

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF THE
MINISTER'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

October 10 & 11, 2012

900 Bay Street
Macdonald Block, Huron Room
Toronto, Ontario

Members

John Wilhelm, Chair
Warren Kennedy, Vice-Chair (Regrets)
Lynn Ziraldo, Past Chair
Susan Blekkenhorst (Regrets)
Marcia Brown
Dawn Clelland
Tracy Grant
Dr. Arlette LeFebvre
Cheryl Lovell
Catherine Luetke
David Mason
Christian Mclary
Kim Pearson (Regrets)
Marlene Pike
Marianne Saade (Regrets)
Robert Savage
Janette Seymour
Joe Trovato

Non Voting Members

Susan Capling, Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS)
Christine Hughes, Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS)
Jane Cousens, Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU)
Kenny Li Cheong Man (MTCU)
Mary Iannuzziello, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) (Regrets)

Attending Guests/Presenters

Mary Jean Gallagher, ADM, Student Achievement Division
Audrey Cartile, Manager, Student Achievement Division
Ruth Flynn, Director, Inclusive Education Branch
Marg Connor, Director, Learning Environment Branch
George Zegarac, Deputy Minister of Education

Members of the Autism Reference Group**Provincial Schools Branch**

Nancy Sanders, Director

Regional Office

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

French-Language Policy and Programs Branch

Vanessa Lee, Senior Program and Policy Analyst

Special Education Policy and Program Branch

Barry Finlay, Director
Anita Bennett, Manager
Sandy Palinski, Manager
Julie Williams, Manager
Mike Gildea, Council Secretary
Paul Grogan, Education Officer
Fausto Iannialice, Senior Policy Advisor
Caroline Parkin, Senior Policy Advisor
Céline Ranger-Rush, Education Officer
Christine Riedel, Education Officer
Louise Sibbald, Recorder
Sandra Montgomery-Laird, Senior Policy Analyst
Kim Slomka, Education Officer
Ruth Swan, Education Officer

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| ITEM | WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS | John Wilhelm |
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October 10, 2012: Meeting started at 9:00 AM

John Wilhelm, Chair of Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE), expressed regrets on behalf of the Minister who would not be able to attend the Council meeting. He also expressed regrets for members who were unable to attend. Members were reminded of the requirement to declare any potential conflict at each meeting.

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| ITEM | REMARKS | George Zegarac |
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George Zegarac, Deputy Minister of Education expressed his appreciation for the commitment of MACSE members and reminded members that MACSE is a strong voice and a vehicle for change. The Deputy Minister suggested MACSE focus on three priorities and follow them through to their completion.

The Deputy Minister identified a number of areas that MACSE could provide input including:

- Mental Health
- Transition Plans
- Speech and Language

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| ITEM | SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE | Barry Finlay |
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Barry Finlay, Director of the Special Education Policy and Programs Branch (SEPPB), provided an update of activities in SEPPB. An overview of the number of students receiving special education programs and services and a breakdown per exceptionality based on the most recent available data (2010-11). He also noted the percentage of students receiving special education programs and services continues to increase and may reach approximately 20% in 3 to 5 years. This growth is being driven primarily by the non-identified population, as the percentage of students reported to be receiving special education programs and services that have been formally identified has remained fairly constant at around 9%.

MACSE members were provided with the Special Education Update and reminded that it is a DRAFT copy only.

Discussion:

- The responsibility for Mental Health and Addictions will remain in SEPPB.
- School boards are indicating that many students are struggling with mental health issues.
- The ministry will continue to work with EQAO regarding accommodations.

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| ITEM | ACCEPTING SCHOOLS | Ann Rubello Major Carla Meili Marg Connor |
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Marg Connor, Director of the Learning Environment Branch and Ruth Flynn, Director of the Equity and Inclusive Education Branch provided an overview of the Accepting Schools Comprehensive Action Plan, which includes Bill 13, the *Accepting Schools Act*.

In the discussion, members of MACSE identified areas of concerns including:

- Cyber-bullying
- Special education and bullying
- Suspensions and expulsions within the various exceptionalities

The Ministry, through the collaborative work of Inclusive Education Branch, Learning Environment Branch and Special Education, is working with the Ontario Human Rights Commission to develop a resource to support a bias free approach to student discipline through prevention, early intervention and progressive discipline. The resource, *Approaching Student Behaviour from a Human Rights Perspective* is designed to support school and system leaders in their work with teachers, staff, students, families and the community to foster and promote student achievement and well-being while addressing inappropriate student behaviour.

Discussion:

- The importance of all students needing to feel safe, included and accepted.
- Leadership and data are two key things that promote change in education.
- Safe Schools and the principles of equity and inclusive education have to be embedded in the curriculum.
- Parent engagement will help to build a shared understanding of inappropriate behaviours.
- Students need to learn to advocate for themselves.
- Special education should be integrated within the process not thought of after the fact.
- Training required for staff on mental health issues.

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| ITEM | A4 Update on Assessing Achievement in Alternative Areas | Maureen Cox Kim Slomka |
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The Special Education Policy and Programs Branch (SEPPB) developed provincial guidelines and funded regional projects in boards to enhance assessment processes, methods and reporting for students who are not accessing the curriculum.

This is a small group of students who do not access the Ontario curriculum and do not participate in EQAO assessments. Members were provided with an overview of the project as well as an update on projects that the team supported within selected school boards.

In 2011-12 funding was provided to one board in each region to further enhance board capacity to collect, analyze and use data to report on the progress and achievement of these students.

Discussion:

- This group of students should have access to an alternative curriculum that assists the student with employment, supportive day programs and development of life skills for independence. It would be much easier to assess progress.
- A suggestion was made to develop a video for parents with their progress.

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| ITEM | WORKING GROUP DISCUSSIONS | All |
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Members divided into two working groups to discuss Accepting Schools and Accountability.

- Accepting Schools: This working group discussed the impact of the *Accepting Schools* legislation on students with special education needs
- Accountability: This working group discussed student achievement and accountability.

October 11, 2012
Meeting started at 9:00 a.m.

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| ITEM | HOUSEKEEPING ISSUES | |
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MACSE members discussed the use of survey monkey as a tool to collect information from their respective associations as part of community collaboration.

1. MACSE members will continue to circulate the hard or electronic copy of the Community Collaboration form to members of their constituency groups as per the previous process;
2. Respondents would submit their completed forms to MACSE members directly; and
3. MACSE members would then summarize the feedback provided and use Survey Monkey to capture the information summary prior to the next meeting.

Remind constituency groups that the minutes of this meeting are one way of sharing feedback and survey monkey is another tool used to collect their information.

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| ITEM | MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTIONS | Sandy Palinski |
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Members were provided with an update on Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.

As of January 2013, 28 of the 30 Mental Health Leaders have been hired across the province.

Mental health leaders are full time senior mental health professionals with dedicated responsibility for:

- Conducting/updating board and school level resource mapping to determine areas of strengths and need
- Providing leadership for the board mental health team
- Working with senior administration to develop and implement the board mental health and addictions strategy
- Collaborating with board and community professionals to promote clear and integrated access to services
- Coordinating systematic mental health literacy initiatives in the board
- Selecting and supporting evidence-based approaches to mental health promotion and prevention

Ministry commitments to mental health include the following:

- Amend the education curriculum
- Develop a K-12 resource guide/website
- Provide support for professional learning in mental health and addictions for all Ontario educators
- Fund and support mental health leaders in publicly funded school boards
- Support *Working Together for Kids' Mental Health*
- Implement School Mental Health ASSIST

School Mental Health ASSIST is a provincial implementation support team designed to help Ontario school boards to promote student mental health and well-being, through leadership, practical resources and systematic research-based approaches to school mental health.

Discussion

- Dr. Kathy Short is currently developing modules/resources that will be made available for both elementary and secondary educators. These resources will provide a better understanding of mental health and addictions to better support student well-being.
- Members suggested students be more involved with the Strategy, one way of reaching students is through the internet. Members suggested that mental health information be available on a website for students similar to the online community for [Mental Health Leaders](#).
- Additional work is underway to better support educators in understanding youth suicide prevention and addictions.

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| ITEM | UPDATES FROM OTHER MINISTRIES | Christine Hughes –MCSS Jane Cousens – MTCU Kenny Li Cheong Man - MTCU |
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MACSE members heard presentations on a variety of initiatives underway within the Ministries of Community and Social Services (MCSS), and Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU). A written update of each ministry is now part of the Special Education Update.

MCSS

- A team of in-house experts at MCSS has been pulled together to lead an evaluation of the Passport mentoring initiative. The results of the evaluation will help inform and advise on the essential components of the program that provide the most benefits to participants. The evaluation and final report is expected to be completed by December 2012.
- Effective April 1, 2012, the Passport became the single direct funding for adult developmental services. Adults currently receiving Special Services at Home funding moved into the Passport Program.
- The Passport guidelines are being revised to cover a range of services, such as respite. The ministry expects to consult on draft guidelines beginning in October.

MTCU

- MTCU is working with EDU Provincial Schools Branch, Resources Services Library and publishers with on-line textbooks. This initiative helps provide print alternate materials (e.g. Braille, tape, large print and CD-ROM) to students who are blind, low vision, learning disabled or unable to use print materials. This service will also be available to colleges so that students can access alternate textbooks.
- The Summer Transition Program has now expanded to colleges. This program is intended to assist students with learning disabilities to make a successful transition from secondary school to college or university.
- MTCU will continue funding the Northern Ontario Resource and Assessment Centre and Queens University Regional Assessment and Resource Centre. Costs will be prorated based on financial need. The Centres used the funds to assist students with disabilities in

Grade 8 and 9 with their transition to high school and to encourage and support them to pursue postsecondary education.

- Crown Ward Education Championship now has 21 teams which provide province-wide support for Crown Wards in Ontario, through partnerships with Children’s Aid Societies, school boards, colleges, universities and employment services. Their objective is to remove information or administrative barriers to coordinated and integrated customer service for Crown Wards.
- Recommendations have been made to create a website for “transitions”. This website would provide students with what is accepted and required ahead of time

Discussion:

- Members expressed concern about accommodations for exams in the apprenticeship program. People with special education needs are struggling to get accommodations when writing exams for their license.
- Transitions is an on-going concern for students transitioning from secondary school to postsecondary education.

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| ITEM | COMMUNITY COLLABORATION | 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:

Past Chair (Lynn Ziraldo)

- LDAO has recently posted a position paper on “Accommodating Students with LDs in Postsecondary Studies”
- It was suggested that the ministry integrate accessibility into curriculum
- Some school boards are now collecting data on applied and academic for students with special education needs
- Students with learning disabilities are choosing the applied stream when transitioning from elementary to secondary.
- Students with Learning Disabilities often feel stigma

Psychologists (Joe Trovato)

None

Principals (Marlene Pike)

- Importance of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and incorporating teaching strategies using a team approach.
- Three graduates from the youth shelter graduated in June. One has been accepted to College and the other two will be attending university.
- One of the graduates was interviewed by a radio station about what it is like to be homeless.

Medical Practitioners (Dr. Arlette LeFebvre)

- Suicide rate among students is extremely high
- Whooping cough is prevalent at this time
- Cardiac arrhythmias are occurring in students who are prescribed a long list of medications.
- Sick Kids is currently in negotiations with different comedy outfits for sitcom workshops with kids

Pervasive Developmental Disorders/Autism (Janette Seymour)

- Challenges include lack and allocation of resources
- Concern regarding split grades specifically JK-1 splits. Split classes for JK-1 risk the loss of the Early Childhood Educator (ECE) position, and it may not be replaced. When that occurs, there are no supports at all.
- ECEs are refusing to work with students who have autism.

Emotional/ Behavioural Disorder (Robert Savage)

- A request was made to see the recommendations made from Accepting Schools Expert Panel.
- There is a need to approach student behaviour from a human rights perspective.

Multiple Exceptionalities (Tracy Grant)

- There are concerns about the spectrum of services and what works for the family and service providers.
- Concussion and brain injuries are being served better by the medical professionals.
- PPM 149 is interfering with serving children with mental health problems.

Educational Assistants (EA) (Marcia Brown)

- EAs are frustrated that IEPs are continuously changing.
- One of the successful practices seen is the sharing of transition plans with parents and students.
- Seeing more Grade 12 information sessions being held and EAs are helping students with that process.

Students/Youth (Christian McLary)

- None

Gifted (David Mason)

- The Consortium for Ontario Gifted (COG) recently completed a survey.
- There is a decline in resources for the gifted.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Catherine Luetke)

- The Bob Rumball Centre is seeing a lot of changes including the decrease in preschool students and an increase in the number of students choosing cochlear implants.
- Elementary schools have a lack of services for students of the deaf and hard of hearing.
- The Canadian Hearing Society is having challenges in finding qualified staff.
- Voice for Hearing impaired is concerned that schools boards are not recognizing the importance of qualified staff to work with students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Trustees (Cheryl Lovell)

- Cheryl is currently sitting on the Ontario Public School Boards Association (OPSBA) working group and looks after special education. Issues that are of concern include:
 - Large increase in suspensions and expulsions
 - Staff having safety issues in dealing with students with physical aggression behaviors resulting in suspension or expulsion

Blind and Low Vision (Dawn Clelland)

- Due to the low incidence of Blind and Low Vision and the uniqueness of technological needs, many children struggle unnecessarily to get the appropriate technical supports they require.
- EAs should be trained on how to work with low vision students through places such as W. Ross MacDonald School.
- School boards don't necessarily interpret low vision as an issue but need to be cognizant that it plays a role in the student's learning.

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| ITEM | IEP REVIEW TEAM | Maureen Cox Kim Slomka |
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The IEP Review Team asked members of MACSE for feedback in a creative manner. A video is being prepared based on their products.

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| ITEM | WRAP-UP AND ADJOURNMENT | John Wilhelm |
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MACSE's next meeting is scheduled for February 6, 2013 in Toronto.