

**Minutes of the meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee held in the Boardroom, J.W. Singleton Centre, Burlington, Ontario, on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010.**

Present: Amy Collard (Member at Large) (Chair); Amy McKenzie (Halton Council of Home and School Associations) (Vice Chair); Paulyne Lack (Tourette Syndrome Association); Dianna Bower (Halton Down Syndrome); Don Vrooman (Alt. Trustee); Lynn Clark (Easter Seal Society); Craig Newman (VIEWS); Karen Poole-Lawrence (Alt. Easter Seals Society); Veerle Ryckewaert (Autism Ontario); Vicki DeMone (Alt. Tourette Syndrome Association); Janet Barton (Community Living); Donna Danielli (Trustee)

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

Regrets: Nigel Scott (HSPA); Jennifer Hlusko (Trustee); Anita Phillips (Alt. ABC); Greg Allen (ABC); Patrice Shennette (Alt. Autism Ontario); Kathryn Bateman-Olmstead (Alt. Trustee)

Absent: Leslie Howchin (Alt. Community Living); Lisa Griffiths (PSSP); Lisa Reid (Alt. Halton Down Syndrome)

**Agenda Item 1- Opening**

*1.1 Welcome and Call to Order*

A. Collard called the meeting to order at 7:05.

*1.2 Approval of Agenda*

J. Barton/P. Lack

**#25-10**

**“THAT the Agenda be approved”**

**CARRIED**

**Agenda Item 2 - Presentations**

*2.1 Farewell Presentation-Director Wayne Joudrie*

A. Collard presented W. Joudrie with a SEAC Award and gave a farewell presentation. W. Joudrie thanked SEAC for their hard work.

*2.2 Learning Centre- Heather White*

H. White gave an overview of the objectives of the Learning Centre, focusing on the changes that have occurred in the past few years. The Learning Centre is an opportunity for in depth evaluation for students. It is a 6 week experience that is very goal oriented. Emphasis is placed

on 4 areas: literacy, numeracy, learning skills and assistive technology, which is similar to the self contained LD classes. Goals are reviewed every day.

H. White explained the research project that she and other staff have been working on. In this research, students were trained to use Kurzweil for 6 weeks to see what impact it had on their learning skills. It was found that the students reading skills improved significantly when using Kurzweil.

When a student leaves the Learning Centre, the teacher can be called back in for support if need be.

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

None

### **Agenda Item 4 - Action**

#### **4.1 Approval of the Minutes**

D. Bower/P. Lack

**#26-10**

**“THAT the minutes of the May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010 meeting be approved.”**

**CARRIED**

#### **4.2 Order Paper**

##### **4.2.1 Special Education Plan Amendments**

D. Boag went over the list of amendments for the Special Education plan. SEAC members made suggestions and comments on these amendments, and also added some of their own suggestions. The list of amendments will be updated and sent back out to SEAC members prior to the June 15<sup>th</sup> meeting.

There were in depth discussions on a few topics, including:

- Criteria for life skills and developmental disability identification
- Transition plans
- Budget approval timelines and Special Education Plan approval timelines
- Lunch room supervisors and adequate training for supervision of spec ed students

It was noted by several members that the plan should not be passed until the budget has been passed by the board. Discussion followed.

D. Danielli explained the budget process.

A. Collard made a motion to extend the meeting.

D. Bower/ A. McKenzie

#27-10

**“THAT the meeting be extended.”**

**CARRIED**

Discussions also took place on dates for meetings and training for the new SEAC that will be appointed in the coming school year. It was noted that the new SEAC is likely to be appointed in January and the training would also take place in January. Due to this, is it not likely that there will be a regular January SEAC meeting, and the new SEAC will have its first meeting in February. There was some discussion on the number of members at large as SEAC reps.

4.2.2 Protocol Committee Report

A. McKenzie mentioned that SEAC binders need to be updated for September. D. Boag noted that they will be updated in the summer.

D. Danielli has agreed to help train the new SEAC.

4.2.3 Communication Committee Report

A. McKenzie mentioned that the IEP information night will take place in the fall. It was agreed that September 23<sup>rd</sup> would be a good date and the location will likely be in the MDHS auditorium. It would be ideal if at least 3 SEAC reps could be present.

4.2.4 Accessibility Committee Report

No report this month.

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:

- ECE teachers are being hired this week, interviews are taking place
- Still waiting to hear about regulations which should be coming this week
- Training for teachers will take place at the end of June
- Year 2 sites have not been confirmed yet
- There will be meetings with the region regarding service to JK/SK

4.2.6 SEAC Awards Committee Update

There will be just over 60 awards this year for staff and students. The committee is organizing presentations for the awards.

A. McKenzie mentioned June 17<sup>th</sup> is Oakville Trafalgar's recognition ceremony. At the same time they're going to let SEAC present the awards to the lunch buddy team. As it is the first year for allowing Down syndrome students there, they also made a film about it.

D. Bower will present because of her connection to HDSA. It would be great if SEAC members could attend to show them support and encourage this type of program across the Board.

4.2.7 Early Identification for Learning Disabilities

This information is in the Superintendent's report.

4.2.8 Track & Field Event

This information is in the Superintendent's report.

4.3 HDSA Motion deferred from May 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting

D. Bower noted that the motion is being withdrawn.

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

5.1 Superintendent's Report

No discussion

5.2 School Board Communications to Parents re: Special Needs Students

None

5.3 Chairs Report & Correspondence

A. Collard thanked everyone for coming out.

5.4 Association Reports

D. Bower had an association report from Halton Down Syndrome Association:

**NEW INITIATIVES:**

We had our Annual General Meeting on May 28th. We've completed a survey of our membership. These results show that although the majority had been able to receive some speech therapy and occupational therapy through School Health Support Services, the quality of service they received was detrimentally affected by availability. Also identified as areas for improvement were a need for a focus on quality and outcomes rather than filling time; setting appropriate goals and increasing consistency.

Also of interest was that there was identified a lack of programs to provide opportunity moving out of the school system.

**OTHER INFORMATION:**

The Down Syndrome Association of Ontario will be holding its annual conference the weekend of October 15-17, 2010. The keynote speaker will be Carol Johnson, a behavioural therapist. There will be sessions on occupational therapy, Brain Gym and sex education.

I will be providing a workshop for our current and future SEAC representatives across the province. Provincially, we have prepared a resource guide for our SEAC representatives which will be presented as part of the workshop.

V. Ryckewaert had an association report from Autism Ontario:

Autism Ontario – Halton Chapter held their Annual General Meeting on May 18th. A strategic plan was brought forward in which the association would like to create more awareness for autism and for the activities of our chapter. We are thankful for the opportunity that the school board offers to distribute flyers to students and their families.

We also enjoyed a presentation by Carol Ann MacDonald, who is a teacher at the Peel Board. She is a person with an autism spectrum disorder and she teaches a self contained class with reverse rotary integration for students with an ASD. She emphasized the importance of teaching children with an ASD the Ontario Curriculum, as well as the need for a safe haven in the school for students with an ASD.

L. Clark noted that Easter Seals will have their annual general meeting on June 15<sup>th</sup>. They will be hiring someone to look after SEAC reps across the province.

## 5.5 Trustee Reports

D. Danielli mentioned the following items that the trustees are looking at:

- Budget
- Director Search
- By-laws
- Operational Plan
- Special Education Plan

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

None

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

### 7.1 SEAC Goals for 2010-2011

This discussion is being deferred until the meeting on June 15<sup>th</sup>. A. Collard asked the members to think about goals in 3 areas: SEAC meeting norms, availability of information about SEAC, and PD for SEAC members. A. Collard will send a reminder out to members about this.

V. Ryckewaert asked what is happening with special needs students, and especially those students who have a hard time with transitions or who have had a long road to finally achieving success in school, when they are required to attend a new school in September due to a new

school opening or a change in catchment area. She asked if these students have the option of choosing to stay at their current school (optional attendance), or, if they have to change schools, is there an appropriate transition plan in place. The student, the parent and the receiving teachers and staff would need to be well prepared to start the new school year in the new school with success.

D. Boag said that these families can always request optional attendance. Consideration would be given for special needs students. For students changing schools, there would be lots of work taking place on the transition plan involving students, parents and both sending and receiving schools.

**Agenda Item 8**

8.1 Review of Changes to Order Paper

The following items will be taken off the order paper:

- SEAC awards
- Track and Field
- LD piece

8.3 Motion to Adjourn

D. Bower/P. Lack

**#28-10**

**“THAT the meeting adjourn.”**

**CARRIED**

Time: 10:45

# June SEAC Superintendent's Report

## June 1, 2010

First, let me apologize for all the paper this month and the lateness of this report. It seems as the school year winds down, there seems to be more happening now than at any other time of the year. I wanted to share this information with you and try to minimize my verbal report at our meeting because of the full agenda. I would invite you to bring your questions to the meeting about any material contained in this report.

### **SEAC Calendar**

Dates have been tentatively booked for next year. Pamela will post these to the Board Website. We have scheduled our October meeting at Gardiner Public School in Georgetown and the Principal (Gurdeep Lall) has offered to take SEAC on a school tour prior to the meeting.

### **Gifted Screening Process Update**

We have currently assessed most of the 108 students recommended for gifted screening with 46 students so far meeting the criteria for gifted identification. Those not meeting the criteria for formal identification were all strong candidates and generally assessed in the above average range. We are very happy with the screening process so far and schools and our psychology staff have done an excellent job with the process. Currently, families of students meeting the gifted criteria are doing school visits to determine what the self contained placement might look like for their child. Decisions on self-contained vs resource support are yet to come.

### **LD Class Closure Analysis**

Attached you will find a brief analysis of the 47 students who moved from a self-contained LD class last year into a regular class setting this year. The spreadsheet shows term 2 marks for these students. As you may recall, we chose term 2 marks to focus on, as we wanted to ensure students had settled into their new environments prior to formally collecting data on them. Overall, the data indicates that students have done very well back in the regular setting in the core areas of Mathematics and English. To provide additional data, we chose three students at random and did a more thorough analysis to show you typical results for these students over time. We will continue to examine the benefits of self-contained vs mainstream class setting for all of our students.

### **Special Athletes Track Meet**

The Special Athletes Track Meet is fast approaching and will take place on June 4th at the Nelson Field. There is approximately 130 students registered which is a significant increase over last year. There have been a number of changes this year to accommodate the larger numbers and this has posed some logistical challenges for the planning team but we are looking forward to another very successful event. Lets keep our fingers crossed for nice weather!

We have explored options for moving this event to other sites as we recognize the challenges of getting our Halton Hills kids down to south Burlington for the meet each year. The key barrier to this has been the need for both an accessible and good quality

track, and an accessible building so that our students who require a change table and/or larger washroom can access this. Nelson has both of these, with the washroom area conveniently located near the track area. A Milton location would be ideal. With the new track facilities in Georgetown and the new High School to be built in Milton, we have two new potential locations to consider for the future.

We have also explored running a meet like this for high school students. Currently E. C. Drury runs the Energy Challenge (a less traditional approach to a track meet) for its special needs students. This has been a very successful annual event for students in Milton. We may want to explore both these options for High Schools as we plan for next year.

### **Torch Run**

The Torch Run is scheduled to run on June 17<sup>th</sup>. There will be three runs happening on the same date in Burlington, Oakville and Milton. Burlington and Oakville will meet up at the park at Melores and New Street (just west of Bronte Road) for a lunch and festivities provided by Halton Law Enforcement. The North run will finish at the Police Station on Child's Drive.

The Police escort our students along the entire route using marked cars, motorcycles, and bike patrols. Traffic is stopped at all intersections by the Police to ensure that participants are safe at all times.

The organizing committee has asked that participating schools and any other schools who would like to help to raise awareness for our Special Athletes, do some very simple school based fundraising with events such as a Tweekies for Torches day, or bake sales. All monies collected will assist in supporting new programs, competitions, staff support for organizations, field support, competition development and school programs for Special Olympics.

In the past we have had schools where there were no actual participants; however, many schools or entire classes have come out to cheer on our Special Athletes along the route. Glenview PS choir and Robert Baldwin choir will kick off the event with inspirational and heartwarming songs.

### **Early Identification**

The question of early identification was asked last meeting so I have provided an overview of what occurs in general when dealing with learning challenges for students including early learners.

Early identification and intervention is something that occurs on an ongoing basis in our schools. It starts with the collection of information about a student, the way he/she learns and the potential barriers or obstacles to learning. For many students, this starts with the first meeting prior to the student starting school.

In our schools we use a progressive model of interventions that are used with increased intensity when current strategies are not achieving the desired results. It is important that our staff follow these stages of intervention so that we can provide the appropriate level of support at the right time for each child. This is outlined below:

- Teachers, through classroom assessment observe students who are experiencing difficulty early on. They use a variety of classroom interventions and teaching strategies to support all students (including those who are struggling or require additional challenges).
- Teachers are expected to contact parents and discuss any concerns they might have with a student who is struggling. Teachers and parents will discuss possible strategies, interventions or changes to programming to support the student.
- Where a student continues to struggle, teachers will enlist the support of the special education teacher (SERT).
- The SERT and the classroom teacher may engage a broader group of school staff for further problem solving and may recommended other interventions or academic assessments be completed by the SERT or classroom teacher.
- School Resource Team is the next level of intervention and may involve other resource staff such as a CYC, social worker, psychological consultant or other outside agency staff. Parents are invited to this meeting to participate fully in the discussion. At this level, there is continued problem solving and there may be recommendations to put an IEP in place, do more formal assessments (eg: psychological or speech language), involve itinerant specialized central staff or pursue outside agency support
- Formal identification may be the result following a formal assessment. Typically formal identification may not be recommended for many students when they are young, as there may just be lagging skills or a lack of exposure/practice to school work that with some support early on, in the classroom, can be remediated. This is particularly true when identifying for learning disabilities.
- For other exceptionalities such as MID, DD or Autism, students may be formally identified as early as kindergarten.
- Identification is required for students entering the Primary Language Classes (PLCs) and these formal identifications do occur for students in SK or grade 1.

### **Self Contained Class Preference Form**

Some suggestions were raised at SEAC in our April meeting about the Self-Contained Class Parent Preference Form. Staff considered these suggestions and has made some subtle changes to improve this form (changes highlighted in yellow – please see attached)