL)/English Language Learners (ELL) teachers, and Speech-Language Pathologists, to promote awareness of student need and provide the necessary supports. Susan Bernstein also described the tools and strategies that are provided to teachers and parents to assist students in the program. Zaiba Beg highlighted the collective effort involved in the careful selection of students for the program, in view of the complex factors that influence language acquisition. Aimee Wolanski reviewed details of the research study regarding, methodology, student demographics, data collection, staff survey results, and parent and guardian survey highlights. She also provided information on performance outcomes of students in Control and Program groups for ELLS and non-ELLs, and limitations of the survey. Speaking about next steps, Lorie Grant indicated that a Steering Committee has been established to develop a framework for greater implementation of the program. In 2015-2016, Links to Literacy was offered to control schools and implemented in 7 of the 8 schools. It was noted that 8 new schools will be receiving Links to Literacy in the 2016-2017 school year.

4. Links to Literacy (Continued)

The administration responded to questions of clarification regarding: parent and teacher responses to the survey; effectiveness of multi-modal strategies; funding sources; creating an inclusive and equitable program to support cognitive development in all students; funding for the project. Lorie Grant stated that, in light of research about reading disabilities, it is quite possible that students being identified for early literacy intervention may require special education support in the future.

Acknowledging the significant findings of the survey, and the impact of this program on students, Superintendent Byers advised that the task of the Steering Committee, which includes representation from Curriculum and Instruction and Special Education Support Services, is to create an implementation plan for the early literacy programs that exist within the Board, determine the diagnostic tools to identify student need, and outline training for staff. He also advised that the implementation plan will be brought to a future Committee meeting. A member requested an update report along with timelines for expansion of this program, and profile of students who will receive support. She noted that students with special needs would benefit from such a program.

SE-41, moved by Mary Wright, that the report re Links to Literacy, be received.

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5. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Byers thanked members for their attendance at the 28th Annual Peel DSB Psychology Conference on May 4, 2016, when Marshall S. Korenblum spoke about At-Risk Youth: What the Brain Does (and Doesn't) Tell Us. He noted that a parallel conference is also held for social work and speech and language staff in Peel.

Highlighting the provincial focus of the Ministry of Education's Renewed Mathematics Strategy initiative, Superintendent Byers spoke about Peel's Engage Mathematics project, which centres around mathematics instruction, instructional strategies for a deeper mathematics understanding, and assessment. Ted Byers reported on a meeting between Board and Ministry staff, when the Board's plans were outlined with respect to a Board-wide mathematics strategy. A report will be brought to the next Committee meeting along with additional information on the Renewed Mathematics Strategy for special education students, and training to support staff at the elementary and secondary levels. Superintendent Byers stated that the Special Education department projects and goals for the next year will also be brought to the next meeting.

SE-42, moved by Dorothy Peddie, that the Superintendent's Report (oral), be received.

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6. Special Education Plan

Laptops were provided for members to view the draft Special Education Plan.

Superintendent Byers thanked members for their input and feedback on the format of the Special Education Plan, which has been incorporated into the draft plan. He noted that final edits are being made to the plan, and he invited feedback. Members' comments included: provide explanatory links to acronyms; more interesting home page. At this point in the meeting, a trustee suggested that members review the updated information and email feedback to staff in advance, so that highlights can be discussed and the plan finalized at the next meeting.

SE- 43, moved by David Green, that staff send the link of the updated Special Education Plan to SEAC members for feedback, so that highlights of the final plan can be discussed at the next Committee meeting.

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7. Question Period

Carol Ogilvie updated members about a symposium on May 28, 2016, and requested them to forward display material, if any.

8. Public Question Period

Hilary Campbell, President of the Educational Resource Facilitators of Peel (ERFP) group, spoke about the embarrassment experienced by Karen Del Ben, ERFP representative to SEAC, when she was asked by the Chair to vacate her seat around the table. She indicated that Karen Del Ben, Vice President of the ERFP group which represents Teaching Assistant staff, including Special Education Teaching Assistants, is volunteering her time to attend SEAC meetings while on maternity leave, and she commented that Karen Del Ben was offended. Stating that the group had asked for an apology, she indicated that, while the Trustees, Superintendent Byers, and Director of Education, have orally extended apologies for the incident, the group is disappointed at not receiving an apology from the Chair of SEAC. Chair Byers responded.

9. Adjournment

SE-44, moved by David Green, that the meeting adjourn (20.55 hours).

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..... Chair Secretary