

Meeting Summary
Meeting of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE)
October 7, 2015

The Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) held its most recent meeting on October 7th in Toronto. Below are highlights of the meeting.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Joe Trovato, Chair, MACSE

- Joe Trovato, Chair of MACSE welcomed members to Council and reminded them of the *Conflict of Interest* rules and the requirement to declare any potential conflict to John Wilhelm, Ethics Executive.
- Joe reminded the group that all documents distributed are confidential unless otherwise stated.
- The meeting summary and minutes from the June meeting will be circulated soon.
- Introductions for Cathy Montreuil, Assistant Deputy Minister, Learning Curriculum Division and Louise Sirisko, Director of the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch (SEPPB).

Minister Update

The Honourable Liz Sandals, Minister of Education

- Minister Sandals thanked Council members for their hard work and dedication. The advice of Council is important and continues to help inform policy work for students with special education needs. The education system is characterized by great partnerships which enable the system to continue to move forward. Minister Sandals also provided the following update:
 - Increase of \$2.72B in the special education grant which is a 9% increase from 3 years ago.
 - Current funding model reflects variability in student need and boards' abilities to meet the needs.
 - Minister Sandals asked the group to think about other sources of statistically valid data that exist that could inform funding decisions.
 - Minister Sandals encouraged the group to continue to pursue opportunities for interministerial work. Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy is a good example.
 - Minister Sandals looks forward to receiving recommendations from MACSE's working groups related to well-being and student achievement and Aboriginal Education.

Cathy Montreuil

Assistant Deputy Minister, Learning Curriculum Division

- Cathy Montreuil, Assistant Deputy Minister, thanked the group for their hard work and important advice regarding students with special education needs. Cathy reinforced the Ministry's commitment to working with all partners to enable school boards to stay focused on supporting students.

Special Education Update

Louise Sirisko, Director, SEPPB

- Louise Sirisko has held a number of positions within the education sector and most recently was Superintendent with the Peel District School Board. Louise discussed the need to continue to work collaboratively across ministries and to build relationships based on transparency, respect and honesty. It is important to build a culture and community that enables open communication, learning from best practices and a strong focus on data to inform decision making.
- Louise provided an update on the following items:
 - Lots of inter-ministerial collaboration underway focusing on the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.
 - Learning for All Day to be held on October 22, 2015 (this was subsequently postponed).

- A draft of the Provincial Alternative Curriculum is ready for internal review and discussion with stakeholders. MACSE members provided a synopsis of their work to date on Alternative Curriculum:
 - Rather than a separate document, consider making the provincial curriculum inclusive for all learners. The word “alternative” suggests that it is separate.
 - Need to revisit how curriculum documents are developed to consider various learning pathways, technology and 21st century learning.
 - Suggest using the term “functional” versus “non-academic”.
 - Students leaving school should have functional skills.
 - The June 2015 MACSE Resolution reiterated the need for an inclusive provincial curriculum.
 - Ongoing discussions regarding the definition of inclusive education.
 - Alternative curriculum is helpful for teachers to provide consistency and uniformity of programming and assessment.
- Special Needs Strategy, which is a partnership between the Ministries of Education, Children and Youth Services, Health and Long-term Care and Community and Social Services, has three target goals:
 - Identifying children earlier and getting them the right help sooner;
 - Coordinating Service Planning; and
 - Making supports and service delivery seamless.
- Draft Definitions for Intellectual (Developmental Disability, Mild Intellectual Disability, Giftedness) or Behavioural Needs are currently in approvals. This is an important piece of work that will support future development of guidelines and effective practices.
- MACSE will be invited to provide feedback on funding.
- The continued phase-in of the High Needs Amount to a more fair and equitable model will involve redistribution of funds to better reflect the variation among district school boards with respect to students with special education needs and boards’ abilities to meet the special education needs of students.
- Individual Education Plans should be in place by October (ETFO labour sanctions may have delayed IEP creation in some schools. ETFO sanctions have since been suspended).

Updates from Other Ministries

Christine Hughes, Manager, Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS)

- The Ministry is continuing to implement the 2014 Ontario Budget investment through the ongoing transformation of the Developmental Services (DS) sector.
- The Ministry is working with the Canadian Hearing Society to develop a program framework that will provide direction for the planning, structure and delivery of MCSS-funded Interpreter Services.
- MCSS was asked to provide an update on Passport funding at the next meeting.

Eleni Tsoutsias, Senior Policy Advisor, Ministry of Health and Long-term Care (MOHLTC)

- There has been an investment of \$7.2M to support Active and Healthy Communities. As part of this investment, the province is providing more than \$224,000 to Special Olympics Ontario for athletes with special needs. The investment will also support 123 provincial, regional and local projects to increase opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to get active.

Jane Cleve, Manager, Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS)

- Jane provided an update on the work underway as part of the Special Needs Strategy. District School Boards and service providers across the health and children/youth services sectors have been working together at local proposal development tables to develop proposals for the implementation of coordinated service planning and the integrated delivery of rehabilitation services in 34 service delivery areas across the province.

- Proposal development tables submitted proposals for coordinated service planning in June and the four ministries are finalizing review of these proposals. The first phase of implementation is expected to begin at the end of 2015.
- The deadline for the Integrated Delivery of Rehabilitation Services proposals is October 30, 2015 with phased implementation targeted for spring 2016.
- MACSE members commented that the process is going well and commended all four ministries for the collaborative process.
- MCYS was asked to provide an update on Moving on Mental Health at the next meeting.

Autism Update (Members of the ASD Reference Group: Lynn Ziraldo (already present), Neil Walker and Marg Spoelstra.

Julie Williams, Manager, Ministry of Education

- In 2013-14 school boards report that more than 18,000 students diagnosed with ASD are in the public school system.
- There has been a \$73M investment since 2006 to strengthen school board capacity and improve learning environments for students with ASD. Of the \$73M, \$49M was allocated to training.
- Two pilots are underway for students moving to post-secondary education, in collaboration with MTCU:
 - Transitions Model: multi-disciplinary, student-specific, post-secondary institution Education Disability Services Office-led transition teams to support transition of students with ASD to post-secondary education. Funding of \$270,000 has been provided to coordinating boards. These pilots involve partnerships between Algonquin College and the Ottawa Carleton District School Board, and York University with the Toronto District School Board and the York Catholic District School Board.
 - Conscious Classroom Pilots: \$250,000 has been provided to the Ontario Education Services Corporation to pilot Conscious Classrooms in four district school boards for the 2015-16 school year. Participating school boards are: Algoma District School Board, Huron-Superior Catholic School Board, Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board and Peel District School Board.
- ABA Day was held in June 2015 and all 72 district school boards were invited to attend.
- The Geneva Centre for Autism Summer Training Institute will now be delivered through the 2015-16 school year through a series of on line training modules. As well, the Geneva Centre for Autism has developed another free on line training modules with a focus on effective collaboration practices of schools, parents and community providers in supporting students with ASD.
- PPM 140 Survey Results:
 - The ministry is considering potential changes to the survey questions and its method of delivery.
 - In 2014-15, 67 out of 72 school boards responded. Increases in all but three areas:
 - Functional behavior assessments
 - Formal training sessions
 - Knowledge mobilization
 - Further information is needed to understand the reasons for the lack of change or growth in these areas.
 - Significant increase in transition planning, may be a result of new PPM 156.
 - Next steps include continued work with TCU on pilots, continued collaboration with MCYS and continued monitoring of EduGAINS and ÉduSource.

Jane Cousens and Justine Wadhawan, Senior Policy Advisors, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (TCU): Update on the Action Plan to Strengthen Transitions to Post-Secondary Education for Students with Disabilities

- Purpose of the four point plan is to assist Universities and Colleges in their capacity to support students with disabilities as they transition to post-secondary education by building on existing services, expertise and successful practices in the education and community service sectors.
- The four point plan is built upon collaboration and includes:
 - Transition website: enhancement of a new web-based Transition Resource Guide for students with disabilities transitioning to post secondary education. (www.transitionresourceguide.ca). As of fall 2015, the Transition Resource Guide has been distributed in hard copy in both English and French to all school boards in the province.
 - Demonstration Projects: Demonstration projects have partnered with school boards and each coordinating board receives \$270,000 over two years, ending December 2016. As of fall 2015, the two demonstration projects saw a total of 63 students with ASD enrolled in their programs last academic year and 52 successfully completed the year.
 - Multi-Sector Working Group: Focus is on transitions to Post-Secondary Education for Students with ASD to arrive at a Proposed Transitions Model for students with ASD. This group is on track to provide advice to the Deputy Minister of TCU by the summer of 2016.
 - Review Transitions-Related Documentation for Students with ASD: The ministry has asked the Regional Assessment and Resource Centre (RARC) and the demonstration projects to review transitions-related documentation for students with ASD to support the identification of best practices. RARC is using a specialized psycho-educational assessment template specifically designed for students with ASD.

Sarah Hardy, Manager, Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS)

- In 2015-16, MCYS is investing over \$190M in autism programs and services including Autism Intervention Program, Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)-based services and supports and ASD respite programs.
- A number of reports and consultations have identified challenges and opportunities for providing services and supports for children and youth with ASD, including:
 - Limited access to early intervention and diagnosis - families experience long wait times and few or no supports are available during this time.
 - Challenges with current autism services – ABA may not be intensive enough and regression can occur between blocks of service. Approximately 93% of those receiving IBI are age five or older.
 - Varying levels of school-board capacity and knowledge of ABA practices – disconnect between MCYS community-based ABA interventions and instructional based ABA in schools.
 - Lack of supports for youth transitioning into adulthood – youth are under prepared for adulthood, and there are a lack of services and supports for youth with ASD after they turn 18.
- The ministry is working on a number of initiatives to address these challenges and help to improve services for children with ASD and their families, including:
 - Special Needs Strategy (discussed as part of ministry updates).
 - Improving Access to Early Intervention and Diagnosis – improving access to pre-diagnosis, evidence-based early intervention services for children with developmental concerns and/or those who are showing early signs of autism. Through a Call for Applications, MCYS will identify four organizations to implement evidence-based early intervention models over a three year period, to be launched in early 2016. MCYS is also collaborating with MOHLTC to improve access to early diagnosis, through a pilot project involving multidisciplinary ASD diagnosis teams within primary health care organizations in select regions. Demonstrations expected to be launched in March 2016.
 - Evaluation of ABA-based Services and Supports – the ministry is preparing to procure the services of an external consultant to conduct a program evaluation to identify opportunities to improve the accessibility, effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of the program.

- Improving Efficiency and Family Experience with the Autism Intervention Program (AIP) – MCYS is collaborating with three AIP agencies to identify and implement opportunities for efficiencies.
- Improving Transitions for Youth with ASD – MCYS is working with MCSS to launch a two year demonstration project to assist young people with ASD ages 14-30 attain and maintain paid employment. Agencies for the demonstrations will be selected in Fall/Winter 2015-16.

MACSE members provided some further comments:

- Collaboration between all ministries is remarkable and speaks to the quality of relationships that have been formed.
- Consideration needs to be given regarding how to effectively impact on learning, professional development and knowledge mobilization.
- Need to look at the role of the education sector in supporting the development of self-determining individuals.
- Need to continue to think about how to communicate pilot findings and results to the system.
- Continue to consider the needs of Francophone communities and small, isolated school boards as various initiatives are being developed and implemented.
- It would be useful for the collaborative work for students with ASD to model how we support all students with special education needs.

Priorities Update / Working Groups

All

MACSE members broke into the following groups to discuss their current priorities:

Aboriginal Education	Well Being and Student Achievement
Marion (Chair)	Sue (Chair)
John (Executive Member)	Lynn (Executive Member)
Shelly	Joanne
Katie	Daphne
Brian	Laura
Peggy	Denise
Sharon	Stacey
Cheryl	Janette
Lucille	Marcia
Suzanne	Braxton
	Dawn

Meeting Summary and Wrap-Up

Joe Trovato, Chair

- Joe reminded the group of the following:
 - Think about Minister Sandals request for statistically valid data sources and opportunities to continue to build on interministerial work.
 - MACSE will be invited to upcoming funding consultations.
 - June minutes are in approvals and will be circulated as soon as possible.
- Next Meeting is Feb 18-19, 2016.

Appendix A: Members of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education

Exceptionalities/Sectors Represented	Name
Council Chair	Joe Trovato
Exceptionalities	
Learning Disabilities	Suzanne Bonneville
Pervasive Developmental Disorders / Autism	Janette Seymour
Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing	Denise Maisonneuve
Gifted	Stacey Manzerolle
Developmental Disability	Laura LaChance
Blind and Low-Vision	Dawn Clelland
Physical Disability	Katie Muirhead
Multiple Exceptionalities	Lucille Norman
Emotional / Behavioural Disorder	Daphne Korczak
Educators	
Supervisory Officers	Peggy Blair
Trustees	Cheryl Lovell
Principals	Brian Rivait
Teachers	Shelly Durance
Educational Assistants	Marcia Brown
Professionals	
Medical	Joanne Jones
Psychologists	Dr. Sue Ball
Social Workers	Jim Van Buskirk
Speech and Language Pathologists	Sharon McWhirter
Students / Youth	
Students / Youth	Braxton Hartman
Aboriginal Community	
Vice Chair /Aboriginal Community	Marion Macdonald