

**Halton Catholic District School Board**

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

Monday, March 31, 2008  
7:00 p.m. – Board Room,  
Catholic Education Centre

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

**Members Excused:** Mr. C. Learn; Mr. J. Trovato

**Staff Present:** Mr. G. Mahoney, Superintendent of Special Education Services

**Recording Secretary:** Ms. A. Swinden

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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 led by L. Kovalchek.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

The following items were added to the agenda:

7.2 Ontario Association of Education Advocates

7.3 JK/SK Information Update

**RECOMMENDATION**

Moved by: J. Matters

Seconded by: P. Houlahan

*THAT, the agenda be approved as amended.*

**CARRIED**

**3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**3.1 Approval of SEAC Minutes – February 25, 2008**

The minutes of the February 25, 2008 SEAC Meeting were reviewed and accepted as submitted.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Moved by: J. Matters

Seconded by: K. Drexler

*THAT, the minutes for the February 25, 2008 SEAC meetings be approved as presented.*

**CARRIED**

**4. PRESENTATIONS**

There were no presentations.

**5. REPORTS/UPDATES/DISCUSSION**

**5.1 G. Mahoney Retirement**

*M. Kohler*

G. Mahoney addressed his intent to retire, effective August 31, 2008, from his position as Superintendent of Special Education Services. He expressed his appreciation for the support he has received from trustees, staff, and parents throughout his career as an educator in Halton.

He noted that the consensus of trustees was to defer the appointment of his successor until the appointment of the new Director of Education has been confirmed. Trustee Matters indicated that the Board anticipates that the new Director will be in place during the summer (2008). She also noted that Trustees accepted G. Mahoney's retirement with sincere regret and that his exceptional leadership skills will genuinely be missed.

#### *Other Items*

#### **Contained Classes for Developmentally Disabled (DD) Students**

G. Mahoney indicated that staff are moving ahead with plans for the provision of contained classrooms for DD students. He noted that preliminary analysis would indicate that the provision of these contained classes will prove to be cost neutral. He referred to "Structured Teaching Classes" (STC), an approach to instruction for students with developmental concerns. The classroom would not feature one-to-one supervision, but rather would likely have ten (10) students and two (2) Educational Assistants in a contained class.

He also noted that as a result of feedback received by Victoria Goodwin-Duncan, Special Education Consultant, staff have determined that the merging of DD students with students with Mild Intellectual Development (MID) would not be in the best interest of either group of students. Accordingly, staff are considering the provision of a class for MID students, separate from the class for DD students. R. Quesnel expressed her appreciation for this initiative, noting that it would address many of the challenges of placement for MID students.

G. Mahoney indicated that the STC class for DD students has tentatively been allocated at St. John Catholic Elementary School in Oakville, since there exists in that vicinity a large population of DD students. The location for the STC classroom for MID students has not yet been determined.

#### 5.2 **SEAC School Newsletter Updates and Website Issues**

*M. Kohler/G. Mahoney*

G. Mahoney noted that the request for SEAC communications to be inserted in the monthly school newsletters and/or on school websites has been well received by school communities. SEAC members were provided with samples of school newsletters that included the introductory message from SEAC, which was prepared by Miranda Kohler, and approved by SEAC at its February 25<sup>th</sup> meeting.

R. Quesnel indicated that she has prepared the second communication from SEAC, and invited Committee members to review and provide input. Pending the Committee's review and input, the second message from SEAC will be forwarded to schools for insertion in school newsletters and/or on school websites. M. Kohler and R. Quesnel will draft the third communication for insertion in the school newsletters/websites, and it will be provided to SEAC members for review and input at the April 28<sup>th</sup> meeting.

*\* POST NOTE: The second communication from SEAC was forwarded via email to Principals on April 3, 2008.*

In response to concerns raised regarding the need to update information on the web pages dedicated to SEAC on the Board's site, G. Mahoney indicated that although there is currently no staff member assigned to manage the Special Education pages, it is his intent to assign this responsibility to Sandra Miller, who was recently appointed Special Education Consultant.

P. Houlihan suggested that in the interim while the website is being updated, it may be prudent to indicate in the SEAC newsletter communications the name of a contact person that parents may call should they require additional information related to SEAC. She suggested perhaps rotating the name of the contact, and volunteered to be listed as the SEAC contact on the next communication. R. Quesnel indicated that she would revise the newsletter message to include P. Houlihan's name as the SEAC contact, and list her phone number and email address.

M. Kohler raised for the Committee's consideration a proposal to create a one-page information leaflet for SEAC, which would provide parents with an overview of the mandate of SEAC, and list the names of the Committee members as well as all the meeting dates. She noted that the one-page handout could be provided to parents at the beginning of each school year, and also be available as general information at school sites. She provided a sample from Halton District School Board. The Committee was in agreement with this proposal. M. Kohler provided A. Swinden with a copy of the document produced by the Halton District School Board; a draft will be prepared for the Committee's review and input.

### 5.3 Gifted Education

*M. Kohler*

#### 5.3.1 Placements

In response to M. Kohler's request for an update regarding the proposed locations to host the gifted education placements, G. Mahoney indicated that staff are reviewing the possibility of implementing the gifted program at St. Elizabeth Seton and St. Catherine of Alexandria. He noted that the Trustees have been very clear in their direction to staff to move ahead with the implementation of the Gifted Program for September 2008; however since the implementation of the program will have financial implications for the Board, the model will be presented to Trustees for their review and approval through the budget process. G. Mahoney also noted that in January Martha Martino, Special Education Consultant with responsibilities for Gifted Education, met with a Ministry of Education official (Maira Sinclair), as well as staff from the Halton District School Board to review the programming components.

#### 5.3.2 Parent Information Night for Gifted Program

G. Mahoney indicated that a Parent Meeting for parents of gifted students has been proposed for an evening in May 2008 (exact date to be determined). More details will follow.

#### 5.3.3 Secondary Gifted Update

G. Mahoney indicated that a focus group will be implemented in April to review the provision of the gifted programming in the secondary school panel. The committee, lead by Kim Slomka, Special Education Consultant, and comprised of administrators and department heads, will address matters related to timetable adjustments that would need to occur, and will explore possible solutions for obstacles and challenges that may arise as a result of the provision of the gifted programming in secondary schools. Staff will follow up with SEAC regarding the outcome of the meeting of the focus group.

M. Kohler indicated that she would forward to G. Mahoney information she has received related to the Gifted Program at the Ottawa Carleton District School Board.

### 5.4 Parent Guides

*M. Kohler*

G. Mahoney provided a summary of the changes made by staff to the revised Parent Guide. He commented on staff's favourable reaction to the revisions proposed by the Parent Guide Committee; however he noted that some staff members expressed concerns with removing the Board's Catholicity guidelines from the front of the Parent Guide. He suggested including the guidelines on the back of the front cover of the Guide.

P. Houlahan clarified that the intent of the Committee was not to remove the faith element from the Guide; but rather to include the Board's Mission Statement in the back. She noted that the Committee discussed the inclusion of a prayer at the front of the Guide. R. Quesnel provided a prayer that was created for parents of special needs children. She agreed to delete some of the paragraphs (as the prayer in its entirety would be too long for the purposes of inclusion in the Parent Guide). It will then be forwarded to SEAC members for their review prior to insertion in the Guide.

L. Kovalchek suggested the addition of a sentence within the Guide which would invite parents to contact their SEAC representative for further information.

Discussion ensued around the inclusion of a sample IEP within the Parent Guide.

M. Kohler suggested including a reference within the Guide which would direct parents to the Ministry's website (which includes a template of the IEP). The other option would be to provide a template within the Guide. C. McCarney suggested including a sample of an IEP for a student with minimal needs. G. Mahoney indicated that he would work with staff to draft a sample. SEAC members were advised that any additional suggestions/revisions should be sent via email to G. Mahoney. G. Mahoney noted that he would like to send the document to print in mid April.

#### 5.5 **Special Education Plan**

*M. Kohler*

G. Mahoney requested that Committee members forward to his attention via email any suggestions/input on the Special Education Plan. He will update the Plan accordingly, and bring the document back to the next SEAC meeting for the Committee's review.

### 6. **ACTION ITEMS**

#### 6.1 **Halton Accessibility Showcase**

*P. Houlahan/L. Kovalchek*

The Chair expressed her appreciation to SEAC members for offering their support and assistance in staffing the display table for SEAC at the Halton Accessibility Showcase which will be held on Saturday, April 19<sup>th</sup>. She circulated a schedule on which Committee members indicated their availability. G. Mahoney indicated that he would follow up with staff to determine whether a prepared information/presentation board that may available for display purposes.

#### 6.2 **Spirit of Inclusion Award**

*L. Kovalchek*

L. Kovalchek indicated that the Spirit of Inclusion Award Committee, comprised of J. Matters, K. Drexler, and G. Mahoney met on March 8, 2008 to review the submissions. *Sarah Barnes*, student at St. Peter Catholic Elementary School in Milton; and *Josh Romagnuolo*, student at Bishop Reding Catholic Secondary School in Milton were selected as this year's recipients for the Spirit of Inclusion Award.

L. Kovalchek expressed concern that the criteria for nomination may be weighted too heavily in the area of academic achievements, and suggested that at a future meeting the Committee review the criteria and perhaps reformat the structure of the nomination form.

### 7. **INFORMATION**

#### 7.1 **Orientation Manual**

*L. Kovalchek*

L. Kovalchek addressed the SEAC Orientation Manual. G. Mahoney indicated that the Special Education Guide for Educators 2001 is no longer available in print; however additional copies may be reproduced. M. Kohler suggested that each agency representative prepare a brief overview of their particular exceptionality for inclusion within the Orientation Manual.

#### 7.2 **Ontario Association of Education Advocates**

Discussion ensued around the Ontario Association of Education Advocates (OAEA) Conference to be held on Saturday, April 26<sup>th</sup>. In response to a question from the Chair regarding whether the Board would consider supporting the costs of SEAC members to attend the conference, G. Mahoney indicated that he would review the matter with appropriate staff to determine whether this is a conference which the Board would consider supporting (financially). He will follow up with SEAC.

**7.3 JK/SK Information Update**

L. Kovalchek indicated that she and R. Quesnel attended the JK/SK Parent Information Night. It was a very informative session and provided parents with an opportunity to make an initial contact with the school community.

**8. AGENCY UPDATES**

There were no agency updates.

**9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

9.1 Gifted Screening Procedures – M. Kohler

9.2 Parent Guide

9.3 Change Form – Spirit of Inclusion

9.4 Role and Responsibilities of Child and Youth Counsellors – C. McCarney

9.5 Parent Information Evening on Premier Assistive Technologies software – P. Houlahan

M. Hastings left the meeting at 9:43 p.m.

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** Monday, April 28, 2008

**11. ADJOURNMENT****11.1 Motion for Absenteeism**

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<i>Moved by:</i>	<i>R. Quesnel</i>
	<i>Seconded by:</i>	<i>C. McCarney</i>
<b>THAT, C. Learn and J. Trovato be excused.</b>		
		<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>
<b>THAT, the meeting adjourn.</b>		
		<b>CARRIED</b>

**11.3 Closing Prayer**

The Chair provided SEAC members with the Board's "Focus on Faith Prayer". The meeting adjourned with a prayer at 9:50 p.m.