

Halton Catholic District School Board

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

Monday, May 26, 2008
7:00 p.m. – Board Room,
Catholic Education Centre

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

Members Excused: Ms. K. Drexler

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

Recording Secretary: Ms. A. Swinden/Ms. K. Harkness

1. CALL TO ORDER

1.1 Opening Prayer and Welcome

The meeting opened at 7:05 p.m. with a prayer led by L. Kovalchek.

G. Mahoney addressed a tragic accident involving four Bishop Reding Catholic Secondary School students which occurred on Sunday, May 25, 2008. He asked the committee members to keep in their thoughts and prayers the families of the two deceased students.

The Chair welcomed students from Part I and Part II Special Education Course who were in attendance to observe the SEAC Meeting.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The following item was removed from the agenda:

4.1 Mental Health Issue & Roles and Responsibilities of CYC (postponed until new school year)

RECOMMENDATION

Moved by: C. McCarney

Seconded by: P. Houlahan

THAT, the agenda be approved as amended.

CARRIED

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

3.1 Approval of SEAC Minutes – April 28, 2008

The minutes of the April 28, 2008 SEAC Meeting were reviewed. Some revisions were made to the wording, and the minutes were accepted as amended.

RECOMMENDATION

Moved by: C. McCarney

Seconded by: C. Learn

THAT, the minutes for the April 28, 2008 SEAC meetings be approved as amended.

CARRIED

4. PRESENTATIONS

There were no presentations.

5. ACTION ITEMS

There were no action items.

6. REPORTS/UPDATES/DISCUSSION

6.1 Update on DD/MID/Gifted

V. Goodwin-Duncan

6.1.1 Clarification on DD Classes and Their Composition

V. Goodwin-Duncan, Special Education Consultant, provided SEAC members with an update on the provision of contained classes for students with Developmental Disabilities (DD). The Committee members were provided with a supplement document to the Special Education Parent Guide entitled *Guidance for the Parents of Students Identified with Developmental Disabilities*.

V. Goodwin-Duncan noted that the Structured Teaching Classes will be held at two locations: St. John Catholic Elementary School in Oakville; and St. Raphael Catholic Elementary School in Burlington. She also noted that while the original plan was for the DD classes to be available to students beginning in Grades 7 and 8; in response to feedback received, the Structured Teaching classes will now be available to students beginning in Grades 5 and 6.

She emphasized that Special Education staff will be using a variety of teaching methods, and not solely one program for the delivery of instruction to students in the Structured Teaching Classes. An information package will be provided to SEAC members.

In late June, an opportunity will be provided for parents and students (on an individual basis) to tour the school and view the designated DD classroom. J. Trovato noted that it would be more advantageous for the open house to take place prior to the IPRC meeting in order to afford parents with the opportunity to make a more informed decision. G. Mahoney noted that should a parent feel that their child staff would absolutely benefit in a contained classroom setting, an opportunity will be provided to the parent in August to reconsider their child's placement options.

K. Slomka provided a brief overview on the concept of structured teaching. SEAC members may contact Kim Slomka to request additional information on structured teaching.

In response to a suggestion raised by J. Trovato that the DD classes be organized according to level of need, G. Mahoney responded that while staff have some latitude to balance a class in terms of level of need, it is staff's job to support all students. Furthermore, all students are entitled to attend school, and no student can be excluded per se.

6.1.2 Clarification of MID Classes and Their composition

The Committee members were provided with a supplement to the Special Education Parent Guide document entitled *Guidance for the Parents of Students Identified with Mild Intellectual Development*. V. Goodwin-Duncan confirmed that there are thirteen students currently registered for the MID (Essential Learning Skills Class). The MID (Essential Learning Skills) class will be held at Ascension Catholic Secondary School in Burlington.

In response to a question regarding the process for entry into the DD and/or MID classes next school year (2009-2010), V. Goodwin-Duncan indicated that IPRCs will be held annually, and staff will continue to generate a list of names of students and parents interested in the classes. Additional classes will be opened accordingly.

6.1.3 Clarification of Gifted Classes and Their Composition

G. Mahoney indicated that the only criteria for inclusion in the gifted student placement classes is that the student will have to be identified as gifted. He noted that although a student could potentially be identified Gifted/LD or Gifted/Behavioural, by and large the

population of gifted students is comprised of a fairly low percentage of students with other identifications. Support for gifted students with other identifications will be addressed as required and appropriate.

6.1.4 **Parent Information Night for Parents of Gifted, DD, and MID Students**

L. Kovalchek indicated that the Parent Information Night for Special Education Students will take place at St. Elizabeth Seton on Wednesday, May 28, 2008, at 7:30 p.m.

L. Kovalchek, J. Matters, and P. Houlahan indicated that they would be in attendance at the Information Night. M. Martino will be providing a presentation on the gifted placement model.

7. INFORMATION

7.1 **Special Education “Baseball – Everyone Belongs” Day**

L. Kovalchek

L. Kovalchek talked about what a phenomenal day it was for Secondary Students at the Rogers Centre. They had an opportunity to meet some of the Toronto Blue Jays. Three stations were set up for students to practice pitching and batting skills and for them to get autographs. Every student had the chance to hit the ball and run the bases. It was a very motivating and inspiring day for the students and parents. It was a successful and well organized event.

G. Mahoney mentioned the Blue Jays Care Foundation – Patrick Mayne is the principal at St. Christopher and the motivation behind this program – we had Jason Frazier and Jesse Lynch from the Blue Jays come out. The Jays foundation mentioned to us that in all their work with other school boards they have found us to be the best managed and best organized group that they deal with. This has made it easy for them to know what to give.

L. Kovalchek went on to mention that they also had the support of the Notre Dame and Bishop Reding baseball teams helping out on field at the bases and stations. This event will alternate between elementary and secondary from year to year.

110 students & more than 110 staff members – counting the EAs – also student helpers were in attendance. Not only Life Skill program, but Community Living classroom students were also invited to attend.

We also had students involved in opening and closing ceremonies, they did an amazing job at their prayer, their welcoming to the students, their thank yous to the Blue Jays players and to Gary Mahoney, and the organizing staff. Mr. Trevor Demeris, Special Ed Resource Teacher, and commentator for the day, identified each of the students on the P.A. system as they came up. She was impressed with how well he knew the students and identified them each by name as they came up and ran the bases, so thank you to Mr. Demeris.

7.2 **Special Olympics Torch Run**

L. Kovalchek

L. Kovalchek reported that the Run took place on Friday, May 23rd. It was a motivating day with a great turn out. There was great support from Police and students had an opportunity to carry the torch, if they chose to, in front of the banner. Students from St. Raphael were out cheering on their respective students with banners up. It was a great community and school opportunity.

G. Mahoney recognized Mario Mule, a Special Education Resource Teacher at St. Dominic School in Oakville. He has been the liaison for this event. An amazing 38 out of 39 schools participated. There were a couple of schools among them who didn't have kids involved in Special Olympics, but participated anyway. It is a huge event that integrates both Halton school boards and the Halton Regional Police Services. The student who was the spokesperson for Special Olympics, Ellen MacNeil a former student who now works part time at Holy Rosary School in Burlington.

P. Houlahan commented on the front page of the Oakville Saturday weekend edition which had a beautiful picture of the event.

8. AGENCY UPDATES

8.1 ABC Update

M. Kohler read her letter of resignation from SEAC. ABC Halton will be seeking a replacement and SEAC alternate. Her resignation is effective as of the end of June 2008. She prepared a list to leave with SEAC that outlines important areas in gifted education she hopes will be addressed in future meetings by SEAC (noted that she will provide list to Recording Secretary). She thanked Gary Mahoney for his compassion and understanding the needs of gifted children.

L. Kohler expressed her appreciation for all her hard work and dedication, wishing her all the best. G. Mahoney urged her to reconsider her decision.

8.2 Easter Seals – “Leaders of Tomorrow”

Brochure received by L. Kovalchek which is about leadership training for youth and young adults with physical disabilities. Being held August 25-27 at Easter Seals Camp in London, Ontario. www.easterseals.org for more information, application form and information brochure for anyone interested.

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS – JUNE

9.1 Last Minute Issues and Celebration of Year End

June 23rd will be the last meeting which will fulfil the requirement of 10 SEAC meetings per year. It will start as a SEAC meeting, but will follow with year end celebration – details to follow.

M. Kohler asked G. Mahoney Would the Special Ed Plan come back for September/October for the more formal consideration? G. Mahoney responded that it may come back before that. He will send draft to SEAC when he submits, so any responses will be incorporated if appropriate and he will send the draft back so September would be a good time for SEAC to look at whether this would become for the approved revision for this past year. Gary hoping to have the Spec Ed Plan done and to SEAC before the end of the year...probably go to Board in revised form by mid-July.

Lori Kovalchek away first two weeks of July so anything of importance can be directed to Rhonda Quesnel.

9.2 Other Items:

G. Mahoney noted that future agenda items for September are grouped in order of priority. VOICE presentation should occur at the first meeting. Best Buddies will also be prepared to present.

On the Shared Solutions Pilot: Kim Slomka, Joanne Parisi, myself and two of our principals have an good enough understanding of what the project is and would like to request two SEAC member as Steering Committee participants because the important thing going forward is that the process is very much parent driven. Once we begin to offer the service the assumption will be made that it is a now a component service offered by our Board on a regular basis—however do not have the funding for this beyond the pilot year. Have looked at contracting Agree Incorporated (based in Dundas -- Heather Schwartz is CEO) will provide both training to broad cross section of staff; and would also like SEAC participants as well; in addition will also provide contract services around mediation, resolution, services and interventions. They will be able to make a more detailed presentation to SEAC in September or October. Will probably need SEACQ volunteers connected to the project. Project has tremendous potential provided we are able to see one of the goals – programming issues vs. Identification issues. The dynamic we are familiar with at this board is that parents historically begin to take issues with programs, and services and turn them into identification issues – tough on the working relationship b/w home and school and in the end it is not always clear whether we've supplied a solution – hopefully this will allow that to occur.

K. Slomka addressed question of time commitment: a couple of meetings late summer and into the fall with the entire project done by June 2009. Initial training in early fall with six follow up

sessions; once a month for steering committee meeting and training six times a year. G. Mahoney commented that if anyone is interested in the steering committee they can try to accommodate after hours. K. Slomka mentioned that the other matter is the need to negotiate with other employers for time. It is education based therefore during the school day. C. Learn was interested but daytime hours might be challenge; J.Trovato interested, daytime hours challenge.

10. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS – SEPTEMBER

- 10.1 Group Photo of SEAC Members
- 10.2 VOICE Presentation
- 10.3 Best Buddies Program Presentation
- 10.4 Progress on the “Shared Solution” Pilot
- 10.5 Impact of Proposed Full Day Kindergarten on Special Education Resources
- 10.6 Home Instruction for Special Education Students
- 10.7 Gifted Screening Procedures
- 10.8 SEAC Information Flyer
- 10.9 *Report from the Board on the Status of Implementation of ABA Strategies PPM – for September (added by Chuck Learn)*

11. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** Monday, June 23, 2008

12. ADJOURNMENT

12.1 Motion for Absenteeism

RECOMMENDATION	<i>Moved by:</i>	<i>J. Matters</i>
	<i>Seconded by:</i>	<i>J. Trovato</i>
THAT, K. Drexler be excused.		
		CARRIED

12.2 Motion for Adjournment

RECOMMENDATION	<i>Moved by:</i>	<i>J. Trovato</i>
	<i>Seconded by:</i>	<i>C. Learn</i>
THAT, the meeting adjourn.		
		CARRIED

12.3 Closing Prayer

The meeting adjourned with a prayer at 8:53 p.m.