

**Halton Catholic District School Board**

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

Monday, April 28, 2008  
7:00 p.m. – Board Room,  
Catholic Education Centre

**Members/Alternates Present:** Ms. P. Houlahan; Ms. M. Kohler; Ms. L. Kovalchek (Chair);  
Mr. C. Learn; Ms. J. Matters; Ms. R. Quesnel; Mr. J. Trovato

**Members Excused:** Ms. K. Drexler; Ms. M. Hastings; Ms. C. McCarney

**Staff Present:** Mr. G. Mahoney, Superintendent of Special Education Services  
Ms. M. Martino, Consultant, Curriculum Services  
Ms. E. Bukvic, I-SERT, Gifted Education  
Ms. M. Morrissey, I-SERT, Gifted Education

**Recording Secretary:** Ms. K. Harkness

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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

**1.1 Opening Prayer and Welcome**

The meeting opened at 7:15 p.m. with a prayer.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**RECOMMENDATION**

*Moved by: Joanne Matters*

*Seconded by: Pauline Houlahan*

**THAT**, the agenda be approved as amended.

**CARRIED**

**3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**3.1 Approval of SEAC Minutes – March 31, 2008**

The minutes of the March 31, 2008 SEAC Meeting were reviewed.

**RECOMMENDATION**

*Moved by: Rhonda Quesnel*

*Seconded by: Miranda Kohler*

**THAT**, the minutes for the March 31, 2008 SEAC meetings be approved.

**CARRIED**

**4. PRESENTATIONS**

No Presentations

**5. ACTION ITEMS**

**5.1 Special Education Plan**

**G. Mahoney**

Mr. Gary Mahoney, Superintendent, Special Education Services, updated the Committee on the status of the Special Education Plan. To date the revisions are not yet finished. The revised plan in draft form will be sent to the Ministry. Once the revisions are approved by the Committee that version will be forwarded to the Ministry. The revisions required are updating and taking out stale-dated material.

**5.2 Spirit of Inclusion Award****L. Kovalchek**

Mr. Mahoney provided a printout of the criteria for the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Brian P. Fichaud Spirit of Inclusion Award.

Ms. Lori Kovalchek shared what a wonderful experience it was as chair to present the two recipients their awards at the Award of Excellence evening on April 22nd. She passed on that the recipients and their families were excited about being a part of the special evening and the recognition that they were given was phenomenal, from Bishop Bergie who presided over the mass to Mr. Lou Piovesan, Director of Education, who presented some of the awards, as well, Ms. Joanne Matters who brought greetings from the Board.

Ms. Kovalchek remarked that the essence of Spirit of Inclusion and the importance of inclusion in our Board were certainly evident. Both our recipients beamed from ear-to-ear as they received their awards. She wanted to pass on what a remarkable evening it was for both the recipients and for her.

Ms. Kovalchek informed the Committee that the award selection committee thought this would be a good time to review the criteria used to select the award. Looking for two things:

- 1) A way to encourage each school to participate. There were a couple of elementary schools and one secondary school that did not participate this year.
- 2) Perhaps order the criteria in such a way that more identified students are seen as good candidates for this award.

Ms. Kovalchek went on to explain how the award was developed, proposed and intended. She mentioned that a large number of applications still focus on all-round achievers, especially academic achievers. She then read the current criteria and asked for feedback on whether or not the criteria are targeting our identified students as good recipients for these awards.

Ms. Kovalchek asked if Mr. Joe Trovato and a few of the committee members could have a look at the criteria and reword it/reorder it. Suggestions or revisions should be forwarded on to Mr. Trovato. The revised document could then go to the Board.

Mr. Mahoney suggested we dispense with the last 2 pages. If we decide on the criteria set just plot out each one of the criteria and ask people to respond anecdotally.

Ms. Kovalchek asked if the name of the award should be changed. Mr. Charles Learn put forth the motion that the Committee change the name of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Brian P. Fichaud Spirit of Inclusion Award to the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Spirit of Inclusion Award.

**RECOMMENDATION***Moved by: Miranda Kohler**Seconded by: Rhonda Quesnel*

**THAT**, the name of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Brian P. Fichaud Spirit of Inclusion Award be changed to Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Spirit of Inclusion Award.

**CARRIED****6. REPORTS/UPDATES/DISCUSSION****6.1 Parent Input for the Special Education Plan****L. Kovalchek**

Ms. Kovalchek asked that since we're not having parents coming to the SEAC meeting and participating in a discussion of the Special Ed plan how they would facilitate receiving parent input? This began a discussion for the input, feedback, adjustment and collation of the incoming information and the ultimate provision of that information to the Special Education Services Department.

## 6.2 Gifted Education

*M. Kohler*

### 6.2.1 Update on Gifted Placements

*M. Martino/E. Bukvic/M. Morrissey*

Mr. Mahoney introduced the presenters and took the opportunity to advise the Committee regarding Ms. Martha Martino's new provincial position and provided his thoughts, comments and well wishes to her.

Excerpted from the larger PowerPoint presentation prepared for the Gifted Information Night for Parents, it covered:

- the range of placements as defined by the Ministry;
- what each placement looks like in our Board;
- provision of transportation services;
- locations and assigned schools.

The full 40 minute presentation also allows for a question period and informal queries after the formal portion of the meeting.

The Gifted Information Night for Parents is set for May 28, 2008, from 7:30-9:00 p.m. at St. Elizabeth Seton Catholic Elementary School.

Ms. Martino talked about placements 1-5 and about what information will be disseminated to parents.

Questions were posed regarding the qualifications for gifted teachers.

Ms. Houlahan raised concerns and comments from gifted children about leaving their friends behind. A discussion ensued.

Ms. Kovalchek thanked Ms. Martino for the presentation.

### 6.2.2 Parent Information Night

Mr. Mahoney asked Ms. Kohler to invite parents who have experience with the gifted program to attend as resources for new parents who may have concerns and questions.

Mr. Mahoney asked Ms. Kohler to provide the names of parents who are to be officially invited to Ms. Karen Harkness.

### 6.2.3 Gifted Screening Procedures

Ms. Miranda Kohler asked if current screening practice is under identifying.

Ms. Martino responded with findings from our Psych Associate Oliver Foese that, based on data he has been collecting since he joined us in 2005, we continue to find in our grade 4 testing a higher population of gifted candidates across the Board than the national average of gifted students.

A discussion regarding gifted screening ensued including using EQAO scores as an identifier and how students are nominated for testing and identification.

## 6.3 Parent Guide Update

*G. Mahoney*

Mr. Mahoney reviewed the document and discussion ensued regarding the look of the guide.

Ms. Kohler suggested one more look for typos, etc., before printing. This guide needs to be ready for Parent Information Night. Mr. Mahoney asked for input before the end of the week in order to be ready for print.

It was asked that suggestions for revisions be submitted to Ms. Harkness. Mr. Mahoney provided her e-mail address to the Committee.

A Parent's Guide to Special Education ~ Supplement: relevant to students with development disabilities. Mr. Mahoney walked the Board through the supplement.

Name of the classrooms will no longer be called DD classrooms. Structured Teaching Classes will be for students with developmental disability and Essential Skills Classes are for students with mild intellectual disability.

A discussion ensued regarding structured teaching. Mr. Trovato wanted to know how he could get literature regarding structured teaching. Mr. Mahoney said he would get Special Education Consultants Kim Slomka and Victoria Goodwin-Dunkin to pull together information to forward on to Mr. Trovato.

#### **6.4 SEAC Information Page (one-page flyer) – Draft for Review**

**L. Kovalchek**

Ms. Kovalchek asked for the flyer, Ms. Kohler said she gave it to Ms. Andrea Swinden to be reworked. Mr. Mahoney will follow-up with Ms. Swinden. Ms. Kovalchek asked for this item to become a future agenda item.

### **7. INFORMATION**

#### **7.1 Halton Accessibility Showcase**

**L. Kovalchek**

Ms. Kovalchek thanked Mr. J. Trovato, Ms. R. Quesnel and Ms. C. McCarney for their support at the Halton Accessibility showcase. She commented on what a great and worthwhile event it was.

There were a number of photos available for the Committee members to view. Ms. Kovalchek asked if photos can be added to a professional display/presentation board. She also asked if we need parent permission to use the photos. Mr. Mahoney said they would have to check on the permission and suggested we illicit the support of Mr. Boris Hoffman from Media Services Department as he takes a lot of the pictures of Board events and could probably put something together for us that could be sent for professional reproduction.

Ms. Kovalchek would like a series of pictures or a collage around the information. She will send out the information that is on the board and suggested they could look at that next year in terms of content and if they would like to make any changes. Mr. Mahoney named Ms. Harkness as a handy resource for that project.

#### **7.2 SEAC Orientation Manual**

**L. Kovalchek**

Ms. Kovalchek passed around what she had come up with so far. The majority of the binder is *Special Education: a Guide for Educators* done in 2001. She pointed out information of interest.

Ms. Kovalchek is hoping this is a good starting point and asked the other SEAC members to get back to her with anything they would like to see added.

#### **7.3 School Newsletter Insert #3**

**L. Kovalchek**

Checked online sites for other schools for their newsletters and found that 2 of the schools not only have our SEAC Blurb as part of their electronic newsletter, but they also have a separate title for SEAC news that parents can access.

Ms. R. Quesnel told the committee that she and Ms. Kohler collaborated on Blurbs 3 & 4 which was submitted to Andrea and she did not know where they were in terms of distribution, but they were in and are on the ABC's school board definitions for special education.

**7.4 Communications***L. Kovalchek*

Ms. Kovalchek suggested that information or questions amongst our members should come through the chair (Ms. L Kovalchek) or vice chair (Ms. R. Quesnel). Mr. G. Mahoney will still be used as a resource for them should they not have an answer, but initial communications should go through Ms. Kovalchek or Ms. Quesnel who will forward them on to Mr. Mahoney.

Lori asked people to call, or leave a message, if she has not responded to e-mail in a reasonable amount of time due to her shift work.

Mr. Mahoney talked about fielding a dozen calls in the past couple of weeks about gifted education rumours. It was suggested that we circulate a “statement” amongst the Committee members so that the messaging is consistent and we can avoid misinformation and cut down on the rumours.

Ms. Kovalchek responded regarding dissemination of information and Miranda commented that some of the information may have come from her organization’s newsletter blurb which said they are expanding the range of placements and has probably hit some of the schools newsletters by now. Director’s Report from 2007 had a bit on expanding for gifted.

**7.5 Special Needs Placement Survey for Parents of Students with Mild Intellectual Disability (MID)***G. Mahoney*

Mr. Mahoney discussed the survey. Reason for generation: Survey data from each of the groups of parents whose children’s placements are expanding except for parents of students who are identified as mild intellectual disability. In order for us to have a consistent database we will be generating a survey for that specific group of parents.

Mr. Mahoney did not see it as having some of the same formative impacted as the DD review did because we’re already looking at opening a class for students with MID because we felt that their needs would be better addressed by not merging this population with the DD population, or with the ASD population either. Where staff have visited other boards and have seen merged or amalgamated groupings those tend to be advantageous for the board in that they allow for larger number of students in the classroom, but tend not to be as effective from a programming point of view.

This is a 1st draft passed out for the committee’s information and comments.

Ms. Kovalchek clarified that there will be a placement 4&5 for MID, DD and Gifted. LD is still being dealt with by the LD Centre. Mr. Mahoney confirmed and then discussed LD and LD Centre development efforts.

Mr. Trovato had comments regarding some confusion around Question 5 & 6 on survey. He also wonders if it possible for there to be a short preamble before question 8 about what the placement option would be in a parent-friendly descriptive way so that there’s a bit of a knowledge base going in.

**7.6 Torch Run***P. Houlahan*

Ms. Houlahan provided the date of May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**7.7 Best Buddies***P. Houlahan*

Ms. Houlahan described the program and Martha filled in some details. Discussions around if this is something SEAC worthy and comparisons to Circle of Friends. Ms. Harkness to provide website address to Board members.

**7.8 2008-2009 Resolution on Gifted Education Model****G. Mahoney**

Mr. Mahoney distributed a 3 page report "New Budget Initiative" that concluded with a resolution that he would like to have someone sponsor, second and have a vote taken. Mr. Mahoney then explained the initiative.

Discussion on whether to accept recommendation without creating this as an action item. Miranda had a question regarding transportation. Gary addressed issue regarding routes and parents getting their children to the pickup points.

**RECOMMENDATION**Moved by: *Pauline Houlahan*Seconded by: **?**

***THAT, the Board approve the model of range of placement for students identified as Intellectual – Giftedness, as described in this document, New Budget Initiative 2008-2009, Special Education Expansion of Range of Placement for Gifted Students.***

**CARRIED****8. AGENCY UPDATES****8.1 ABC Update****M. Kohler**

ABC Halton meeting on Wednesday 30th concerning IEPs. Information given to Martha in hopes that she could send it out to the newly identified. Martha sent it to the Principals, but said newly identified won't know until the letters go out this week.

A speaker will be attending to talk about Gifted IEPs.

**9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

9.1 Presentation of Gifted screening procedures

9.2 SEAC Information Flyer

9.3 Group photo of SEAC members for the first meeting in September

9.4 Presentation on mental health issues by Theresa Wilson, Chief Social Worker

9.5 Presentation of role and responsibilities of CYC

9.6 June meeting will be brief followed by a celebration of end of the year for SEAC and a culmination of all our accomplishments

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Monday, May 26, 2008****11. ADJOURNMENT****11.1 Motion for Absenteeism****RECOMMENDATION**Moved by: *Joanne Matters*Seconded by: *Joe Trovato*

***THAT, Ms. K. Drexler; Ms. M. Hastings; Ms. C. McCarney be excused.***

**CARRIED****11.2 Motion for Adjournment**

(2:43:00ish)

**RECOMMENDATION**Moved by: *Rhonda Quesnel*Seconded by: *Miranda Kholer*

***THAT, the meeting adjourns.***

**CARRIED****11.3 Closing Prayer**

The meeting adjourned with a prayer at 9:45 p.m.