



**SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Tuesday, November 20, 2018 – 9:30 a.m. - Boardroom**

- Present:** Bonnie McKinnon (Trustee), Jill Esposto, Lauren Freeborn, Debbie Fullerton, Carmen McDermid, Patti Mitchell, Michelle Shypula, Teresa Westergaard-Hager
- Guest:** Debbie Dignan – Itinerant Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) and Assumption College School members
- Regrets:** Susan Battin, Jennifer Chapman, Christine Dragojlovich, Paul Sanderson, Tracey Taylor, Nil Woodcroft
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**1. Opening Prayer**

Carmen McDermid led the group in the opening prayer.

**2. Welcome and Opening Comments**

Superintendent Shypula welcomed the group and a round of introductions ensued for the benefit to newest members, Patti Mitchell, Brant Parent Representative and Lauren Freeborn, Service Planning Coordinator from Contact Brant.

Superintendent Shypula presented Trustee Bonnie McKinnon recognition for her 30 years of service to the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board and for her contributions to SEAC. Trustee McKinnon was presented with a 'Homeless Jesus' bronze sculpture, also known as Jesus the Homeless, by Canadian sculptor Timothy Schmalz that depicts Jesus as a homeless person, sleeping on a park bench. In closing, Superintendent Shypula parting words to Trustee McKinnon as quoted by 2 Timothy 4:7 – *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

**3. Approval of Agenda**

Moved by: Jill Esposto

Seconded by: Patti Mitchell

THAT the SEAC Committee approves the agenda of the November 20, 2018 meeting.

**Carried**

**4. Approval of Minutes – October 16, 2018**

Moved by: Jill Esposto

Seconded by: Debbie Fullerton

THAT the SEAC Committee approves the minutes of the October 16, 2018 meeting.

**Carried**

**5. Presentation**

**5.1 Personal Active Learning (PAL) Presentation – Debbie Dignan – Itinerant Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT)**

Superintendent Shypula welcomed Debbie Dignan - *Itinerant Special Education Resource Teacher* and Carla DeFelice - *Assumption College teacher*, Mary McWhirter – *Educational Assistant* and students from Assumption College School.



Carla DeFelice, Assumption College teacher along with students provided a PowerPoint presentation on the *Food for Thought Snack Program*. Carla shared that Brant Food for Thought is the lead agency providing funding to many of our elementary and secondary schools supporting and facilitating Student Nutrition Programs. At Assumption, snacks are distributed by students of the PAL and Community Living Programs and most recently have begun “buddying up” with hospitality students to create hot food once a week. Funding has more than doubled recently; hence, the program has expanded from two days to four days a week and includes an afternoon bin program. Carla linked how the program is helping to support the curriculum in Numeracy by students measuring, counting and checking expiry dates. The snack program supports our Catholic Mission of Service by teaching students to be caring and responsible citizens and showing dignity towards others. Members were invited to ask students questions followed by students providing a sample of the snack they put together for the *Food for Thought Snack Program*.

Debbie inquired to SEAC members if they would be in support of holding the December Christmas SEAC meeting at St. John’s College School in Brantford. All members were in full support of this proposal. Additional information and details will be forthcoming to members.

## **6. Correspondence**

### **6.1 Letter from Upper Grand District School Board**

Superintendent Shypula shared the letter received from the Upper Grand District School Board dated October 10, 2018, addressed to the Honorable Lisa Thompson, Minister of Education (see Appendix A). The letter addresses the Upper Grand District School Board’s support of the Grand Erie District School Board’s Special Education Advisory Committee’s request to amend the *Education Act* in support of Bill 44 (2018) [originally Bill 191 (2017)]. The Bill amends the *Education Act* to provide for board activities to promote awareness and understanding of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), including best practices to support pupils who may have FASD.

SEAC members unanimously agreed to send a letter to the Minister of Education in support of Grand Erie District School Board’s position.

## **7. Community Agency Updates**

### ***Jill Esposto - Director of Services, Brant Family & Children Services***

Jill circulated a flyer and information on becoming a foster family (see Appendices B, C & D). Jill shared that there is currently a very high demand for foster care in Brantford, Brant and Haldimand and Norfolk counties. Members were asked if they could share the information with any individuals they thought would be a good fit for the service and Jill advised that both part time and full time opportunities are available. Jill shared that Shannon Korber is the new Education Liaison Coordinator who will be working with both BFACS and Haldimand-Norfolk CAS agencies to support the Joint Protocol for Student Achievement (JPSA). The purpose of this protocol is to assist school boards and child welfare authorities in creating consistent processes that will improve the educational outcomes of students in the care of the child welfare system.



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

Contact Brant is the lead Service Coordinating Agency in Brant, working with other community organizations to offer Coordinated Service Planning to families in our communities. Lauren updated that Contact Brant is continuing to meet with the identified community agencies on a monthly basis to discuss the Coordinated Services Plan and transition planning for children and youth. Lauren shared that there are long waitlists for adult services and there is good support for youth who are identified and in the education system.

***Patti Mitchell – Parent Representative for Brant***

Further to Lauren's update, Patti noted how complex the process of navigating through the Ontario Disability Support Program has been with her own child.

***Teresa Westergaard-Hager – Supervisor, Community Outreach, Norfolk Assn. for Community Living***

Norfolk Association for Community Living recently held staff training that included various *Community Living* locations and staff members holding separate positions. Teresa shared that the training was a fantastic opportunity as a collective agency to look at historical perspectives on developmental disabilities and the changes that transpired throughout the years. Teresa shared that the agency will be holding a wellness fair in the upcoming week, hosted by the Legion in Simcoe and open to the public. The agency is hosting a '*Personal Outcomes Measures*' session where individuals that they support are interviewed to collect information on how well they are being supported by their workers. Based on the feedback received, the agency can determine where they are working well and the areas in need of improvement. Teresa updated that the agency will be holding their Christmas drop-in in December and will hold their Annual Christmas Carnival after the holiday. Norfolk Association for Community Living is continuing to grow in the area of *Supported Independent Living Programs* and they have hired a new Human Resources person to assist in meeting the demands to fill new positions.

**8. Reports**

**8.1 Student Achievement Leader: Special Education**

Carmen updated on the Lexia Core5 Pilot launch within the Board and the training that was provided to SERTs and System staff on October 29, 2018. Lexia is a research-proven personalized learning model that helps students master foundational reading skills including, Phonological Awareness (about sounds), Phonics (letter sounds correspondence), Structural Analysis (suffix, prefix, etc.), Automaticity (ability to identify letters and letter sounds accurately), Vocabulary (meaning of words) and Comprehension (involving not just the meaning of words in isolation but the relationship among words within sentences and paragraphs). The program enables teachers to identify and address emerging skill gaps and recommends students to spend 20 minutes a day on the program for best results. Carmen shared the intricate process in the anonymous selection of the students for the 70 licenses purchased. Selection criteria for students included; reading at least two levels below current grade level, an identified Learning Disability (or presenting with a profile of a Learning Disability with data to support this) and attends school on a regular basis. All parents of students selected received a parent information letter and a consent form requesting specific Woodcock Johnson IV tests of achievement to be administered.



Carmen updated that on the Professional Activity Day on Friday, November 16, 2018; the remaining Educational Assistants completed their Nonviolent Crisis Intervention (NVC) training. On October 31, all Special Education system staff (E.g. Child and Youth Workers (CYWs), Social Workers, Speech-Language Pathologists, System SERTs, etc.) received a full day of NVC training and will receive their final training on December 20. This new and enhanced NVC training will ensure that all staff are using the same terminology across the Board with the focus being on preventative and de-escalating strategies.

## **8.2 Superintendent of Education**

Superintendent Shypula recognized Carmen McDermid, Student Achievement Lead: Special Education, on being awarded the “Champion of Inclusion” award at the Coaching to Inclusion Conference in London on November 14, 2018.

Superintendent Shypula updated on the Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities Policy. In August, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) released its new Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities along with recommendations on how to best meet legal obligations under Ontario’s Human Rights Code. This policy:

- Recognizes that education is vitally important to a person’s social, academic and economic development;
- Reflects a broad definition of disability;
- Provides students and families with up-to-date information about their human rights and responsibilities;
- Offers practical guidance to education providers to meet their legal obligation to accommodate; and
- Reminds schools of their obligation to maintain accessible and inclusive spaces that are discrimination and harassment- free.

The recommendations have set out actions that the government, schools and post-secondary institutions should take to ensure effective education system functions and that allows students with disabilities to thrive. The policy and its recommendations call on key players in the sector to take proactive steps to remove barriers so that all students can gain the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. Moving forward, this document will be shared at the November 28 Accessibility Steering Committee meeting to examine how we can implement next steps to further support our Multi-Year Integrated Accessibility Plan 2018-2023 (see Appendix E).

In response to the Ministry of Education’s Policy/Program Memorandum No. 144, Superintendent Shypula updated that on the Professional Activity Day on Friday, November 6, 2018, Board staff across the district were asked to complete mandatory Safe Schools Bullying Recognition and Response training. P/PM No. 144 states that employees of the Board must take seriously all allegations of bullying and act in a timely and sensitive manner when responding to students who report bullying incidents. Schools and School Boards are responsible for providing students with a safe school climate that supports student achievement and well-being and helps students reach their full potential. The online training took approximately one hour to complete.



**Brant Haldimand Norfolk  
Catholic District School Board**

**Minutes**

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Superintendent Shypula shared that Principals provided surveys to their Catholic School Advisory Councils asking councils what their goals were for the year and how the Board could support them to achieve these goals. From the feedback received, mental health, depression, anxiety and dealing with self-regulation were most prevalent. Dianne Wdowczyk, Mental Health Lead will be co-chairing at the next system-wide Skype School Council Meeting on Wednesday, November 28, 2018 to offer strategies and information to parents on where to access support within their communities. Carmen McDermid, Special Education Lead and Nancy Smykaluk, Itinerant SERT will be presenting a separate workshop at the next Regional Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (RCPIC) meeting on February 25, 2019. The Board is currently looking at what options are available to assist our Board Catholic School Advisory Chairs on a communication tool designed for our Chairs. The communication platform will allow chairs to work with other school council chairs who may have questions and offer solutions on various topics such as fundraising and Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants.

**9. Closing Remarks/ Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 am and Superintendent Shypula thanked members for their contributions to the meeting.