

# Halton District School Board

Minutes of the meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee held in the Boardroom, J.W. Singleton Centre, Burlington, Ontario, on January 13, 2009.

Present: Donna Danielli (Trustee); Jennifer Hlusko (Trustee); Don Vrooman, (Alt. Trustee); Amy Collard (Member at Large) (Chair); Lynn Clark (Easter Seal Society) (Vice Chair); Karen Poole-Lawrence (Alt. Easter Seals Society); Amy McKenzie (Halton Council of Home and School); Greg Allen (ABC); Christopher McGee (Halton Down Syndrome); Ellen Whitehouse (Alt. Halton Down Syndrome); Jacqueline Bevers (Member at Large); Paulyne Lack (Tourette's Syndrome Assoc.); Bruce Jones (Alt. Trustee); Erin Walker (Autism Ont.)

Resource Staff: Kathy Schaffer, Superintendent of Education; Pamela Cooley, Secretary; Lynne Gurzi (HDEAA); Michelle Joly (PSSP)

Regrets: Bill Elgie (Alt. ABC); Leslie Howchin (Community Living); Janet Barton (Alt. Community Living); Julie Armstrong (HEPA); Daryl Potter (Autism Ont.);

Absent: Maggie Diltz (VOICE); Lisa Griffiths (PSSP); Mary Jane Farrish (HSPA)

## Agenda Item 1- Opening

### 1.1 Welcome and Call to Order

The chair Amy Collard called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

### 1.2 Approval of Agenda

J. Hlusko/P. Lack

#01-09

**“THAT the Agenda be approved with the amendment that the presentation on Differentiated Instruction will be postponed until the April SEAC meeting.”**

**CARRIED**

## Agenda Item 2 - Presentations

### 2.1 Differentiated Instruction – Bridget Scime

A. Collard announced the presentation is postponed until April.

### 2.2 Special Education Budget Update – Steven Parfeniuk

S. Parfeniuk stated that Admin Council has started the budget process for 09-10, and he would like to talk to SEAC so they can have a formal input on the process.

S. Parfeniuk did an overview of the grants that are given by the province for Special Education.

S. Parfeniuk explained how the SEA grant has had an incredible increase. Equipment for high needs students has been a large expenditure. Last year the number was well over a million.

P. Lack asked about professional development days, and how that money is spent.

S. Parfeniuk responded that it can be release time for training, which includes that the teachers on release time are back filled in the classroom.

K. Schaffer stated that EA programs are supported as well some through government-sponsored programs like the Geneva Centre training, but teachers are the greatest expense. All workshops and conferences are included in the Professional Development line.

E. Whitehouse asked how release time is allocated for teachers.

K. Schaffer said that teachers could access funds from different places, for example, from unions (for fees and registrations) or principals (supply dollars). Student Services picks certain initiatives in which they provide the release time. Principals do try to limit the amount of time that individual teachers are away from their classes.

E. Walker asked S. Parfeniuk about the Special Education Reserve fund and Admin Grants, and how they come up with these figures.

S. Parfeniuk explained that a draft operational budget for the board is put together. When the grants come out they are added up to see how they match up. He said the Ministry wants to see that Special Education expenditure is greater than or equal to the grants. He said technically they are overspent in Special Education, but it can be supported by the organization.

E. Walker wanted to know what percentage of the extra funds was allocated to Special Education, and what the process is for allocation.

S. Parfeniuk responded that there is no real set formula. They try to figure out what is needed to support the strategic plan for the board. All Superintendents are asked to bring plans to the table to see what is going to cost over and above their budgets, and they try to figure out what the priorities are. He said that money went to support teachers in schools. Some went to Special Education programs, Safety and Wellbeing, Technology and Innovation and Transportation, among others. He indicated that there is a table of incentives and investments that anyone can look at in the budget book.

J. Bevers inquired how the money is spent for staff learning.

K. Schaffer said it would be better for her to bring a comprehensive list to show her. She said a lot is spent on SERT and IEP training. There is also ongoing professional development for different kinds of teachers. Two significant initiatives include differentiated instruction for teachers and IEP development training for SERTs.

J. Hlusko asked why the \$800 SEA claim amount hasn't increased if there are such a large number of claims, and why is there such a difference between years.

S. Parfeniuk responded that \$800 is the province's number which has not changed since equipment funding was established.

K. Schaffer explained that we used to have a small number of claims and that parents used to have difficulty getting assistive technology for their children. Now a speedier way to get prescriptions written has been implemented. Once the province puts restrictions on this or funds run out, another method will have to be developed.

J. Hlusko mentioned that she has heard from some parents that are angry because it takes too long for students to get their assistive technology. Or, teachers don't know how to utilize the software.

K. Schaffer responded that there have been numerous delays including the board's computer infusion, vendor problems, and provincial backorders. It has taken longer than anticipated. She explained that the average wait for SEA equipment in Ontario is close to a year, while Halton's average is 7 months, which is still too long. Halton is looking at getting more staff for help with the assistive technology area, and the infusion is almost all sorted out.

L. Clark asked if there is a way SEAC can get these numbers before the meeting so there is a chance to go over them beforehand to understand them better.

S. Parfeniuk said he is prepared to come back and explain more, and that anyone can email him anytime with questions about the numbers.

E. Whitehouse asked what S. Parfeniuk meant when he said that IT services are declining.

S. Parfeniuk responded that less IT costs are being charged to special education funds. There is an IT technician this year specifically for Assistive Technology.

K. Schaffer asked S. Parfeniuk to comment on the success of boards staying within their envelope.

S. Parfeniuk said that Halton is anomalous. Many boards are 20-30% over their envelopes. There are a lot of challenges across the province. He mentioned that a reserve fund has to be used for what it was deemed.

### **Agenda Item 3**

#### **3.0 Call for Notices of Motion/Reports to the Board**

E. Whitehouse wanted a motion to be made regarding the Phoneme Touch and Say workshop being held April 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> in the boardroom with the support of SEAC.

C. McGee called for a motion to waive the rules to pass a motion without notice.

P. Lack/ E. Walker

#02-09

**“ That SEAC support the generosity of the board to have the workshop in the JWS Boardroom on April 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4th.”**

**Motion Passed**

**Agenda Item 4 - Action**

4.1 Approval of the Minutes

P. Lack/A. McKenzie

#03-09

**“THAT the Minutes of the December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008 meeting be approved.”**

**CARRIED**

4.2 Matters Arising

None

4.3 Order Paper

K. Schaffer said she is still waiting for the OPA local results.

SEAC new Members: K. Schaffer is still working on the request to bring in members from CADDAC. She mentioned that there are a lot of questions around it because it is a new organization. She has not heard from any other associations. LDAO has information to share with SEAC.

Phoneme Touch and Say investigation: K. Schaffer met with Speech and Language Pathologists. She received a document entitled, “ A Sound Approach”, and that copies are available to those who want one. She did not get a chance to talk to early literacy people in December. She is still interested in bringing more information in, and continuing to move forward to learn more.

Communication with Bridges about Assistive Technology: A. Collard is awaiting a response to her email request for a presentation.

Board Improvement Plan: K. Schaffer said she has copies of the Board Improvement Plan for those who want one. The plan is specific to literacy and numeracy initiatives for Kindergarten through to grade 6. It doesn't refer to special education.

Gifted Distribution amongst schools in secondary clustering: K. Schaffer put this information on the Superintendent's report.

4.4 New Business – Review of Special Education Plan Standard 9

K. Schaffer stated that collaborative problem solving training is in the invitational stage. On the spot training is available, but it is very child specific.

P. Lack said collaborative problem solving needs to be implemented in the whole school when there are kids with Tourette's syndrome.

K. Schaffer responded that schools applied last year to be included in the Collaborative Problem Solving initiative and that the work is continuing this year. Halton has a strong respect for Stuart Avalon's work. Funding connected to Bill 212 (Safe Schools) has been used to keep increasing consultations with Stuart. There is a real commitment in the board.

K. Schaffer mentioned that there have been behaviour classes for primary, junior and intermediate kids for quite a while in Halton. One of the primary/junior classes was closed last year, as the need was not there. They are very small classes that are expensive to maintain. The intermediate model had not been highly successful. Self-contained classes are more successful for younger students and more students are being successfully supported within their home school

E. Whitehouse asked about the resource support models on page 53, and if all of these resource options are available in all schools.

K. Schaffer responded that the categories are artificial to some extent. They were written at time when the skills necessary to teach the proper skills couldn't be taught to the classroom teacher. Resource Support - Consultative Support is the most common. The special education teacher supports the classroom teachers. Resource Support - Resource Assistance is when the SERT goes into the classroom and spends time with the student. Resource Support - Withdrawal Assistance is only to be done when there are no other options. Most SERTs have aspects of all types of support as part of their role. It can look different in different schools. K. Schaffer said she would be delighted to have more SERT support in the schools.

J. Hlusko noted that SEAC and trustees are very supportive of increasing SERT support next year.

K. Schaffer said that changing the delivery model for LD self-contained classes may change the number of classes but that her staff is predicting greater need for life skill classes and SERTs. For many students with learning disabilities, the goal is to have the students in a regular classroom, but the SERT support needs to be there for them.

J. Bevers said she has seen this at a particular high school. The students feel comfortable enough to go to the resource room and use the assistance of the SERTs. She said this is key.

E. Walker asked for information on best practices for service delivery models across the province.

K. Schaffer said that there aren't a lot of boards that would use a self-contained model for large numbers of students with learning disabilities. Generally, the richest environment for them would be the regular classroom. The direction in Ontario has been to reduce the number of self-contained classes. In any exceptionality group, there will likely be some students who cannot be supported in a regular classroom. Grade 7 and 8 students have a strong need to be part of regular classrooms and if accommodations permit them to be comfortable in a regular classroom, it creates a smoother transition to high school. Assistive

Technology can help a vast number of students and allow them to be very independent in the regular classroom.

E. Whitehouse asked if the in-centre support model on page 57 could be clarified. She wanted to know how many students are there in the centre and what the ratio of students to teachers.

K. Schaffer said it is usually 6 children together for a 6-week period. This model is very well received. They have a very individualized focus. There is a lot of reflective work from the child. Over the past year the Learning Centres have held sessions with a strong focus on assistive technology. K. Schaffer will send E. Whitehouse the information. She mentioned that there are 3 centres: Ryerson, Pineview, and Oakwood.

P. Lack asked if the learning centre teachers are being used to teach their skills to regular teachers. She also noted that the learning centre model seems to be more for a younger group, and wondered what is in place for older children.

K. Schaffer responded that the learning centres are more effective with younger grades. Students in grade 7 and 8 don't care for leaving their school for 6 weeks. So the case study consult model is better for them. This is when the teacher goes to where the child is. In regards to having the learning centre teachers teaching their skills to other teachers, a conference is held every year for Halton staff. SEAC is always invited and about 300 teachers attend. There is a significant initiative for Grade 7-10 teachers on differentiated instruction. It is actually a part of student success funding. Teacher practice is changing but it is slow work.

J. Hlusko asked if something could be sent out to SEAC about Differentiated Instruction.

K. Schaffer said something could be put together and sent out.

E. Whitehouse asked about the Learning disability focus section on page 57, why does it say elementary instead of Grade 4-8?

K. Schaffer said there are no grade 3's or younger in a Learning Disability class. It is what is being done this year and what she recommends. Children are not usually diagnosed until the end of grade 3.

E. Whitehouse recommended that for a casual reader, the plan should indicate that it has a junior focus.

A. Collard mentioned that is generally focused on junior but door is not closed.

## **Agenda Item 5 – Communication to SEAC and Current Successes**

### **5.1 Superintendent's Report**

K. Schaffer noted that if anyone is going to do a presentation for SEAC, a standing computer has been installed in the boardroom. The presentation can be brought in on a memory stick or it can be emailed to Pamela prior to the meeting and she can load it onto the computer.

A. McKenzie wondered if it was possible to determine the number of gifted students who are choosing to remain in their home high school.

K. Schaffer clarified that some high schools have never offered the gifted cluster. She can get information on how many have chosen regular class per school.

#### 5.2 School Board Communications to Parents re: Special Needs Students

K. Schaffer noted that a letter was sent out to parents regarding the grade 8 to grade 9 transition for gifted students.

#### 5.3 Chairs Report & Correspondence

A. Collard mentioned that next month is election for Chair and Vice Chair for SEAC. She is not sure of the order of the agenda yet. CCAC is doing a presentation in that meeting so they may do their presentation first and then the elections would be held after that. Standard 10 will also be discussed in the next meeting. She mentioned some upcoming presentations: Darryl Potter will present for Autism Ontario in March, Bridget Scime's Differentiated Instruction presentation will be held in April, and there will be a Learning Disability Presentation in May.

#### 5.4 Association Reports

L. Clark mentioned that Easter Seals has hired someone to look after SEAC representatives.

#### 5.5 Trustee Reports

D. Danielli stated that it is a very busy time. The trustees had an election and elected B. Jones as the new chair of the Board. D. Danielli was elected as Vice-Chair. She mentioned the report on South East Oakville and that there are many accommodation concerns. Gardiner School is now open. Last week the board was not able to finish its meeting and that it will continue next week. She said there is a lot going on with teacher collective agreements.

#### **Agenda Item 6 – Questions from the Public**

1) Why are there no service dogs in schools for epileptic children?

K. Schaffer said they are definitely welcome in our schools. She is aware of a new service dog being introduced in one of the north schools. If a child needs a service dog, it would be supported.

2) Are parents informed when their child is being presented as a case study? And, are parents invited to participate and present their child's learning needs?

K. Schaffer said she would look into the answer for this question and put it in the next report.

M. Joly stated that parents are to be well informed of the process as there is a large amount of work involved.

**Agenda Item 7 – SEAC Discussion/Question Period**

L. Clark stated that she would not be standing for re-election as vice chair.

E. Whitehouse asked what kind of time is involved and what the commitment is like.

D. Danielli explained that some of the duties are: helping set the agenda, keeping the speakers list, and sitting in for the chair should they not be available.

C. McGee asked if there was any luck with hiring a new SLP.

K. Schaffer said there were interviews before the holidays. There isn't anyone definitely hired right now, but the position has been offered. They hope to have good news next month.

C. McGee asked what is planned for Special Education on the next Professional Development day.

K. Schaffer explained that the Ministry was going to release a document called "Learning for All", a revised version of *Education for All*, but that delays have occurred. Training is supposed to be done for the system for the Professional Development day in April based on this document but it is not finished yet. The most recent promise is that they are going to send information to be rolled out for the day in April. She said she should know more next month. If this is not ready, then the P.D. day will focus on our continuing initiatives of Differentiated Instruction, Learning profiles, etc.

G. Allen asked why are there significantly fewer gifted girls than boys in Halton, and if there is someone in the board who specializes in identification testing who could talk about differences in the way the boys and girls are identified as gifted.

J. Hlusko said she would look into this and give ideas. She mentioned that profound giftedness tends to be a male trait.

E. Whitehouse said that she will be sending a flyer to everyone next week regarding the Phoneme Touch and Say workshop. She is wondering who is going to attend and how the registration will proceed. She said that she has had inquires from Toronto and the Catholic Board, etc.

K. Schaffer said that a small group of Halton staff would attend the workshop and provide their recommendations.

E. Whitehouse said that she hopes that SEAC members will attend. She mentioned that the Friday is targeted to educators, and the Saturday will be targeted towards parents.

A. Collard said that they would want as many SLPs there as possible.

E. Whitehouse asked, with SEAC's agreement, if it could be left it to K. Schaffer to ensure that key people are there.

D. Danielli inquired about the release time. What the cost would be and what envelope it is coming from.

K. Schaffer said that there are other places where teachers can look for release time. She said that they will see what they can do. EAs have received support from the government, which could help release them.

D. Danielli asked what the minimum number for attendance is for the workshop.

E. Whitehouse said 25.

### **Agenda Item 8**

#### **8.1 Review of Additions to Order Paper**

Items left on the order paper:

OPA

SEAC New Members

Phoneme Touch on Say

Communication with Bridges

Board improvement plan and gifted distribution has been taken off the order paper.

Items that have been added to the order paper:

Professional Development Allocation

Differentiated Instruction

Professional Development Day for Special Education In April

L. Clark mentioned that she has an article on Government RDSP's that she will email to SEAC.

#### **8.3 Motion to Adjourn**

P. Lack/J. Bevers

**#03-09**

**“THAT the meeting adjourn.”**

**CARRIED**

Time: 9: 44 p.m.

Recorded by: Pamela Cooley