

## 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, September 17, 2013 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 of Ontario, Peel Chapter  
Shelley Foster, VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children  
Meredith Johnson, Trustee  
Jennifer Knight, Easter Seals Ontario  
Brad MacDonald, Trustee  
Wes McDonald, VIEWS for Blind and Visually Impaired Children  
Carol Oitment, Tourette Syndrome Association of Ontario  
Dorothie Peddie, FASworld Canada – Peel Chapter  
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living  
Mary Wright, Peel Caring Network for Challenged Kids  
Lorraine Yuill, Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region

### Member absent: (apologies received)

Nancy Leaton, Autism Ontario Peel Chapter

### Also present:

Karen Kennedy, Association for Bright Children of Ontario, Peel Chapter (Alternate)  
Carol Ogilvie, Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region (Alternate)  
Trevor Sookraj, Student Trustee South  
Linda Standish, Educational Resource Facilitators of Peel

### Administration:

Louise Sirisko, Superintendent, Special Education Support Services (Executive Member)  
Joy Uniac, Superintendent of Education  
  
Nicole Fernandes, Board Reporter

### 1. **Approval of Agenda**

Chair Byers welcomed Student Trustee, Trevor Sookraj, to the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting.

SE-67, moved by Ann Smith, that the agenda be approved.

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## **2. Special Presentation re Starting Point 2013**

Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Louise Sirisko, welcomed SEAC members to a new school year, and she thanked them for their dedication and commitment to their roles on the Committee.

Superintendent Sirisko noted that the Starting Point event, held at the start of each school year, showcases videos prepared by the Communications and Media department. She stated that, for Starting Point 2013, two videos were shown during the address by Director of Education, Tony Pontes. SEAC members viewed the video, "This is a New Year", which is intended to inspire students and staff as they start the new school year, and the video, "Hall of Fame", featuring true stories of Peel DSB students.

## **3. Superintendent Welcome**

Reporting that there will be discussions and consultations with members to obtain feedback on the progress of SEAC, Superintendent Sirisko highlighted some areas of focus for the Committee during the year. She spoke of continuing to work on the Board's Mental Health Strategy, providing support to Tier 3 students who have the highest needs, and celebrating the achievements of special education students. She noted that, with a focus on clear communication to all stakeholders, staff will be preparing newsletters and using Twitter.

Superintendent Sirisko indicated that the accommodation pressures at the Parkholme School will be analyzed to explore better ways to integrate inclusive practices in meeting the needs of students. She advised that the Intensive Support Model and the IS team will continue to be supported, as will the recommendations of the Gifted report and the ISELP. She thanked SEAC members for their partnership with the Board and keeping the best interests of students in mind. She remarked that, although there may not always be agreement on issues, suggestions from SEAC are highly valued.

## **4. Special Presentation re Erindale Secondary School – Inclusion Program**

Principal of Erindale Secondary School, Sue Turner, reported that the inclusion program commenced with a vision to integrate students and was followed by research into schools that offered programs which integrated students with special needs. Principal Turner indicated that Erindale Secondary School staff took on the initiative and the program has surpassed expectation to the point that students in the inclusion program are leaders not only in the school but also in the community. She introduced some members of the inclusion program staffing team at the school: Nadia El Nesr, one of two Lead Teachers; Mike Simpson, Student Success Head; Teaching Assistants, Geeta Thampi and Heather Howse.

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Principal Turner noted that the focus of the inclusion program is to integrate students fully into regular class. Students complete a four year program, and timetables for the mainstream and inclusion programs were shown to highlight the similarity. Technical skills, including woodworking, are taught, and the program helps to build the students' self-esteem.

**4. Special Presentation re Erindale Secondary School – Inclusion Program (Continued)**

Geeta Thampi and Mike Simpson then presented further information on the program. The inclusion program team comprises two teachers and six TAs, and expectations for students are raised beyond the norm but within the reach of success. Character education is a significant component of the inclusion program and, through character education, students are encouraged to implement the 12 attributes of the school, including, integrity, honesty, respect, empathy, initiative and courage. Students in the program are Erindale Secondary School students and their presence in the school has taught mainstream students to treat persons with disabilities with respect and consideration. Anecdotal information was provided regarding the positive effect of the program on students, staff and parents.

Nadia El Nesr stated that the intention of the program is to challenge students academically, physically, socially and emotionally, and to give them skills to work as a team. Principal Turner and Heather Howse reported on fundraising by the inclusion program students for a First Nations school on Christian Island. Clothes, food and money were collected, and the initiative led to the idea of making a product that would help to boost the self-esteem of the inclusion program students, as well as provide additional funds for the First Nations school. A video featuring the students making and selling fleece blankets, as well as a visit to the First Nations school was viewed by members.

**5. Conflict of Interest**

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

**6. Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, June 18, 2013**

Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living, referred to Item 8 of the Minutes, Special Education Programs and Services Report 2013 – Draft. She noted that the response from her association to the report was not read into the Minutes, as she had requested. She asked that the Minutes be amended to include the verbatim script of the response, which is as follows:

“In reviewing the proposed amendments in the Special Education Programs and Services Report for 2013-2014, Brampton Caledon Community Living is concerned with the direction that the Peel District School Board is taking with respect to students with a developmental disability. Specifically, we are disappointed that four contained classes have been added at the elementary level and two at the secondary level. We are also disappointed that there will be no increase in the resource-room programs at the secondary level and that no classes are being decoupled from Applewood and Parkholme Schools. The move towards more segregation in the elementary years and the continued segregation in the secondary years is concerning and does not align with the emphasis on inclusion that we are happy to see in the early years and with our vision that people with disabilities participate, contribute and share in all elements of community life. This move does not support PPM 119, Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools, April 22, 2013.

(Continued overleaf)

**6. Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, June 18, 2013**  
(Continued)

“We acknowledge and appreciate the fact that a transition facilitator has recently been hired to support students with developmental disabilities and we look forward to working with him.

“Brampton Caledon Community Living works closely with Community Living Mississauga, which fully supports the view that we are expressing with regard to the Special Education Programs and Services Report for 2013-2014.

“We remain committed to working with the Peel District School Board to achieve equity, fairness, respect and inclusiveness for all students, including students with intellectual disabilities. However, for the reasons given above, the representative for Brampton Caledon Community Living will abstain from voting on the motion to receive the Special Education Programs and Services Report 2013-2014.”

A member asked for clarification regarding the per pupil High Needs Amount, and Superintendent Sirisko confirmed that she will bring back information to the next meeting.

SE-68, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, held June 18, 2013, as amended, be approved.

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**7. The Journey Ahead**

Superintendent Sirisko stated that The Journey Ahead report is the result of a review of the Board's hiring and promotion processes, and will be used as the background report for a consultative feedback session in October 2013. She introduced Tana Turner, Acting Manager of Workplace Equity, who had been contracted by the Board to develop this report, and has now been temporarily contracted to oversee the implementation of the recommendations.

Tana Turner provided brief background information regarding her work in reviewing hiring policies and practices and she noted that the full report is posted online. Using a PowerPoint presentation, she reviewed the methodology used, highlights of the research report, and the overview of the action plan. She explained that the purpose of the research report was to examine the Board's hiring policies and practices, the promotion process for principals and vice-principals, and the organizational environment and readiness for workplace diversity initiatives. With regard to the research methodology, Tana Turner indicated that this included a review of policies, documents and competition files, and feedback from focus groups, employee surveys and interviews. She described the feedback from staff with regard to perceptions, support and understanding of diversity, and highlighted the findings of the review which pointed to the need for the Board to strengthen its hiring and promotion practices, ensure compliance with equity-related legislation, and do more to increase diversity in the workforce at all levels. Tana Turner outlined some of the actions that will be taken on the three priority areas of focus: ensure a bias-free hiring process; ensure a bias-free academic promotion process; diversity and inclusion.

**7. The Journey Ahead (Continued)**

The administration responded to members' questions of clarification, including whether the Board has policies relating to hiring staff with exceptionalities. Tana Turner noted that a self-identification process would provide information about disabilities, and this information could then be matched with the labour market. Superintendent Sirisko clarified that the number of staff with disabilities is not known at this time.

Tana Turner indicated that the report was made public in January and, since then, the administration has been working on implementing the recommendations. There will be some changes to the Fall Promotion Process, and a revised process will be introduced for January 2014, with a Committee struck to finalize the revision. A trustee reported that the Board had commenced this initiative before the Government introduced Regulation 274/12, and that trustees will be receiving training on bias free hiring as they sit on many interview panels. Superintendent Sirisko indicated that bias free hiring involves many elements. Candidates are to be considered based on the information in their interview package, their interview, and the work they do. Circulating a graphic organizer on Promotion Process: Guiding Questions for Reflection, she stated that, taking a co-constructive approach, she would like feedback from SEAC. She reviewed the organizer indicating that the knowledge and skills under each domain will help to screen candidates and be specific about the qualities of the administrator from the special education standpoint. Confirming that the organizer will be sent to members by email along with examples, she indicated that this exercise can be undertaken at next month's meeting.

SE-69, moved by Shelley Foster, that the report re The Journey Ahead, be received.

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**8. Draft Special Education Advisory Committee Annual Calendar 2013-2014**

Superintendent Sirisko reviewed the draft calendar, highlighting some of the activities that will be undertaken at each month's SEAC meeting. She noted that: consultations will be a large part of the October SEAC meeting; New Educator's Guide for Accessibility in March; Learning Disabilities of Peel Region presentation in February.

Referring to the letter from Minister Ted McMeekin to the Board Chair and SEAC Chair regarding transition from school to adult services for students with developmental disabilities and the Ministry of Community and Social Services NEWS items regarding enhancing support for adults with a developmental disability (Items 10.5 and 10.10 of these Minutes), Superintendent Sirisko asked members to review the documents and discuss at their association meetings about the effect on parents, and whether the response was adequate. With members' agreement, she indicated that the topic will be raised in November, and that a member of Development Services Ontario can be invited back.

Superintendent Sirisko confirmed that she will bring back information on the Ministry's document on building the new phase of the Ontario Education Strategy in October in order to collect SEAC feedback. Peel's Systemness Project will be linked to this item. A member indicated that there was a presentation at the City of Brampton regarding a collaboration between the City and Peel DSB in terms of providing workshops, and she asked that the presentation be included in the calendar.

**8. Draft Special Education Advisory Committee Annual Calendar 2013-2014 (Continued)**

SE-70, moved by Lorraine Yuill, that the Draft Special Education Advisory Committee Annual Calendar 2013-2014, be received.

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**9. Updated Special Education Advisory Committee Member List**

Members reviewed the list. Contact information for Mary Wright and Carol Ogilvie will be corrected, and the list updated.

SE-71, moved by Mary Wright, that the Updated Special Education Advisory Committee Member List, be received.

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**10. Communications**

SE-72, moved by Carol Oitment, that the following communications, be received:

1. Letter from the Association for Bright Children of Ontario regarding nomination of Karen Kennedy as its alternate representative replacing Marilyn Matis on the Special Education Advisory Committee
2. Letter to Marilyn Matis from Janet McDougald to confirm Association for Bright Children of Ontario's resignation from the Special Education Advisory Committee
3. Letter to Mary Wright from Janet McDougald to confirm Peel Caring Network for Challenged Kids as the representative to Special Education Advisory Committee
4. Letter to Karen Kennedy from Janet McDougald to confirm Association for Bright Children of Ontario as the alternate representative to Special Education Advisory Committee
5. Letter from Minister Ted McMeekin to Peel District School Board, Chair and SEAC Chair regarding Transition from School to Adult Services for Students with Developmental Disabilities
6. Letter to Minister Ted McMeekin from SEAC Chair, Avon Maitland District School Board regarding Special Services at Home (SSAH) funding
7. Letter to Minister Ted McMeekin from SEAC Chair, Upper Canada District School Board regarding Special Services at Home funding
8. Letter to Minister Ted McMeekin from SEAC Chair, Halton District School Board regarding Special Services at Home funding
9. Letter to Minister Liz Sandals from SEAC Chair, Renfrew County District School Board regarding Special Education Preparatory Courses
10. NEWS - Ministry of Community and Social Services regarding Enhancing Support for Adults with a Developmental Disability
11. Summit on Children and Youth Mental Health on April 3-4, 2014 in Toronto
12. Letter from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services regarding Transfer of programs and services at Thistletown Regional Centre to community based agencies

**10. Communications (Continued)**

- 13. Letter from Minister Liz Sandals thanking SEAC Chairs for their continued contribution and commitment
- 14. Fall 2013 - Ministry of Education Update regarding Special Education Policy and Programs Branch

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Chair Byers referred to Items 10.1 to 10.3, and she thanked Marilyn Matis for her work on the Special Education Advisory Committee. Chair Byers welcomed Karen Kennedy as alternate representative for the Association of Bright Children on the Committee.

Superintendent Sirisko invited members to attend the Summit on Children and Youth Mental Health on April 3-4, 2014 in Toronto, Item 10.11, and noted that the costs of members' registration will be covered by Special Education Support Services.

Chair Byers referred to the letter from Minister Sandals, at Item 10.13, and she reported that the link included in the letter contains special education resources.

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SE-72

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**11. Question Period**

Barbara Cyr advised that the newly printed brochures for the IPRC and ISRC contain her personal telephone number, rather than her association's number, and that she has started getting telephone calls. Lorraine Yuill indicated that the name change for the Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region has not been included. Mary Wright requested that contact information for the Peel Caring Network for Challenged Kids also be included. Superintendent Sirisko will follow up on the distribution lists for the newly printed brochures. She will send members an electronic copy of both brochures, and she requested members to check and ensure that details for their associations were printed accurately.

Lorraine Yuill thanked Trustee Stan Cameron and Louise Sirisko for attending the LDAPR annual barbeque event on Saturday. She reported that a resource fair is scheduled on November 21, 2013 at the Grand Banquet Centre, Brampton, with nutrition as the theme.

Ann Smith referred to Fall 2013 - Ministry of Education Update regarding Special Education Policy and Programs Branch (Item 10.14 of these Minutes), with specific reference to the Ministry establishing a Provincial ABA Expertise Professional Working Group consisting of school board representation from rural, urban, catholic, public and French Language school boards. Therese Fitzpatrick reported that the Peel DSB is representing some other Toronto area boards on the group. She provided information regarding the meetings held and the initiative, including: professional development for ABA facilitators; discussions with psychiatrists regarding Autism diagnosis; reviewing benchmarks for intake and exit for ABA; plans for a website which will contain Ministry documents, effective practices, transition, etc.

**12. Public Question Period**

Margarette Guerra from Brampton-Caledon Community Living commented positively about the presentation regarding the Inclusion Program at Erindale Secondary School. Referring to The Journey Ahead presentation, she asked whether the Board will consider undertaking a similar initiative to help remove barriers in schools for students with developmental disability. Superintendent Sirisko responded.

**13. Adjournment**

SE-73, moved by Dorothie Peddie, that the meeting adjourn (21:00 hours).

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