



**SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Tuesday, May 18, 2021 – 1:00 p.m.
Teams Meeting**

Members: Kevin Greco (*Superintendent of Education*), Bill Chopp (Trustee), Jennifer Chapman (Co-Chair), Lauren Freeborn (Co-Chair), Laura Bergeron (*ad hoc*), Annmarie Krauss, Sarah Robertson, Nil Woodcroft,

Regrets: Tara Buchanan, Brook Gardner, Patti-Mitchell (*Parent, County of Brant*)

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

1. Opening Prayer/Land Acknowledgement

Superintendent Greco provided the land acknowledgement by recognizing the Indigenous Land on which we gather, and Carmen McDermid led the group in the opening prayer.

2. Welcome and Opening Comments

Superintendent Greco welcomed the group.

3. Approval of Agenda

Moved: Lauren Freeborn

Seconded: Annmarie Krauss

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approves the agenda of the May 18, 2021 meeting.

Carried

4. Approval of the Minutes

Moved: Nil Woodcroft

Seconded: Lauren Freeborn

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approves the minutes of the April 20, 2021 meeting.

Carried

5. Correspondence

RCCDSB Letter re: Bill 172

Lauren shared the correspondence letter sent on March 30, 2021 from Renfrew County Catholic District School Board (RCCDSB) (see appendix A). Superintendent Greco communicated that the letter was to show RCCDSB's support of Bill 172, the Education Statute Law Amendment Act for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Superintendent Greco inquired to the SEAC if the committee would also be in support of a letter to the Ministry and a follow up email would be provided to members.



6. Presentation – Rachel Moreau (Zelem) – Orientation & Mobility

Carmen welcomed Rachel Moreau to the group and provide details on her roles and responsibilities for Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Instruction within the Board. Further to her 10 years of service with the Board, Carmen commended Rachel on her commitment to working with students.

Rachel provided a brief overview of her role as O&M instructor within the Board and the importance of teaching proper guide to blind and low vision persons. Providing details on her education and background, she updated on the instructional areas for O&M that outlines her focus when working with students such as, the use of devices, motor development and techniques of O&M, etc.

Rachel shared on how O&M is a lifelong process, guided by these 3 principles:

1. Where am I?
2. Where am I going?
3. How am I going to get there?

To further explain this point, Rachel shared a quick video on a young child learning to use their cane.

Providing an outline on the varying stages of vision loss, members learned the differences between 20/20 vision and being legally blind. Rachel shared the following websites to learn more about vision loss, Ontario Association of Optometrists: <https://optom.on.ca/eye-health-library/> and the Canadian Association of Optometrists: <https://opto.ca/health-library>. With the use of a sheet of paper, members were then walked through an optical illusion activity.

Sharing various eye conditions from students she works with in the Board, Rachel detailed how with the use of Environmental Analysis Reports, she has successfully removed barriers in our schools such as, the reconstruction of a staircase at St. John's College.

Rachel shared her passion of goalball and how she became a National Technical Official in 2015 for the Pan Am Games. She communicated her goal to introduce the sport within the Board displaying her support on equity and inclusion for all students.

Superintendent Greco and Carmen thanked Rachel for her work and for her presentation to the committee.

7. Community Agency Updates

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

Jennifer Chapman updated that the Children's Aid Society of Haldimand and Norfolk continue to prepare for the amalgamation. On Friday, May 14, 2021 the agency hosted their annual Children and Youth in Care Day through a more creative way during the pandemic and expressed the importance of acknowledging the day. She expressed concerns for foster parents during these times and how the agency continues to provide ongoing support. Jennifer updated that the agency recently completed their annual audit and received positive results.

Annemarie Krauss – Lansdowne

Annemarie shared that most staff at Lansdowne continue to work virtually from home however, in-person services continue to be limited to essential visits. The Kids Country Inn (KCI) respite program is limited, and overnight services are not available during this time. Some in home respite supports are continuing but this is very limited. Annemarie updated that the agency continues planning for summer camps and recreational therapy programs to support children in summer camps. Lansdowne is hoping to run two skill camps (self-



care and independent learning for life) for ages 14 to 18 on the last two weeks of August for up to four to five kids in each camp.

Shannon Mason – Principal Lead

Shannon shared how today's presentation resonates and how many principals and school staff are working to best support students who do not have the online tools or are experiencing other barriers to participation in virtual learning. It has been a learning curve for all, and she spoke to the great things happening within the Board. Shannon thanked Rachel for the supports she provides to students and staff and learned from recently having the opportunity to work alongside her.

Bill Chopp – Trustee

No updates were provided on behalf of the Board of Trustees.

Lauren Freeborn – Service Planning Coordinator, Contact Brant

Lauren updated that Contact Brant services continue to remain virtual with in person options available while following Covid protocols, upon request from families.

Lauren spoke to Shannon's update to inform her that Special Services at Home (SSAH) is currently providing financial reimbursement for internet bills for the time being, and it is unknown when/if that will become an ineligible SSAH expense.

Further to the letter from RCCDSB (Item 5), Lauren confirmed that we will be having a presentation from two FASD Coordinators from Contact Brant at the June meeting. They provide education and support to families in the community, and that the FASD Coordinators could inform members of the SEAC Committee on identifying and recognizing sign and symptoms of FASD.

Nil Woodcroft – Haldimand-Norfolk REACH

Nil updated that Haldimand -Norfolk REACH continues to provide services virtually, as well as in-person visits on an as need basis. The agency will be offering a virtual family and child interactive School's Cool program (see appendix B). The seven-week program will be offered during July and August focusing on school readiness and a transition to kindergarten. Registration for the program will open on May 17, 2021.

Nil recognized and commended Carmen McDermid and her team for their work with transition to school meetings. Nil has received a lot of positive feedback from REACH employees regarding the planning for upcoming transition to school.

Sarah Robertson – Director of Services, Brant Family & Children's Services

Brant Family & Children's Services (BFACS) have been continuing to provide services with a few ongoing changes from the COVID-19 pandemic. Sarah updated that the agency has seen an increase in services for family and children due to the pandemic, caused by increased pressures and stressors and less resources available during a difficult time. The agency continues to plan and prepare for the upcoming year by looking at increased opportunities with other community partners. BFACS continue to work through the ongoing amalgamation process which can take one to three years for the merging process. Sarah shared that the agency does not anticipate any disruption or changes to services with the amalgamation.



8. Reports

8.1 Superintendent of Education

Kevin Greco

Superintendent Greco gave a summary of funds for the Board provided by the Ministry of Education (MOE) detailing the different types of funds such as, Grants for Student's Needs (GSN's), and Priorities and Partnerships Funds (PPF's). These funds received will help the Board in the hiring of additional staff and better support our students in areas suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The below list details a summary of the enhanced funding for 2021-22 to support special education and mental health and well-being for the Board:

- **The Special Education Grant:** Enhanced to retain additional staff, provision of special education programs, resources and professional learning, and professional assessments.
- **The After School Skills Development Program:** As this GSN funding will now be offered again in the 2021-22 school year, it has become a permanent funding that will support students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and working collaboratively with community agencies.
- **Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount:** This allocation addresses the variation among school boards with respect to their population of students with special education needs and school boards' ability to support these needs.
- **Mental Health and Well-Being:** This GSN will now also be offered in 2021-22 school year and a permanent funding to support the Board in addressing local needs and priorities that promote mental health and well-being, including safe, healthy, inclusive, and accepting learning environments. The GSN will assist the Board to employ additional mental health professionals and support staff, and professional learning and resources.
- **Board Re-Engagement Plan and Lead:** The Ministry has requested that all school boards will submit a re-engagement plan for 2021-22. The plan will consider disengaged students and effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the return to the 2021-22 school year. The Board is currently establishing the lead who will focus on the re-engagement plan and the plan will be brought to the Board of Trustees upon completion for furtherance to submission to the Ministry.
- **Transfer Payment Agreements (TPAs):** The following TPA funds will assist Boards in these areas:
 - Summer Support and Transition in the mental health, special education, early reading intervention, and assessment and mitigating learning loss.
 - Educator Autism Spectrum Disorder Additional Qualifications Course Subsidy
 - Transportation for Children and Youth in Care
- **Care Treatment Custody and Correctional Programs (CTCCP) Funding:** Funding has been submitted to continue running programming at Sprucedale Youth Centre in Simcoe for the 2021-22 school year.
- **Special Education Per Pupil Amount:** The Special Education Per Pupil Amount provides funding to the Board to assist with the costs of providing additional support to students with special education needs.
- **Student Support Funding OCSTA/OECTA:** The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA) and Ontario English Catholic Teacher's Association (OECTA) should be providing funding to support students.



Superintendent Greco updated that the Board would have one less transition classroom at Notre Dame school, Brantford, and St. Joseph's school, Simcoe, in the 2021-22 school year. The Job Skills class at St. John's College, Brantford will be growing with the addition of another class and the Board is currently going through the staffing process to help support students. There will be an increase in elementary special education staffing and employment position for the Job Skills class.

As the Board awaits additional direction from the MOE for virtual school in 2021-22, Superintendent Greco updated that a Board will be sending out a survey to families for virtual school. The announcement that the Ministry of Health is moving to support the full vaccination of individuals 12 years of age and older in Ontario as well as offering second doses of the vaccine to all staff and students by the end of August also promises to curtail the spread of COVID 19 in our schools and communities.

8.2 Student Achievement Leader: Special Education

Carmen McDermid

On Friday, May 14, 2021, Carmen shared that a Community of Practice (COP) meeting was held for school Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs) and Special Education Classroom Teachers (SECTs). Led by John Sylvestri (Information Technology SERT) and Jean-Paul Levac (System Teacher for Math and SEA), educators received specific training on the new online Boardmaker software and the wealth of resources within this program. This program offers a complete special education platform software that supports academic and non-academic skills, communication skills, visual supports, etc. and provides access to thousands of pre-made teaching materials. Carmen shared updates on some of the new features of the resource, how it can be used interactively with students, and how it can be used to support specific student IEP expectations. The spec. ed. system team have trialed Boardmaker over the past 18+ months to ensure they deeply understand the wide range of possibilities the program can offer to all students including French, mainstream, special education, speech & language, etc. Carmen shared that the COP meeting was recorded and can be made available to any interested party in the group if they wish to learn more about the updated program. To date, they have received a tremendous amount of positive feedback about this resource.

Carmen updated that they will be looking to offer the Summer Transition Support Program as well as the After School Skills Development Program (ASSDP) through in-person learning this summer. The ASSDP will be targeting students with significant needs who do not have independent skills and require significant adult support. The camps will run Monday to Thursday for up to four students per camp and they will be provided activities ranging from STEM, social skills building, outdoor physical and well-being activities, etc. Planning is well underway, and they remain hopeful that they will be moving forward with it this summer.

Carmen also shared with the committee about the planning being done for the Summer Transition Support Program (STSP) that will also be offered this summer. It will be organized to again focus on the wide range of student of needs and to assist them in transitioning back to school in the fall. This program is being offered in conjunction with members from the Student Support Services team who support students with mental health needs. The overall intention of the program is to offer students support using a variety of strategies and options to help make their transition back into school a positive one.



9. Forward Planning 2021-2022

Due to time constraints, there will be an email shared by Superintendent Greco to the committee on SEAC Terms for 2021 (see appendix C). The guide will detail roles and responsibilities of members, the function of the committee and looking ahead at future meeting dates and standing agenda items for 2021-22. Members were asked to review the information for discussion in June.

10. Closing Remarks/Adjournment

Superintendent Greco and Lauren thanked the group. The meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm.

Next meeting: Tuesday, June 15, 2021, 1:00 p.m. – Microsoft Teams