

Halton Catholic District School Board

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

Monday, October 27, 2008
7:00 p.m. – Board Room,
Catholic Education Centre

Members/Alternates Present: Ms. K Drexler; Mrs. P. Houlahan; Mrs. L. Kovalchek (Chair); Mr. C. Learn; Mrs. J. Matters; Ms. C. McCarney; Mrs. R. Quesnel; Mr. J. Trovato; Mrs. L. Volkers

Members Excused: N/A

Members Absent: Mr. C. Learn; Mr. B. Rivera

Staff Present: Mrs. S. Rossini, Superintendent of Special Education Services
Mrs. A. Sequeira, Claims Management/FOI Officer

Recording Secretary: Ms. K. Harkness, Administrative Assistant to Mrs. S. Rossini

Group Photo of SEAC Members

Boris Hofman

1. Call to Order

- 1.1 Opening Prayer introduced by L. Kovalchek and read aloud by all.
- 1.2 Members of SEAC introduced themselves.

2. Approval of Agenda

<p>RECOMMENDATION</p> <p><i>THAT, the agenda be approved as presented.</i></p>	<p>Moved by: C. McCarney Seconded by: R. Quesnel</p>	<p>CARRIED</p>
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3. Actions to be taken

3.1 Approval of Minutes – September 29, 2008

<p>RECOMMENDATION</p> <p><i>THAT, the minutes for the June 23, 2007 SEAC meetings be approved as presented.</i></p>	<p>Moved by: J. Matters Seconded by: K. Drexler</p>	<p>CARRIED</p>
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4. Presentations

4.1 VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children

Anita Bernstein/Bill Quesnel

B. Quesnel introduced representatives of VOICE and provided some information about what they do. A video was shown with profoundly deaf children talking about how VOICE has helped them. B. Quesnel then introduced the guest speaker, A. Bernstein, Director of Auditory-Verbal Therapy Services for Ontario, who did a presentation on the VOICE Auditory-Verbal Training and Mentoring Program. A handout was provided to the members of SEAC.

L. Kovalchek thanked B. Quesnel and A. Bernstein for an informative presentation and questions were addressed. R. Quesnel thanked SEAC for taking the time to hear from VOICE.

SEAC is interested in learning more about the program.

5. Action Items

No Action Items

6. Reports/Updates/Discussion

6.1 HCDSB's Annual Accessibility Plan

Anna Sequeira

L. Kovalchek introduced A. Sequeira who responded to some of the questions she received from SEAC members.

The following items were addressed:

List of barriers identified in 2003: have not have any new barriers come forward at this time. The list is extensive, so they have been building on that. A. Sequeira said that the committee is always welcome to bring forth new accessibility issues as they become aware of them.

Board Website - are there policies, procedures and guidelines in Sign Language: Yes. On the main board page there are two icons for sign language and audio. It has some one who signs and there is an audio version. It has policies that are specific to students; it has information about the board; it has information on elementary and secondary school curriculum; requirements; it also talks about safe schools, attendance policies. They're in the process of updating it. It is a project in process.

Physical: the reception desks to have wheelchair-height access; are all secondary schools completed? Notre Dame is still all one level. A. Sequeira will bring this forth to our facilities department for review and implementing.

Automatic Door Openers: do not have those in the interior, i.e. doors to the main office, libraries, and cafeterias. They are working towards being accessible. Facilities Management Services needs to build to code. Because funding is based on code, the issue is finding funds to do that.

Policies referred to inclusive, yet highlight Special Olympics, Basketball for All, events for special education students only: What they wanted to bring to that was the fact they are doing things that including our students with special needs. An accessibility policy which will go into greater detail is being worked on by Superintendent John Langill. As a committee, we are looking very general broad sense; each of our own departments and superintendents responsible are getting very specific. So, our special education superintendent will get into student accessibility, our facilities superintendent is going to get into building accessibility. It's departmentalized

Architectural: still building 3 story secondary schools which challenge evacuation for physically disabled. That is true. It is dollars and cents; it's cheaper to build up than to build out. With the Evac Chairs, they do allow for the safe removal of persons who are in a wheelchair or have mobility issues.

Are Evacuation Plans Part of the Accessibility Plan? All evacuation plans of staff and students are part of the Fire Safety plan. When a school goes through their first fire safety drill in September/October they go through it and they go through all of their students or staff members who require evacuation. All of the fire safety plans went through with fire chiefs of the area, who walked the staff through it and made sure it was proper and safe for the evacuation of those individuals.

Communications: A. Sequeira was not sure about it, but would find out. She will check with our recruiters and the people who do the orientation with new staff. They do have information on the website and are trying to refer people there.

Schools with no Visual Alarm Systems – will all schools be equipped with visual alarms eventually, or only when the student requires it? At this time, only it's only when it is required. However, as the act grows, the requirements may change. If the requirements change, then all schools will be equipped.

Evacuation Chairs: in single story schools where there isn't any reason to take the child out of the wheelchair, they would not get an Evac chair. All of the two-story schools have one in every stairwell; that was completed last year. If the need is there we will increase the numbers of Evac chairs. We're not there yet, it is a work in progress.

L. Kovalchek mentioned that EVAC chairs are used by paramedics and fire department that were recommended to improve our evacuation plan about 5-6 years ago with the support of SEAC to ensure there are Evac chairs in all the schools.

R. Quesnel asked A. Sequeira if she could forward VOICE's document called R.A.M.P.S. which addresses the five areas of need for deafness and is about accessibility. The request was accepted by A. Sequeira.

A. Sequeira indicated that anyone who was interested in volunteering on the accessibility working group should forward their questions to L. Kovalchek, or S. Rossini, who will forward it to the accessibility working group. One member at large may sit on the committee. Time commitment required would be 1-2 times per year. Meet early spring. There may be more meetings as they prepare for Regulation 429-07, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. This regulation is under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005, our compliance as Schedule II is January 1, 2010. This regulation gives school

boards guidelines on customer service, sensitivity training, all of those things a good employer should do, especially a public service employer. This is something that has gone to our Admin Council who has all the information.

For answers to the questions A. Sequeira was not able to address, she will go back to the departments that are affected, get responses and give them to S. Rossini. A. Sequeira indicated she would be available to come back to the SEAC at the next meeting if necessary.

6.2 Director's Entry Plan; Committee's Response (carried forward from Sept. 29) *Lori Kovalchek*

L. Kovalchek provided a draft copy that included each member's feedback under each question. She asked that they go through each of the items and collective response from SEAC to each question.

J. Matters was happy with the comments as they were and asked that if everyone agreed she would be happy with L. Kovalchek making the wording more concise.

A lengthy discussion ensued around the issue of IEPs. S. Rossini asked that she be able to add questions around IEPs to the agenda of the Consultants meeting next week since they are the front-line people in the schools and they deal with the issues that arise on a day-to-day basis. She would like to speak to principals as well.

L. Kovalchek asked that when S. Rossini talks to the staff/consultants regarding the IEP consultation process that she verify what their understanding is around IEPs.

7. Information

7.1 Parent Information Nights: Contained Classes

Suzanne Rossini

S. Rossini asked the staff what transpired in terms of parent information nights. She wanted to reiterate that we had a number of open houses, two in structured teaching and two in essential skills classes in the last week of June. S. Rossini attended one and felt there was a healthy representation of parents in attendance. Additional open houses were held in the last week of August for those classes that weren't ready to host open houses in June.

Follow-up: St. John School had a parent information night last Tuesday night. St. Raphael School was invited to host one and they have chosen to do an information piece and follow-up with parents during parent teacher interviews on December 7th. Holy Family School's Essential Skills – Parents are being followed-up with regards to the IEP which went out right after Thanksgiving weekend and every parent is being provided the opportunity to come back and provide some input. Ascension School feedback has been positive. Very good feedback in a majority of cases from parents of students in contained classes.

L. Kovalchek asked if there was a plan to have another parent information night at the end of the year for students entering the program in the next year. S. Rossini said she would invite input from SEAC. She suggested we can hold parent info nights in spring if we know of students entering the program in the fall. We can also hold them in the fall. S. Rossini felt parents really appreciate going into the classroom and having a presentation, meeting other parents, which provides them with a sense of community.

A discussion around timing and how to move forward was initiated.

7.2 SEAC Newsletter Inserts

Lori Kovalchek

L. Kovalchek mentioned they were started last year by R. Quesnel and M. Kohler, would like to see the newsletter blurbs be reinstated and would like some volunteers to take on that project. L. Kovalchek asked that if they are specific to elementary, or secondary, make sure they are in the blurb.

A discussion around content and frequency ensued.

J. Trovato and P. Houlahan volunteered to work on the SEAC Information Brochure/Flyer. K. Harkness will provide them with the existing documentation.

R. Quesnel and C. McCarney will take on the responsibility for the Newsletter Blurbs/Inserts.

L. Kovalchek suggested that any of the SEAC members could forward information to R. Quesnel and C. McCarney for the newsletter inserts if they feel there is something they would like to pass on.

7.3 Superintendent's Report

Suzanne Rossini

This will be a new ongoing information item from the Superintendent of Special Education Services. Suzanne wants to share information on what's happening and the great things that are being done:

- National Bullying Awareness Week is November 16-22nd and this is the second year that on November 21st we will be hosting a conference and the theme of the conference is *Be the Change! Youth Leadership and Action Day*. We invite two students from every elementary school from either grade 6, 7, or 8 to attend. There are a number of workshops that are presented and a guest speaker. S. Rossini invited the SEAC members to drop in and see what the students are doing. Being held at Halton Region Auditorium, Hwy 25 and QEW. Starts at 9:30 a.m. and goes until approximately 1:45 p.m. on November 21st. Other Academic Senior Staff has been invited. It is run by Chief Social Worker Theresa Wilson and other CYC volunteers.
- Today we got together with school effectiveness framework lead Larry Clifford. Started to discuss the Board Improvement Plan and S. Rossini thought it was important to have sufficient representation from special education department. Tami Browne and Sandra Miller, Special Education Consultants, were invited to join. S. Rossini is staying on to ensure that our interests are represented at the table.
- CODE is hosting a summit on Nov 17 & 18. All consultants, S. Rossini and Janet Foster, Supervising Principal, will be attending. A number of presentations from the Ministry will be made. Sandra Miller, and Susan Palijan, Research Officer, will be presenting at the conference on the CODE project, the Assistive Technology Learning Centres. We're quite proud of having that representation at the conference.
- The document *Learning for All*, which is the outgrowth of *Education for All*, will be launched and will form the basis of the April 24th Special Education P.D. day.
- We have scheduled a date for the rollout of PPM 140 which is on ABA Methodologies Training on November 20th. A memo did go out to all staff. We're looking at a team collaborative approach within the school where the principal, the special education resource teacher (SERT), the educational assistant, the child and youth worker and one teacher, will come out and work as a team. There will be regional meetings. The Agenda will be IEPs, Principals of Applied Behavioural Analysis, Data Collection and Transition Planning. S. Rossini invited SEAC members to drop in and audit for part of the day. Suzanne will let SEAC know of location and times. SEAC members are to let S. Rossini know if they are planning to attend.

J. Trovato asked about the Geneva Centre Program and wanted to know how many of our educational assistants are trained now. S. Rossini will provide numbers for him.

Feedback on staff reaction to Best Buddies: Best Buddies has presented to department heads at the schools for a number of years. They presented to groups in individual schools and the schools have welcomed the program. However, the staff felt that there would be quite a commitment on their part, greater than was indicated by Best Buddies in their presentation to them. The program hasn't moved forward in any school yet. We currently have a number of initiatives at the Secondary level that are inclusive and are targeted toward the integration of non-credit students in classes such as: reverse integration opportunities where the religion classes come into the life skills to spend some time; special Olympic training with typical peers; other classes working with life skills teachers to put on plays, organize dances; there is a conference for students who are developmentally delayed and ASD that they organize biannually and several other partnerships that have developed at the individual sites.

We have been an inclusive board to the degree that we have had these activities already embedded in what we currently do that it was one of the opinions of the author saying that "Best Buddies has been more successful in Boards that haven't had the level of inclusion in terms of their programs and services that we have."

S. Rossini suggested she could itemize what every high school is doing in terms of a "Best Buddies" for SEAC. She said that the information and invitation [for Best Buddies] is out there, but we are not devoid in working with students in that Best Buddies approach.

Discussion ensued around 'buddies'. J. Matters asked if there would be one school, one group of staff that would be willing to pilot the Best Buddies program. It was suggested we could ask Best Buddies for clarification around what they presented to SEAC, in comparison to the presentation school staff received.

S. Rossini responded that it was a good suggestion and that they could have members of that community come and present perhaps a year from now at SEAC and see if it's something to pursue on a larger scale.

8. Agency Updates

No Agency Updates. L. Kovalchek mentioned that we look forward to hearing future information from LD Association and for their letter of recommendation [for the vacant SEAC position] when they are able to do that. M. Kohler [ABC Representative] is still actively looking for her replacement. At this point in time, she does not have a candidate that meets the requirement for the SEAC position.

9. Future Agenda Items November

- 9.1 Children's Mental Health & Agency Coordination
- 9.2 Review of the IEP process

Theresa Wilson

10. Future Agenda Items December Christmas Dinner Meeting

- 10.1 Gifted/MID/DD Program Updates

Tami Browne/Victoria Goodwin-Duncan

11. Future Agenda Items

- 11.1 Gifted Screening Procedures
- 11.2 Impact of Proposed Full Day Kindergarten on Special Education Resources
- 11.3 Update on EQAO Results (oral report)
- 11.4 Home Instruction for Special Education Students
- 11.5 Provincial IEP Changes
- 11.6 SEAC Information Flyer

*Tami Browne
Suzanne Rossini
Erika Van Roosmalen
Theresa Wilson*

12. Next Meeting: November 24, 2008

13. Adjournment

13.1 Motion for Adjournment

RECOMMENDATION	<i>Moved by: J. Matters</i>
	<i>Seconded by: R. Quesnel</i>
<i>THAT, the meeting adjourns.</i>	
	CARRIED

13.2 Closing Prayer

From the last meeting's commissioning of service. Read aloud by all.