



Minutes of the meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee held in the Board Room, J.W. Singleton Centre, Burlington Ontario, on March 1st, 2011

- Present: Judy Shiels (VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children); Sherry Foster (Association for Bright Children); Veerle Ryckewaert (Autism Ontario-Halton Chapter); Amy McKenzie: **Chair** (Halton Council of Home and School Associations); Paulyne Lack (Tourette Syndrome Association of Ontario); Lisa Reid (Halton Down Syndrome Association); Heather Thompson (Canadian Mental Health Association); Diane Vandebossche (Learning Disabilities Association of Halton); Lori Kafato (Alternate- Association for Bright Children); Patrice Shennette (Alternate-Autism Ontario-Halton Chapter); Lori Aker (Alternate-Halton Down Syndrome Association); Heather Holden (Alternate-Learning Disabilities Association of Halton); Lynn Trevisan: **Vice-Chair** (Member at Large); Jackie Bevers (Member at Large); Jason Bartlett (Member at Large); Kristen Lochhead (Trustee); Kathryn Bateman-Olmstead (Alternate-Trustee); Dianna Bower (Alternate-Trustee);
- Board Liaison and Resource Personnel:**
David Board (Superintendent); Sue Roszell (Principal of Special Education); Pamela Cooley (Assistant); Nigel Scott (HSPA); Lisa Griffiths (PSSP)
- Regrets: Karen Poole-Lawrence (Easter Seals Society); Julie Armstrong (HEPA); Maureen Smithers (Alternate-Halton Council of Home and School Associations); Jennifer Hlusko (Trustee)
- Absent: Lynne Gurzi (HDEAA); Patricia Molnar (PSSP)

Agenda Item 1- Opening

1.1 Welcome and Call to Order

A. McKenzie called the meeting to order at 7:00

1.2 Approval of Agenda

P. Lack/ L. Reid

#04-11

The call for notices of motion section of the agenda was moved to the SEAC discussion period.

“THAT the Agenda be approved as amended”

CARRIED

Agenda Item 2 - Presentations

2.1 Ministry of Education Presentation-Barry Finlay

B. Finlay introduced his colleagues and provided an overview of SEAC's around the province. He gave an overview of the roles and responsibilities of SEAC members and also spoke about the legislation about SEAC's. He also mentioned that they have reviewed responses to the SEAC survey and will be communicating to members soon about the responses.

He opened the floor up for questions from members.

Some of the issues that members inquired about included: Inconsistency of standards across the province, budget, Special Education Plan reviews, parental information and communication, the Board Improvement Plan, Transition planning, differentiation, continuum of service, early learning program support and funding.

B. Finlay mentioned the following points in regards to SEAC questions:

There have been requests from other Boards for more alignment with the identification process and thresholds. They will be looking more into this and how to bring greater consistency.

There is pressure on the government for expansion of formal exceptionalities (ADD, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, etc); they are looking at determining how to provide these supports without creating a massive list.

The Ministry is working on a PPM to mandate transition plans for all children with special needs. They are hoping to have more information available on this by June 2011, with full implementation by September 2012. It was noted that the transition piece should include transitions between school boards and also transitions between people (multiple teachers, EA's, etc).

Some other topics discussed include: Special Education involvement in the Board Improvement Plan, variation in special classes throughout the Board and funding for those classes, concerns for all day kindergarten and the before/after school program with 3rd party providers of care.

2.2 SEAC Member Associations Presentation

Each association had their representative give an overview of their association and their role. They also spoke about key issues that the association would like to focus on.

Agenda Item 3- Call for Notices of Motion/Reports to the Board

Moved to the SEAC discussion period (agenda item 7).

Agenda Item 4 - Action

4.1 Approval of the Minutes

V. Ryckewaert/L. Reid

#05-11

“THAT the minutes of the February 1, 2011 meeting be approved.”

CARRIED

4.2. Special Education Plan Revision Process

D. Boag discussed a potential model for reviewing the Special Education Plan. The community consultation sessions are set for March 29th, 30th, and 31st; there is a need for SEAC reps to attend these sessions.

Members had a discussion on how to conduct the session. A. McKenzie shared a focus group method and asked for input and received good feedback. Members discussed how to improve the process from last year. Some members gave input on this and shared ideas on how to conduct the groups.

A. McKenzie noted that they will get some focus group questions together and send them out to SEAC.

H. Holden suggested posting the questions on the website for anyone that cannot attend.

J. Bartlett suggested using an online survey tool and also offered to help with this.

Questions should also be sent to associations.

D. Boag noted that SEAC should also consider thinking about starting the working group meetings between regularly scheduled SEAC meetings, just like last year. This will be discussed further in April.

4.3. Monthly Reports

4.3.1. Bullying (Safe School Action Teams Advisory Group)

A. McKenzie submitted a report:

The Bullying Prevention/Intervention Team has moved from writing the new Policy (spring 2010) and its Resource Guide roll out in September to the new phase of our work. We changed the name to Safe Schools Action Team Advisory Group as we now support Safe Schools Action Teams through training and accountability. In February, from the 9-11th) we conducted in-services for both the elementary and secondary panels, inviting all SSATs to allow them focussed time for resource gathering and planning sessions. The attendance and response was very good.

These afternoons included open space workshops where participants were able to choose from a number of sessions offered, including information on everything from Restorative Justice, Data and Survey collection, police partnerships and actual Curriculum Connections. The committee's aim is to take the great work being done by the best resource teams on the Board and make sure it hits the front lines where the students and staff meet the bullying issues head-on. The aim is to provide as many resources, practical tools, online programs and forums as possible. Our motto has become "it's easier than you think". We want to show

educators that creating a safe school culture actually leads to more productive learning and MORE teaching time rather than heaping on a number of new obligations on already time-strapped teachers.

This important work is of significance to our SEAC as we know that our students with special needs can often be in the thick of bullying issues – on both sides, because of skill deficits, misunderstanding and ignorance.

This work must be sustained and maintained and the Group is committed to finding ways to make sure that this happens.

Our next meeting is March 10, 2011.

4.3.2. Protocol/Communications Committee

No new update but the committee is searching for members. The committee meets once monthly between SEAC meetings. Dates are suggested via email.

4.3.3. Early Learning Program

The last meeting for ELP was on February 10th. A decision was made that the Board would not continue to provide the extended day program for 2011-2012 and would instead have 3rd party providers do the extended day.

Year 3 schools expected to be announced later this week.

There is a template and manual being prepared for principals on the operating process for getting started with ELP.

The next meeting is March 25th.

L. Aker asked if SEAC would be able to see the manual and template before it goes out to schools.

S. Roszell will look into it.

4.3.4. Accessibility Committee

Still need SEAC reps for this committee. The next meeting is March 3rd to discuss integrated standards.

D. Bower can send information out about this committee.

4.3.5. Equity and Inclusion Committee

Next meeting is March 23rd. The committee is looking at Faith accommodations. They will be discussing Cultural Proficiency.

Agenda Item 5 – Communication to SEAC and Current Successes

5.1 Superintendent's Report

D. Boag noted that a volunteer for PIC is needed.

D. Boag addressed the IPRC waiver letter. It has been reformatted with a third option for parents to choose.

There was some discussion on IPRC. Some members are interested in acquiring the data surrounding the percentage of parents who actually attend IPRC meetings, the amount of waiver forms that come in, and also looking into keeping Minutes at IPRC meetings.

D. Boag said that he can talk to the Coordinator of the IPRC process about getting some data, and also noted that the Board is looking at the entire IPRC process to see whether it needs to be revised.

D. Bower noted that SEAC reps should try and attend the upcoming Kindergarten information night if possible.

Some discussion took place on the SERT allocation process. S. Roszell gave an overview of how the allocation process works and also discussed the ratios of pupils to SERT's. She mentioned how the SERT's are assigned based on various needs within schools, and that there is a fixed number to assign. She mentioned that they are looking at a more formulated approach including looking at the variation in types of IEP's.

P. Lack commented on looking into a type of mini learning centre set up within schools.

L. Trevisan commented that the communications and protocol committees should review the documentation of the IPRC process.

5.2 Association Reports

L. Reid provided a report from Halton Down Syndrome Association:

It Takes a Team February 12th, 2011 workshop postponed, no new date has been set.
Rotary club of Burlington's Giggles and Grub Annual Fundraiser – April 1st, the HDSA is one of the major recipients of this fundraiser, tickets are \$150, let Lori Aker or Lisa Reid know if you would like to purchase tickets. For more information go to www.gigglesandgrub.ca

NEW INITIATIVES:

We have worked closely with the Down Syndrome Association of Ontario to respond to the questionnaire from the Ontario College of Teachers about the Additional Qualification program for Special Education.

Our organizations felt that the courses were too broad and did not focus on the exceptionalities in a way that would be adequate for a teacher in a Special Education classroom working with students with various special needs.

We have recommended that the Ontario College of Teachers review the three part courses with an emphasis on the various exceptionalities in Part 2 and Part 3 of these courses. We also recommended that there be a practical component to these courses.

OTHER INFORMATION:

The Halton Down syndrome Association have just started a new group for Graduates (21 years and over). This is a social and networking group organized by and for our self-advocates.

D. Vandebossche provided a report from Learning Disabilities Association of Halton:

Date of ASSOCIATION meeting: February 9, 2011, March 9, 2011

ASSOCIATION UPCOMING MEETINGS OR CONFERENCES:

- February 12 workshop in partnership with HDSA and MofE was postponed – rescheduled for end of March but no definite date – I will email SEAC members when I have that date
- May 11, 7 – 9 PM, we have Dr. Maggie Mamen, Clinical Psychologist from Ottawa. Dr. Mamen’s topic will be “What the Eye Doesn’t See – Understanding Nonverbal Learning Disabilities. Dr. Mamen is an expert in this field and has published several books related to NLD and children’s behaviours
- Our keyboarding classes have some spaces available this spring – we have allocated limited spaces for students who are not identified so parents who are interested should phone
- We also have some space in our reading and math programs. Both programs end this term in May but will have summer programs available.

NEW INITIATIVES:

- We are starting plans for a summer camp for 2012 that will address reading, writing and math programs, as well as a variety of activities

OTHER INFORMATION:

- Our newsletter is electronic so if you wish to be on our email list, please see me.

J. Shiels provided an update about Dress Out Loud Day. The flyer will be sent out to SEAC and also to SERT’s.

5.3 Trustee Reports

K. Lochhead noted that the Trustees approved the 2011-2012 school year calendar, they are looking at the Growing Success policy, and they are looking at psychological assessment wait times.

Agenda Item 6 – Questions from the Public

Six questions from the public came in and they will be answered at the next meeting or in the next Superintendent’s report.

A. McKenzie noted that hopefully some of these questions would be answered in the discussion period.

Any questions of a personal nature will be communicated directly to the person who asked the question. Personal questions are not listed in the Minutes.

Questions:

1) We've just heard from the ABC representative that many gifted students have multiple exceptionalities. How then is the gifted screening going to be useful to these students? It may get them into the primary program, but it may well fail to identify their other exceptionalities. As they won't be entitled to further assessments, I see that this could be detrimental to these students.

2) The new gifted primary program being implemented in September has been perceived by many as preferential/ or exception based delivery of service for a given group. Considering assessment backlog time and lack of services for other special education exceptionalities, I would like to know if SEAC participated and recommended this and now what changes for assessment testing and delivery of service and self-contained classes would you now suggest for all other special education children.

3) The primary gifted program which was rolled out in the fall had attached to it a 4-year commitment. Firstly, was the \$800,000.00 cost representative of each year's costs, each centres cost, or what? When did this get approved by SEAC?

4) When a child has been removed from class and forced to work independently with no teacher instruction, what are the steps that a parent should take in order to get their child back in a class receiving instruction from a teacher?

5) When a student's IEP states "withdrawal" and this is not happening, what steps should a parent take to ensure their child does receive withdrawal?

Agenda Item 7 – SEAC Discussion/Question Period

A few comments were made around Kindergarten suspension, the early learning program and the lack of the withdrawal placement being an option for many students.

H. Holden noted that parents are being told that the Withdrawal placement is not being offered.

D. Boag mentioned that parents should be speaking to the principal in this case because our Board does offer the Withdrawal placement.

7.1. Assessment Data Discussion

A. McKenzie made a Motion to extend the meeting until 10:00 pm.

H. Holden/P. Lack

06-11

“THAT the meeting be extended until 10:00 pm”

CARRIED

D. Boag framed the discussion on assessment wait times. He gave some background information on the Board reports and the numbers in those reports. He noted the average wait time is 15 months as there are 700 kids on the list currently waiting for an assessment. A report will be going to the Board tomorrow and Trustees have brought a motion regarding a long term plan for this issue. He is hoping for more conversation at the Board meeting.

V. De Mone commented that a letter should be sent out to parents of kids who are on the wait list explaining the action the Board is taking on this issue so they have a good idea of where they stand. D. Boag mentioned he will look into this.

Discussion continued around Psychological assessment wait times. Some points that were discussed included the amount of time it takes to get on the list, implementation of pilot programs such as the primary gifted pilot and assessments that these students receive, wait times for kids to get into IPRC, and the treatment of private assessments.

D. Boag noted the following points: Other Boards were consulted prior to the implementation of the primary gifted pilot program. There is no reason for a delay in getting a student to SRT as they meet monthly.

A private assessment is taken at face value as long as it is completed by a qualified person. The wait list for assessments is prioritized by length of time that an individual has been waiting but specific cases of exceptional high needs students may take priority. If there is an urgent need, then an assessment for that particular student would be bumped up the list.

V. De Mone noted that some parents are told that private assessments won't get the same consideration. There needs to be some effective communication sent out to schools regarding private assessments. D. Boag said he would look into this.

D. Boag noted that assessments for primary gifted are done at certain times of the year and it is a very time-sensitive process. This shouldn't create a net difference in wait times because the assessments are just being bumped from grade 4 down to primary years.

D. Boag also wanted to clarify that the staff that do the assessments also have a lot of other responsibilities. They consult with staff, attend SRT meetings, review OSR's, review assessments, they are also involved in research projects. It is a very complex role.

A. McKenzie made a Motion to extend the meeting until 10:30 pm

L. Reid/V. Ryckewaert

#07-11

“THAT the meeting be extended until 10:30 pm.”

CARRIED

Discussion took place on the OPA project and whether this work has any significant impact on the assessment wait time issue. .

D. Bower noted that SEAC should have copies of the Sharing Promising Practices document from the Ministry.

The assessment wait time piece should be a standing item on SEAC as it will require more discussion.

2 motions were brought forward:

A. McKenzie called for a motion to waive the rules of notice of motion.

S. Foster/D. Vandebossche #08-11

“THAT the rules of notice of motion be waived.”

CARRIED

A. McKenzie read the first motion.

Rationale:

Whereas HDSB SEAC policy states that only the Representative from a Member Association may speak at SEAC meetings if both Representative and Alternate are present,

and whereas SEAC recognizes the unique perspective, skill and experience that each member brings to the SEAC table,

and whereas it has been the HDSB SEAC's practice over the previous term to include Alternates in all discussions at the SEAC table,

L. Trevisan/J. Bevers #09-11

“BE IT RESOLVED that HDSB's SEAC recommends to the Board of Trustees that HDSB SEAC POLICY 1000-55 be changed to officially allow Alternates to speak at the SEAC table even when their Association Representative is present.”

CARRIED

A. McKenzie called for a motion to waive the rules of notice of motion.

V. Ryckewaert/ J. Bartlett #10-11

“THAT the rules of notice of motion be waived.”

CARRIED

A. McKenzie read the second motion.

Rationale:

Whereas Halton District School Board recognizes that the Ministry of Education requires school boards to provide programs and services to all pupils, including those with exceptional needs,

And whereas Halton District School Board also recognizes that service delivery provided by student services personnel is an integrated part of prevention and early intervention as outlined in the Education Act, regulations and policy memorandum and
Whereas at the present time, there is an unacceptable process for children to receive early appropriate assessments and interventions in a timely manner.

D. Vandebossche/ L. Reid

#11-11

BE IT RESOLVED that SEAC recommends to the Board of Trustees:

- 1. That a committee of Professional Student Services Staff, Administration, SEAC, trustees and other relevant Board staff be formed immediately to develop a long term strategy to reduce wait times for students needing access to psycho-educational assessments;**
- 2. That the committee review past relevant documents, such as the 1992/93 Status Report on Special Services within the Board, report # 1723, OPA Student Assessment Project: Sharing Promising Practices, 2006, and any other pertinent documents;**
- 3. That the committee provide a report to the Board with hard data on the reasons for referrals, the services provided by psycho-educational consultants, and a comprehensive list of interventions focused on reducing the wait times for students to six (6) months.**

CARRIED

H. Holden discussed documents that were handed out this evening on behalf of LDAH. She also discussed the suggested amendments sent out and noted it is a starting point for a long term solution. SEAC members agreed that there is a need to look into some hard data regarding the motion.

K. Lochhead will bring these 2 motions forward to the Board.

Items to be added to the agenda for next month: More discussion on wait times, public consultation evening, EA day extension, possible presentation from the Superintendent of Finance.

Agenda Item 8-Adjournment

8.1 Motion to Adjourn

P. Lack/ J. Bartlett

#12-11

“THAT the meeting adjourn.”

CARRIED

Time: 10:35

SEAC SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT
March 1, 2011

Hi SEAC Members,

Here are a few updates since our February SEAC Meeting.

1. **Board Committees** - at our February meeting, there was a call for interested SEAC members to sit on the following board level committees: Equity and Inclusion, Parent Involvement Committee and Accessibility Committee. We did receive some interest and would like to confirm our SEAC reps on these committees at our March meeting.
2. **Psych Ed Assessment Wait times Board Report** - A report on Psychoeducational Assessment Wait times was brought to the Board meeting on Feb 16th. Trustees asked for a few modifications to the report (see attached report). Trustees also put forth a notice of motion to be heard at the next Board meeting requesting a report come back to the Board outlining a) an immediate plan to address the wait time issue and b) a longer term plan to ensure wait lists are maintained at a reasonable wait time in the future. This item is on our SEAC agenda for discussion.
3. **IPRC Waiver Letter** - In the fall there was concern raised from SEAC about our IPRC Waiver letter. This is the letter that goes home prior to year end IPRCs. Parents have the right to attend their child's annual IPRC but where there are no concerns and parents agree with the recommendation about identification and placement from their school's SRT, many parents prefer not to attend the IPRC. The request from SEAC was to review the 2 options presented in the letter and to add a third option for parents who are in agreement with the SRT decision and would still like to attend the IPRC. This recommendation has now been included in the letter. A copy of the revised letter will be brought to the meeting.
4. **SERT Allocation process** - We are currently in the process of allocating staff to schools in preparation for next year. Regular teaching staff are assigned to schools based on projected enrolments. Special Education staffing area assigned to schools based on a number of factors including enrolment, # of IEPs a school has as well as the demographics of the school community. We are in the process of allocating elementary SERT staffing now and will be beginning secondary SERT staffing at the beginning of March. In both cases, the student services department works with a group of administrators to look at the allocation to ensure we have made the best decisions possible about assigning SERT support to schools.
5. **Student Services Priorities for next year** - The Students Services Department has just started the department planning process for next year. This includes a review of what we are currently doing as well as what programs, services or additional resources we feel are required to better support our students with special needs. I am hopeful that I can share the department's thinking at our April SEAC meeting.

6. **Suicide Protocol** - Attached you will find a brochure outlining information and steps school staff should take when concerned about students presenting as suicidal. This information was developed by a team of School Social Workers and has just been distributed as a resource for schools.

7. **Special Events** - Reminder about 2 important events coming 1 up:
 - Special Needs Kindergarten Evening on Mar 3, 7:00 p, at Bruce Trail
 - LINK Event on Mar 7 at 10:00 am, St Voladymyr'sDetails for these events were distributed at the February SEAC meeting.