

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

**MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF THE**

**MINISTER'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**October 30, 2013**

**900 Bay Street  
Macdonald Block  
Toronto, Ontario**

**Members**

John Wilhelm, Chair  
Warren Kennedy, Vice-Chair  
Lynn Ziraldo, Past Chair  
Suzanne Bonneville  
Marcia Brown  
Dawn Clelland  
Shelly Durance  
Tracy Grant  
Braxton Hartman  
Laura Lachance  
Dr. Arlette Lefebvre  
Domenica Leone  
Cheryl Lovell  
Catherine Luetke  
Marion Macdonald  
David Mason  
Sharon McWhirter  
Lucille Norman  
Kim Pearson  
Marlene Pike  
Robert Savage  
Janette Seymour  
Joe Trovato  
Jim Van Buskirk

**Non-Voting Members**

Sarah Hardy, Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Manager, Autism  
  
Jane Cousens, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU)

**Attending Guests/Presenters**

Honourable Liz Sandals, Minister of Education  
Kerry Smuk, Minister's Office

**Provincial Schools Branch**

Nancy Sanders, Director of Provincial Schools Branch

**Regional Office**

Glenda Stevenson, Ottawa Regional Office  
Cosimo Cinanni, Ottawa Regional Office

**French-Language Policy and Programs Branch**

Armand Gagné, Manager, FLEPPB  
Vanessa Lee, Senior Policy Advisor

**Special Education Policy and Program Branch**

Barry Finlay, Director  
Julie Williams, Manager  
Anita Bennett, Manager  
Lisa Lumley, Manager  
Mike Gildea, Council Secretary  
Céline Ranger-Rush, Education Officer  
Arkadi Toritsyn, Senior Policy Advisor  
Katherine Nowina, Senior Policy Advisor  
Louise Sibbald, Policy Analyst  
Kim Slomka, Education Officer  
Christine Riedel, Education Officer  
Maureen Cox, Education Officer  
Steven Venner, Policy Analyst

**Non OPS Staff**

Margaret Spoelstra, Executive Director, Autism Ontario  
Susan Menary, Speech and Language and Autism Services,  
Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) (via teleconference)

**Meeting Summary**  
**Meeting of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education**  
**October 30, 2013**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS</b>	<b>John Wilhelm</b>
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John Wilhelm, Chair of Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) welcomed all new members to Council and provided a detailed overview of the Conflict of Interest rules to the Council. Council members were reminded of the requirement to declare any potential conflict at each meeting.

Presently, MACSE members have two working groups. Tracy Grant is chairing the Special Education Funding working group and Robert Savage is chairing Building the Next Phase in Ontario working group. New members were asked to see Tracy or Robert to indicate which group they will be participating in.

John reminded members that the purpose of community collaboration during the MACSE meetings is to provide members with an opportunity to discuss challenges and/or opportunities within their associations/organizations.

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE</b>	<b>Barry Finlay</b> <b>Director, SEPPB</b>
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Barry provided a brief overview of special education in Ontario.

A large part of the discussion was centered on the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. Barry also provided an update on the Ministry of Child and Youth Services (MCYS) *Moving on Mental Health*. Lead agencies will be established across Ontario and be responsible for providing core services and collaborating effectively with other services that play a role in young peoples' lives, such as schools, hospitals, those working in primary care and child welfare authorities. Discussions will be taking place with lead agencies and at the local level to define a common set of core services in Ontario. Defining core services will make the system more transparent to parents and young people, as well as those who help families find the services they need.

Discussion

*Supporting Minds*, an Educator's guide is now available to all educators to help them understand more about mental health and how to identify students that are struggling.

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>Autism Reference Group - Report on PPM 140</b>	<b>Julie Williams, SEPPB</b> <b>Kathryn Nowina</b> <b>Arkadi Toritsyn</b> <b>Steve Venner</b> <b>Sarah Hardy, MCYS</b> <b>Jane Cousens, MTCU</b>
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Lynn Ziraldo, Margaret Spoelstra, Executive Director from Autism Ontario and Susan Menary from the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) participated in the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) update.

The Autism Reference Group was provided a status update on ministry initiatives to support students with ASD.

- The total number of students formally identified as having an ASD by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) in publicly funded school boards, including School Authorities, as of the 2011-12 school year is 16,260.
- The Government has taken action in response to the majority of the Reference Group’s recommendations.
- On May 2, 2013 the Ministry hosted an Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Expertise Professional Learning Day. All 72 school boards participated and engaged in this knowledge mobilization event and shared current evidence-based resources and effective practices. Information and resource sharing continued the development of regional professional learning communities to further develop ABA capacity in Ontario’s publicly funded schools. Next year’s ABA Expertise Professional Learning Day is scheduled for April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014.
- The Ministry of Education (EDU) funded the Geneva Centre for Autism to develop 12 bilingual e-Learning modules on autism. They became available free of charge to all educators employed by publicly funded school boards in Ontario in July 2013. EDU will monitor the uptake of these modules.

**Discussion**

Next Steps include:

- Improve training opportunities
- Support transitions to postsecondary education
- Update IEP samples (Connections for Students, Elementary and Secondary examples)
- Promote Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA) through the Geneva Institute
- Share effective practices identified by ABA Working Group

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>COMMUNITY COLLABORATION</b>	<b>All</b>
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Each member of MACSE shared the successes and challenges experienced by their exceptionality, group or the community they represent. The information gathered helps to inform MACSE’s priorities and various initiatives of EDU.

Gifted (David Mason)

Challenges include:

There have been three Minority Reports specific to Boards’ Special Education Plans generated from SEAC Groups during the Spring /Summer of 2013. These Minority Reports indicate significantly different perspectives between Members/Associations of SEAC and their respective Boards.

Two of the Minority Reports focus on key issues brought forward concerning Gifted Learners. One of the reports was shared with the Chair of MACSE over the summer.

First Nations (Marion Macdonald)

Challenges include:

When students arrive into local boards, they come with significant learning gaps and do not have IEPs. This is one issue that affects the aboriginal community globally. It is very difficult to get Northern Affairs to understand that early detection is required.

### Physical Disabilities (Kim Pearson)

Successful practices include:

Easter Seals, in collaboration with Holland Bloorview has developed 10 different “Transition Tip Sheets” available in 6 languages. Families can now access this resource on the Easter Seals website at:

<http://www.easterseals.org/services/parent-resources/transitions>

Challenges include:

PPM 156 on transitions is a concern; specifically developing transition timelines and ensuring parents are included in the process.

### Developmental Disabilities (Laura LaChance)

Challenges include:

- Curriculum content should be developed for students with developmental disabilities.
- The ministry should review the IEP as it restricts the number of accommodations.

### Pervasive Developmental Disorders/Autism (Janette Seymour)

Challenges include:

An early intervention service has indicated that 25% of parents whose children are identified with autism are refusing to share that information with school boards and service providers.

### Students (Braxton Hartman)

Challenges include:

The issue of parents not sharing information is also a concern with the York ASD partnerships. York ASD has observed that it could be due to different cultural backgrounds.

### Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Catherine Luetke)

Parents are not informing daycares.

### Blind and Low Vision (Dawn Clelland)

Challenges include:

- High school academic math curriculum has become an issue for blind students. Students are expected to learn math orally. Most blind students do not take math at secondary school level.
- Teachers need to be taught how to use the new unified system.
- Dawn suggested that students could take their academic math, science and music braille at W. Ross Macdonald as more support would be available for these students.

### Multiple Exceptionalities (Tracy Grant)

Challenges include:

More students are receiving supports without a formal identification. Data is required to justify the funding school boards receive.

### Supervisory Officers (Warren Kennedy and Domenica Leone)

Successful practices include:

Funding for the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy has been well received as well as the recent Mental Health resource for educators, *Supporting Minds*.

### Past Chair, Lynn Ziraldo

Successful practices include:

The recent IEP training within school boards. We are seeing more students becoming involved in the IEP meetings and owning their disability.

Challenges include:

- Transitions continues to be an issue for postsecondary students. Students who have special education needs are being asked for up to date assessments and accommodations. A standard policy should be

put in place so that students transitioning into postsecondary have an understanding of what is acceptable.

- The Pathways document that replaced Choices into Action needs to be clarified, there is huge misinterpretation (page 23). A memo should go out from EDU and TCU with clear direction.

#### Emotional /Behaviour Disorder Robert Savage

Challenges include:

The number of children entering Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) with learning challenges.

#### Speech and Language Pathologists (Sharon McWhirter)

Successful practices include:

Provincial demonstration school projects have just completed the integration of speech and language and are now looking at how to integrate and improve transitions from preschool to school.

#### Learning Disabilities (Suzanne Bonneville)

Successful practices include:

The release of the resource document, *Supporting Minds*. It has excellent information however needs to include more about the impact of exceptionalities on mental health.

#### Educational Assistants (Marcia Brown)

Successes include:

The information I receive from MACSE meetings is now being shared with other educational assistants in my school board.

Challenges include:

Support staff are not receiving enough professional development in the Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) program.

#### Social Workers (Jim Van Buskirk)

Successful practices include:

*Supporting Minds*, a guide for educators is very clear and reassures teachers they are not clinicians. It provides teachers with knowledge and strategies to recognize and support students with mental health needs.

Challenges include:

The biggest challenge is the lack of professional services within communities. Hospital admissions and day treatment programs are at the highest level of need.

#### Principals (Marlene Pike)

Successful practices include:

The community school principal, youth and parent groups are all working together. Marlene thanked the ministry for building capacity in Section 23 programs.

Challenges include:

- Marlene has attended several principal meetings and has heard that there is an increase in student needs in the early years. Another concern was the need for increased coordination between agencies and schools.
- Regulation 274 continues to have a huge impact. Teachers are only required to have Special Education, Part One for positions within special education.

#### Teachers (Shelly Durance)

Challenges include:

Special education teachers would like to know when the *Learning for All* K-12 document will be released in final form. Implementation has been difficult because it is still in draft format.

Medical (Arlette Lefebvre)

Challenges include:

- Students should not have cell phones in the bedroom, it disturbs their sleep pattern.
- Bullying is increasingly becoming a problem for students with special education needs.

Psychologists (Joe Trovato)

Successes include:

- School psychology welcomed PPM 156 on transitions.
- Funding for Mental Health Leaders.
- The funding for suicide prevention was well received.

Challenges include:

- There are discrepancies in the exceptionality categories. An update is required. The main concern is the definition of Learning Disabilities and Intellectual Disability.

Trustees (Cheryl Lovell)

Challenges include:

A workable childcare plan should include funding for supports.

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>School Board Efficiencies &amp; Modernization Strategy</b>	<b>Barry Finlay Director, SEPPB</b>
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Barry Finlay presented the School Board Efficiencies and Modernization Strategy in relation to special education. A detailed explanation was provided of the Special Education Grant (SEG) and High Needs Amount (HNA) and how each amount is allocated. Barry also spoke of Dr. Douglas Willms work with the ministry and the creation of a new funding formula, that if approved, will provide a more equitable distribution of funds.

Discussion

- As of 2014-15, funding to hire a Mental Health Leader will be allocated to each of the 72 school boards
- In 2013-14, funds were provided to all Section 23 programs for professional development.

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>Supporting Continuous Improvement of Individual Education Plans (IEP's) and Transition Planning Process: IEP Provincial Trends Report 2012</b>	<b>Anita Bennett, Manager, SEPPB Céline Ranger-Rush Kim Slomka Christine Riedel Kathryn Nowina</b>
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SEPPB shared highlights from the Individual Education Plan (IEP) Provincial Trends Report, 2012. Boards internally reported improvement in all IEP components since the 2006-07 Provincial IEP Review. School boards reported ongoing professional learning in four major areas that has contributed to these improvements including:

- Awareness development
- Professional development
- Resource development; and
- Internal IEP reviews

Boards were also asked how the Ministry of Education could support further improvement in IEPs.

Recommendations included:

Updating the IEP samples on the Council of Directors of Education (CODE) website; and an online forum for boards to share resources and engage in professional dialogue.

The ministry has responded and is currently updating the IEP samples on the CODE website and has created a password protected online IEP e-community for boards to use.

**MACSE members were asked to respond to the following question.**

To support continuous improvement of IEPs including transition plans, what types of resources would benefit parents/students through this process?

Members suggested the following:

- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Training sessions available for SEAC members, parents and students
- Parent Mentorship Program through local Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs)
- Board produced materials be made available in multiple languages and formats
- On-line resource site for parents
- One IEP template software to be used by all boards across the province.

ITEM	REMARKS
	<b>Honourable Liz Sandals</b>

The Minister of Education, Honourable Liz Sandals welcomed new members of MACSE and expressed her thanks for those who have been on MACSE for many years. The Minister provided members with an update on current priorities. Minister Sandals also spoke briefly about the following initiatives including:

- PPM on Learning Disabilities
- Mental Health Strategy
- Mental Health Leaders
- PPM 156 transition planning

The Minister also spoke of the legislative agenda including the amendment to the Ontario College of Teachers Act (investigative and disciplinary processes), the new framework for negotiations in the school sector and the replacement of the Day Nurseries Act that will become the new Childcare and Day Nurseries Act.

The Minister spoke about updating the vision for Ontario’s education system. Consultations on education have been occurring throughout the province with a variety of people attending including small businesses, non-profit agencies and various parent groups. Conversations have included resilience in students, the importance of connecting with students and better use of technology. The main issue at all venues was Mental Health and Addictions. There is a growing public awareness in mental health issues.

Minister Sandals approved the establishment of working groups to review the following exceptionalities:

- Developmental / Mild Intellectual;
- Gifted; and
- Behaviour

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>Mental Health Update</b>	<b>Lisa Lumley, Manager, SEPPB</b>
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SEPPB provided an update on Ontario’s Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. Results to date include the following:



- More services on the ground including over 770 new mental health workers across the province.
- *Working Together for Kids' Mental Health* was expanded to engage front-line professionals within 11 communities involving over 300 participating organizations. These community partners are working together to better meet the needs of children and youth through identifying their needs early and getting them the help they need from the most appropriate provider.
- EDU commitments include enhancing the Ontario curriculum, developing a K-12 resource guide and website, funding and support for Mental Health Leaders and implementing School Mental Health ASSIST.
- Postsecondary strategies include a province-wide hotline dedicated to postsecondary students and a Mental Health Innovation Fund for postsecondary institutions, student groups and local mental health providers with a postsecondary partner.
- New initiatives launching next include a tele-mental health expansion and enhancement, training supports for Aboriginal Mental Health and Addictions Workers.

#### Discussion

- Members inquired about how to provide feedback.

Once finalized, MACSE minutes will be posted on the MACSE repository and will be available to members. Minutes from previous meetings, as well as MACSE's Annual Reports can be reviewed at [www.macse-on.ca](http://www.macse-on.ca).

MACSE's next meetings are as follows: June 24 and 25, 2014.

Members are reminded that all meeting materials from the October 2013 meeting are confidential unless otherwise stated.