

**Halton Catholic District School Board**

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

Monday, April 30, 2007  
7:30 p.m. – Board Room  
Catholic Education Centre

**Members/Alternates Present:** Ms. M. Hastings, Ms. P. Houlahan, Ms. M. Kohler, Ms. L. Kovalchek, Mr. C. Learn, Ms. J. Matters, Ms. C. McCarney, Mr. J. Trovato,

**Members Excused:** Ms. K. Drexler, Ms. R. Ms. L. Volkens

**Staff Present:** Mr. G. Mahoney, Superintendent of Special Education Services  
Ms. T. Wilson, Chief Social Worker  
Ms. K. Slomka, Consultant, Special Education Services  
Ms. K. Laforet, Consultant, Special Education Services  
Ms. L. Fournier, Child & Youth Counsellor

**Recording Secretary:** Ms. M. MacLellan

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**1. Call to Order**

**1.1 Opening Prayer and Welcome**

The meeting opened with a prayer.

It was agreed that from now on, a SEAC Member will volunteer to bring an opening prayer to each meeting. Pauline Houlahan volunteered for the May meeting.

**2. Approval of the Agenda**

**Additions – 6.7 Easter Seals response to Range of Placement**

**7.3 SEAC Training**

**RECOMMENDATION**

*Moved by: J. Matters*

*Seconded by: C. McCarney*

**THAT, the agenda for the April 30, 2007, SEAC meeting be approved.**

**CARRIED**

**3. Actions to be taken**

**3.1 Approval of SEAC Minutes – March 26, 2007**

**RECOMMENDATION**

*Moved by: C. McCarney*

*Seconded by: M. Hastings*

**THAT, the minutes for the March 26, 2007, SEAC meetings be approved as presented.**

**CARRIED**

**4. Presentation**

**4.1 C.H.A.N.G.E. Program**

*Theresa Wilson, Lisa Fournier, Kit Laforet*

Theresa Wilson introduced her presentation by thanking and praising the dedicated and knowledgeable staff with whom she works on many special programs. Lisa Fournier informed the membership that the CHANGE Program, which is located at the Adult Learning Centre on Speers Road in Oakville. There are presently 16 students there, aged 14, 15 and 16 years. It provides a small group setting for the students who cannot succeed in a regular school setting. The students typically stay for 2 or 3 semesters, although each student's needs are being considered on an individual basis.

The students' timetable is flexible and all students are working on secondary school credits. The students choose how to schedule their day, possibly working on one subject all day or several for a shorter part of the day, depending on their learning style.

Support and assistance is available for the students throughout the day, provided by the teacher, Educational Assistant and Child & Youth Counsellor; as well, a mental health consulting nurse and high school liaison police officer are available when needed.

Students are referred to this program by their home school Vice Principal, guidance counsellor or Special Education Resource Teacher and are screened by a committee consisting of Theresa Wilson (Chief Social Worker), Gary Mahoney, Kim Slomka (Consultant, Special Education Services), Fiammetta Mazzetti (Superintendent of Education), Joe Scozzari (CHANGE teacher) and Lisa Fournier (CYC – CHANGE).

When a candidate has been chosen, transportation by taxi is set up and the student starts attending classes within 2 or 3 days. Emotional, social, behavioural support, as well as academic support, are provided on a daily basis.

Once the student is ready to transition back to their home school, a plan is set up. Sometimes, the student will need to have partial transitions, attending CHANGE for ½ day and their home school for the other half. Students like this program and feel comfortable in it.

There is not currently a waiting list. The committee meets every few months in order to provide a continuous intake and to avoid a waiting list. Less than half of the students are identified with special needs. Although it is not a behaviour program per se, most students have significant family troubles, addictions or emotional concerns. They are steered to the appropriate mental health or community service they require.

The cost of this program is minimal, consisting basically of the cost of the staff salaries.

Theresa Wilson distributed a chart outlining the various educational options available to students who need mental health services and support (attached). We share these programs with the public board and the classes have no more than 8 students at any given time.

Kit Laforet, Special Education Consultant, shared a document outlining the Safety Rooms in some of our schools (see attached). Occasionally, some students experience such upsets that they threaten the safety of themselves and those around them. In such cases, the student's IEP would reflect the need to use the Safety Room in order to help them regain control of themselves in a safe environment. They are to be used only as a last resort.

The exact rules for Safety Rooms are explained in this document, including the physical state of the safety room itself (no locks, no shelves, nothing that the child can use to injure themselves). The student is under observation at all times while in the Safety Room.

The Safety Rooms must be approved by the Superintendent of Schools and the Superintendent of Special Education Services. Parents of students who may potentially use the Safety Rooms are asked to sign a consent form.

Gary offered to take the SEAC Members to a few schools to view the Safety Rooms at a future date.

## 5. Action Items

## 6. Reports/Updates/Discussion

Responses from the Associations will be given to Mary Tessari and Janet Foster as feedback. The responses will determine the direction we will take and we will either take this to the Board as a motion or we can continue to work on this, approaching the Board with a clear and concise version.

### 6.1 Summary of ABC Response to Range of Placement Survey

*Miranda Kohler*

Miranda shared some concerns expressed by ABC:

- They felt the timing of the surveys (end of June) was poor.
- There was some confusion regarding the term "Placement" among staff and parents.
- There was no specific description of what Option 5 would be for the students.
- Option 3 (daily withdrawal) does not currently exist in our Board. Presently, the gifted students receive 110 minutes with the Gifted I/SERT every three weeks.
- Statistics show that approximately 600 families are not happy with their child's placement.
- Students are looking for Options 3, 4 and 5.
- The degree of challenge and meeting academic needs are not covered in this survey.
- The existing Range of Placement does not meet the needs of all gifted students.
- The greatest dissatisfaction among staff was with Option 1.
- The Ministry is saying that we must offer a full Range of Placement and we are not doing so.

### 6.2 Summary of LD Association Response to Range of Placement Survey

*Maureen Hastings*

Maureen brought the following thoughts from the LD Association:

- The cover document of the survey sent to parents stated that the objective is to find out if "the needs of the students are being met".
- Page 14 stated that "parents were dissatisfied" based more on academic point of view. Parents would also like to see the data on #11, regarding the progress in specific areas, such as the social area (how are the students getting along with others).
- Page 11 talks about teachers' attitudes, sometimes stating that they are less satisfied than the parents and they shared their own concerns about meeting the students' needs.
- It was recommended that more statistics be collected regarding the students we have.
- Why were only the Gifted students surveyed?
- LD Association would like to see what the other Boards are doing.

### 6.3 Summary of Autism Ontario Response to Range of Placement Survey

*Chuck Learn*

Chuck shared the following from Autism Ontario:

- School Boards should make available the full Range of Placement, supported by adequate resources based on the needs of the students.
- The survey shows that there is a need for congregated classrooms for a small portion of the student population.
- Students with ASD should not have to prove that they cannot cope in a regular classroom before being placed into specialized programs.
- Studies should continue to look into classrooms in Peel, York and Ottawa, where successful pilot programs are taking place.
- ABA is being delivered in pre-schools and may be used in some schools as well.

### 6.4 Response to Range of Placement

*Joe Trovato*

Joe believes that some central themes are coming to light:

- The fact that we are Catholic does not segregate us.
- As a group, we need a separate system that honours and respects the various characteristics of each and every student.
- A portion of the population of students is not having its needs met - “Inclusion” should mean choice.
- Although it appears that the people who responded to the study were informed enough to respond appropriately, they appeared not to fully understand Options 4 and 5.
- If information was available from other Boards, the respondents could have made more informed responses.
- In conclusion, the statement, “in general, there were no burning issues and the current Options are appropriate for our needs” is not exactly a ringing endorsement.

### **6.5 Response to Range of Placement**

*Cheryl McCarney*

Cheryl reported the following:

- After reviewing the distribution and collection of data, it is unsettling that there was such a low response from parents and students.
- Cheryl is concerned about the isolation of only one group of students to respond to the survey – one group cannot speak for all students when data is examined.
- There are definitely students for whom the Inclusion Model will not meet their needs.
- When some of the Special Need students are placed in regular classrooms, they are set up for failure.
- Some alternatives to full inclusion are very beneficial to students, academically, socially and emotionally.
- Our students are different. They know it and their peers know it. They are often bullied and feel badly in a fully-integrated classroom.
- We must continue to search to meet the needs of each child.

Gary Mahoney informed the Members that Option 5 is a contained classroom with no integration. Our CLC classrooms would be considered either Option 4 or Option 5, depending on whether the individual students have integration.

Maureen Hastings stated that the LD students have not had Options 4 or 5.

Lori Kovalchek reminded Members that, as a SEAC, we need to make recommendations, which could be complicated as many students have multiple identifications.

Joe Trovato asked if all the students who may need safety rooms could be placed in a room together, in close proximity to the safety room. Gary Mahoney advised that the parents of these students may not agree to have them all congregated in one class.

Miranda Kohler stated that what works for one student may not work for another. If a child has one area of concern, that can be covered by an IEP. Some students need more than extra interesting information and it must be an extension of their daily work.

### **6.6 Budget Priorities**

*Gary Mahoney*

Gary informed SEAC that the Board has passed a motion to include, in its budget, a priority list “The Board will examine its goal for providing Range of Placement for Special Needs Students”. It is premature to address other issues regarding budget at this time. Please send any comments/questions to Gary and he will forward them to the Budget Department.

We are moving away from the claim-specific ISA type program. We will receive more money now. Gary will send the information about this to SEAC Members via email.

## **6.7 Summary of Easter Seals Society Response to Range of Placement Survey**

*Lori Kovalchek*

- The Easter Seals Society believes that “Integration” is a process to deliver a quality education to all students and “Inclusion” means that all pupils have access to programs and services, including field trips and after-school programs.
- Students with physical disabilities are often segregated, but need to be integrated into society and not have barriers of accessibility.

## **7. Information**

### **7.1 Board Resolution – Members-at-large**

*Gary Mahoney*

Cheryl McCarney and Joe Trovato were welcomed at the Members-at-large, selected by resolution by the Board on the recommendation of SEAC.

### **7.2 Torch Run**

*Pauline Houlahan*

Mario Mule is a SERT at Ascension School and is involved in the Torch Run, an initiative of the Halton Police Force. Our Special Needs students and their mentors join in for a portion of the route to help raise money for Special Olympics. It is taking place on May 31, 2007. In the past years, we were the most highly-represented Board in this run.

SEAC Members were reminded that “Baseball: Everyone Belongs” is taking place at the Rogers Centre on May 16, 2007.

### **7.3 SEAC Training**

*Lori Kovalchek*

Lori Kovalchek informed the Membership that there is a SEAC Training Conference scheduled for June 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007. All SEAC Members of Associations are welcome.

After some discussion, the question was raised about Lynn Ziraldo coming to give us a training session.

Gary Mahoney said that we will create a package of information and email it prior to the SEAC Meetings, so that the Members have an opportunity to peruse it prior to the meeting.

Miranda Kohler asked if we could designate a time limit on Question & Answer periods.

Maureen Hastings asked if Range of Placement could be early on the Agenda for the next meeting.

Gary Mahoney advised that the Selection Committee for the Spirit of Inclusion Award received their packages this evening.

Pauline Houlahan asked if SEAC can somehow help parents of newly identified children, as that is a very lonely time and a moment of need in that parent's life.

Cheryl McCarney suggested that SERTs make parents aware of contact information for organizations that may help their children. Gary informed Members that the Parent Guide for Special Needs Children is being revised and is distributed regularly to parents who require it.

## **8. Agency Updates**

9. **Future Agenda Items**  
Ministry Up-date regarding Autism  
Range of Placement

10. **Date of Next Meeting**  
May 28, 2007

11. **Adjournment**  
11.1 **Motion for Absenteeism**

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<i>Moved by:</i>	<i>M. Hastings</i>
	<i>Seconded by:</i>	<i>P. Houlahan</i>
<i>THAT, K. Drexler, R. Quesnel, B. Rivera and L. Volkers be excused.</i>		
<b>CARRIED</b>		

11.2 **Motion for Adjournment**

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<i>Moved by:</i>	<i>C. McCarney</i>
	<i>Seconded by:</i>	<i>M. Kohler</i>
<i>THAT, the meeting adjourn.</i>		
<b>CARRIED</b>		

11.3 **Closing Prayer**  
The meeting adjourned with a prayer at 10:05 p.m.