

Addendum February 8 & 9, 2012

ITEM	COMMUNITY COLLABORATION REPORT	ALL
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Members were invited by the Chair to highlight successful practices and challenges as well as possible solutions from their most recent consultation with their constituency groups:

Gifted (David Mason)

- Transitions have not been mandated for gifted students hence the number of transition plans for gifted students in the past have been very low.
- Multiple exceptionalities be addressed with respect to transitions
- Mandate transition planning for gifted students as per all other exceptionalities

Multiple Exceptionalities (Tracy Grant)

- With the various complex profiles of this group of students, it is widely believed that “individual” programming is required in a collaborative, case managed way. Funding issues are often cited in situations where services are not available to students.

Emotional / Behavioural Disorder (Robert Savage)

- With the release of the Caring and Safe Schools guide, the Connect program was established. So far, 12 students have graduated from this program targeted at suspended and expelled students.
- Wait times for students with emotional and behavioural problems are an issue.
- Possible solutions may include investment in building staff capacity and professional development.
- There is sensitivity in school boards when working with external partnerships in schools.

Principals (Marlene Pike)

- The challenge for each school is to try and meet the needs of a very diversified population with a minimum of resources, specifically funding. At this time, the overwhelming issue for our youth relates to mental health. A growing number of our youth are struggling with anxiety, depression and other mental health issues that are seriously impacting their ability to function. We are faced with the challenge of not only managing these behaviours but providing support to the students and their families. Many families are finding the community support to be sorely lacking. Waiting lists are long and by the time students are seen, the symptoms have reached the critical stage.
- Students transitioning into high school are often unprepared for the significant differences in programming, often from small class placements. They are accustomed to the intensive support and counselling which often come with small class placements, including more intensive academic support. Even with accommodations (partial timetables, reverse integration etc) when they return to full time school, the supports are often insufficient and students spend an unsuccessful semester or year until they adjust, act out, or drop out.

Developmental Disability (Susan Blekkenhorst)

- Acknowledgement of the memorandum sent out from Barry Finlay from December 2011, regarding the categories of exceptionality.
- A comment was made regarding the Additional Qualifications courses and the need for all classroom teachers to be able to employ a variety of teaching strategies in order to reach every student in the classroom. Teaching strategies are not disability specific but instead benefit a range of students with and without an identification of exceptionality.

Pervasive Developmental Disorders / Autism (Janette Seymour)

- Emphasis was placed on the importance of focusing on inclusion. For example, even if students have not had a formal assessment, service should be provided.

Students / Youth (Christian Mclary)

- Christian shared his personal experiences with the high school system and identified that additional support could be provided to address the needs of all students.

Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (Catherine Luetke)

- It is important to note that not all students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing are being formally identified which means that the data available to the Ministry does not necessarily reflect the actual number of children and youth who are deaf and hard-of-hearing.
- Catherine circulated a document entitled “On Becoming: Developing an Empowering Cultural Identify Framework for Deaf Youth and Adults”, written by Anita Small and Joanne Cripps. This paper was submitted to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. This document can also be found on the MACSE repository.

Physical Disability (Kim Pearson)

- Thames Valley District School Board and the community wide initiative “The Pledge to End Bullying Campaign” was recognized with a National Exemplary Bullying Prevention Program Award granted by the U.S. based School Safety Advocacy Council. This award was presented at the National Conference on Bullying on February 15, 2012 in Orlando, Florida.
- It was suggested that a parent brochure or FAQ's be available on the ministry website when the PPM on Transitions is released.
- School and classroom accessibility continues to be a concern for families of students with physical disabilities. Policies about accessibility considerations in all school retrofitting and construction are critical.