

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 June 9, 2009.

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

Resource Staff: Wayne Joudrie, Director of Education; Pamela Cooley, Secretary; Lynne Gurzi (HDEAA); Suzanne Moffatt (Acting Superintendent of Education); Sue Roszell (Principal of Special Education)

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

Absent: Mary Jane Farrish (HSPA); Michelle Joly (PSSP); Lisa Griffiths (PSSP)

Agenda Item 1- Opening

1.1 Welcome and Call to Order

A. Collard called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm.

E. Walker sat in for Vice Chair for the meeting.

1.2 Approval of Agenda

P. Lack/ J. Bevers

#26-09

“THAT the Agenda be approved.”

CARRIED

Agenda Item 2 - Presentations

2.1 Measure of Variability – Steven Parfeniuk

Barry Finlay from the Ministry was present to answer questions regarding the Measure of Variability.

The data used to calculate the measure of variability is with respect to all students receiving Special Education Services. The information is captured from every student in Halton on a daily basis.

18% of the MOV grant comes from EQAO scores. In general, as the scores get better, the amount received in the grant goes down.

A small percentage of the grant comes from the remote and rural category. Which means that the grant money comes in by having schools that do not have as easy access to external resources because of their remote location. There are 2 schools in Halton that just barely qualify for this: Limehouse and Brookville. This totals less than \$10,000 for both on an annual basis.

P. Lack asked why there wasn't high school data used in the MOV as one cannot see the progression from the elementary data into high school.

B. Finlay said it isn't there because the grade 9 data was not large enough to use as a measure. Statistically it could not be used.

E. Walker asked if the grant is based on students that received withdrawal assistance.

B. Finlay explained that the grant is based on the percentage of students in the Halton District School Board who received Special Education Services in 2005/2006. Any time a student receives services it is used for data.

E. Whitehouse asked if this process is going to be used again next year.

B. Finlay explained that there is a consultant working with the Ministry of Education. They are building specific board profiles based on evidence that has a direct impact on learning. They do not know how effective it will be until this process is complete. They also do not know at this point whether it will be added to the MOV. They are attempting to get a rich evidence based system that justifies why each board is in need of a specific amount. This process does take time, as it is very complex.

J. Hlusko asked for clarification on the identified students that are being used in the data. It seemed the data reflected the number of students who had gone through IPRC. But, there are a number of students who have IEP's but who aren't formally identified. This would mean that these students are not reflected in the data from 05/06. Because of this, the number of students reflected in the data is actually lower than the number of students who are receiving Special Education services. She wanted to know how this issue could be addressed.

B. Finlay explained that the data had to come from the most recent year that was clean. Meaning that the data was useable. If the data from 2007/2008 were available and clean, they would have used that data. They will always use the cleanest data from the most recent year. The ministry gathers data from all boards across the province. It takes a long time for all of it to be compiled and get a final sign off on it at a provincial level for official data. The process for this started last October/November, and money is not allocated until March or April. So the process on getting the data has to be done much earlier. The data for 05/06 was reportable data, which is what is meant by clean data.

S. Parfeniuk asked B. Finlay to clarify what it included in the data.

B. Finlay explained that the data includes all children who are receiving services. It is the hope that all students who are receiving Special Education services will have IEPs.

J. Hlusko mentioned that there are students in schools that are receiving support from SERTs who are not Special Education students. She wanted to know if these services are counted. She asked if anything that is being serviced by a SERT qualifies for the MOV.

B. Finlay explained that the Ministry purposely has some flexibility. There is room for decision within boards for this.

A. Collard asked if external resources such as OT's, Social work, CCAC, fall under this.

B. Finlay explained that the relationship of external supports is not part of what the board is reporting on with respect to utilization of its dollars. Money is allocated to boards for EA's.

A. Collard mentioned that historically, many boards across the province have consistently overspent their envelope. She wanted to know when the Ministry is going to recognize that boards are spending more than they are being given, and when it will be adjusted.

B. Finlay explained that it is a misconception that the only funds available for Special Education are from within the envelope. The money allocated to Special Education is not the sole amount available, there are other grants as well. There are challenges with funding, especially in today's economy. The use of Special Education dollars is the board's decision. Those are incremental dollars.

E. Whitehouse commented that although the ministry is supporting integration, what is happening with grades 4 through 8 are class sizes that have a ratio of 1:25. This does not work because these are large class sizes with a large amount of IEP's (around 10). This setting is not conducive to education for these kids. The Ministry should consider given extra money so that there is flexibility in teacher ratios.

B. Finlay mentioned he would take this back to the Ministry, and that this would be an area that is applicable for overall grant review.

A. Collard noted that a number of students do not write the EQAO, and wondered if this number was included in the MOV.

B. Finlay mentioned that all of the EQAO allocations are based upon the percentage of students with special education needs in the board who achieved level 1 or less, or who were exempted. There is a separate allocation for students with special education needs who had five or more accommodations in order to write EQAO.

P. Lack expressed a concern over the lack of data for high school. These students are still in need of services.

B. Finlay explained that the grant based on the data is an allocation, not utilization. Although the dollars are coming from elementary data, they go out to the whole system. They are used as the board sees fit.

J. Hlusko asked why the gifted was excluded from the data.

B. Finlay said that this was related to the fact that EQAO excludes gifted in the compilation of their data. They will do their best to include gifted.

A. Collard asked what the plans are to progress the MOV so that the data is more current.

B. Finlay explained that major portions of the MOV are very current. It is 36% that is from 05/06. He said he anticipates that next year they hope to have 07/08 data as their basis. If the ministry can move quickly they will use the latest data available.

D. Vrooman entered at 7:45

E. Walker asked if there are provincial SEAC reps that are aiding in creating this.

B. Finlay responded that there are not reps that are working with the Ministry directly on this. They work with a number of Directors of Education and other board members. There will be a broader consultation across the province including SEACs going into next year.

A. McKenzie entered at 7:55

S. Parfeniuk asked B. Finlay to clarify what the future of the MOV is.

B. Finlay said they are really focusing on the high needs amount. He can't really comment right now on the future of specific components of the MOV. It is very much an evolution.

J. Hlusko commented on how Special Education dollars are proportioned in the board. She mentioned that Boards throughout the province spend in excess of their envelope. If this board tried to restrict the expenditures to students who are legitimately Special Education Students, it could lower the expenditures. There needs to be discussion of the charges in the Special Education line for staff that are not directly working with Special Education students. Special Education students need to be accurately defined. There is a lack of accountability. She wondered if rules about this would be extended to all boards.

B. Finlay explained that boards implement policies and legislation as corporate bodies. Prescribing a certain amount of dollars so specifically loses the flexibility to do other things. There would be too much control. They continue to provide reporting processes and flexibility for boards to make certain decisions. Boards have different philosophies. The ministry provides dollars but leaves flexibility for local decision-making.

A. Collard noted that from board to board, there are different definitions for different exceptionalities. For example, gifted in some boards is in the 97th percentile, some boards the 98th percentile. When students move to another board, their services could change and this does a great disservice to them. She wondered if the ministry is looking into standardizing any of this.

B. Finlay could not comment directly on this. He said the Ministry does have concerns about this and they are looking into it.

J. Bevers asked if the Ministry was looking at descriptions of exceptionalities to clarify medical diagnoses.

B. Finlay said they are receiving pressure from around the province on this issue for many medical diagnoses, such as environmental sensitivities, ADHD, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, etc. The list goes on. Identifying all of these would be endless. They are looking into this issue and they are really focused on implications for learning with exceptionalities.

A. Collard thanked B. Finlay and S. Parfeniuk for presenting.

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

3.1 Special Education Plan

A. Collard asked for a motion to vote on the plan as amended.

J. Hlusko/ D. Danielli

#27-09

“ THAT SEAC will approve the amended plan.”

Motion Passed

SEAC voted to pass the amended plan and all were in favour.

E. Whitehouse will present a Minority Report.

Agenda Item 4 - Action

4.1 Approval of the Minutes

A. McKenzie/ C. McGee

#28-09

“THAT the Minutes of the June 2, 2009 meeting be approved.”

CARRIED

Agenda Item 5 - Adjournment

Before the adjournment there was a discussion period.

E. Whitehouse asked how the application process for SEAC was going.

W. Joudrie said the only group that has officially applied is CADDAC. He has received an email from VIEWS and heard from LDAH, but neither group have submitted something formally in writing. Requests will be taken up until the end of the summer.

E. Whitehouse suggested offering a personal invite to the Fetal Alcohol syndrome association to sit on SEAC, as they were turned down previously for not having a provincial association, which was a requirement at the time of their application.

S. Moffatt will look into this.

L. Clark asked about the percentage of time that CYC's and SW's spend with their students. She asked if this could be added to the order paper.

W. Joudrie said it would be added and they will look into it.

A. Collard mentioned that there has been some follow up to the letter she sent to Minister Wynne and the other school boards. She has received a number of emails back thanking her for sharing the letter. She also mentioned that someone would need to present for his or her association in September.

P. Lack will present for the Tourette's Syndrome Association of Ontario in September.

E. Whitehouse suggested that the new comers on SEAC in the fall would need a training schedule.

A. Collard said they would likely start in October, and they will look into this.

W. Joudrie thanked the committee for the great work they are doing.

5.1 Motion to Adjourn

P. Lack/ G. Allen

#29-09

"THAT the meeting adjourn."

CARRIED

Time: 8:25 pm

Recorded by: Pamela Cooley