

Halton Catholic District School Board

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

Monday, February 25, 2008
7:00 p.m. – Board Room,
Catholic Education Centre

Members/Alternates Present: Ms. K. Drexler; Ms. M. Kohler; Ms. L. Kovalchek (Chair);
Ms. J. Matters; Mr. B. Rivera; Mr. J. Trovato; Ms. R. Quesnel

Members Excused: Ms. M. Hastings; Ms. P. Houlahan; Mr. C. Learn; Ms. C. McCarney

Staff Present: Mr. G. Mahoney, Superintendent of Special Education Services
Ms. V. Goodwin-Duncan, Consultant, Special Education Services
Ms. K. Laforet, Consultant, Special Education Services
Ms. J. Parisi, Consultant, Special Education Services
Ms. K. Slomka, Consultant, Special Education Services

Also Present: OECTA Special Education Course Participants

Recording Secretary: Ms. A. Swinden

1. CALL TO ORDER

1.1 Opening Prayer and Welcome

The meeting opened at 7:10 p.m. with a prayer led by G. Mahoney.

CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair apologized to SEAC members for having erroneously accepted a question from the floor at the January 28, 2008 SEAC Meeting. She indicated that in the future only questions from the Committee will be considered.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The following item was added to the agenda:

6.2 SEAC Parent Updates in School Newsletters

7.3 Agenda

RECOMMENDATION

Moved by: J. Matters

Seconded by: R. Quesnel

THAT, the agenda be approved as amended.

CARRIED

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

3.1 Approval of SEAC Minutes – January 28, 2008

The minutes of the January 28, 2008 SEAC Meeting were reviewed and accepted as submitted.

RECOMMENDATION

Moved by: R. Quesnel

Seconded by: M. Kohler

THAT, the minutes for the January 28, 2008 SEAC meetings be approved as presented.

CARRIED

4. PRESENTATIONS

There were no presentations.

5. REPORTS/UPDATES/DISCUSSION

5.1 Parent Guide

SEAC members were provided with a draft copy of the revisions to the Special Education Parent Guide. M. Kohler noted that the working committee charged with reviewing the

M. Kohler

current guide undertook their mandate with the premise that the Parent Guide should be applicable to all parents of students with special needs and should be rewritten in user-friendly language to ensure that parents understand the overall focus of Special Education. She provided a brief overview of the revisions.

G. Mahoney indicated that staff will review the document to ensure that it is in compliance with Ministry of Education requirements/specifications for the Special Education Parent Guide; in particular staff will ensure that the language is consistent with language in the Education Act. Any comments/feedback from staff will be emailed to M. Kohler by March Break (the week of March 10-14).

G. Mahoney also noted that once the content of the Parent Guide has been determined, the document should be forwarded to Communications Services for formatting and stylizing so that it may be distinctively branded as SEAC material.

In response to a request from M. Kohler, G. Mahoney indicated that staff would draft a summary chart outlining the various exceptionalities; the document will be provided for SEAC consideration at the next SEAC meeting.

5.2 **DD Review**

G. Mahoney

G. Mahoney requested that any Committee members who have not yet availed themselves of the opportunity to provide feedback to staff on the Elementary DD Review, may forward their comments to Victoria Goodwin-Duncan. Any comments related to DD services for secondary special needs students should be directed to Kim Slomka.

5.3 **Special Education Plan**

G. Mahoney

G. Mahoney suggested that any feedback regarding the Special Education Plan should be forwarded to Kim Slomka so that she may either incorporate the revisions or compile them and bring back for discussion at the next meeting.

At the request of the Chair, K. Slomka indicated that she would forward a hardcopy of the highlighted version of document to each SEAC member.

G. Mahoney clarified that the provision of the Board's Special Education Plan to the Ministry of Education used to run on a two-year cycle: every other year the Board was required to submit a new plan to the Ministry; on alternate years, the Board was only required to submit amendments/revisions to the plan. The Ministry of Education has now indicated that the content of the Special Education Plan should be incorporated into the Board's overall Improvement Plan. The new framework/structure is forthcoming from the Ministry of Education. In the interim, school boards have been advised to forward amendments to their existing plan. He noted that all significant departures from the original Special Education Plan up to the end of December 2007 will be submitted as amendments to the plan.

5.4 **Gifted Program Update**

G. Mahoney

G. Mahoney provided for the Committee's information and review a draft report entitled *Proposed Implementation of the Elementary Model of Gifted Education Services and Related Costs*. He noted that the staff report will be submitted for trustee consideration at a future Board Meeting. He also indicated that he would like to incorporate in the budget process for 2008-2009, the provision of a class for students with Developmental Disability (DD) that would be cost neutral if not cost saving. He anticipated that a draft report will be presented to SEAC members by the end of March.

6. **ACTION ITEMS**

6.1 **Selection Committee – Spirit of Inclusion Award**

G. Mahoney

G. Mahoney informed SEAC members that for the first time, the *Spirit of Inclusion Award* will be recognized in the same ceremony as the Board's *Sharing the Spirit Award*. He

requested the participation of three (3) members of SEAC to serve on the nomination committee to determine the award recipients. *Karen Drexler, Lori Kovalchek, and Joanne Matters* volunteered to participate in the nomination process; they were each provided with a hardcopy package containing the submissions from the various schools. It was determined that the nomination committee would convene on Tuesday, March 4th at 5:00 p.m. in G. Mahoney's office.

POST NOTE: The meeting of the nominations committee was rescheduled to March 5, 2008 at 5:00 p.m.

6.2 SEAC Parent Updates in School Newsletters

M. Kohler

M. Kohler addressed a message that she prepared for the first communication from SEAC for inclusion in school newsletters. The Chair expressed her appreciation to M. Kohler for her efforts in preparing the communication; she noted that it is a great introductory message, and that it should be sent out at this time, and then again in September.

G. Mahoney indicated that he would prepare a memo to be sent out to school principals along with the first communication. The memo will request the inclusion of SEAC communications in their respective school's monthly newsletter, as well as the posting of SEAC agendas and minutes in a prominent location at their school.

In terms of the timelines for forwarding communications to schools, G. Mahoney suggested that prepared communications should be sent to schools within one (1) week following the SEAC meeting each month. He also noted that it may be prudent to prepare two or three inserts at a time since schools often draft the newsletters a month or two in advance of its release.

R. Quesnel will draft the second and third inserts; the topics will include the Inclusion Policy and the extension of Range of Placements, as well as the ABCs to Educational Acronyms.

7. INFORMATION

7.1 Donation – Community Living Program at Notre Dame

L. Kovalchek

L. Kovalchek requested an update on the status of a donation (of \$1000.00) to the Community Living Program at Notre Dame. G. Mahoney noted that the funds, which were originally intended to be dedicated to the development of a sensory room, have not yet been allocated due to space restrictions at Notre Dame. He indicated that allocation of Special Education funds to the development of a sensory room at Notre Dame would be reviewed in light of budgetary considerations.

7.2 Budget Process

G. Mahoney

G. Mahoney indicated that P. McMahon, Superintendent of Business Services has circulated the timetable for the budget process; it will be forwarded to SEAC members via e-mail.

7.3 Agenda

L. Kovalchek

G. Mahoney indicated that Andrea Swinden will be assisting with the SEAC correspondence (i.e. agenda management, production of minutes, etc.). It was determined that a call for agenda items would go out two (2) weeks in advance of a SEAC Meeting. The final agenda and the minutes of the previous meeting will be sent out via email one (1) week in advance of the meeting. In response to a suggestion made by J. Matters, G. Mahoney indicated that he would welcome an opportunity to meet with the Chair to review the agenda prior to dissemination to the SEAC committee.

In an effort to afford SEAC members with an opportunity to review information and prepare for a presentation in advance, it was requested that whenever possible, presentation handouts will be distributed in hardcopy to SEAC members at least one week in advance of the meeting.

L. Kovalchek also indicated that in previous years, SEAC members were provided with a monthly calendar of upcoming events; she noted that it would be helpful if this information were provided again.

G. Mahoney clarified that items that require a motion from SEAC endorsing a direction would be placed on the agenda as an “Action Item”.

8. AGENCY UPDATES

8.1 ABC Ontario Conference

M. Kohler

M. Kohler provided information on the ABC Ontario Conference to be held on May 9 and 10th at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). The session on Friday, May 9th is intended for educators (teachers); the session on Saturday, May 10th is designed as a Family Day. The conference will feature a keynote speaker presentation by Susan Winebrenner, author of *Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom*.

Other Items

G. Mahoney

G. Mahoney indicated that the P.A. Day sessions which were scheduled for Friday, February 1, 2008, were cancelled as a result of inclement weather conditions. He noted that in an effort to avoid a similar cancellation next school year, it has been determined that during the 2008-2009 school year, the Special Education Day will take place on April 24th, and the January 30th PA Day will be allocated to school-based Curriculum initiatives.

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

9.1 Presentation by VOICE – R. Quesnel

9.2 Children’s Mental Health (T. Wilson to be invited to present) – J. Trovato

9.3 Transition to School (pre-schoolers coming in) – J. Trovato

9.4 Orientation Manual for SEAC – M. Kohler

9.5 Update on Secondary Gifted Model – M. Kohler

10. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** Monday, March 31, 2008

11. ADJOURNMENT

11.1 Motion for Absenteeism

RECOMMENDATION

Moved by: J. Matters

Seconded by: M. Kohler

THAT, M. Hastings, P. Houlahan, C. McCarney, C. Learn, be excused.

CARRIED

11.2 Motion for Adjournment

RECOMMENDATION

Moved by: J. Matters

Seconded by: M. Kohler

THAT, the meeting adjourn.

CARRIED

11.3 Closing Prayer

The meeting adjourned with a prayer at 9:11 p.m.