



**SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Tuesday, December 15, 2020 – 1:30 p.m.  
Teams Meeting**

**Members:** Kevin Greco (*Superintendent of Education*), Bill Chopp (*Trustee*), Lauren Freeborn (*Co-Chair*), Laura Bergeron (*ad hoc*), Tara Buchanan, Mischa Dinsmore, Jill Esposito, Brook Gardner, Sophie Podfigurna, Nil Woodcroft, Terri-Lynn Zakrzewski

**Regrets:** Teresa Westergaard-Hager, Jennifer Chapman (*Co-Chair*)

**Resources:** Shannon Mason (*Principal Lead: Special Education Staffing*), Carmen McDermid (*Student Achievement Lead: Special Education*), Patti-Mitchell (*Parent, County of Brant*)

---

**1. Opening Prayer**

Carmen McDermid led the opening prayer.

**2. Welcome and Opening Comments**

Superintendent Greco welcomed the group.

**3. Approval of Agenda**

Moved: Brook Gardner

Seconded: Mischa Dinsmore

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approves the agenda of the December 15, 2020 meeting.

**Carried**

**4. Approval of the Minutes**

Moved: Patti Mitchell

Seconded: Nil Woodcroft

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approves the minutes of November 17, 2020.

**Carried**

**5. Correspondence**

No correspondence to share.

**6. Community Agency Updates**

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

No report.

**Mischa Dinsmore – Lansdowne**

Welcome to Sophie who will take Micha's place during maternity leave.



**Sophie Podfigurna – Lansdowne**

Thank you for welcoming me to the SEAC team while Mischa is off on Maternity Leave. Lansdowne continues to adapt as we receive information relating to COVID-19. We are providing services virtually as well as in person based on priority and needs of the family/client in all departments. Currently we plan for our recreation and respite programs to continue through the winter both virtually and in person (with limited numbers). Autism Services is providing free foundational services to children and youth registered with the Ontario Autism Program (OAP) in addition to a fee of service model for ABA Therapy. Our staff continue to work toward meeting the goals of families and their children/ youth, we look forward to our continued partnership in the new year.

**Shannon Mason – Principal Lead**

No report.

**Bill Chopp – Trustee**

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, Trustee Chopp thanked this committee for all their support. We are expecting the government to put out GSN's by March for funding. Please look for the upcoming survey that will be on our website.

**Brook Gardner - Woodview**

Brook reported that they are continuing to offer in person and virtual services. They have been very busy and have lots of new files. As a replacement for the family Christmas party, staff have gone out to deliver gift cards and cookie decorating kits for families. Woodview will be bringing autism services for the community, the flyer will be attached to the minutes.

**Patti Mitchell – Parent, County of Brant**

Patti shared that the special Olympics are doing a Zoom Christmas dinner to try and keep the participants feeling connected.

**Lauren Freeborn – Service Planning Coordinator, Contact Brant**

We are continuing to serve of our clients both virtually or over the phone, depending on their preference. Any in person visits are currently done as porch or outside visits while respecting the COVID protocols that are in place.

**Nil Woodcroft – Haldimand-Norfolk REACH**

HN REACH is currently in Restrict category which includes virtual, outside in person services, inside in person services at HN REACH workplace locations and 50% capacity limits within worksites. We have started the transition to school process for students transitioning in September 2021. We have connected with the Board and will most likely hold individual virtual meetings at the end of February.

**Jill Esposto – Brant Family & Children's Services**

We are seeing some very difficult and desperate folks who are reaching out for help. For our Supervised Access Program and for Home visits, it continues to be an expectation that we will not to go back to virtual visits unless there is a specific reason to do so based on the child and families' needs. In response to the



increase of cases they are updating office and visit protocols to provide safety at visits. PPE will be provided, as necessary. Foster families may feel vulnerable and staff are working to address concerns and ensure that they feel safe. We are seeing very difficult situations with drug issues and the impact it has on families including the death of several parents. As a mandated service we continue to see children and families with significant needs seeking assistance, but fewer other services available for ongoing support. Some youth, who are unable to live at home also have some challenges that make it difficult to find placements or to find homes for, and Covid is making it very difficult.

Staff are trying to remain hopeful and offer service. Knowing that the vaccine is coming has offered a glimmer of hope moving forward. We continue to explore amalgamation with HNCAS and we have hired consultants to support the process. Consultants may reach out to community stakeholders for input and invitation to participate in planning.

#### **Tara Buchanan – Community Living Brant**

We are using PPE and trying to meet with people in person safely. We are trying to do this as much as possible to keep everyone safe. The employment program has been trotting along, lots of people looking and lots of people getting jobs. Community Living Ontario is doing a contest for students to win a pizza party if they send in submissions about how classrooms can be inclusive. The contest is open to students in Grade 8 and under.

#### **Lauren Freeborn – Contact Brant**

We are continuing virtual and phone visits. Porch visits are done if necessary. No changes to the agency at this moment, just continuing to serve their clients.

## **7. Reports**

### **7.1 Superintendent of Education**

**Kevin Greco**

Superintendent Greco thanked everyone for all their participation and collaboration during these difficult times. We hope the vaccine brings some hope for our future to return to normal soon. Our Board will be offering our school administrators an additional qualification course in special education. School Administrators can get insight into leading schools that meet the needs of students in special education. This will likely be virtual. The accessibility audit is still under way and he will share that outcome at the next meeting, this will ensure everyone has access to what they need in our Board. Mental health resources have been put on our website. The info on our virtual classrooms will also soon be on our websites. This will help parents access mental health resources. We have made a pivot plan in case we need to close the schools. We do not anticipate this will happen, but we have it in place just in case. We have made plans how Spec Ed teachers will respond and provide supports in a pivot scenario.

Superintendent Greco wished everyone a merry Christmas and a safe and happy New Year.



**7.2 Student Achievement Leader: Special Education**

**Carmen McDermid**

On December 9th, the Special Education Department hosted another virtual Community of Practice Meeting with system and school Special Education Resource Teachers. The meeting was divided into two separate sessions. The first session was led by Jim Little, Consulting Board Psychologist who spoke about 'Neurodevelopmental Perspectives on Learning – Fine Motor Issues'. This professional development workshop was offered as a follow up to requests received from staff regarding concerns with students' fine motor skills and in seeking strategies to be tried with students. We are very pleased to have had a few SEAC members join this online PD session.

The second portion of the Community of Practice Meeting focused on discussing specific topics and preparing SERTs for a variety of upcoming responsibilities including IPRCs, achievement testing/report sharing, PowerSchool and Virtual School supports. These online meetings are recorded to enable staff the option of being able to reference information shared with them in the future. Debbie Dignan organized and hosted secondary, virtual Job Skills Program information sessions for all potential grade 8 student candidates and their parents/guardians. St. John's College had their virtual meeting on Dec. 7th and Assumption College held their virtual meeting on December 9th. Holy Trinity is hoping to host a virtual session in the new year. The Special Education Department Heads and Job Skills classroom teachers joined Debbie online to assist in providing virtual tours of the school, sharing information specific to their school and in answering a variety of parent's questions. A student representative from each school also joined and shared their experiences as a student in the Job Skills Program. Families were also provided a Pathway Plan Guide to help them better understand options and pathways for their child.

The Board is pleased to have been able to hire a temporary .8 Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) to work in partnership with our permanent SLPs (Stephanie Bergman & Meagan Courneyea) in helping to reduce the list of students waiting for a speech and language assessment or phonological awareness screening. The permanent SLPs will maintain their current school assignments and will continue to be the primary contact for any speech/language questions or concerns from schools.

**8. Closing Remarks/Adjournment**

Superintendent Greco thanked everyone for coming. The meeting adjourned at 1:51 p.m.

---

**Next meeting:** Tuesday, January 19, 2021, 1:00 p.m. – Microsoft Teams