



BRANT HALDIMAND NORFOLK Catholic District School Board

Minutes

Catholic Education Centre
322 Fairview Drive
Brantford, ON N3R 2X6

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, May 21, 2024 – 1:00pm

Microsoft Teams

- Members:** Brandi Bertling (Child and Family Services of Grand Erie), Dennis Blake (Trustee), Mischa Dinsmore (Lansdowne Children's Centre), Michelle Drake (Crossing All Bridges), Shannon Korber (Child and Family Services of Grand Erie), Linda McFayden (Contact Brant), Patti Mitchell (Parent, County of Brant), Phil Wilson (Superintendent of Education),
- Regrets:** Laura Bergeron (ad hoc), Mary Bradford (Principal, Secondary), Tara Buchanan (Community Living Brant), Christina Ferrell (Woodview Children's Centre), Kerri Lomax (Principal, Elementary), Shannon Mason (Principal Lead: Special Education Staffing), Marilyn Noi (Autism Ontario), Jennifer Rudyk (Principal, Elementary), Janelle Sandy (Indigenous Child and Youth Team at Child and Family Services of Grand Erie), Nil Woodcroft (Haldimand Norfolk REACH)
- Resources:** Stephanie Bergman (Speech-Language Pathologist), Debbie Dignan, Maria Petruccelli (System Special Education Consultant), Jennifer Tonnie (System Special Education Consultant), Student.

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Phil Wilson welcomed the committee.

2. Opening Prayer

Sandra De Dominicis shared an opening prayer.

3. Land Acknowledgement

Superintendent Wilson read the board's land acknowledgement.

4. Approval of Agenda

Moved by: Mischa Dinsmore

Seconded by: Dennis Blake

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approves the agenda of the May 21, 2024, meeting.

Carried

5. Approval of the Minutes

Moved by: Mischa Dinsmore

Seconded by: Patti Mitchell

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approves the minutes of the April 16, 2024, meeting.

Carried

6. Correspondence – Nil

7. Story Champs – Stephanie Bergman

Speech & Language Services highlighted their job embedded professional development using Story Champs in kindergarten classrooms. During the 12 weeks of support, Teachers and ECEs learned about assessment of oral language, implementation strategies and supports for differentiation. The SLPs emphasized the importance of foundation oral language skills and connections to academic learning. This year represented year one of a three-year plan.

Lexia – Jennifer Tonnies

System Special Education Consultant, Jennifer Tonnies explained the distribution process for Lexia licenses as well as eligibility criteria. This year, the committee expanded licenses to populations with a profile of Learning Disability, Mild Intellectual Disability, and Language Impairment. As of April 2024, the following data was shared: 50% of students gained 1-2 levels in skills, 33% of students gained 3-4 levels in skills, and 7% gained 5 or more levels in skills. She noted that 3-4 levels equate to an entire reading level. Data tracking on usage ensures accountability among Special Education Resource Teachers ensuring the program is implemented as intended for maximum gains in literacy skills.

Empower – Sandra DeDominicis

Student Achievement Leader for Special Education, Sandra De Dominicis reminded members that Empower Reading, is an intensive reading program that was developed by researchers at the Hospital for Sick Children and took over 30 years to develop. Empower Reading provides struggling readers with the skills necessary to become successful readers by teaching them various word identification skills and decoding strategies. Empower Reading, is a 110-lesson program, that is delivered in 45–60-minute blocks four to five times per week. Eligibility criteria was shared as well as the number of Year 1 participants which included 81 students in 13 schools with 11 trained instructors. Progress and growth to-date was shared which is measured in multiple areas at 3 stages in the learning process and includes measures from the Empower Reading Program as well as selective standardized achievement subtests from the Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Achievement. Significant growth and progress have been made to date. The goal is to have Empower in all elementary schools in the 2024-2025 year.

Special Equipment Amount (SEA) – Maria Petrucelli

System Special Education Consultants highlighted some of the changes with the SEA training model which, this year, includes six consultants delivering training to both students and teachers. Consultants shared some of the consistent practices developed across the district including standard communication to schools, sharing of printable and digital resource guides for teachers, students and Special Education Resource Teachers and the inclusion of family members in training. They presented visual resources that were created to support students in navigating some of the basic operations and accessibility features in essential software programs. Consultants also created a resource for teachers that summarizes essential skills that students are taught in their training sessions as well as skills that teachers need to support their student's use of their SEA computer. To better understand the needs of secondary teachers in supporting their students with SEA equipment, a survey was developed to gather information about the types of documents that teachers share with students. This data will help to tailor training for secondary students to ensure that they know how to access and work with a variety of document types. Teachers were able to identify specific needs they would like further training on and then have the opportunity to connect with a consultant.

Assumption College School – Student

SEAC members enjoyed an inspirational presentation from a current student at Assumption College. The student shared the educational journey and challenges with Epilepsy and learning difficulties. The student highlighted how struggles were overcome with the support of educators and educational assistants along the way, highlighting the need for individualized programming, and significant accommodations. The student will graduate with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma in one more academic year through the perseverance and efforts. The student reminded members of the potential of all students given the right opportunities and supports and the impact decisions have on the success of the students.

8. Community Agency Updates

Patti Mitchell

Brantford and the surrounding area have been awarded the 2025 Special Olympic summer games. There will be over 3000 athletes coming from six nations worldwide. There will be many volunteer opportunities.

Shannon Korber

Child and Family Services of Grand Erie is working to get transportation/stability funds for students.

Linda McFayden

Contact Brant is now settled into their new location at 255 Colborne Street in Brantford.

Mischa Dinsmore

Lansdowne Children's Centre will have a Speech and Language Pathologist visiting the Early Years Centre's to answer parents questions their child and speech.

Michelle Drake

Crossing All Bridges Summer Camp registration opened May 1, 2024. Spots are filling quicky. The camp is for ages 14 plus.

9. Student Achievement Lead and Superintendent of Education

The Student Achievement Lead, Sandra De Dominicis, chaired 50 Entry to School Meetings for new 2024-2025 Junior Kindergarten students.

The Educational Assistant Allocation process is underway for the 2024-25 school year.

The Speech and Language Pathologists will be holding screeners over several days in June. They will be held in a centralized location with some at centralized county schools. There will be a focus on a couple schools that historically have less readiness. There are between 300-440 students that have been identified as having speech language concerns. EDI research supports this.

Special Incidence Portion (SIP)/Special Equipment Amount (SEA) – BHNCDSB was audited this year for SEA claims. They were looking at SIP claims. BHNCDSB received an additional \$107,000. The audit ensured the money was being used and being used for children. The process of BHNCDSB was recognized as clear and in order. Gianni Silvestri was recognized for his process'. The use of Bartimaeus was also praised.

10. Closing Remarks/Adjournment

Superintendent Wilson thanked everyone.

The meeting adjourned at 2:34 pm. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 18, 2024, at the Catholic Education Centre.
