

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 November 3, 2009.

Present: Amy McKenzie (Halton Council of Home and School Associations); Greg Allen (ABC); Jacqueline Bevers (Member at Large); Paulyne Lack (Tourette's Syndrome Assoc.); Bruce Jones (Alt. Trustee); Donna Danielli (Trustee); Dianna Bower (Halton Down Syndrome); Karen Poole-Lawrence (Alt. Easter Seals Society); Jennifer Hlusko (Trustee); Erin Walker (Autism Ont.)

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

Regrets: Janet Barton (Alt. Community Living); Daryl Potter (Autism Ont.) (Vice Chair); Amy Collard (Member at Large) (Chair); Don Vrooman, (Alt. Trustee)

Absent: Patricia Molnar (PSSP); Lynn Clark (Easter Seal Society); Anita Phillips (Alt. ABC); Leslie Howchin (Community Living)

Agenda Item 1- Opening

1.1 Welcome and Call to Order

D. Boag called the meeting to order at: 7:05 pm

In the absence of the chair and vice chair, D. Danielli sat in for Chair, and Erin Walker sat in as Vice Chair.

1.2 Approval of Agenda

P. Lack/J. Hlusko

#36-09

“THAT the Agenda be approved.”

CARRIED

Agenda Item 2 - Presentations

2.1 Therapeutic Listening Presentation- Colleen McKay

Therapeutic Listening is proven to help children under the ASD spectrum. It helps orientate surroundings and space. It aids in fine and gross motor skills, communication, and shows increases in verbal language and social abilities to communicate with others. It also helps promote phonemic awareness.

A functional listening assessment is done for the child and a program is then developed from this information. The child listens to various CD's for the duration of the program in their downtime away from school. As they listen to the CD's, their progress is closely monitored. Programs usually run from 12-26 weeks. Soon, some programs will incorporate the Phoneme Touch and Say program, which is very well received by some OT's.

This program is in the process of being included in recommendations from CCAC. The program can work for children as young as 2 years of age. The program is not covered by OHIP, but there are different grants that are available.

2.2 Early Literacy Presentation – Jol Grzeslo and Shari Sonoda

J. Grzeslo and S. Sonoda gave an overview of oral language. They discussed the differences between different parts of language. This includes the differences between listening to a language, speech and the ability to read and write.

Language in students is tracked with different tools from the time they enter school as they move through the grades. As children enter school there is a focus on speech development. The Nipissing screen tool is used for this assessment. In Kindergarten, the focus of articulation and verbal fluency is added. As the students move from grades 1 through 3, there is more focus on phonemic awareness and the use of continuums.

S. Sonoda gave a brief summary of the role of LRTs (Learning Resource Teacher). LRTs support classroom teachers. They initially started with Kindergarten and grade one teachers only, and created a knowledge base. The LRTs started to unpack the curriculum between kindergarten and grade 1 and found that the common element between the two was the Sound Letter Relationship.

Learning in students is tracked by doing a pre and post assessment. This is done in all LRT schools in the Board (40). From these assessments, differentiated instruction is done based on the phonemic awareness skills within a class. There is a whole class lesson, and then from here the class moves into small group work with guided practice and guided reading and writing.

D. Bower asked how the schools that are not LRT schools get support.

S. Sonoda replied that these schools get the support they need through in-services and workshops, kindergarten council, and with consultants going into these schools when a request is made.

J. Hlusko asked if this presentation can be brought to the Board as well. She also asked if there is a way to make sure the teachers are learning these tools so that the non-LRT schools are having their needs met.

J. Grzeslo said that teacher practice is not tracked to that kind of degree. They try to work with new teachers to ensure they understand the needs of students. There are other projects that help to ensure all schools have an opportunity to learn. This includes SERTs, and ministry projects such as OFIP, where teachers are able to look into their practice.

E. Walker asked how success is measured and markers are used.

S. Sonoda said there is the CODE project, which is done in tandem with the research department. Also, the use of PM benchmarks for reading is consistent across the Board.

D. Bower asked if this process can help identify potential Special Education students.

S. Sonoda said that it can be a great early identification process.

2.3 Assistive Technology Presentation- Marian Thorpe, Judy Sackville-Boyd, Stacy Falconer.

M. Thorpe gave a description of the main software that students use with their Assistive Technology (AT). There is a focus on 3 main software programs:

Text to voice: Kurzweil or the Premier program. Kurzweil is very specific to student needs. It is a very expensive piece of software. Premier is a similar program, and is loaded onto every student laptop.

Voice to Text: Dragon Naturally Speaking. It takes what a person says into a microphone and turns it into text.

Organizational Software: Smart Ideas. This is loaded on all computers and is a mind-mapping software. It helps students organize their ideas.

By the end of this year, there will be approximately 1700 laptops in this Board.

M. Thorpe introduced S. Falconer, a classroom teacher, to show examples of how the software is used in the classroom.

S. Falconer gave an overview of that how the Kurzweil software works and some examples of how students in her class use the software.

M. Thorpe explained that AT is not remedial software, it is compensatory. It compensates for the inability to do two things at once. It helps the students work at the grade level they are capable of.

Most students who receive AT receive training through Bridges Canada. Bridges trainers come into schools and do group sessions with the students. The classroom teacher is involved in this and parents are always invited to attend. Some schools are even taking AT use to the next level by running AT clubs, having parents meetings and also using peer helpers.

J. Sackville-Boyd explained what her role is for AT with the Board. Her role, Itinerant Teacher of Assistive Technology, requires the support of schools and staff with their AT. She meets with teachers regularly and discusses how to implement AT with certain students. She attends PD sessions for AT, she works directly with Bridges staff and EAs, and she also works with students directly.

Assistive Technology helps to allow kids to access the curriculum that they wouldn't have been able to do otherwise. It opens the door and allows them to take the extra risk. They use the laptop as they see fit.

M. Thorpe noted that students can use their AT on provincial tests as long as it is on their IEP as an accommodation for assessment. The only exception is the grade 10 math test. Students do not have to be identified to have AT. They will receive it as long as it is prescribed for them. The most common way for it to be prescribed is from a psychological assessment. AT can also be prescribed from an Occupational Therapist, or in rare cases, a medical doctor. Once they get their laptop, students will have an IEP. The

earliest grade that students can receive a laptop is grade 4. This is a Ministry guideline. It is believed that receiving AT younger than this will interfere with the reading process.

D. Bower asked if the students who have AT have any keyboarding programming since they are typing a lot.

M. Thorpe replied that the programs in the younger years are very mouse dependent. There is keyboarding software that is loaded on all the laptops. Parents are encouraged to work on keyboarding skills, and some schools still focus on keyboarding skills.

Agenda Item 3

3.0 Call for Notices of Motion/Reports to the Board

3 notices of motion were presented to SEAC from D. Bower. They will be brought to the board for review and added into next month's minutes.

Agenda Item 4 - Action

4.1 Approval of the Minutes

D. Bower had a few minor adjustments to the minutes on page 2.

A. Mckenzie /J. Hlusko

#37-09

“That the minutes of the October 6, 2009 meeting be approved as amended.”

CARRIED

4.2 Order Paper

Subject Acceleration:

D. Boag will bring back a report on this in December.

CCAC referral process:

D. Boag met with CCAC members and talked about the new model for speech referrals. All referrals will have to come through SLPs. This process is being monitored.

D. Bower asked to add the CCAC appeal process back into the plan.

Discussion followed on the timelines for Speech and Language discharges. The Board SLPs can do a referral process based on a previous private assessment.

Data Dashboard:

Information on this is outlined in Superintendent's report:

We are in the process of collecting the data identified at the last SEAC meeting. A good start has been made on staff data. Our Research Department is helping us to retrieve student and system data. More to come at the next SEAC meeting.

Research is working on getting some student data and system data. It is a work in progress. More will be brought back in December.

Website:

Bruce Smith is coming in December to discuss the website. D.Boag handed out a suggested framework for the website and asked SEAC members to do some thinking and provide any feedback to him.

D. Bower will forward some information on website suggestions.

Agenda Item 5 – Communication to SEAC and Current Successes

5.1 Superintendent's Report

Accessibility Customer Service information was given to SEAC from Jacki Oxley. She offered to come to speak to this at the December meeting but D. Boag suggested that perhaps we may just want to read the material and provide feedback electronically. D. Bower is a member of the Accessibility Customer Service Steering Committee, and offered to receive any feedback and bring it back to the committee.

The Ministry of Education has sent out various information and/or projects in the last three weeks and this will be forwarded on to SEAC for the next meeting. Included in this is the CODE JK- Grade 1 assessment, identification and intervention project. Information on this will be fed back to CODE. There will be an update for the December meeting.

5.2 School Board Communications to Parents re: Special Needs Students

None

5.3 Chairs Report & Correspondence

None

5.4 Association Reports

D. Bower provided an association report From HDSA. She talked about upcoming workshops and spoke about Down Syndrome Awareness week.

P. Lack provided a hand out from the PSSP conference in October.

5.5 Trustee Reports

D. Danielli mentioned that H1N1 is keeping everyone very busy. There is hiring of additional occasional teachers to cover for absentees. Schools are getting alcohol based hand sanitizer. All PD at New Street Education Centre has been cancelled for the next week. The Board is advising to not register for any new conferences until the end of December. Athletics are continuing as normal, and field trips are a school based decision. She also mentioned the Board passed the Operational Plan and the Long Term Accommodation Plan. There is also work being done on Capital Projects, including 3 groundbreakings.

Agenda Item 6 – Questions from the Public

None

Agenda Item 7 – SEAC Discussion/Question Period

P. Lack asked SEAC members to offer a book or video from their organization for classes to watch so students and teachers can be more educated. It was noted that parents coming to the classroom also works well for this. There was also a suggestion to include lunch supervisors. SEAC can discuss this further in the year with staff development planning.

D. Bower expressed concern that there should be a SEAC rep on the Equity and Inclusion committee. D. Boag will pass this information on to M. Zonneveld.

G. Allen asked for an update on the transportation policy.

D. Boag explained that this policy is not finalized and is still under review.

K. Poole-Lawrence asked about transporting adult sized wheel chairs on large busses. There is a concern that there are not enough busses able to accommodate the larger chairs. Discussion followed on this topic. Drivers are required to have the student's transportation safety forms. One can ask the driver to see the forms.

D. Bower asked about the wait times for psych assessments. She wondered if there is a time limit on getting bumped back in the wait list for more urgent assessments coming in. Also, if there was a point where one should go outside the Board for assessment.

D. Boag said there is no time limit on this. If the lists are getting very significant, then the Board may look into some funding in the Special Ed department to get some outside assessments.

G. Allen inquired about the pilot project for early gifted identification that the previous superintendent had mentioned. She said it should have been under way this fall.

D. Boag replied that the Research Department felt there were a number of areas of concern from a research perspective on how students were chosen and the assessment criteria used. The early identification pilot has been put on hold. The Subject Acceleration Committee is looking at how to how to address the needs of these students with their current work.

D. Bower mentioned that she has a copy of allowable expenditure list from 03-04 and will provide SEAC with a copy.

D. Bower asked if the Board has a review process in place for the Special Education plan and the Board Improvement plan.

D. Boag said there is no direction yet from the Ministry on what the plan will look like. There is a need to have a discussion on the review process.

The December meeting will have a Holiday potluck dinner. Details will be shared throughout the month.

Agenda Item 8

8.1 Review of Additions to Order Paper

3 notices of motion will be forwarded for review.

8.3 Motion to Adjourn

P. Lack/J. Bevers

#38-09

“THAT the meeting adjourn.”

CARRIED

Time: 9:40

**SEAC Superintendent's Report
November 3, 2009**

1. Response to LDAH's Review of the Special Education plan 2007 – 2010

I have gone through in some detail the critique and commentary provided by LDAH on our current Special Education Plan and the process for reviewing it. While I did not agree with the review in its entirety, I did find some suggestions made to be constructive. I have tried to capture the essence of a few key themes from this review that I believe we should attend to as we continue our work this year. These are outlined below:

- Parent/Community Consultation – We should clarify our processes on parent and community consultation. Providing opportunity for SEAC and parents to take a more active role and have input in helping us to improve special education programs and services should be a priority.
- SEAC's role in Budget Planning – SEAC as an advisory body to the board should be taking a more proactive role in budget discussions and making recommendations about priorities for the upcoming year's Special Education budget.
- Budget and Special Education Plan Alignment – The processes for updating the Special Education Plan and budget planning should be done in tandem so that recommendations about special education programs and services are aligned with budget recommendations to support them.
- Recording of Special Education Plan amendments – This is just good record keeping. I would suggest that we refine our process for updating the Special Education Plan this year to ensure efficiency and accuracy of recording any changes from the current plan.

2. Primary Language Class Review – Sue Roszell is working with a team of teachers, SLPs, and administrators to review current practice and possible changes to the model. The group is in the process of seeking parental input and will be bringing recommendations back to SEAC at our December meeting.

3. CCAC SLP Referral Process - CCAC will now only be accepting applications for speech/language support from school board SLPs. The process requires SLPs fill out an assessment checklist as part of the application process. Halton previously has made referrals from classroom teachers and SERTs. This will create some pressures for our SLPs who are very busy supporting language classes, individual students and doing assessments. We will be monitoring their workload and any impact on service to students over the remainder of this year and revisiting our speech language support services model for next year.

4. Data dashboard – we are in the process of collecting the data identified at the last SEAC meeting. A good start has been made on staff data. Our Research Department is helping us to retrieve student and system data. More to come at the next SEAC meeting.

5. Website Update – I am hoping to bring a proposed draft outline of the new Special Education pages on our website. This is a starting point and I would be very interested in your suggestions and comments. Also, Bruce Smith will be here for our December SEAC meeting and will talk to us about the website. If you have an opportunity to go on the Board website, please have a look and pass on any suggestions to make the sight more user friendly, accessible and useful for parents/students looking for special education information.

6. Please find attached to this report recent special education updates provincially from MACSE.