

Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting

Apr. 17, 2012

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 HJA Brown Education Centre, 5650 Hurontario Street, Mississauga, Ontario on Tuesday, April 17, 2012 at 19:00 hours.

Members present:

Barbara Byers, Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada, Chair
Brad MacDonald, Trustee, Vice-Chair
Stan Cameron, Trustee
Lynne Cramer, Community Living Mississauga
Barbara Cyr, Association for Bright Children
Shelley Foster, VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children (19:05)
Meredith Johnson, Trustee (19:10)
Joyce Lang, Autism Ontario Peel Chapter
Sandy Milakovic, Canadian Mental Health Association, Peel Branch
Carol Ogilvie, Learning Disabilities Association of North Peel
Carol Oitment, Tourette Syndrome Association of Ontario
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living (19:05)
Lorraine Yuill, Learning Disabilities Association of Mississauga

Absent:

Deanna Henderson, Easter Seals Ontario
Wes McDonald, VIEWS for Blind and Visually Impaired Children

Also present:

Marg Fishbein, Educational Resource Facilitators of Peel
Marilyn Matis, Association for Bright Children (Alternate)
Linda Standish, Educational Resource Facilitators of Peel

Administration:

Louise Sirisko, Superintendent, Special Education Support Services (Executive Member)
Pam Tomasevic, Associate Director, Instructional Support Services

Nicole Fernandes, Board Reporter

1. Approval of Agenda

Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Louise Sirisko, introduced Cindy Perras, Special Education Coordinator, Special Equipment, and provided brief background information on Cindy Perras' career at the Board.

SE-40, moved by Carol Ogilvie, that the agenda be approved.

..... carried

2. Capacity Building: Effective Transitions for Students With Disabilities

Special Education Coordinator, Cathy White, spoke about the importance of transition planning for students with exceptionalities and disabilities. She noted that differing practices between boards, as well as legislative requirements, philosophical differences and service terminology between post-secondary institutions and secondary schools are some of the challenges. Cathy White stated that, while it appears that students with disabilities are prepared academically, they may not have the social and problem solving skills required to be successful. There needs to be social and academic supports at post-secondary institutions to help these students succeed. Providing statistical information from the Sheridan College Accessible Learning Services for 2010-2011, Cathy White highlighted that a majority of students with disabilities were not prepared, leading to the unsuccessful completion of program requirements or withdrawal from the program. She spoke of the need for stakeholders to discuss the secondary to post-secondary transition and examine the challenges.

Cathy White reported that an application was made for the Ministry of Education's Knowledge Network for Applied Education Research grant, which was used to host a one-day symposium. The focus of the symposium included: to develop better communications between community partners, secondary and post-secondary sectors to share processes that support the transition of students with disabilities; share knowledge of best practices and evidence-based activities that both support and hinder successful transition; build a professional development network of educators and community-based professionals to develop new programs aimed at building students' and teachers' skills related to transition. Cathy White reported that another one-day symposium was held at Sheridan College in October 2011 to gather input and trends from individuals in the field who currently support students with disabilities transitioning from secondary to post-secondary school. Attendees were asked specific questions from which key findings, significant gaps and best practices were identified. She noted that an important finding was the sharing of practices and work within the organization.

Cathy White then introduced, Ryan Machete, Program Coordinator, Coalition for Persons with Disabilities, which is a regional initiative providing supports for transitions beyond secondary school. Using PowerPoint slides, Ryan Machete reported that the Coalition serves the area of Peel, Halton and Dufferin, and that his role is that of a job developer and assisting persons with disabilities find employment. He explained that a program application was submitted to the Trillium Foundation, and the Coalition was granted \$168,000 over two years to assist Peel and Dufferin-Peel Catholic DSB co-op teachers in resource building and to develop co-op placements for persons with disabilities, making sure that employability was the key focus. Work in this area began in September 2011, and Ryan Machete noted that he has been presenting workshops to teachers and students, speaking about expectations when students transition into the workforce, how to get the best out of co-op in secondary school, etc. He highlighted the areas of focus, including: knowledge of income and employment supports; importance of job carving and job creation; need for additional on-site support and utilizing technology; need for generating new employers; minimum requirements to access assistive technology; post-secondary funding for students who require assistive technology; job / employer sharing; parent awareness of community resources; relying on employer database.

Katie Levalds, Special Education Coordinator, commended the significant in-roads made by Ryan Machete and the Coalition in supporting students with disabilities in the workplace. She stated that the more co-op teachers consider the students' strengths and skills, the more successful the students are in their transition and in the workplace. A member suggested Ryan Machete make presentations at the Connections 2012 conference, and at workshops for co-op teachers on job carving and job creation. Another member advised about applying for Workplace Safety Insurance Board grants to spread awareness among students with disabilities about workplace safety. The member also suggested that a flyer be sent home with every student inquiring about employers or businesses that could offer co-op placements. Ryan Machete confirmed that he has obtained municipal support for the program which will help to reach more employers.

3. Capacity Building: Learning Disabilities Association of North Peel / Mississauga

Cristina Pergotski, Board Member, Michael Collens, Assistant Executive Director, and Vincenza Matseo, Manager of Program Services and Outreach, from Learning Disabilities Association (LDA) of North Peel were introduced by SEAC representative, Carol Ogilvie. Handouts of the PowerPoint presentation were circulated, and Vincenza Matseo and Michael Collens reviewed the slides in detail. The role of the LDA chapters was described, specifying the missions and goals. The Canadian chapter of LDA provides a national voice for persons with learning disabilities and those who support them. In 2011, LDAC had 10,000 members. The local chapters of LDA, North Peel and Mississauga, are charitable non-profit organizations providing programs and services for children, youth and adults with learning disabilities.

Vincenza Matseo explained that a learning disability is defined as a neurologically based information processing disorder affecting the way one stores, recalls, understands and expresses information. The cause is unknown and learning disabilities range in severity. It was noted that the disability occurs in individuals with average to above average intelligence and is not low intelligence, a mental illness or a developmental delay. The programs and services for children provided by the LDAs in the Region of Peel were described in detail, including: social skills; positive conflict; computer skills; assistive technology; academic support; summer support; stay-in-school. It was noted that the activities of the LDA foster stronger persons and communities by supporting and providing appropriate accommodation, specific skill instruction, compensatory strategies, and self advocacy skills. Other programs and services include: parent support group; adult support group; employment support program; resource counseling; reference libraries; workshops. The presentation concluded with Vincenza Matseo providing contact information of LDA of North Peel and Mississauga, and she invited SEAC members to contact her for more information. SEAC representative from Learning Disabilities Association of Mississauga, Lorraine Yuill, encouraged staff to direct parents to the association's website because of the quality and well-priced programs and services offered.

A member requested that presentations be shared electronically with SEAC members so that these can be forwarded to their associations.

4. Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

5. Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, March 20, 2012

Shelley Foster's name will be corrected in the minutes. A member clarified that she had referred to the Instructional Programs / Curriculum Committee minutes with regard to the Full Year and Semestered Mathematics Program.

SE-41, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, held March 20, 2012, as amended, be approved.

..... carried

6. Updated Special Education Advisory Committee Member List

The updated member list was reviewed. In response to a question, Superintendent Sirisko, requested updates to the list be sent to her or her assistant.

SE-42, moved by Lynn Cramer, that the updated Special Education Advisory Committee Member List, be received.

..... carried

7. SEAC Meeting Structure

Superintendent Sirisko referred to the proposed new agenda included in the above-noted report, and stated that the suggestion is to re-structure the conversations at SEAC meetings to align it with its purpose. She explained the rationale for the proposed terminology regarding Ministry and Board policy review, program review, and department work plan review, and remarked that such a re-structure will lead to more authentic and meaningful opportunities for feedback. She then reviewed the draft calendar for 2012-2013, and drew members' attention to the program focus for each month.

Superintendent Sirisko asked whether SEAC would require time to consider the suggestions, and a member requested that the report be brought back to the next meeting for further discussion. In reply to the member's comments, Superintendent Sirisko indicated that policy reviews could be the focus of discussions at SEAC, rather than special presentations or capacity building reports. Another member asked for SEAC Terms of Reference and a list of acronyms.

SE-43, moved by Lynne Cramer, that the report re SEAC Meeting Structure, be deferred for discussion to the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of May 15, 2012.

..... carried

8. OnSIS October Reports 2011

The OnSIS October Reports are generated for SEAC each year, and Barb MacRae, Special Education Coordinator, Data and Standards, explained that the report is a snapshot of special education students by exceptionality in October 2011, and verified by the Ministry. She indicated that there were 13,563 identified special education students compared to 6,657 non-identified students with special needs supported by special education. She noted that the number of identified special education students for 2011 has decreased slightly, in line with the reduction in enrolment for the Board. Barb MacRae recalled that, due to significant effort in 2010, the number of non-identified students increased by almost 3,000 students. Describing the exercise this year, she stated that the practices, policies, classifications and definitions were considered, staff visited every school, and reminders were sent to schools regularly, in order that all non-identified students are included in the Ministry count. She commented that the number of elementary non-identified students fluctuates due to staff changes but are more stable in the secondary panel because department heads take responsibility for ensuring that these students are included in the count. Barb MacRae spoke of the importance of ensuring that schools and staff understand which students qualify for special education services.

To a member's comment that the ratio of male and female special education students is almost 2:1 and her question whether Peel DSB enrolment follows the same ratio, Superintendent Sirisko responded in the negative. Member's questions of clarification were responded to by the administration, including: elementary and secondary statistics for 2011 are combined in the same report but separate reports can be provided; depression and anxiety are not classified as exceptionalities, but an ISRC will determine whether a medical mental illness has an impact on the student's ability to learn; caseload of hearing impaired students; reasons for some students in the mainstream programs not being formally identified, including personal choice of parents.

SE-44, moved by Joyce Lang, that OnSIS October Reports 2011, be received.

..... carried

9. Vision for Learning and Instructional Technology Plan

Providing relevant background information, Superintendent Sirisko reported that the Board had undertaken a review of the successes and challenges in implementing digital technology for teaching and learning. At

the March 27, 2012 Regular Meeting of the Board, the Board approved the transfer of \$7 million from the Working Fund Reserve to support the first major step of creating wireless access in all schools and expanding network capacity. Louise Sirisko spoke of the administration's plans for students to bring their own devices and, in the interests of equity, to provide a baseline level of technology in schools. She clarified that the responsibility for personal devices will be the student's and parent's, and use of the devices will be in accordance with the Appropriate Use of Technology policy.

SE-45, moved by Sandy Milakovic, that the report re Vision for Learning and Instructional Technology Plan, be received.

..... carried

10. Communications

SE-46, moved by Shelley Foster, that the following communications, be received:

1. CAT/3 Testing
2. Meeting Summary of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE), February 8-9, 2012
3. Launch of ABA Central West Parent website
4. Children's Mental Health Awareness Week
5. Memo to Directors of Education from Barry Finlay, Ministry of Education, re Individual Education Plans (IEP): 2011-2012 Internal Review
6. Letter from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services re Transfer of Programs and Services at Thistletown Regional Centre
7. Camp I Can with Credit Completion Summer Program – Grades 9 and 10
8. Summer Programs 2012 Grades 7 and 8: CIC (Camp I Can) and SCORE (Summer Camp Offering Recovery Education)
9. Connections Resource Fair for Persons with Disabilities

.....

Highlighting Item 10.1, CAT/3 Testing, Superintendent Sirisko clarified the difference between CAT/3 and CCAT. She noted that CAT/3 is not aligned with Growing Success, and that the CCAT will continue to be administered to identify gifted students. Regarding Item 10.5, she reported that the Ministry has asked all boards to undertake an internal review of IEPs. She explained that a committee of stakeholders will be struck, and input from parents and students will be invited regarding the IEP development and the impact on programs and services. She confirmed that representation from SEAC will be invited.

Superintendent Sirisko explained about the transfer of programs and services with the closing down of Thistletown Regional Centre, Item 10.6. She noted that the centre serves students with significant disabilities and needs, including Section 23 students, and the Ministry is working with community agencies to support these students. She stated that she has asked for the list of Peel students who are being provided programs and services at the Centre.

Katie Levalds described the programs outlined in Items 10.7 and 10.8, CIC and SCORE, indicating that CIC is a summer program for Grade 9 and 10 students who require one credit in literacy. SCORE is offered to students who are working below Level 2 in their EQAO tests to support literacy development. Katie Levalds will clarify whether students with intellectual disabilities are included in these programs, and the rationale if they are not.

.....

SE-46

..... carried

11. Response of Administration to Former Questions

1. Full Year and Semestered Mathematics

Louise Sirisko referred to the question raised at the last SEAC meeting by Carol Ogilvie regarding evaluating the year round Mathematics program. She reported that, in discussions with Shawn Moynihan, Superintendent of Curriculum and Instructional Support Services, it was explained that staff will be evaluating schools that have full year and semestered Mathematics, and considering aspects such as report card scores, credit accumulation, etc. Observations can be brought back to SEAC.

12. Reports from Representatives on Councils / Associations

Joyce Lang reported that this is her last meeting as Autism Ontario Peel Chapter representative on SEAC, and that a letter to appoint Nancy Leaton as the new representative has been sent to the Board for approval. Joyce Lang thanked everyone for their support and, on behalf of SEAC, Chair Byers expressed appreciation for Joyce Lang’s valuable input and insight on the Committee.

Sandy Mikalovic distributed pamphlets relating to the CMHA / Peel Walkathon and Rebound Choices, a volunteer-driven new program for young children who are dealing with substance abuse and other issues that affect their ability to perform well in school and life. Jim Van Buskirk, Chief of Social Work, provided details of a parent event focusing on suicide, and he invited SEAC members to attend.

13. Question Period

Carol Ogilvie asked that SEAC be apprised of any Board policy with regard to the use of blocker shields. Superintendent Sirisko confirmed that she has discussed the issue with the Board’s Disabilities Officer, who clarified that the blocker shields of the type used at the Simcoe County DSB, are not on the Board’s approved list. One foam pad is being used in one school for a student to protect himself from self-injury and is with parental consent and an approved safety plan. Superintendent Sirisko noted that student safety and parent involvement is of paramount importance.

14. Public Question Period

Leeja Anderson reported that she had applied to be on SEAC, but was advised that there is a conflict of interest when she identified that she was a Peel DSB employee. She asked for clarification. Superintendent Sirisko indicated that she will discuss the issue with Leeja Anderson following the meeting.

15. Adjournment

SE-4Z, moved by Lynne Cramer, that the meeting adjourn (21:30 hours).

..... carried

..... Chair Secretary

Public meetings of the board are held in the board room, HJA Brown Education Centre, 5650 Hurontario Street, Mississauga. Meetings are open to the public and feature open public question periods, and opportunities to attend as a delegation. For more information, contact Marion Smith, executive assistant, 905-890-1010/1-800-668-1146, ext. 2011 or e-mail: marion.smith@peelsb.com

[Subscribe](#) electronically to receive the regular board meeting agendas.