

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

Thursday October 14, 2010

8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Huron Room
MacDonald Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario

Members

Jean-Baptiste Arhanchiague
Susan Blekkenhorst
Joanne Cripps
Tracy Grant
Ruth Jones
Warren Kennedy, Vice Chair
Dr. Arlette LeFebvre
David Mason
Marlene Pike
Raoul Romain
Marianne Saade
Robert Savage
Joe Trovato
Linda Ward
John Wilhelm, Chair
Lynn Ziraldo, Past Chair

Members Absent:

Bonny Cann
Alison Morse
Lois Parkinson

Non Voting Members

Jane Cousens, MTCU
Christine Hughes, MCSS
Mary Iannuzziello, MOHLTC
Susan Capling, MCYS (Regrets)

Special Education Policy and Programs Branch

Anita M. Bennett, Manager
Maureen Cox
Barry Finlay, Director
Noorie Kabani
Venetta Miranda, Council Secretary
Suzanne Moffat
Céline Ranger-Rush, Recorder
Christine Riedel
Ruth Swan
Julie Williams, Manager
Zheng Xu

Attending Guests/Presenters

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Education
Ruth Flynn
Penny Patrician
Liz Harding
Sharon Stuckless
Judy Speirs
Dom DiBartolomeo
Carolyn Bennett

Regional Office

Janet Penner
Cosimo Cinanni

Sign Language Interpreters

Amber Kegyama

ITEM**Chair's Remarks****John Wilhelm**

John Wilhelm welcomed members and congratulated Susan Blekkenhorst for receiving the Award of Excellence 2010 from the Ontario Public School Boards Association.

ITEM**Special Education Update****Barry Finlay**

SEPPB

Barry Finlay provided an update and set the current context for Special Education and thanked the group for their continued commitment and work, and acknowledged that significant progress has been made for students with special education needs.

Intra-ministerial and inter-ministerial discussions continue to take place to provide a more seamless system of supports from prenatal to adulthood. Implementation of the Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program (FDELKP) is a good example of ministries and professionals coming together to look at the child in a holistic way. It is anticipated that lessons can be learned from the implementation of the FDELKP and applied to other projects and initiatives.

The same holistic vision of the child is reflected in *Learning for All* and in the enhancements to the board improvement plans. *Learning for All* enables teachers to identify how students can learn most effectively and how to instruct appropriately. The integrity of services and supports needs to be an explicit part of the work we do.

The release of a follow up report to the Auditor General's Report is scheduled for December. It will indicate that progress has been made in every area.

The development of a Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) on transition planning for students with special education needs is part of the Ministry's commitment to the Auditor General. Students who have been identified as gifted will be included in this PPM.

Work is underway to reinforce the role of parents relating to individual education plans (IEPs). IEPs are a living document and the use of SMART goals can support continuous assessment of progress against the IEP.

Child and youth mental health continues to be a focus and the Ministry of Education continues to work with partner ministries on the 10 year Addiction and Mental Health Strategy. SEPPB maintains the lead for mental health within the Ministry of Education. MACSE Chair John Wilhelm informed that MACSE's advice paper on mental health was forwarded to Deputy Minister Costante, and the Deputy Minister has suggested a meeting with MACSE's Executive Committee to discuss. John will follow up to set up the meeting.

Caring and Safe Schools has been released and feedback in the field has been very positive. This document is intended to support a school's ability to effectively respond to behaviour issues within the school environment by seeking to understand the causes of behavior and by considering individual student's needs before disciplinary action is taken.

SEPPB is working on the future release of the guide on oral language foundations and the release of guidelines for programs and service delivery for two exceptionalities (deaf/hard-of-hearing and blind/low vision).

A new *Special Education Guide* is being developed with updated content and resources. The concepts in *Learning for All* will inform the development.

A brief update was provided regarding students in care, treatment, custody and detention facilities, also known as section 23 programs. Staff from the Ministry have recently had the opportunity to visit a number of section 23 programs. The site visits demonstrated the complexity of the system and diversity of programs and student needs within these programs. The Ministry will be exploring opportunities to undertake longer-term policy work related to section 23 programs. Given that this is one of MACSE’s priority areas, this will be a discussion item at a future meeting.

Discussion ensued about the following:

- A memo was released by the Ministry to clarify IEP review expectations in light of changes in report card requirements in *Growing Success*;
- Improvement of EQAO results for students with exceptionalities;
- Impact of Bill 168 (workplace violence) on the education sector, and the need to support education staff in handling difficult situations;
- Building capacity in secondary schools as it relates to IEPs;
- Ontario is regarded around the world on how well it serves the 300 000 students with special needs although improvements continue to be made;
- Proposal, by a member, to celebrate 25 years of implementation of Bill 82.

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| ITEM | MACSE Review | Anita M. Bennett Venetta Miranda SEPPB |
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As part of the review of MACSE, a survey was sent to members, Branch staff, Regional Office staff and representatives from other ministries. Results of the survey were shared with members.

Overall, responses were extremely positive about the role and value of MACSE. Great value was attributed to the work done by MACSE and the attendance of the Minister. Some areas of improvement were identified, including clarity of roles and responsibilities, the appointment process, the effectiveness of the community collaboration form and the process used for the presentations and updates by members and guests. Recommendations for next steps will be developed in collaboration with the Executive Committee.

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| ITEM | Ministry Updates | Christine Hughes, MCSS Mary Iannuzziello, MOHLTC Jane Cousens, MTCU Carolyn Bennett, MTCU |
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Members were provided with a written copy of the update of each ministry.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services staff focused on two program areas: 1) the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* and the opportunity for public consultation on the Ministry website relating to Information and Communication, Transportation, Employment and Built Environment standards. Accessibility standards for customer service have been law since 2008; and, 2) the phased-in proclamation and implementation of the *Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008*.

Areas of discussion with members:

- Ability varies among parents and students in accessing Passport funding to participate in the postsecondary environment;
- There is a need for additional funding for the Passport Initiative;
- Need to look at how Passport Initiative can support better transition planning;
- There is a need to fund innovative and effective programming

The Ministry of Health and Long Term-Care staff highlighted the tri-ministerial initiative to review the Community Care Access Centre (CCACs) School Health Support Services. The final report and an online survey are to be posted on the MOHLTC website for feedback and comments.

Areas of discussion with members:

- Section 23 Programs were not part of the CCAC review because they don't receive School Health Support Programs;
- Waiting lists are long but complex needs are seen first and single needs are waitlisted;
- Confusion about Assistive Devices Program – assistive devices and SEA funded equipment as it relates to the use of equipment at home;
- There's a need to refer student at age 15 to ADP so that they can have the equipment when they exit school.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities staff provided an overview of the Mental Health and Addiction Summit planned for October 29, 2010.

Discussion:

- Children in Foster Care have difficulty accessing post secondary education;
- Member proposes that MCYS should be invited to the summit.

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| ITEM | Community Collaboration Report | All MACSE members |
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Each member of Council was invited by the Chair to briefly highlight successful practices and challenges as well as possible solutions from their most recent consultations. Each member is required to maintain ongoing contact and consult with their constituency on matters related to special education. Feedback is provided in the Community Collaboration form. The Chair asked that members provide their highlights electronically to the Council secretary in advance of the meeting in future. These highlights will be posted on the MACSE repository.

Developmental Disability (Susan Blekkenhorst)

- Introduction of a federal private member's bill on prevention and treatment of FASD.
- There is a lot of misdiagnosis and non diagnosis of children who could have FASD which means that the needs of these students may not be met in schools.
- There is a Justice Ministers' meeting in British Columbia to discuss the justice system's responses for individuals with FASD.

Principals (Marlene Pike)

- Ongoing communication with EDU staff is important to French-language school boards in order to support improved understanding of the changes to the funding formula. Similarly, parents need accessible information on the funding model.
- Curriculum consultants and special education staff enrich each other when collaborating in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs);
- Challenge of implementing the 7 hour days of Educational Assistants;
- PD half day modules have been very successful. Schools were asked to choose one of the kits from "Reach Every Student" Kit, which included the following modules: *When The Shoe Doesn't Fit*, *Helping Our Students with Mental Health Concerns*, *IEP Implementation*, *Autism Learners* and *Leveraging the Strengths of Learners with LD and/or ADHD*

Medical Practitioners (Dr. Arlette LeFebvre)

- There has been an increase in the number of anxiety and bipolar disorders;
- Lack of service in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT);
- Transition to adult services for youth with mental health problems is an issue;
- There is a concern regarding over-prescription of medication to youth, given that some of these medications have not been approved for use in young people.

Speech and Language Pathologists (Ruth Jones)

- The implementation of the Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program is providing opportunities for Speech and Language Pathologists to be part of the team. The focus on play and language development is welcomed by the field;
- The inclusion of communication difficulties in the *Caring and Safe Schools* document is appreciated
- Revision of oral language document is underway;
- Reduction in number of students serviced by CCAC, especially language referrals;
- Increasing use of assistive technology for non verbal students has been reported;
- Confusion over the overlap of Assistive Device Program (ADP) and Special Equipment Amount (SEA).

Trustees (Linda Ward)

- Workshops held for parents on IEP and IPRC processes;
- Flyer three times a year that is titled *Focus on Special Education*.

Multiple Exceptionalities (Tracy Grant)

- PAAC on SEAC is developing a guide for SEACs which will be released in November;
- Involving parents as partner.

Gifted (David Mason)

- Support for the inclusion of students identified as gifted in the transitions PPM
- Conference in Spring;
- Survey on *Reaching Out* available at later date.

Emotional/Behaviour Disorder (Robert Savage)

- *Caring and Safe Schools* was very well received
- Happy to see mental health in the front of the line;
- Can be difficult to address the needs of students with behavior disorders

Psychologists (Joe Trovato)

- Concerns around Bill 168 as to when to involve the police and when to deal through programs and services;
- Looking at amendments for people who are members of Colleges as well as encouraging universities to increase training spots in psychology (40 unfilled positions in school boards as of February 2010;
- Positive Programs *Friends for Life, Feelings Club, Kids Have Stress Too, Warning Signs, ABCs of Mental Health*;

Physical Disability (Susan Blekkenhorst for Alison Morse)

- Are there more alternative assessment techniques that respond to students who have disabilities?

Teachers & French Language Community (Jean-Baptiste Arhanchiague)

- Ontario Teachers Federation's new special education website in English (<http://www.teachspeced.ca/>), which is also available in French (http://www.otffeo.on.ca/francais/pro_specialed.php?id=) It contains good strategies, resources;
- Pre-service preparation, lack of information for parents and teachers on early manifestation of learning disabilities amongst students in JK and SK;
- Request of French learning disability community to build a bank of multisensory strategies and resources.

Learning Disability (Raoul Romain)

- Working on establishing contacts with sector;
- Involvement of parents during family week and community meal was great success.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Joanne Cripps)

- International Congress for Educators of the Deaf Conference. At the conference an old resolution that children should not be taught in sign language was changed this past summer. An apology was offered to the Deaf Community and there was recognition that sign language is appropriate as language of instruction. This is viewed as a big success and the beginning of the healing process.

Social Workers (Marianne Saade)

- Training on suicide prevention;
- Program for expelled students – study. Keep track of these students;

- Good input with other ministries, same tools for mental health.

Past Chair (Lynn Ziraldo)

- York District School Board Website: document on Social Emotional Academic Learning (SEAL);
- Higher results on EQAO for kids with special needs;
- Positive response from the sector concerning the *Caring and Safe School Guide*;
- Secondary staff challenged with IEPs;
- Number of students with very complex needs and mental health disorders is increasing;
- French Immersion Services and Special Education Services are lacking at supporting students with learning disabilities in French Immersion Courses;
- Building capacity with SEAC is a great Ministry initiative as some SEACs across the province are very effective and some need more guidance. Need to work on how to build relationship and deal with conflict resolution;

Vice-Chair and Supervisory Officers (Warren Kennedy)

- The Board Improvement Planning process has provided the opportunity to bring curriculum and special education staff together;
- The *Caring and Safe Schools Guide* has been well-received;
- Funding discussions and identification of successes and challenges.

Chair (John Wilhelm)

- Consultation with stakeholders and communities is worthwhile. Follow up will take place with Executive Committee for further improvements.

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| ITEM | Update on SEAC | Julie Williams Christine Riedel SEPPB |
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Staff provided an update on the three goals related to building capacity of Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs): 1) improving communications, 2) developing resources, and 3) developing mechanisms for the sharing of effective practices.

- In September, SEAC Chairs received a memo inviting them to register and participate in a survey on their effective practices and their recommendations relating to the SEAC e-learning website. The intention is to upgrade the website. A 6th section on resources and links was already added. Links will be added relating to the Board Improvement Plan on Student Achievement (BIPSA).
- PAAC on SEAC received a grant from the Parent Engagement Office to develop a SEAC handbook. The Special Education Policy and Programs Branch will have the opportunity to review and provide feedback.

Areas of Discussion:

- Encourage school boards to train all trustees on SEAC;
- Assist Superintendents individually and as a group on how to build relationships with SEACs.

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| ITEM | MACSE Priorities (Board Improvement Plan & Transitions) | Julie Williams Maureen Cox Judy Speirs Dom DiBartolomeo Anita M. Bennett Suzanne Moffatt |
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Board Improvement Plans on Student Achievement (BIPSA)

- This year is a transition year for integrating special education in the BIPSA. School boards submitted a Special Education Report Checklist, also available on each school board’s Website. As the system is living this paradigm shift, SMART goals are used to develop a broader understanding of specific, observable, measurable, time bound goals for achievement of students with special education needs, in addition to EQAO scores. Visits to school boards to review their BIPSA revealed how special education is becoming an evolving part of the BIPSA. The purpose of this new reporting requirement is to improve learning, improve teaching, and improve leadership.
- Resources are being developed: examples of smart goals, board data profile (including special education data), School Effectiveness Framework K-12, DVDs, training modules for SEACs to help them understand special education reporting and BIPSA.

Transition Planning

- In response to the Auditor General’s Report 2008, a Policy/Program Memorandum is being developed to improve transition planning in the system. Gifted students will be included in the new policy. Planning for physical, emotional and program transitions at various key “events” in a student’s life will ensure seamless continuity of special education programs and services and will support the development of resiliency skills. The new PPM will be informed by the concepts in Learning for All and aligned with transition planning requirements from other Branches.

MACSE members separated in two small working groups to provide feedback:

- MACSE is pleased that smart goals are being used in the BIPSA;
- MACSE’s feedback on transition from June 2010 meeting will be used to enhance further discussion during Working Groups’ teleconference before the end of December.

The two working groups will be convened before the end of December via teleconference.

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| ITEM | Update Parent Engagement Office | Sharon Stuckless Penny Patrician Inclusive Education Branch |
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The Parent Engagement Office (PEO) provided an update on their recent activities:

- release of new Parent Engagement Policy (September 3, 2010); policy sets out vision for parent engagement in Ontario; four strategies: 1) school climate, 2) eliminating barriers, 3) supports for parents, and 4) parent outreach; and an action plan for schools, school boards and the ministry;
- newly amended regulation 612 *School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees* (filed September 1, 2010); two formal structures: the Parent Involvement Committee

(PIC) at the board level and the School Council at the school level; new provisions set out the composition, mandate and function of PICs; a draft handbook is being developed to assist PICs, comparable to school council guide;

- Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grant funding was announced earlier this year (October 8, 2010) to allow projects to begin earlier in the school year; this year there were more successful school council grants than ever before; parents are developing local projects to reach out to involve more parents in their children’s education.
- The PIC Symposium in April 2010 was a resounding success; plans are underway for the 2011 PIC Symposium.
- New innovative resources are being developed (under contract with parent, principal and supervisory officer organizations) including: vignettes to welcome parents and newcomer parents, Parent Took Kit, Leadership Institute offered to school teams (including parents) in August, 2010.

Discussion:

- Question around terminology; engagement/involvement;
- Another cycle for PRO grant application will start in spring. Every proposal goes through exhaustive evaluation, each year. Funding is limited and uptake was significant. Possibility to re-apply in next cycle;
- Re: PIC Reg. Community representative at PIC table represents SEAC in school board;
- Members offer congratulations for vignette concept with little language, and in many languages.

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| ITEM | Police/School Board Protocol | Liz Harding Norman Stormes Learning Environment Branch |
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- The draft confidential Police School/Board Protocol was discussed with members. Discussion included: how principals deal with investigation, definition of student property, when police and school exchange information, when to involve police, when to call parents, how students are to be interviewed, mitigating factors for students with special education needs and annual review. Local SEAC to be part of developing the board protocol.

Discussion:

- Confidential copy not to be shared with stakeholders
- Members asked for clarifications on mitigating factors, strategies for lockdowns when students are physically challenged, deaf and blind, debriefing after lockdowns or incidents.
- Susan will share DVD from Lakehead District school board and local police. St-Clair Catholic District School Board did one too.

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| ITEM | Honourable Leona Dombrowsky Minister of Education | Minister Dombrowsky |
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MACSE Chair John Wilhelm welcomed the Minister of Education the Honourable Leona Dombrowsky and offered some comments regarding the discussions that have taken place at MACSE's meeting. MACSE members provided an update for the Minister on MACSE' priorities including Board Improvement Planning and transitions. John indicated that MACSE would be developing a resolution on funding, in response to the previous day's discussion on funding.

Three MACSE members shared success stories with the Minister. Ruth Jones spoke about the opportunities for collaboration and integration afforded by the full day early learning kindergarten program. A variety of professionals such as Social Workers and Speech and Language Pathologists are involved in the program and provide the opportunity for the community to wrap around the student. This model allows parents to have access to consultation with these professionals without needing a referral.

David Mason provided information about the Cape Croker Elementary School located in the Bruce Peninsula. This group of educators initiated professional development focusing on Gifted Students for the Fall of 2010. They are interested in supporting gifted students and in identifying pragmatic ways to identify this group of exceptional students and provide programming to meet their needs.

Susan Blekkenhorst shared inspiring pictures from her daughter's graduation and spoke about the successes of all children with education needs as an example of how the system in cooperation with parents can create student success.

Minister Dombrowsky thanked John, Ruth, David and Susan for sharing inspiring stories and pictures. The Minister indicated that she was heartened to hear about the success of the Full Day Early Learning Kindergarten program, and in particular that parents are becoming increasingly engaged. The Minister attributes much of this success to the use of play-based programs, which are often less intimidating than curriculum-based programs and offer strategies that parents can use at home. The Minister recognized the good work of Council and thanked them for their ongoing commitment and advice.

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| ITEM | Summary of Meeting Highlights | John Wilhelm |
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The Chair thanked all Council members, Ministry staff and guests for their contribution to a productive meeting. He noted a few final items:

- Reminder about the confidential protocol police document
- BIP memo is public
- Discussion on resolution regarding special education funding. Resolution is attached.

Adjournment

NEXT MEETINGS:

February 9 & 10, 2011

June 15 & 16, 2011

**Resolution
MACSE
October 14, 2010**

10/10.14.01 RESOLUTION

WHEREAS: MACSE supports revision of the current special education funding model; and

WHEREAS: There are many intricacies and complexities of developing a fair and equitable model across all Ontario school boards; and

WHEREAS: The Special Education Grant needs to be aligned with the total Grants for Student Needs (GSN); and

WHEREAS: Although there is progress in measuring positive outcomes for students with special education needs and there has been progress in implementing system efficiencies such as collaboration between publicly funded school boards and other ministries, there is also a recognition that a great deal of work lies ahead; and

WHEREAS: School boards have indicated an increase in students with special education needs; and

WHEREAS: At this time, reduction in funding to any school boards' special education allocation could result in a reduction of programs and/or services and school boards will need time to adjust to a new funding model.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

A new funding model should result in no less funding to any school board than they received in the 2010/2011 school year to ensure that there is no reduction in the current levels of programs and services.

Moved by: Dr. Arlette LeFebvre

Seconded by: David Mason

Approved