



Minutes of the meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee held in the Boardroom, J.W. Singleton Centre, Burlington, Ontario, on May 3, 2016.

Present:

Amy Collard **Vice-Chair** (Trustee Representative); Jason Bartlett, (Member-at-Large); Richelle Papin (Trustee Representative); Tammy Beattie (Learning Disabilities Association of Halton); Kim Graves (Trustee Alternate); Lucille Morris (Member-at-Large); Leah Reynolds (Trustee Alternate); Lori Aker (Halton Down Syndrome Association) ; Sherry Foster (Association for Bright Children); Carla Marshall (Autism Ontario); Susan Suter (Easter Seals Ontario); Diane Vandenbossche (Learning Disabilities Association of Halton); Denise Nacev, **Chair** (Member-at-Large);

Board Liaison and Resource Personnel:

Mark Zonneveld (Superintendent); Jane Lewis (Principal of Special Education); Margaret Kew (Vice-Principal Special Education);
Rebecca Bardin (SEAC Assistant)

Trustees: Joanna Oliver, Jeanne Gray

Regrets: Sophie Geffros (Easter Seals Society)

Absent: Judy Shiels (Voice for Hearing Impaired Children); Dawn Spence (Association for Bright Children)

1. OPENING

1.1. Welcome and Call to Order

D. Nacev called the meeting to order at **7:07** p.m.

D. Nacev welcomed S. Miller, Director and D. Boag, Associate Director to the SEAC meeting. S. Miller highlighted the 2016/2017 HDSB budget deliberations currently underway and responded to questions/comments concerning the reductions in funding to special education.

1.2. Approval of the Agenda

#34-16 L. Morris/C. Marshall

“THAT the agenda be approved as amended.”

CARRIED

2. CALL FOR NOTICES OF MOTION/REPORTS TO THE BOARD

L. Aker presented two motions that will be brought forward to SEAC later in the agenda. A. Collard requested that these motions be sent to SEAC via email.

3. BIG TOPIC – Budget

D. Nacev welcomed SEAC members and introduced the discussion of budget. D. Nacev highlighted the 2016/2017 Budget Development slides that were previously shared with SEAC and provided an overview of the proposed changes to programs and services. Comments and questions were brought forward by

SEAC. M. Zonneveld responded to SEAC comments/questions/concerns and discussion ensued amongst the group.

M. Zonneveld confirmed that the addition of the Communication Classes would be funded through the cancellation of the ELDC classes.

S. Suter responded that the main concern is that there are 17.5 cuts in direct support positions.

S. Miller commented that the capacity building of staff will support the proposed changes.

D. Vandenbossche brought forward a prepared statement regarding the Learning Centre and potential closing – see attached.

A Collard is in support of D. Vandenbossche's request regarding an option of phasing out the Learning Centre. S. Miller responded that this is a challenging request as the funding necessary for capacity building would be made available through the reductions.

D. Nacev reviewed answers to previously asked questions and clarifying questions with SEAC. Discussion ensued amongst SEAC, members requested additional information as to what the alternative supports would look like.

D. Nacev concluded that as a group SEAC does not support reductions to Special Education Services and asked the members for suggestions to bring forward during her presentation on May 4, 2016 to the Board.

J. Bartlett would prefer to see reductions in other areas.

S. Suter would like a plan to be brought forward to SEAC

S. Foster feels that SEAC has not been given enough information to support or suggest any reductions.

Motion to waive the rules

#35-16 C. Marshall/D. Vandenbossche

CARRIED

SEAC recommends to the Board of Trustees that:

A full review of special education programs and services in the Halton District School Board be done by a qualified outside agency (s) to look at best practice in delivering programs and services to students with special education needs within the HDSB.

AND THAT

this review include consultation with all stakeholders groups within the HDSB, including, but not limited to, Teachers, administrators, SERTs, SLP, Psych. Ed., CYC, SW, SERTs, Trustees, SEAC, Student Services, parents/guardian and students.

AND THAT

this review be started as soon as possible; and in any event in the Fall of 2016; to be finalized by March, 2017 for consideration during the budget process as well as prior to SEAC making any recommendations to the Board of Trustees on the 2017-18 Special Education Plan.

Rationale:

Changes are being made to special education programs and services without consultation with all stakeholders to know whether the changes being made are the best possible decisions, and whether they are in the best interests of students with special education needs.

An outside review of all special education programs and services was done previously by Dr. Sheila Bennett and was used to help put in place new ideas that support students, while at the same time removing those supports that were not effective.

With the budget restrictions the HDSB is under, it makes sense to hire someone to look at how to provide the programs and services required by students with special education needs within the HDSB. This could, in fact, reduce the amount of special education funding required.

#36-16 L. Aker/S. Suter

CARRIED

SEAC chair will present to the Board of Trustees that SEAC cannot support the proposed budget cuts due to lack of information available on the plan to ensure the support for these students continues.

#37-16 D. Nacev/J. Bartlett

CARRIED

ACTION

4.1 *Motion to approve the Minutes of April 19, 2016 meeting*

#38-16 L. Morris/J. Bartlett

“THAT the minutes of the April 19, 2016 SEAC meeting be approved.”

CARRIED

4.3 Special Education Plan

S. Suter recommended that SEAC be provided with a list of the Special Education Plan amendments prior to the budget approval.

A. Collard questioned how you vote to support a plan that is not complete.

SEAC members discussed the time lines necessary for voting on the Special Education Plan and what documents are needed from HDSB in order for SEAC to vote on the Special Education Plan. It was decided amongst the members that a document outlining the current amendments to the Special Education Plan would be provided to SEAC by Friday May 6, 2016 along with the most up to date draft version of the 2016/2017 Special Education Plan document.

Motion to extend the meeting

#39-16 L. Aker/D. Vandenbossche

CARRIED

4.2 Board Motion to Rescind

Motion to waive the rules

#40-16 S. Foster/D. Vandenbossche

CARRIED

SEAC recommends that:

Motion M11-0216, requiring that the Special Education Plan be brought to trustees prior to budget approval in any given year, carried in December 2011, remain in place.

Rationale:

- The motion ensures that trustees know whether or not SEAC supports the Special Education Plan, including recommendations from Student Services and SEAC, prior to making final budget decisions.
- The motion ensures that trustees receive SEAC's input as one voice rather than hearsay from individual members.
- The motion ensures that members of SEAC feel that their considerable volunteer commitment is of value and is taken seriously by trustees.
- Timing has not been an issue in the past when:
 - a) Student Services maintains an updated Plan each year,
 - b) SEAC votes to support or not support the updated Plan in May, with Student Services and SEAC recommendations included as appendices, and
 - c) trustees review SEAC's recommendations prior to the completion of the budget review and before they make their final budget decisions in June.
- The Ministry does not require the budget to be approved until June 30.

Background:

Motion M11-0216 was brought forward in December 2011 by Gillian Tuck-Kutarna, seconded by Dianna Bower, and was carried unanimously:

"Be it resolved that the Special Education Plan be brought to the Board in each year prior to approval of the budget for that same year."

#41-16 L. Aker/D. Vandenbossche

Recorded vote:

Learning Disabilities Association of Halton - Support

Halton Down Syndrome Association - Support

Association of Bright Children - Support

Easter Seals Ontario - Support

Autism Ontario - Support

A. Collard, Trustee Representative – No

R. Papin, Trustee Representative – No

J. Bartlett, Member at Large – Support
L. Morris, Member at Large – Abstain
D. Nacev, Member at Large – Support

CARRIED

Motion to move that once the documentation is received to support or not support the Special Education Plan, a motion will take place via email.

#42-16 D. Nacev/L. Aker

CARRIED

5.0 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Parent of a former HDSB student attended the meeting and brought forward a statement on behalf of her son who attended Frontenac PS and Bateman HS. During his time with HDSB this student attended the Learning Centre. The students statement outlined his support for the Learning Centre and it's services.

6.0 OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

L. Aker has questions around the annual IPRC annual review letter and the incorrect regulation number. L. Aker would also like to confirm if the suggested changes were incorporated into the letter. J. Lewis responded that vendor's have been contacted and changes are in progress. L. Aker would like confirmation when updates have been completed.

7.0 NEXT AGENDA/ORDER PAPER

Budget

8.0 MOTION TO ADJOURN

#43-16 L. Aker/J. Bartlett

"THAT the meeting be adjourned."

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 pm

LDAH thoughts re potential Spec Ed cuts of the Learning Centres.

LDAH always speaks up for all students with special needs but first we are going to speak up for students with LDs. It is a known fact in our world that academic classrooms the way they are set up today are not a happy, comfortable or safe place for many students with LDs to be. Our students go to school every day with hope and come home beaten down and feeling dumb yet again until they don't want to go to school at all. Many do not show frustration or confusion at school as they try to "fit in" but then have meltdowns at home - a safe environment. Many students with Learning Disabilities act out and adults rush to address the behaviour issues.

The small group Learning Centre allows our students to see and understand that they are not alone and they become comfortable in an environment with others "like them". They learn more than the appropriate technology for them. They learn to understand and embrace their own learning profile - their areas of strength and areas of need and they learn to use strategies that help them. Since students with Learning Disabilities are not a homogeneous group but individuals with learning profiles that are individual to them, it takes a specialist in the field to help our students to embrace their individual profiles and accept themselves as learners. They leave the Learning Centres with a large bag of tricks and improved self-confidence and self-esteem. The teachers in the Learning Centres guide our students through this process.

LDAH supports increased PD to build capacity in our system for classroom teachers and SERTs. At this time, many classroom teachers and SERTs do not have the understanding of Learning Disabilities to accomplish what LC teachers accomplish. We do not support cutting this very valuable program and then building capacity over 12-24 months. We think it is unfair to ask our students to put their learning, their confidence and their self-esteem on hold until their teachers catch up. What we do support is keeping the LCs open, providing PD to build capacity in all classrooms in all schools and then, when everything is working well and the applications for this program decline, this program can be gradually closed. This would be due process. This would be accepting our duty to accommodate so that our students with Learning Disabilities who have average to above average intelligence can graduate with the appropriate credits to enter any post-secondary institution or apprenticeship programs.

Even with extensive PD to build capacity, classroom teachers will be hard pressed to provide the comfortable and safe environment of the LCs for our students. At the LCs they get to work with other students like themselves to help them to build their capacity. This can't be replicated in the regular classroom. The learning that takes place at the LCs encompasses more than technology. Students learn about their learning profiles, learn to accept themselves as successful learners and learn strategies that they can use in the regular classroom to support their learning. Again this can't happen in the regular classroom as there won't be a cohort of 8 students with LDs in a classroom.

LDAH thoughts re potential cuts to Spec Ed programs and services - place in Assoc Reports

Learning Disabilities Association of Halton does not support cuts that include cutting ITs and the Learning Centres. We can also not support cuts to LRTs. Our understanding is that these teachers work with Primary classroom teachers to build early intervention capacity. Since our students do not meet the criteria for the Leveled Literacy Initiative program, the LRTs are needed to provide this capacity to meet the needs of students with a PA deficit. Rationale - we can't intelligently discuss making cuts without knowing intent of programs, success or lack of success of specific programs, and any data collected. We also need to be looking for cuts that do not involve direct service to identified students. Knowing that cuts were imminent then we really needed to spend the last few years completing an intense review of Student Services/Special Education - staff, students, programs. We haven't done that so how do we have an intelligent discussion and make decisions that affect our most vulnerable.