

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 September 8, 2009.

Present: Amy Collard (Member at Large) (Chair); Don Vrooman, (Alt. Trustee); 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); Jennifer Hlusko (Trustee); Daryl Potter (Autism Ont.) (Vice Chair); Lynn Clark (Easter Seal Society); Donna Danielli (Trustee); Dianna Bower (Halton Down Syndrome); Anita Phillips (Alt. ABC)

Resource Staff: David Boag, Superintendent of Education; Pamela Cooley, Secretary; Julie Armstrong (HEPA) Lisa Griffiths (PSSP);

Regrets: Karen Poole-Lawrence (Alt. Easter Seals Society)

Absent: Mary Jane Farrish (HSPA); Janet Barton (Alt. Community Living); Erin Walker (Autism Ont.); Lynne Gurzi (HDEAA); Leslie Howchin (Community Living); Patricia Molnar (PSSP)

Agenda Item 1- Opening

1.1 Welcome and Call to Order

A. Collard called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm. She introduced the new SEAC members; Dianna Bower from Halton Down Syndrome Association, and Anita Phillips; alternate for Association for Bright Children. She mentioned that from now on; the questions from the public will be answered in the following month's meeting so as to get all information possible to answer the questions properly.

A. Collard mentioned there would be a PIC conference on October 24th.

1.2 Approval of Agenda

J. Bevers/J. Hlusko

#30-09

“THAT the Agenda be approved.”

CARRIED

Agenda Item 2 - Presentations

2.1 Tourette Syndrome – Paulyne Lack

P. Lack explained how Tourette's affects the brain. She explained the differences in categories of Tourette's and what kinds of behaviours are associated with those categories. People with Tourette's often suffer from other disorders (LD, ADHD, etc).

P. Lack explained what accommodations could be beneficial for people suffering from Tourette's. Children with Tourette's are often blamed for doing certain actions on purpose when really they don't have control over these actions. EA's are very important for these students. Youth workers are also important to help teachers and EA's be able to manage these children in the classroom.

D. Bower asked P. Lack to elaborate on the role of the EA and friendship.

P. Lack explained that these kids don't have friends, because often, people are afraid of them. They need someone who will listen to them, and to know they are valued. The EA is someone they can talk to.

L. Clark asked how someone would deal with a person with Tourette's who seems threatening.

P. Lack said the best thing to do is to wait it out. They need to be able to let go and let emotions out. It would be beneficial if the EA could provide activities for them that allow them to unwind periodically such as listening to an iPod or going for a walk.

G. Allen asked what issues the organization is trying to address.

P. Lack said it is important for schools to start bringing in teams of people that can talk to students about Tourette's so they get a better understanding of what it is and how it affects behaviour. There needs to be more communication about the disorder. Parents of children with Tourette's can feel as if teachers and principals are against them. Everyone needs a better understanding of this disorder.

J. Bevers asked if there are medications available to help control tics or behaviours, and if there is research on genetic links, or what the known causes are.

P. Lack said there are medications, but they can often cause a lot of weight gain, and their effectiveness alters with hormonal changes. Using medication is a lot of trial and error. Research shows right now that Tourette's is inherited.

L. Clark mentioned that SEAC should be working towards making sure that students with any disorders feel accepted. It was commented that there are a lot of people in the schools and in the community that don't know how to work towards this.

Agenda Item 3

3.0 Call for Notices of Motion/Reports to the Board

None

Agenda Item 4 - Action

4.1 Approval of the Minutes

A. McKenzie/L. Clark

#31-09

“That the minutes of the June 9th, 2009 meeting be approved.”

CARRIED

4.2 Order Paper

D. Boag thanked everyone for being very welcoming to him in his new role. He explained his vision for Special Education in Halton and asked for SEAC members to come to him with input whenever they needed.

SEAC membership progress report:

The new members were welcomed at the start of the meeting. Memberships for CADDAC and New Vision are still being looked at.

Phoneme Touch and Say:

S. Roszell explained that back in May there was a group of staff that went to the workshop and they had a discussion about the concerns and good points around the workshop. They decided as a group to support families using it at home, and also to go to the research department to look at tracking success of the program because one of the major concerns was that it was not a research based program. The research department informed them that HDSB does not do independent research. The Board has to purchase programs that have already been tested. This kind of research wouldn't work with a small amount of people. The creator of the program was contacted to see if she was interested in research. The Board will continue to support families using it at home, but cannot introduce it as a program.

A. Collard asked if the HDSB would consider doing another workshop.

S. Roszell said it wouldn't make sense when it has been done already and this was the outcome. The Board and SEAC need a better understanding of the programs that are used in the literacy model now. S. Roszell said they would bring in a team from the School Programs department to show what the programs are like that the Board is using.

D. Bower said that space for the workshop did fill up quickly and there will be another in the area. She will let SEAC know when it will be. She urges the Board to support all families using this program because it is very effective.

Subject Acceleration:

The committee working on this will be meeting later in September.

Grade 8 programs for slower learners:

This is to stay on the order paper for now.

Primary Language Classes and Early Language Development Classes:

The Board is looking at putting a committee together to examine these classes, and is hoping to come back with recommendations around Christmas. Hopefully the process for this can be shared in October.

Number of grade 8 students affected by closure of LD classes:

D. Boag said they would have a number to bring back for this in October.

Financial Reports and Presentations:

SEAC would like to have S. Parfeniuk come back for discussion.

A. Collard mentioned that it would be a good idea for him to come back a few times a year and explain how the budget affects Special Education. SEAC is looking for data from him more frequently.

P. Lack noted that SEAC would also like him to talk about testing for elementary and secondary grades, and how this affects the number of EA's throughout the system. It was commented that there are a lot of problems in the higher grades.

D. Danielli said that SEAC gets the budget after it is gone through without input. If SEAC could take last year's budget and figure out what the pros and cons are, SEAC could have some meaningful input before the budget gets created.

A. Collard suggested making this a regular agenda item.

D. Bower said SEAC used to get a comparative statement so it showed what had been spent from the previous year to see where the changes occurred.

L. Clark noted it would be good to have it before the meeting so there is time to look over it.

D. Boag said he had a meeting with S. Parfeniuk and he liked the suggestion of reps to sit down with him to talk about this so SEAC can look at this information before budget process.

Number of EA's and number of students requiring an EA for the last 5 years:

D. Boag will bring this data back

Primary Literacy program:

D. Boag said the department would work with program services to look at this.

Self contained placement process discussion:

D. Boag said the department will be looking at this and he will bring it back.

Development of process for wait time calculation:

Quoted in Superintendent's report.

P. Lack asked about updating psych assessments for students going to college and university. She wanted to know who provides this, since most schools are requiring it.

D. Boag said if the Board were to provide this, it could affect the wait times for all assessments. It is currently up to students to do them through the college/university. This is the current state.

P. Lack said the minister should be involved in this. These kids need the help when they go to college or university; she wanted to know who foots the bill for this.

L. Clark asked how many Spec Ed students a year go on to post-secondary education.

D. Boag said he could get a hold of these numbers.

Universities do have funding to cover these services. The Ministry has put money at the university level to be covered for this.

D. Bower asked what the need is to have another assessment if a student has been identified in the system for so many years.

D. Boag responded that universities have to answer that. Most universities do claim that they do offer assistance.

D. Bower asked how the Board is dealing with CCAC not doing speech and language assessments.

D. Boag said he met with CCAC and discussed the model change. He will bring this back to department to see how to manage this.

AODA regarding language:

D. Bower explained that there is sensitivity around the term mental retardation. This term is contrary to AODA language guidelines. When parents choose to have psychological testing, there is no need to use this terminology. The board should not be using this term, and this needs to be known to staff.

D. Boag said that Psych staff would get this information.

Time spent with Social workers and CYC's with students who have IEP's:

D. Boag said there is no data or tracking mechanism in place for this.

A Collard asked if it could be put into place.

D. Boag said it would be really difficult. When there are kids in crisis and students need help, putting this front and centre isn't realistic.

L. Clark said that SEAC wanted to know because it is all charged to the Spec Ed budget.

J. Hlusko noted that B. Finlay said the ministry does not monitor that. The Board isn't strict about expenses tallied under Spec Ed. To the ministry it does not matter. No school board is going to voluntarily create this work. It would be an impossible feat to know how much time a SERT spends with purely Spec Ed students because some are not identified or have IEPs. The time spent is determined by the needs of the school according to the principal.

D. Bower mentioned that CYC's weren't always paid by the Board, there was funding from outside sources. She wanted to know if SEAC could find out if this still happens.

D. Boag said he would get an answer.

Agenda Item 5 – Communication to SEAC and Current Successes

5.1 Superintendent's Report

Discussed in order paper

5.2 School Board Communications to Parents re: Special Needs Students

None

5.3 Chairs Report & Correspondence

A. Collard noted that she got a response to the letter that was sent to Kathleen Wynne. It will be with the SEAC secretary. She also welcomed everyone back on the first day of school.

5.4 Association Reports

D. Bower had an association report from Halton Down Syndrome Association. She talked about some new initiatives and some upcoming meetings and conferences.

A member of the public made an announcement about a Documentary playing on Global on Friday, September 18th 2009, called "ADD and Loving It!"

D. Danielli asked if the chair could send a thank you letter to E. Whitehouse, C. McGee and B. Elgie for their service on SEAC.

5.5 Trustee Reports

D. Danielli said that the trustees had their first Board meeting of the school year and it was all about capital projects. Currently there are 18 different capital projects, which is a new record. She mentioned they are moving forward on Milton schools, and that SEAC membership came forward for the new members that are here tonight.

Agenda Item 6 – Questions from the Public

There was one comment and one question from the public:

Comment, Re: Tourette's Staff/workshops/outreach: Both the VP with Tourette's and myself frequently make ourselves available and have been asked for staff support by sharing workshops as possible (this includes EA workshops during PD days and staff meetings/workshops). Many Spec Ed staff in Halton are aware of us, as are coordinators who have directed requests for support.

Question: How can SEAC get word out to families affected (not only parents of current PLC/ELDC students, but former students as well) to be aware and become involved in the PLC/ELDC review process when there is currently no key contact on SEAC?

D. Boag said this has not been brought to the department yet, will bring this back in October.

L. Clark asked what is happening with LDAH.

A. Collard said there have been numerous discussions. They were asked to come back, but finding the right person as a representative is a challenge. This is what they are waiting for.

Agenda Item 7 – SEAC Discussion/Question Period

D. Bower asked if there is enough SERT support in schools with the changes in the LD classes. She mentioned hearing about SERT's having a workload of k-6, and 6 and up, which seems like a large workload. She wondered if it was possible to have the workload divided up based on level of need.

D. Boag said that allocation of SERT's is up to principals and goes school by school. He will bring back information around the SERT allocation process next month.

L. Clark asked what Student Services is doing for the LD students out in the main stream, and how closely they are being monitored.

D. Boag replied that they will be monitored very closely as there is a need to know how the delivery model change is affecting them. After first reporting period, he can let SEAC know how things are going.

P. Lack mentioned that a lot of Spec Ed parents don't understand IEP's, SERT's, IPRC's, etc. She asked if the message get out to them through a parent involvement committee to provide this information.

D. Bower said there is a PIC conference on Oct 24th, and wondered if SEAC members could come and have a booth for their associations, and to also raise awareness of SEAC. SEAC also used to have a parent information night, and this might be worth looking into again.

J. Bevers noted that the Working Together document sums up that kind of information.

L. Clark suggested that SEAC members should go to some school council meetings to talk to them about what SEAC is and its purpose.

D. Bower mentioned that there was a protocol committee a few years ago to communicate about SEAC to parents; its purpose was to go out to school councils with information.

A Collard noted that the website is lacking in easily accessible information about SEAC.

D. Potter agreed on the need for ongoing data, and concurred that data is lacking. He also suggested considering putting together a Spec Ed dashboard, something that allows to see each year a list specific items that are continually tracked so someone can look back a few years and see the changes.

J. Hlusko suggested talking to S. Parfeniuk about this because he started a project similar to this last year regarding energy use in schools. The Ministry heard about this and now all Boards are going to be doing this as well.

D. Boag said this is a great suggestion. He has already chatted with research about what data is available and what data the department needs and how to extract it. He could pull together some things he believes SEAC would need.

A. Collard said that she and D. Boag would have a discussion about when this could be presented.

J. Bevers mentioned that perhaps some information about SEAC could send to school councils through J. Oxley.

D. Bower said she would forward a Power point presentation.

Agenda Item 8

8.1 Review of Additions to Order Paper

Add:

- List of events to promote for the public
- What happened with SERT support due to changes in LD classes

8.3 Motion to Adjourn

P. Lack/ D. Bower

#32-09

“THAT the meeting adjourn.”

CARRIED

Time: 9:05

Recorded by: Pamela Cooley