

Minutes of the meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee held in the Boardroom, J.W. Singleton Centre, Burlington, Ontario, on April 6, 2010.

Present: Amy Collard (Member at Large) (Chair); Amy McKenzie (Halton Council of Home and School Associations) (Vice Chair); Paulyne Lack (Tourette Syndrome Assoc.); Dianna Bower (Halton Down Syndrome); Jennifer Hlusko (Trustee); Don Vrooman (Alt. Trustee); Lynn Clark (Easter Seal Society); Anita Phillips (Alt. ABC); Greg Allen (ABC); Kathryn Bateman-Olmstead (Alt. Trustee); Janet Barton (Community Living); Jacqueline Bevers (Member at Large); Donna Danielli (Trustee); Craig Newman (VIEWS)

Resource Staff: David Boag, Superintendent of Education; Pamela Cooley, Secretary; Nigel Scott (HSPA); Lynne Gurzi (HDEAA); Patricia Molnar (PSSP); Julie Armstrong (HEPA)

Regrets: Karen Poole-Lawrence (Alt. Easter Seals Society); Lisa Reid (Alt. Halton Down Syndrome)

Absent: Leslie Howchin (Alt. Community Living); Lisa Griffiths (PSSP)

Agenda Item 1- Opening

1.1 Welcome and Call to Order

A. Collard called the meeting to order at 7:02. She welcomed Craig Newman from VIEWS to the table.

1.2 Approval of Agenda

D. Bower/L. Clark

#12-10

“THAT the Agenda be approved”

CARRIED

Agenda Item 2 - Presentations

2.1 Special Education Professional Development- Gillian Hall

G. Hall explained different types of PD in the Student Services department. All facets of the organization are driven by guiding principles and expectations. She also explained who provides professional development specific to special education needs, and some different types of target audiences too. A sample list of possible PD topics was provided, and the possible delivery models as well.

G. Hall explained that there are some mandatory PD sessions, there are some that are optional, and there are situations where a teacher might be suggested to attend by the principal.

2.2 Learning Disabilities- Ian Brandon and Gillian Hall

I. Brandon explained how the LD network works in Halton. He identified some characteristics that a student may have in an LD self contained class. He also explained some of the reasons for entry into an LD class. The LD placement is usually 1-2 years, but it does depend on the individual student profile. Some key elements that are found in the LD network are differentiated instruction, evidence based research and universal design.

There are four focus areas in an LD class: literacy, numeracy, assistive technology and learning skills. I. Brandon gave an explanation of each pillar.

A few questions were asked and I. Brandon gave the following information:

The strategies described for LD classes are also built into the regular classroom with LD Kids. Similar strategies are used at both the elementary and secondary levels.

There was discussion regarding demission from French for LD students. It is an option for students to be demitted from French, but the ideal situation would be that the student would remain in French if possible.

J. Hlusko noted that the system needs to improve the message that the principals are giving to families regarding demission from French, as it is not properly discussed. There is a need to be more open minded about French demission as it could be the best solution, and taking French for some LD kids can be tremendous struggle.

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

A motion was brought forward and A. Collard made a motion to waive the rules of Notice of Motion.

J. Barton/ P. Lack

#13-10

“THAT the rules of Notice of Motion be waived.”

CARRIED

A. Collard read the motion brought forward:

J. Bevers/D. Bower

#14-10

“ THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee of the Halton District School Board direct the Chair of SEAC to send the attached letter of behalf of SEAC to the Ontario Minister of Education with a request to review and update the categories of exceptionalities to appropriately reflect the special education needs of students currently identified “Behaviour” in a manner which respects the dignity of the individual student.”

MOTION DEFERRED

RATIONALE:

1. The current categories of exceptionalities developed by the Ministry of Education for the purpose of formal identification include “Behaviour” which is described as “behaviour problems...marked degree.”
2. Regulations specify that students 16 years of age and older may be involved in meetings and processes which include the above language.
3. The term “behaviour” has a negative connotation that stigmatizes the student with a mental health concern.

J. Barton suggested that the term ‘Mental Health’ could also have large implications.

P. Lack suggested that SEAC should get input on this from other Boards and go in as a whole.

D. Bower explained what the Behaviour category is now. She explained that they have had input and expertise that led to the motion.

D. Danielli noted that a motion as lengthy as this should have been distributed prior to the meeting.

A few members noted that they had some concerns.

D. Boag mentioned that this motion doesn’t have a lot of urgency. SEAC should wait a month before acting on it so it can be reviewed a bit more.

P. Lack mentioned that the motion needs to reference neurological as well as mental health.

A. Collard made a motion that SEAC defer this motion to the May meeting so the letter can be reviewed and amended where needed.

D. Bower/ P. Lack

#15-10

“THAT Motion #14-10 be deferred until the May SEAC meeting.”

CARRIED

A. Collard read two notices of motion put forward by D. Bower and seconded by J. Barton. They will be voted on in the next meeting and will be included in the minutes.

Agenda Item 4 - Action

4.1 Approval of the Minutes

D. Bower/A. McKenzie

#16-10

“THAT the minutes of the March 2, 2010 meeting be approved”

CARRIED

4.2 Order Paper

4.2.1 Special Education Plan and Budget Report

The recommendations that were put together regarding the plan and the budget were sent to all SEAC members and there was a large amount of discussion.

A. Collard mentioned that S. Parfeniuk will be invited to the April 20th working group meeting to discuss the budget.

J. Hlusko asked that her objections be recorded in the minutes. She said that she has objected before to these extra meetings when the material covered is the single most important work that SEAC can do. She said that these discussions should occur at public meetings where the agenda publicizes the discussion. She said that no trustees are available Apr 20th yet they need to be present when the Superintendent of Finance discusses budget implications of SEAC's recommendations.

After discussion on budgetary timelines, along with the timing of Board and Trustee meetings, the following plan was put forth:

- The meeting on April 20th will be cancelled.
- The document will be sent to S. Parfeniuk so he can review it.
- B. Jones is to be contacted immediately regarding the timing for the presentation to the trustees.
- S. Parfeniuk will come to the May SEAC meeting. Feedback from staff on the recommendations will also be available at the May meeting.
- The recommendations will be presented to the Board on June 2nd.

All the recommendations that were discussed will be updated and sent out to SEAC members. The topics that were discussed include the following:

- Putting the IEP pamphlet back into place, also IEP timelines.
- Teacher training regarding exceptionalities.
- Communication between SEAC associations and those associations that are not at the SEAC table.
- Adding a communications area to the website where the agendas and minutes are posted.
- Adding a special education update in school newsletters.
- Learning centres at the elementary and secondary level. Importantly, what the model of the learning centre would look like at the secondary level, what would be required to put this in place, and the budget implications.

D. Danielli mentioned she would like to see a written response to the document from staff.

A. Collard made a Motion to extend the meeting.

D. Bower/L. Clark

#17-10

“THAT the meeting be extended.”

CARRIED

There was further discussion on the following topics included in the SEAC priority list:

- Programs and Services
- Closure of LD classes
- Staff and training
- The primary gifted pilot
- The hiring of new SERT's

D. Boag gave an update on the Primary gifted pilot, which was originally to be included in the Superintendent's report section. Plans are in place to start a grade 1-2 level at Charles R Beaudoin next year. Trustees recommend using the 98 percentile as the cut off to access the self-contained placement. There is a need to test out screening tools and how the class goes. There is also a need to get parent feedback. The model is based on the Ottawa-Carleton Board's model which involves teacher nomination. If numbers are big there might be a need to go with 2 classes.

A. Collard expressed concern that the gifted children in grades 1 to 4, who are not included in the new gifted class, should have opportunities for clustered activities at least once per term in order to meet their needs for breadth and depth of programming.

D. Boag suggested that the recommendation for re-naming the Life Skills program be open to other options and that there be some further work done to determine an appropriate name for the program.

D. Bower agreed this was a good idea.

S. Roszell gave an update on how the EA allocation process will take place.

D. Boag will get data on learning centre wait times out to SEAC.

D. Vrooman put forward a recommendation regarding a “SMART” Inclusion Pilot. This will be forwarded out to SEAC.

4.2.2 Protocol Committee Report

A. McKenzie will send out a report.

4.2.3 Communication Committee Report

A package of flyers from each association will be put together to go out to each school. Members are to bring flyers to the next meeting. The Communications Committee will be meeting again on April 8th.

4.2.4 Accessibility Committee Report

None

4.2.5 Update on All-Day program for 4 and 5 year olds

S. Roszell gave an update on the all day Kindergarten programming:

- Costs of the extended day program are going out in a mass mailing later this week. Parents are asked for a deposit and sign up by April 23rd. Then the number of sites where it will be held can be determined. Decisions regarding locations will be made by May 14th.
- Cost: \$25.00 per day for before and after day care. It is a weekly rate. Parents can select 5 days mornings only, (\$53.00 /week), 5 days afternoons only (\$72.00) or 5 days both mornings and afternoons (\$125.00 /week)
- The program will run from 7:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. The Halton District Catholic School Board will run the same times.
- Day care providers for students in grades 1-6 who are in these all day kindergarten schools with extended care (e.g. YMCA) will also be permitted to start at 7:00 a.m. beginning in September. (Currently they start at 7:30 a.m.)
- An ad for ECE teachers will go out next week. The initial hiring will be for the 39 core day classes. Additional staff will be hired as we know how many extended day classes are in operation. Additional staff will also need to be hired for the ECE supply list.
- Parent information sessions are being held May 11th (Milton), May 12 (Burlington) and May 13 (Oakville) to provide information about the full day every day program available at the 11 schools. The flyer with additional information can be found on the Board website.
- YEAR 2 planning is in the early stages. We have been allocated 16 additional classes for year 2. We are already over by 3 classes for this year, reducing the new year 2 classes to 13.

Agenda Item 5 – Communication to SEAC and Current Successes

5.1 Superintendent's Report

D. Boag provided the specifics regarding the Gifted Pilot update earlier in the evening.

5.2 School Board Communications to Parents re: Special Needs Students

None

5.3 Chairs Report & Correspondence

A. Collard thanked everyone for staying late.

5.4 Association Reports

D. Bower provided an association report:

The Halton Down Syndrome Association's Learning and Resource Centre ("LRC") is starting up with an 8 week pilot with approximately 25 children with Down syndrome. The LRC program is a partnership between parents, educators and therapists to deliver an effective learning program based on best practice. The program is with an interdisciplinary team that includes the child's parents, occupational therapist, speech-language pathologist, music therapist, early childhood educator, physiotherapist and behavioural therapist. There will be an initial screening and goal selection process based on the individual needs of the participant. An Individual Program Plan (IPP) will be developed for each participant.

OTHER INFORMATION:

Our Provincial Association has written to the Ministry of Education with regards to PPM 8 and the use of out-dated offensive language still within the current document. One of our member families is featured in an article in Exceptional Parent Magazine (their daughter is on the front page) for March. The article can be viewed at www.exceptionalfamily.ca/magazine.php?issue=Spring+2010

L. Clark provided an association report:

After approximately two years of work the March of Dimes committee for the L.I.F.E. Program has been awarded three years (the maximum) of funding by Trillium to start this first ever program for young adults who have a physical disability, who are finished school, for some this is High School and for others this also includes College or University who are not employed or volunteering on a regular basis.

The L.I.F.E. (Learn, Income, Future, Employment) program is a five day per week program which will include job readiness training, goal setting, physical activities such as swimming, yoga, public transit training and such skills as meal planning, grocery shopping, cooking classes and budgeting for all activities.

The Pilot Project will be started on April 26th in Mississauga with 10 young adults. The minimum days per week per participant will be three but most have already decided to go the full five days so that there can be measured outcomes.

Once the first year is completed, the March of Dimes and our committee will then be rolling this program out across the Province and also will be going for permanent Government funding as we believe there are upwards of 50,000 young people in this Province who are by in large sitting at home with their parents (who are aging) and families need care giver relief and also need their young people doing and learning something constructive every day

A. McKenzie provided an association report:

The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations (OFHSA) is having their annual conference and AGM from April 16th –18th in London, Ontario hosted by the Thames Valley Home and School Association. Together as parents we represent thousands and thousands of volunteer hours spent partnering with Schools and School Boards to deliver everything from reading programs to hot lunches and hundreds of thousands of fundraising dollars. We share best practices and vote on resolutions which are later used to lobby government on several levels.

And kudos to Thames Valley for including Special Education Superintendent Karen Edgar as a workshop speaker

5.5 Trustee Reports

D. Danielli gave an update on what the trustees are working on right now:

- Trustee distribution: There will be a change next year.
- Reports about Early Learning program.
- Busy time of year with budget
- Director search
- 6 trustees attended the Specialist High Skills Major conference. The Programs are being expanded in Halton.
- The Council for Exceptional Children conference will be held soon. Notes will be forwarded to SEAC.
- Budgetary items: Grants for student needs have been released. There will be capital dollars for 2011. There is also freeze on salaries of employees-details still being worked on.

Agenda Item 6 – Questions from the Public

None

Agenda Item 7 – SEAC Discussion/Question Period

7.1 SEAC e-Learning Website

Deferred to May if need be.

7.2 SEAC Awards Sub-Committee

A. Collard and A. McKenzie will take on the SEAC awards process this year. There is a need from SEAC members to commit to helping out with the distribution of the awards.

D. Bower noted that there should be SEAC representation on the new schools committee.

A. Collard sent notice that there should be a SEAC rep on the calendar committee.

Agenda Item 8

8.1 Review of Additions to Order Paper

None

8.3 Motion to Adjourn

D. Bower/P. Lack

#18-10

“THAT the meeting adjourn.”

CARRIED

Time: 11: 18