

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, November 18, 2014 at 19:00 hours.

Members present:

Barbara Byers, Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada
Nancy Bratkovic, Canadian Mental Health Association
Barbara Cyr, Association for Bright Children, Peel Chapter
Shelley Foster, VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children
Jennifer Knight, Easter Seals Ontario
Nancy Leaton, Autism Ontario Peel Chapter
Brad MacDonald, Trustee
Wes McDonald, VIEWS for Blind and Visually Impaired Children
Carol Ogilvie, Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region
Dorothy Peddie, FASworld Canada – Peel Chapter
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living
Mary Wright, Peel Caring Network for Challenged Kids

Absent: (apologies received marked *)

Stan Cameron, Trustee, Vice-Chair*
Meredith Johnson, Trustee*
Carol Oitment, Tourette Syndrome Association of Ontario

Also present:

Tammy Bowman, Educational Resource Facilitators of Peel

Administration:

Louise Sirisko, Superintendent, Special Education Support Services (Executive Member)

Nicole Fernandes, Board Reporter

1. **Approval of Agenda**

SE-84, moved by Carol Ogilvie, that the agenda be approved.

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2. Special Presentation: Using Assistive Technology to Augment a Child's Communication

As Michelle Bratovz, Speech-Language Pathologist, and Kathy Brouse, Teacher, Britannia Public School, were unable to attend the meeting, Special Education Coordinating Principal, Therese Fitzpatrick, presented information on the use of Proloquo2Go in the elementary classroom.

Noting that Proloquo2Go is an Alternative and Augmentative Communication application (App) for the iPad, iPhone and iPod, Therese Fitzpatrick indicated that using the App was part of Kathy Brouse's learning plan and professional development related to the use of technology. She reported that Kathy Brouse had shared that learning and becoming familiar with the App was easy, as was incorporating and updating the App into the program using appropriate technology. Referring to the report, with regard to the article written by Kathy Brouse in the Fall 2014 issue of Autism Matters, Therese Fitzpatrick spoke about the initial use of PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) to help with Zoe's ongoing language development and difficulty with articulation. Since the transition to using Proloquo2Go, a dramatic improvement in Zoe's spontaneous use of functional language and communication was reported. Therese Fitzpatrick commented that this improvement and achievement of academic goals were remarkable because Zoe attends school only part time, as she also attends Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) therapy at ErinoakKids.

SE-85, moved by Nancy Leaton, that the Special Presentation: Using Assistive Technology to Augment a Child's Communication, be received.

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3. Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

4. Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, October 21, 2014

SE-86, moved by Nancy Bratkovic, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of October 21, 2014, be approved.

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5. EQAO Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics 2013-2014 – Primary Division (Grades 1-3), Junior Division (Grades 4-6), Grade 9 Mathematics, and Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test

Reports were circulated regarding the results for special education students by exceptionality for the EQAO assessments. Rosanne Brown, Research Officer, Assessment and Accountability, presented information on the EQAO Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics for 2013-2014. She noted that the results of the assessments were released in September 2014.

5. EQAO Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics 2013-2014 – Primary Division (Grades 1-3), Junior Division (Grades 4-6), Grade 9 Mathematics, and Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (Continued)

Reviewing five year trends for the assessments, Rosanne Brown reported increases in the Primary Division of 12% for reading and 8% for writing, but a decrease of 2% in mathematics. Results by gender and ELL were highlighted, and for special education students, the trend showed an increase of 16% in reading, 10% in writing and 1% in mathematics. A comparison of 2012-2013 results to this year for special education indicates a 4% increase in reading and writing, and 3% increase in mathematics. For the Junior Division, Rosanne Brown explained that trends were similar, with 9% and 8% increases in reading and writing respectively, and a decrease of 5% in mathematics. Trend information relating to the gender gap and for ELL students were outlined. For special education students, there were increases of 24% in reading, 26% in writing, and 14% in mathematics, and year over year results show an improvement in 2013-2014 of 16% in the three areas. Student questionnaire results were highlighted. Results provided for the Primary and Junior Divisions excluded identified gifted students.

Reviewing the results for Grade 9 mathematics, Rosanne Brown advised that there has been little change over five years in the results, with increases of 1% in academic and 4% in applied mathematics. Gender gap information and trends for ELL students were noted. She reported that the five year trend for special education students showed a 6% increase in academic mathematics and 2% increase in applied mathematics. A comparison of year over year results indicates a 4% increase in academic mathematics and 1% decrease in applied. Rosanne Brown reviewed the OSSLT results, noting that the results are consistent with provincial results, and that the five year trend shows no movement for special education students, but a drop of 2% over last year's results. Regarding results for special education students by exceptionality, she advised that, for privacy reasons, data for some exceptionalities is not included in the reports if there were less than 6 students with the exceptionality, or if less than 6 students achieved levels 3 or 4. She noted that, overall, the results were lower than provincial special education results.

In response to a member's question about results for gifted students not being included in the reports, Rosanne Brown indicated that the Ministry provides a separate report for gifted students, and the reports need to be consolidated. In general, these students report 90% or above achievement rate. Chair Byers asked about next steps, and Superintendent Sirisko advised that the trend for special education students is moving in the right direction. She explained that success for Peel's special education students and the exceptionality rates need to be compared with those for other boards. Peel's exceptionality rates are significantly lower than other boards and, with its diverse demographic, teachers are cautious about identifying students as there may be other causes for students showing difficulty, for example, language difficulty for ELL students. Superintendent Sirisko stated that, along with the lower identification rates, the severity of the exceptionality should also be considered. Acknowledging that more work needs to be done, she spoke about collaborating with the Curriculum and Instruction department to explore intervention strategies. She noted that programs such as Links to Literacy, which is currently being piloted, will have an impact on closing gaps as well as aligning with overall strategies. She advised that, at the same time, some students with special education needs may not achieve Levels 3 or 4 but find success in their chosen pathways.

5. EQAO Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics 2013-2014 – Primary Division (Grades 1-3), Junior Division (Grades 4-6), Grade 9 Mathematics, and Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (Continued)

Superintendent Sirisko indicated that much of the significant gains seen in special education EQAO achievement is a result of including in the data identified gifted students who are receiving ISELP. She advised that, to ensure comparisons are accurate, staff are working on including notation in the IEP to indicate that the student is receiving ISELP. Responding to a member's query about more aggressive intervention for students with Down Syndrome, Superintendent Sirisko suggested that the question be raised during the consultation session scheduled after this meeting.

SE-88, moved by Shelley Foster, that the report re EQAO Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics 2013-2014 – Primary Division (Grades 1-3), Junior Division (Grades 4-6), Grade 9 Mathematics, and Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, be received.

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6. Partnering for Change

Special Education Coordinating Principal, Ana Pauchulo, introduced Debra Stewart from McMaster University's CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability Research. Using a PowerPoint presentation, Debra Stewart noted that Partnering for Change (P4C) is a new model of service delivery to support children with motor coordination difficulties. She reported that service is provided by occupational therapists from two Community Care and Access Centres (CCACs) and that the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care has funded a two year study by CanChild to evaluate P4C. The evaluation will cover student, parent and teacher outcomes in 40 schools, 20 of them in Peel, and she indicated that occupational therapists are seeing a significant number of children who do not have a diagnosis but who exhibit motor coordination difficulty.

Debra Stewart advised that Development Coordination Disorder (DCD) refers to a difficulty in learning and execution of motor skills which not only interfere with the activities of daily living but also affect academic and school productivity. She noted that the onset of DCD is in the early development of the child, and cannot be explained by some other condition or diagnosis. The goals of P4C were highlighted as: early and improved identification of children with DCD; build capacity among educators, psychologists and parents; change outcomes through successful participation; facilitate families to provide further assistance to children with DCD. Debra Stewart reported on the data collection through the study. She noted that seven occupational therapists visit the research once a week, and keep track of the activities done and time spent. Sharing statistics, she spoke about the formal and informal in-service provided, and activities and screening undertaken. She stated that 2,314 individual accommodations were provided for 407 children and knowledge was shared with educators and families.

6. Partnering for Change (Continued)

Debra Stewart noted that for 2014-2015, service will be extended to 20 more schools, including eight Peel schools. Visits will be once every two weeks for the additional schools, but the new schools will not be part of the study, and no data will be tracked. She commented that there have been many lessons learned during the first year of the study, and action plans have been developed. Thanking Board staff for their involvement in P4C, she stated that occupational therapists will continue with the work of the initiative, including: early recognition; watching performance of students in daily routines; determination of need; collaboration with teachers and parents; modelling techniques; problem solving; communication with parents to help with at home management of students; providing lunch and learn sessions; attending school team meetings; providing research materials.

Members' questions of clarification were responded to by Debra Stewart. She spoke about the Ministry directive that the research study be restricted to children with DCD because 85% of children waitlisted at CCACs have motor coordination difficulties. She commented on the possibility that the service delivery model will be extended to other types of needs, and she clarified that, at the research schools and additional schools, letters are sent home regarding visits by the occupational therapists. If individual accommodation is recommended, therapists contact parents for consent and there is further communication.

SE-89, moved by Mary Wright, that the oral report re Partnering for Change, be received.

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7. Communications:

SE-89, moved by Jennifer Knight, that the following communication items be received:

1. Letter from Grand Erie DSB re School Health Support Services
2. Letter from Durham Catholic DSB re Mandatory Special Education Qualifications
3. The Riverwood Conservancy: Enabling Garden 2014-2015

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Referring to the letter from Grand Erie DSB regarding school health support services, Item 7.1, a member asked whether SEAC will add its support to the school boards who have written to the Government highlighting concerns about speech and language services. Superintendent Sirisko advised that the Ministries of Education and Health and Long Term Care have initiated a proposal called the special needs strategy with the goal of having school boards and CCACs collaborate to provide seamless supports to special education students, including those with speech and language needs. Initial discussions have just commenced, and writing teams are being set up. Superintendent Sirisko indicated that, at this time, involvement of parents is not requested. She advised that the size of each consultation group is limited and includes representation from four school boards. She confirmed that detailed feedback will be requested from SEAC at a later stage.

7. Communications (Continued)

Chief Speech Language Pathologist, Lorie Grant, noted that information on the special needs strategy is available on the Government website, and that this could be a topic for a presentation at a future meeting. She explained that two reports will be prepared, and SEAC will be invited to provide its feedback.

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SE-89

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8. Question Period

Shelley Foster indicated that she had attended training provided by VOICE for Hearing Impaired for its SEAC representatives on November 15, 2014. She commented that the training was very good, and she offered to share information to interested members.

Carol Ogilvie asked whether there has been any changes to the SEAC survey that is being sent out. Superintendent Sirisko suggested that this be discussed at the next meeting.

Carol Ogilvie reported that on November 20, 2014, the Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region will be hosting a resource fair at the Radisson Hotel. She stated that the Regional Resource Centre is an online resource guide for students going to secondary school, and she asked whether the Board can provide a link to the guide for students. Superintendent Sirisko indicated that Special Education Coordinator, Katie Levalds, will review the guide.

9. Public Question Period

There were no public questions.

10. Adjournment

SE-83, moved by Dorothy Peddie, that the meeting adjourn (20:40 hours).

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..... Chair Secretary