

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 19, 2013 at 19:00 hours.

Members present:

Barbara Byers, Fragile X Research Foundation of Canada, Chair
Stan Cameron, Trustee, Vice-Chair
Sandy Milakovic, 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
Nancy Leaton, Autism Ontario Peel Chapter
Brad MacDonald, Trustee
Wes McDonald, VIEWS for Blind and Visually Impaired Children
Ann Smith, Brampton-Caledon Community Living
Mary Wright, Peel Caring Network for Challenged Kids
Lorraine Yuill, Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region

Absent: (apologies received*)

Carol Oitment, Tourette Syndrome Association of Ontario*
Dorothy Peddie, FASworld Canada – Peel Chapter*

Also present:

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

Administration:

Louise Sirisko, Superintendent, Special Education Support Services (Executive Member)
Joy Uniac, Superintendent of Education (Executive Backup Member)

Marina Amin, Board Reporter

1. Approval of Agenda

SE-82, moved by Nancy Leaton, that the agenda be approved.

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2. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

3. Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, October 15, 2013

SE-83, moved by Nancy Leaton, that the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting, held October 15, 2013, be approved.

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4. Special Presentation: Levelled Literacy Intervention

Reporting that Levelled Literacy was introduced in Peel schools as an intervention program for Grade 1 students, Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Louise Sirisko, introduced Maria Luisa Lebar, Literacy Coordinator, to provide an overview of the program.

Maria Luisa Lebar circulated sample books of the different levels of the program. She indicated that Levelled Literacy is an early reading intervention program that supplements the current literacy program and provides support to readers and writers who are showing limited development in literacy. She noted its use in collaboration with classroom, ESL and ISSP teaching. Using PowerPoint slides, Maria Luisa Lebar provided details about program supports, and noted its alignment with Learning for All, which highlights the use of strategies and differentiated instruction, focused and targeted instruction, and assessment for learning tools. She highlighted the program's tiered approach to learning, its focus on learner profiles to help inform classroom teaching, and the strong focus on early intervention. The program consists of classroom books for Grades 1-3, along with carefully designed intervention and learning material, that includes program and prompt guides, CDs, texts that students can take home, apps for iPhone and iPad. Teachers are able to build a repertoire of strategies that can be transferred to other students as well. Maria Luisa Lebar listed the 15 keys to successful intervention, including: low student/teacher ratio; frequent, structured and systematic sessions; combines reading and writing that includes comprehension and vocabulary development components; connects to classroom work and includes ongoing assessment and progress monitoring. She also noted that further assessment tools may be used, for example, the PM Benchmarks tool, if required.

Maria Luisa Lebar reported that a pilot project which was initiated last year at Derry West Village Public School for Grade 3 students showed positive results. Students gained confidence in their ability to read, and some students moved up five levels in the short period of six weeks. Maria Luisa Lebar indicated that a board-wide implementation plan is being finalized that will be sent out to administrators in the near future.

Jess Grewal, the Principal of Derry West Village Public School, introduced Teachers Susan Sell, Denise Grey, Hema Patel, and Heather Devlin, who were involved in the pilot project since Spring 2012. The team shared their experience of the program, indicating that, as support staff to Grade 1 teachers, they found positive improvement in reading skills of those students withdrawn from the classroom to learn in a smaller focused group. At the end of 20 weeks, a reassessment showed that most had attained the required grade level. The team highlighted the importance of commencing the program early, almost at the beginning of the school year. They noted that students learned different reading strategies, which they took back to the classroom and applied to other areas of study.

5. Special Presentation: Implementing and Evaluating Partnering for Change: Project Overview

Coordinating Principal, Ana Pauchulo, provided a brief report regarding implementation of the project in Peel. She then introduced Nancy Pollock and Wenona Campbell from Partnering for Change (P4C).

A copy of the PowerPoint presentation was circulated to members. Nancy Pollock presented details of the P4C model which is designed to provide support for children experiencing motor coordination problems, or a developmental coordination disorder (DCD). She then presented a video showcasing the challenges faced by children with this disability. Nancy Pollock spoke about the high incidence of DCD, 1 in 20 children, and the secondary consequences associated with it. She indicated that P4C was initiated in order to facilitate earlier identification of children with this disorder, and to offer support, build awareness and understanding about this disability, facilitate self and family management, and prevent secondary consequences. She described the occupational therapist service delivery model for elementary students JK to Grade 3, that works in the classroom and beyond to provide support for children with DCD. Nancy Pollock spoke about stakeholder involvement, and the positive evaluation results of pilot projects conducted at two schools. Members then viewed slides displaying positive comments from parents and educators about the P4C project. Responding to a member's query, Nancy Pollock stated that the program currently only supports children with DCD. She indicated that it is being reviewed to determine how this model might be able to serve children with other disabilities. Nancy Pollock thanked Ana Pauchulo and Heidi Kazman for their work and support on this project.

6. Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement 2013 - 2014

Superintendent Sirisko, advised members of the requirement to annually submit the Board Improvement Plan (BIP) to the Ministry of Education. Indicating that the Board Improvement Plan acts as a guide to schools on system priorities, she reviewed SMART goals, Key Assessment and Instruction Strategies, Focused Professional Learning, along with leading indicators and techniques for support. Louise Sirisko stated that numeracy has been identified as a high needs priority area, based on the outcome of EQAO test results, and that a 5% improvement target has been set. She explained that the targets and goals outlined in the BIP are for all Peel students, and she highlighted instruction strategies outlined in the plan as support tools, including the use of tiered interventions, and the development of student profiles that inform differentiated instruction. Responding to a member's query, Louise Sirisko, indicated that intervention strategies are being reviewed, and currently, the focus is on numeracy and improving student achievement in this area.

SE-84, moved by Shelley Foster, that the Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement 2013 - 2014, be received.

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Trustee MacDonald retired from the meeting at 20:15 hours.

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7. EQAO and Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test

A handout outlining special education student achievement by exceptionality was presented to members.

Using PowerPoint slides, Kim Bennett, Research Officer, Assessment and Accountability, presented an overview of the EQAO assessments conducted in Peel at Grades 3, 6, 9 and the OSSLT level, noting that the purpose of these assessments is to determine the extent of student learning and the application of skills over time. She highlighted upward trending scores in reading and writing for Grade 3 over a five year period, with Peel reaching 69% in reading, and 78% in writing, which is 1% over the provincial average for 2012-2013. The mathematics scores have gone down slightly in Peel, 66% against the provincial average of 67% for 2012-2013. It was noted that, in general, females scored higher than males in reading and writing, while male scores increased slightly over female scores for mathematics. The same upward trend was seen in scores related to reading, writing and mathematics for English Language Learners (ELLs). In the junior division, Grade 4, Kim Bennett pointed to the same upward trends in reading and writing, while mathematics scores decreased 3% below the provincial average of 57% for 2012-2013. Gender-wise, female students outperformed the males. English Language Learners in the junior division showed higher scores for 2012-2013 in reading, writing and mathematics, in comparison to previous years.

Reviewing the results for special needs students in the primary and junior divisions, while trending upwards in reading and writing, Kim Bennett noted the need to surpass the provincial average. Mathematics scores, however, showed a downward trend.

Kim Bennett reviewed the results of the Grade 9 assessments of academic and applied mathematics. She noted that, in both categories, Peel scores surpassed the provincial average of 84% and 44% respectively by 1%. She also reviewed the results for English Language Learners and Special Needs students noting higher scores in academic than applied mathematics. Indicating that the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test is a graduation requirement, Kim Bennett explained that approximately 84% of fully participating first-time eligible students were successful. Out of the fully participating ELLs that tested, 78% were successful against a provincial average of 72%. However the results for students with special education needs, although 1% better than last year, were almost 5% below the provincial average of 51% for this year.

In conclusion, Kim Bennett stated that these assessments provide valuable data that determines where resources need to be focused to support student learning and development.

SE-85, moved by Mary Wright, that the report re EQAO and Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, be received.

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8. Updated Special Education Advisory Committee Member List

Members reviewed the list. Contact information for Carol Ogilvie will be updated.

SE-86, moved by Lorraine Yuill, that the Updated Special Education Advisory Committee Member List, be received.

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9. Communications

SE-87, moved by Barbara Cyr, that the following communications, be received:

1. Letter to Minister Liz Sandals from SEAC Chair, Trillium Lakelands District School Board regarding Special Education Funding Model
2. Letter to Minister Liz Sandals from Chair, Peel District School Board regarding Special Education Funding for the High Needs Amount (HNA)
3. Community Living Ontario regarding 5th Annual Commence Conference, January 23-24, 2014
4. Learning Disabilities Association of Peel Region regarding 12th Annual Resource Fair and Speakers Corner Conference

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Superintendent Sirisko reported on Items 9.2 and 10.1 of these minutes. She explained that the letter from the Chair of the Peel DSB is in response to a request from Minister Liz Sandals for suggestions to fix the funding formula for boards of education, and she highlighted the recommendation for government to move to a Statistical Prediction Model for funding. Using PowerPoint slides, Superintendent Sirisko provided details of the Special Education Per Pupil Amount (SEPPA) and the HNA, noting that these two categories account for almost 92% of the total Special Education Grant (SEG). She provided a detailed explanation about HNA based on enrolment, projected Measures of Variability (MOV) and the MOV Statistical Prediction Model. Referring to details listed in the report regarding the funding received by each board, it was noted that Peel is one of the lowest funded boards across the province. Superintendent Sirisko provided historical details about the development of the funding formula, and how the use of outdated data has affected current funding to the Board. She indicated that special education is under-funded by approximately \$14 million, and highlighted the Board of Trustees commitment to obtain fairer funding to support the high needs of special education students.

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SE-87

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10. Response of Administration to Former Questions

1. Clarification of Funding Sources and Expenses

Superintendent Sirisko reviewed the report at Item 9 of these minutes.

SE-88, moved by Lorraine Yuill, that the administration's report providing Clarification of Funding Sources and Expenses, be received.

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11. Reports from Representatives on Councils / Associations

SE-89, moved by Nancy Leaton, that the following communication items, be received:

1. Consultation Report from SEAC Members re The Journey Ahead and the Promotion of Principals and Vice-Principals
2. Consultation Report from SEAC Members re The Ministry of Education Building the Next Phase

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Superintendent Sirisko stated that the above-noted reports have been included in the agenda for members to review, before forwarding SEAC's response to the Ministry of Education's Building the Next Phase. The response will be forwarded online within the next week, on behalf of the SEAC membership. Any suggestions, revisions, may be forwarded to Superintendent Sirisko before the November 30, 2013 deadline.

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SE-89

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12. Question Period

Lorraine Yuill asked about the Board's plans for supporting transitions and career life planning for students with special education needs, and timeframe for an update report to SEAC members. The administration responded with details of the work being done to support Learning for All. With respect to PPM 156, Supporting Transitions for students with Special Education needs, it was noted that awareness has been raised, and stakeholders have been invited to partner with Peel. A pilot project at the secondary level has been implemented and plans are underway to initiate a pilot at the elementary level as well. The Special Education Support Services team is working to upgrade the transition plan page in the Individual Education Plan. The team recently reviewed transition goals and action items supporting students with disabilities in the transition stage, and in the new year, a transition plan will be incorporated in the secondary panel for students with developmental disabilities. The administration highlighted the significant work done with curriculum partners, and reported on incorporating the Community Living plan into My Blue Print, which is the program being used across the Board for course selection. A trustee commented on the support provided by guidance staff at a recent Pathways presentation on my Blue Print at Humberview Secondary School. Superintendent Sirisko indicated that Patricia Rossall will bring back an update report on the status of My Blue Print implementation in Peel schools.

12. Question Period (Continued)

Lorraine Yuill asked about bias-free progressive discipline. Superintendent Sirisko will bring back a response to a future SEAC meeting.

Ann Smith asked if Levelled Literacy Intervention (LLI) is open to students with intellectual disabilities. Superintendent Sirisko explained that the LLI program has been introduced into the main stream. She indicated that “Empower” is available in Peel schools for students with communication disabilities. Superintendent Sirisko advised that the LLI program is still in the initial stage of implementation and assessment, and it is yet to be determined whether this would be an appropriate intervention support for students with unique learning disabilities. She clarified that “Learning for All” supports special needs students as well, and she referred to a micro pilot program, still in the developmental stage, that may be more relevant to students with intellectual disabilities. When these are ready, they will be presented to the SEAC membership.

Sandy Milakovic questioned the reason for commencing LLI in Grade 1, and not Kindergarten. Superintendent Sirisko explained that learning in Kindergarten is play-based, and it would be difficult to determine the appropriateness or level of intervention for children in Peel, where many of the students speak English as a second language.

Jennifer Knight asked about Literacy for special needs students who are non-verbal. Superintendent Sirisko will bring back a report at a later date.

13. Public Question Period

There were no public questions.

14. Adjournment

SE-90, moved by Mary Wright, that the meeting adjourn (21:00 hours).

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