



**SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Tuesday, September 29, 2020 – 1:30 p.m.
Teams Meeting**

Members: Laura Bergeron (ad hoc), Tara Buchanan, Jennifer Chapman, Bill Chopp (Trustee), Mischa Dinsmore, Jill Esposto, Laura Freeborn, Brook Gardner, Kevin Greco (Superintendent of Education), Patti Mitchell (Parent, County of Brant), Nil Woodcroft

Regrets: Bill Chopp (Trustee), Teresa Westergaard-Hager

Resources: Shannon Mason (Principal Lead: Special Education Staffing), Carmen McDermid (Student Achievement Lead: Special Education)

1. Opening Prayer

Carmen McDermid led the opening prayer.

2. Welcome and Opening Comments

Superintendent Greco welcomed the group to the Teams Meeting. Each member introduced themselves. We welcomed Brook Gardner as our newest member. Superintendent Greco talked about the upcoming orange shirt day and recognized International Women's Day.

3. Approval of Agenda

Moved: Mischa Dinsmore

Seconded: Jill Esposto

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approves the agenda of the September 29, 2020 meeting.

Carried

4. Approval of the Minutes

Moved: Jill Esposto

Seconded: Patti Mitchell

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approves the minutes of June 16, 2020.

Carried

5. Correspondence

Superintendent Greco shared that the Minister's Special Education Advisory Committee asking for input. Terri-Lynn will send out the chart for any ideas/items to include in our summary back to the ministry.



6. Community Agency Updates

Lauren Freeborn – Service Planning Coordinator, Contact Brant

Contact Brant employees have been working both remotely and, in the office, as COVID restrictions still remain in place. In certain circumstances, porch/front yard visits have also occurred, but the majority of appointments continue to remain virtual through either video conferences or phone calls.

Jennifer Chapman - Child Welfare Supervision, The Children's Aid Society of Haldimand-Norfolk

The agency continues to take on changes as they come. The challenge is managing the new scenarios in a Covid including the impact of back to school on the access program that is up and running. The staff is working in a blended model – some in office, some at home and out completing home visits as part of regular services. Events such as the youth thanksgiving dinner, are running differently, but we are finding unique ways to reach our youth and provide the support.

Jill Esposto - Director of Services, Brant Family & Children's Services

Brant FACS has been very busy. Child protection services have continued throughout the pandemic. The supervised access program began in person again in July, with different co-vid protocols in place. An increasing number of families have been having drug issues. There have been multiple deaths of caregivers which were noted as drug related. While Brant FACS staff are considered essential workers, most other community services are still only being provided virtually, so it is difficult for families who are struggling with fewer resources. Many families are also struggling with the virtual education platform. Child Abuse Prevention Month, also known as dress purple month, is important and promotes child safety. Purple masks are being sent to local schools to promote it. Most staff are now working in the office, about 50 percent are in the office at any given time. It is hard to assess most child protection concerns virtually, so in person visits are very important. We are happy schools are open again, as teachers and school related services are an important source of referrals to help keep children safe.

Mischa Dinsmore - Lansdowne

About 50 percent of our staff are back working at Lansdowne site, the rest of staff are continuing to work remotely. We are still not seeing clients in person unless it is absolutely necessary. Some of our visits are taking place- physically distanced in backyards, in the Centre and in the schools when needed. Lansdowne Children's Centre Foundation Heroes Walk & Roll is happening virtually during the month of October. You can take photos of yourself/ your family walking around the community either in a hero costume or not. To register for the event visit: heroeswalkandroll.com/. The event includes a photo challenge, an online raffle that can be accessed lansdowne.bump5050.com/ and a Catch the Ace contest is also running weekly.

Tara Buchanan – Community Living Brant

Community Living Brant has been running throughout the pandemic (many programs closed down, but they stayed open). Phase 3 has allowed for more face to face support. We have tried to keep people connected and support them through it. The biggest challenge is to reach people who need them since everyone is so isolated.



Nil Woodcroft – Haldimand-Norfolk REACH

We have had a staged approach for employees returning to the office beginning in July. During this time, we continued to provide supports by phone and virtually. We are currently in stage 3 which includes beginning inside visits with participants at REACH as well as inside home visits. The transition to school supports have continued and were successful in the virtual format in the spring. Many families have struggled with the decisions to have their children attend school in person or virtually. We continue to support them through this process.

Patti Mitchell – Parent (County of Brant)

Patti shared with the group that the transition back to school process was challenging for her daughter. The school reached out to her and allowed for in person visit. After the visit she then felt better and accepted the transition.

Brook Gardner - Woodview

We had a staged approach for our client needs. We never completely stopped services but went from mostly virtual to now offering in person service. Made space in building to allow for physical distance for those who need to come in person. Many staff are working from home to allow for more space in the buildings. High number of children needing face to face service. Co-vid protocols are in place to help keep everyone safe.

7. Reports

7.1 Superintendent of Education

Reopening Plan/Virtual Schools

The summer transition program was very successful. We started with a list of students and customized the transition for each student. Our Board is immersed in the new co-vid reality. When we were shut down after March Break, it was emergency remote learning which was a different expectation for students than those students who opted for remote learning in September. There is more structure and students have more responsibility and more comprehensive online learning. There are approximately 1000 students in our e-learning programs. We have two virtual schools, BHN Elementary Virtual and BHN Secondary Virtual. We have been working through the set-up of these schools to support the students. All supports will be available to those virtual students. All elementary schools are open with Co-vid protocols in place. Our secondary students are there every day. The class sizes are smaller, and they are on a quadmester program. The format is one course all day every day for rotating weeks. In each Quadmester they get 2 courses completed. The schools are limiting access to outside people and services. Our service partners need to follow all protocols and only come into schools unless it is absolutely essential. Any visitors must wear both masks and shields. If you visited more than one school, you must change the PPE. Also, the Co-vid assessment must be done each day. All locations have their doors locked and you need to give advance notice to come inside.\

Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE)

We will be getting the ideas together to give feedback to the ministry, please give us any you have when you receive the chart.



Spec Ed Plan and Report

Report to the board was approved.

Committee Chair

Please email your interest and the committee will do a vote.

Meeting Times

The committee meets ten times per year and will generally meet on the third Tuesday of each month. Superintendent Greco explained the role of the committee.

7.2 Student Achievement Leader: Special Education

The System Special Education Services team is pleased to have their full complement of staff in place for this school year, including hiring an additional half time teacher to further support the SEA process and required trainings. All team members play a unique role in providing essential supports to students and staff.

Updates to the PowerSchool SpecEd (PSSE) Program were implemented over the summer/early September. All Special Education consent forms (autism, speech, orientation and mobility and achievement testing) have now been embedded into the program to provide greater efficiency (student information automatically populates) and in having easier access to forms as they are all now located within one program.

A significant priority at the start of this school year has been on supporting students with special needs who are enrolled in the Remote Elementary and Secondary Schools. Some key areas focused on for special education include: maintaining close communication with parents and student's homeschool to better understand their learning strengths and needs, shared responsibility of the writing of student IEPs and in developing processes for making referrals for assessments and/or for agency supports.

Summer Transition Support Program – In August, the Special Education Department and the Student Support Services offered individualized transition support to help students further develop the necessary skills to be more successful in re-entering school following a six-month absence. System team members along with school staff flagged students for whom they believed would benefit from the summer program. Families were contacted and offered the opportunity to have their child participate in the program. To help guide the type of support required, a Student Transition Checklist was created. The checklist focused on transitional goals such as: learning a new skill or routine related to health & hygiene or social interaction, transitions to school, self-regulation & safety, wellness supports, etc. Teaching of these transitional skills/routines were targeted in a variety of ways based on individual student needs. Feedback from students and families regarding the Transition Support Program has been extremely positive.

8. Closing Remarks/Adjournment

Superintendent Greco thanked Carmen McDermid (and her team) for her/their hard work over the summer to have this successful transition for our students. He shared that our Director, Michael McDonald has tried to mitigate the impact on students and staff to make everything as smooth as possible in this uncertain time. The meeting adjourned at 2:42 p.m.