

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: April 19, 2021
Time: 7:00 pm
Location: Microsoft Teams

Members Present	B. Agnew	A. Louca-Ricci
	M. Arteaga	M. Lourenco
	R. Barreiro	P. Moran
	N. Guzzo	R. Quesnel
	D. Hotopeleanu	D. Rabenda
	H. Karabela	S. Sweet
	J. Lim	T. Veale

Staff Present	S. Balogh, Superintendent of Special Education Services
	A. Cross, Senior Manager, Financial Services
	P. Daly, Director of Education
	O. Foese, Chief Psychologist
	A. Jones, Manager, Educational Assistants
	D. Kollee, Chief Speech Language Pathologist
	A. Lofts, Superintendent, Business Services & Treasurer of the Board
	J. O'Reilly, Special Education Coordinator

Members Excused M. Duarte

Recording Secretary A. Hughes

1. Call to Order

The chair called the meeting to order.

1.1 Opening Prayer and Land Acknowledgement

The meeting opened at 7:01 p.m. with a prayer led by the Chair.

1.2 Approval of Agenda

Moved by: P. Moran

Seconded by: R. Barreiro

RESOLVED, that the agenda be accepted as received. **CARRIED**

2. Presentations

2.1 Budget Presentation (A. Lofts and A. Cross)

B. Agnew introduced A. Lofts, Superintendent, Business Services & Treasurer of the Board and A. Cross, Senior Manager, Financial Services who presented on Special Education Budget information. The presentation is attached.

3. Action to be Taken

3.1 Minutes of the March 22, 2021 SEAC Meeting

Moved by: P. Moran

Seconded by: D. Rabenda

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the March 22, 2021 SEAC Meeting be approved as presented.

The Chair called for a vote and the motion **CARRIED**.

4. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest reported.

5. Business Arising from Previous Meetings (Chair)

6. Special Education Board Policy Review (Chair)

A red line version of Policy No. IL-29 Inclusion and Range of Placement options for Identified Exceptional Students was included in the meeting package with revisions from input from members at the March 22nd SEAC meeting. ABC emailed their feedback to the policy to members prior to the meeting. The report is attached. Members discussed the policy and a discussion occurred regarding clustering. The Special Education Plan will include an updated statement regarding clustering and a link to the plan was added to the policy. The policy will be placed on the May 11th Policy meeting agenda.

7. Action and Information Items

7.1 2021-2022 SEAC Meeting Dates (Chair)

SEAC meeting dates for 2021-2022 were reviewed. Dates for the 2021-2022 SEAC meetings will be:

- Monday September 27, 2021
- Monday October 25, 2021
- Monday November 29, 2021
- Monday December 13, 2021
- Monday January 31, 2022
- Monday February 28, 2022
- Monday March 28, 2022
- Monday April 25, 2022
- Monday May 30, 2022
- Monday June 13, 2022

8. Communications to SEAC

8.1 Superintendent's Report

S. Balogh provided updates on:

Equity and Inclusion Training: we have been working with the Senior Manager of Human Rights and Equity on a collective focus that includes all Board and school based special education department staff. In March and April, we are focusing on developing learning goals and the review of culturally responsive pedagogy models, which are highly relevant for educational and clinical work performed by special education staff. In addition, the Social Work team has been offering professional development regarding trauma and racialized trauma for the virtual school staff. The Psychologists, Social Workers, Child & Youth Counsellors and Behaviour Analysts, as well as the entire special education leadership team will receive PD from Indigenous Psychotherapist, Dennis Windego in May specifically related to land-based treatment methods.

Life Skills and Structured Teaching Classes: a second Collaborative Learning Community for the STC and Life Skills staff was held April 9th. Several guest speakers from the following Community partners presented to staff: Developmental Services Ontario, Halton Support Services, Community Living Ontario. Other topics facilitated by Board staff included: Transition Resources, Community Pathways, and the unveiling of the Family Transition Guide.

GROW Program at Thomas Merton: provides individuals with Developmental Disabilities the opportunity to develop and enhance their employment, education and/or independence skills. Grow is a supportive program designed to address the needs of adults who are hoping to enter or re-enter the job market. Classes are free but space is limited. The class is currently based in Burlington and intake is continuous. It runs from September to May. Candidates must be 19 or over and eligible to work in Canada.

Project SEARCH: the virtual launch session takes place April 22nd at 7:00 pm. Information is available on the Board website.

Let's Go Fit Pilot Project: is for students in Secondary Life Skills classes. It is an online fitness community that focuses on workouts for people with varying and diverse abilities. It is being piloted at three sites with the intention to provide feedback and information for other schools to participate next year.

ABA Bonanza: the launch of the ABA Bonanza was today. It was led by our Behaviour Analysts with the support of our Special Education Coordinator. All HCDSB staff were invited to view pre-recorded presentations from all special education disciplines in an on-demand format. There was also an opportunity to participate in a panel discussion with the presenters.

SEA Showcase: will be held virtually on May 26th. Carrie Anton will be the keynote speaker. Students from elementary and secondary were chosen as Ignite Grant winners from the submissions and were presented with a certificate and prizes. Their videos will be played at the SEA Showcase.

Speech Language Pathologist and Communicative Disorders Assistants: have adopted a new pathway of support for students referred to them with social communication needs. This includes Tier 1 supports before assessment and Tier 2 support for language and/or social cognition based on results of the assessment by the Speech Language Pathologist. Additionally, ongoing opportunities to collaborate with educators and CYCs to support social skill development have been identified as students transition from Tier 2 back to Tier 1 SLP/CDA support.

Parent Engagement: the Social Work, CYC and Psychology Departments have been presenting Parent/Caregiver Information Sessions for the elementary panel on Wednesday evenings over the last several weeks to support parents and families during the pandemic. All sessions run from 7:00 pm – 7:45 pm and will be taped and posted on HCDSB's website to facilitate parents/caregivers viewing them at their convenience. The next session is on Wednesday, April 21st. The topic is "Family Matters – Raising a Resilient Child". There has been a tremendous response to the videos. There will be two secondary Parent/Caregiver Information sessions focused on mental health and sleep hygiene in May.

Special Education Open Houses: are being held for the various elementary specialized classes.

8.2 Trustee Reports

N. Guzzo reported on:

- There has been one Board meeting since the last SEAC meeting. A motion was discussed to prioritize vaccinations for HCDSB education staff in the second phase of the province roll out. A letter was sent on behalf of the Director and the Chair of the Board to the Minister of Health requesting to prioritize our education staff.

8.3 Association Report – VOICE (R. Barreiro)

R. Barreiro provided an overview of the VOICE association and the annual conference on May 7 and 8. May is Speech and Language awareness month and VOICE will be celebrating Dress Loud day during the month. This can be any day in May, for schools to raise awareness for hearing loss. Information was distributed to all HCDSB schools. An overview was provided on the VOICE webinar series and the teen outreach program. Details are outlined in the attached VOICE association report.

9. SEAC Discussion/Questions

B. Agnew reminded members to submit their input to the Special Education Plan by April 23rd.

The first PRO Grant speaker in the SEAC Speaker Series will be Dr. Louise Porter on May 6th followed by Michael Jacques on May 12th. Other speakers for the series are being explored.

P. Moran indicated he prepared a report on SEAC goals and meeting effectiveness and that the report will be emailed to all members.

10. Meeting Summary and Next Steps**11. Next Agenda: Meeting Monday, May 31, 2021**

The agenda will include a Multi Year Strategic Plan update and a Summer Learning Presentation.

12. Adjournment**12.1 Resolution re Absentees (Chair)**

Moved by: R. Barreiro

Seconded by: S. Sweet

RESOLVED, that M. Duarte be excused. **CARRIED**

12.2 Adjournment and Closing Prayer (Chair)

Moved by: D. Rabenda

Seconded by: R. Barreiro

RESOLVED, that the meeting adjourn. **CARRIED**

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m. with a prayer led by the Chair.

ABC ONTARIO FEEDBACK ON HCDSB POLICY II-29: INCLUSION AND RANGE OF PLACEMENT OPTIONS FOR IDENTIFIED EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS

Issue	Supporting Details
<p>As currently written, the Policy implies that all five placement options are available to all exceptional students at all grade levels.</p>	<p>Several references in the Policy suggest that all placements are available to any student who requires them based on their individual needs.</p> <p><u>Policy Purpose is:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “to provide students identified as exceptional....with a full range of placements....” <p><u>Policy Principles include:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The....Board recognizes the necessity of providing a full range of placements in order to respond to the needs of identified exceptional students” - “the ‘appropriateness’ of a student’s placement is determined through an examination of a detailed student needs assessment....”
<p align="center">Recommendations</p>	
<p>The Policy should not make reference to the board providing a full range of placement options as that is, unfortunately, not the case.</p>	
Issue	Supporting Details
<p>No exceptions are noted in the policy, including where an exceptional student's needs and learning profile indicate a placement that is not available, or does not continue from grade to grade or between panels.</p>	<p><u>Policy Requirements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “the Board will provide those placement settings within the range of placements as defined by the Ministry, and across exceptionalities that are required to fulfil IPRC decisions” - the five options listed include two “Special Education class” placement options. <p>Regulation 181/98 requires that the IPRC’s Statement of Decision provide a reason for a change in placement as determined through the IPRC review process. The IPRC review process considers whether there have been changes in the student’s needs or learning profile as well as their progress in their current placement and program.</p>
<p align="center">Recommendations</p>	
<p>The Policy needs to be clear as to which placement options are actually available for which exceptionalities and for which grade levels. A chart similar to the one found in the Special Education Plan should be incorporated into the Policy.</p> <p>The board needs to articulate how they will meet the needs of students whose appropriate placement - as determined by assessments and the IPRC process - is not currently provided by the board, or where there is a lack of continuity of a placement option.</p>	

**ABC ONTARIO FEEDBACK ON HCDSB POLICY II-29:
INCLUSION AND RANGE OF PLACEMENT OPTIONS FOR IDENTIFIED EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS**

Issue	Supporting Details
<p>There is currently no secondary placement option for gifted students, including those with a special education class placement determined through an IPRC prior to Grade 9.</p> <p>The Ministry's definition of Giftedness acknowledges that gifted students require "differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth <i>beyond those normally provided in the regular school program</i> to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated."</p>	<p>Again, despite policy wording that would suggest otherwise, not all placement options are available to all students who may require them based on their personal needs and learning profile.</p> <p>A lack of continuity of options results in some students, Gifted students in particular, being forced into a change of placement in the absence of a change to their needs or learning profile.</p> <p><i>(For all other students, continuity of placement is available with the exception that students with a Mild Intellectual Disability no longer have the option of a full time special education class in secondary; however, there is some continuity in that there is the option of a special education class with partial integration).</i></p>
Recommendations	
<p>For students with an exceptionality of Gifted, ABC Ontario recommends additional placement(s) be offered at the secondary level to more closely approximate a full range of placements and reduce disruption between the elementary and secondary panels.</p>	
Issue	Supporting Details
<p>Gifted research (Appendix A) consistently points to opportunities to collaborate with like-minded peers as essential to not only academic success, but also the mental health and well-being of Gifted students.</p> <p>This is also acknowledged in the Board's September 2019 Staff Report on "Clustered Classes and Accelerated Learning Opportunities" which recommended that gifted students be "placed in the same classes wherever possible, to allow for maximum opportunities for participation and collaboration between like-ability peers".</p> <p>However, this practice has not been formally documented and anecdotal evidence suggests that this informal approach has not been consistently applied across HCDSB secondary schools or been effective.</p>	<p>Lack of formal documentation raises questions and poses challenges in effective communication with staff as well as parents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how does the board ensure that new hires, or recently promoted staff are aware? - how are parents made aware? - in response to queries at the Spring 2020 Gifted Open Houses, parents were not advised of this practice, or other recommendations from the September 2019 report which would allow for advance credit accumulation and greater breadth of course selection and pace (ie. Reach Ahead credits)

ABC ONTARIO FEEDBACK ON HCDSB POLICY II-29: INCLUSION AND RANGE OF PLACEMENT OPTIONS FOR IDENTIFIED EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS

Recommendations	
<p>ABC Ontario supports the staff recommendation to cluster gifted students with like-minded and like-ability peers, but recommends that this be addressed more intentionally by the creation of an additional, more specific “Regular Class” placement; such as: “Regular Class - Secondary Gifted Cluster - Resource Assistance”.</p>	
Issue	Supporting Details
<p>Current and ongoing changes in education pose additional threats to the effectiveness of an informal approach.</p>	<p>COVID protocols, including cohorting requirements added to the challenge with schools declining to place secondary gifted students with their peers in the current school year. This contrasts to the Board’s commitment to honour all “formal” special education placement options, including for remote learners.</p> <p>While extra-curriculars are not a substitute for an appropriate education program, these have often been presented as enrichment opportunities for gifted students. However, those opportunities have also taken a hit during COVID, and the future is uncertain.</p> <p>Learning loss during the pandemic has exacerbated the range of student readiness in all classrooms, putting additional pressure on teachers to meet the needs of all students. Differentiation is an expectation for all students and therefore not a special education program.</p> <p>The situation will intensify as the Ministry de-streams secondary courses which will also disperse the small number of gifted students across a greater number of sections in a given course, decreasing the likelihood that gifted students will naturally find like-ability peers in Academic classes, and placing additional pressure on teachers.</p>
Recommendations	
<p>A secondary placement should be supported by board level staff (ie. Itinerant) with expertise and/or training in gifted education, who will in turn provide support to classroom teachers with clusters of gifted students.</p> <p>Such a placement would be similar to what is currently offered by other boards across the province, including the Halton District School Board (Appendix B) and the Simcoe District School Board (Appendix C). These placements are referred to as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Secondary Gifted Placement (Resource Support) B. Secondary Gifted Congregated Cluster Program <p>respectively.</p>	

**ABC ONTARIO FEEDBACK ON HCDSB POLICY II-29:
INCLUSION AND RANGE OF PLACEMENT OPTIONS FOR IDENTIFIED EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS**

Issue	Supporting Details
<p>Low numbers of gifted students in any particular secondary school and the number of elective courses available present a challenge to effectively clustering gifted students.</p>	<p>Historically, approximately 20% of gifted elementary students leave the board prior to high school. Currently, those who remain tend to gravitate to secondary schools offering accelerated program options, primarily schools offering pre-AP and AP courses, as well as the IB Programme.</p> <p>As a direct result of offering these accelerated programs in select schools, the number of gifted students in the remaining secondary schools are often minimal, particularly by individual grade.</p> <p>Even if provided the option, not all gifted secondary students will choose to be clustered, or to do so for all courses.</p>
Recommendations	
<p>ABC Ontario recommends that the Secondary Gifted Clustered placement option be provided on a regional basis, at schools offering pre-AP/AP or IB courses in order to reach a critical mass and provide the greatest opportunity for success. Clustering options should be provided on a best efforts basis in any stream requested where there are sufficient students to do so and timetabling allows (ie. Academic, pre-AP/AP, IB).</p>	

APPENDIX A References

Biddick M (2009) Cluster grouping for the gifted and talented: It works! APEX, 15(4): 78-86
Brulles D., Winebrenner S. (2011) The schoolwide cluster grouping model: Restructuring gifted education services for the 21st century. <i>Gifted Child Today</i> , 34(4): 35-46.
<p>Connie Belin Jacqueline N Blank International Center For Gifted Education and Talent Development (2004) Poster: <i>A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students. The Templeton National Report on Acceleration</i></p> <p>https://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Nation_Deceived/ND_v1.pdf Vol 1</p> <p>https://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Nation_Deceived/ND_v2.pdf Vol 2</p>
<p>Connie Belin Jacqueline N Blank International Center For Gifted Education and Talent Development(2015) Poster: <i>A Nation Empowered: Evidence trumps the excuses holding back America's brightest students</i> http://www.prgifted.org/natemp2014.pdf Vol 1</p> <p>http://piedmontalps.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/A-Nation-Empowered.pdf Vol 2</p>
<p>Rogers, K (1991) Executive Summary: The Relationship of Grouping Practices to the Education of the Gifted and Talented Learner, The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented ix - xvii, Section Four: Guidelines for Serving the Needs of Gifted and Talented students (pages 29 - 31)</p> <p>http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.563.9476&rep=rep1&type=pdf</p>
<p>Rogers, K. (2002) Re-forming Gifted Education: Matching the Program to the Child (pages 137 - 140)</p> <p>https://books.google.ca/books/about/Re_forming_Gifted_Education.html?id=nenXRtoEfxUC&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false</p>
<p>Steenbergen-Hu, Makel, Olszewski-Kubilius (2016) Summary: What One Hundred Years of Research Says About the Effects of Ability Grouping and Acceleration on K–12 Students' Academic Achievement: Findings of Two Second-Order Meta-Analyses</p> <p>http://www.k12accountability.org/resources/Gifted-Education/GT_Review_of_Ed_Research_Meta_Analysis.pdf</p>
Swiatek, M. Ph.D. <i>Ability Grouping: Answers to Common Questions</i> , C-MITES News, Spring 2001 6
<p>Peel District School Board (2009) Gifted Education Program Review - Identification and Programming Literature Review PDSB (pages 1, 42 - 44)</p> <p>https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BxsKERQDZjBFOWEzT0Vkcm9teVN3cWVrMU1FNVJTWGVpSnE4</p>

APPENDIX B HALTON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD SECONDARY GIFTED PLACEMENT

The following is an excerpt from the Halton District School Board, 2020-2021 Special Education Plan, pages 55-56, (highlights added):

Categories of Resource Support:

- a) Resource Support – a Regular Class with Consultative Support.
The student is placed in a regular class for the entire day, and the Teacher receives specialized consultative services;
- b) Resource Support – a Regular Class with Resource Assistance.
The student is placed in the regular class for most of the day and receives specialized instruction, individually or in a small group, from a qualified special education Teacher;
- c) Resource Support – a Regular Class with Withdrawal Assistance
The student is placed in a regular class and receives instruction outside of the classroom, for less than 50% of the instructional time, from a qualified special education Teacher;
- d) Resource Support – Secondary Gifted Placement
A congregated grouping of students with an identification of Giftedness at designated secondary (high) schools. Students will be scheduled with non-identified learners in particular courses at the secondary school level. The Ontario curriculum in each of the clustered classes will be differentiated in breadth, depth and pace from the curriculum being offered in the regular class.

Secondary students in grades 9 and 10 are timetabled together into the same class for the core academic subjects of English, Mathematics, Science, Geography and History. Students in grades 11 and 12 are timetabled together into the same University level courses as timetables permit

The full plan can be found here:

<https://www.hdsb.ca/learning-and-resources/Pages/Special%20Education%20Programs%20and%20Placements/Special-Education-Plan.aspx>

APPENDIX C SIMCOE COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD SECONDARY GIFTED PLACEMENT

The following is an excerpt from the Simcoe County District School Board, 2020-2021 Special Education Plan, page 95, under the heading “Special Education Placement options provided by the board”:

Secondary Gifted Congregated Cluster Program:

- While this program does not meet the Ministry definition of a special education class, maintaining it as a placement option affords secondary gifted students the ability to be congregated in selected secondary schools. This provides the students with continued opportunities for interaction with intellectual peers as well as for compaction, enrichment and extension;
- Identification: Intellectual – Gifted (Regular Class Placement);
- Class maximum – based on secondary class caps.

The full plan can be found here:

https://www.scdsb.on.ca/UserFiles/Servers/Server_210898/File/Elementary/Special%20Education/Special-Education-Plan.pdf