



**SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Tuesday, April 16, 2019 – 9:30 a.m. – Boardroom**

- Present:** Bill Chopp (*Trustee*), Susan Battin, Jennifer Chapman, Christine Dragojlovich (*Co-Chair*), Nil Woodcroft
- Resources:** Debbie Fullerton (*Principal and Principal Lead: Special Education Staffing*), Carmen McDermid (*Student Achievement Lead: Special Education*), Patti Mitchell (*Parent, County of Brant*), Michelle Shypula (*Superintendent of Education*)
- Regrets:** Laura Bergeron (*ad hoc*), Jill Esposto, Lauren Freeborn, Tracey Taylor, Teresa Westergaard-Hager (*Co-Chair*)
- Guest:** Debbie Dignan (*Itinerant Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT)*), Sarah McDade (*Job Skills World of Work Teacher*), Kevin O'Sullivan (*Special Education Department Lead*), Dennis Perras (*Job Skills Construction Teacher*)
-

1. Opening Prayer

Carmen McDermid led the group in the opening prayer.

2. Welcome and Opening Comments

Superintendent Shypula welcomed guests and members and a round of introductions were led for the benefit of all in attendance.

3. Approval of Agenda

Moved by: Jennifer Chapman

Seconded by: Susan Battin

THAT the SEAC approves the agenda of the April 16, 2019 meeting.

Carried

4. Approval of Minutes – March 19, 2019

Moved by: Susan Battin

Seconded by: Nil Woodcroft

THAT the SEAC approves the minutes of the March 19, 2019 meeting.

Carried

5. Presentations

5.1 Job Skills: World of Work and Co-op

Kevin O'Sullivan, Special Education Department Lead for St John's College, led the presentation on the Job Skills: World of Work and Co-op by providing goals of the program. Students received an opportunity to create a work related portfolio in the course that includes resumes and cover letters. Examples of student portfolios were then passed around to members. Students learned about work hazards in the course and SEAC members received an opportunity to ask students for examples of work hazards that they have learnt through their



own personal experiences. Kevin described the World of Work (WOW) Skills that students learn and members were then invited to ask interview questions directly to students. Students role-played how they would respond in a real life interview. Sarah McDade, Job Skills World of Work Teacher, updated on the community partnership with *Crossing All Bridges* where students are working to complete their co-op placement with a potential for employment after graduation. Members received information from students on the assignments they completed at *Crossing All Bridges* such as: laundry, dishes and various other life skills.

5.2 Job Skills – Construction

Dennis Perras, Job Skills Construction Teacher at St. John's College, provided an overview on the Job Skills Construction class and learning opportunities offered to students. Students are learning how to work safely with construction equipment, what a medical emergency is and what they would do in a medical emergency. Dennis shared examples of the projects students completed this year and students demonstrated their work by recounting what equipment they used such as: nail guns, glue, etc. In the second project students completed, Dennis described how they tied in literacy from their first semester classes by utilizing ideas from the book they read. Methods used working with students and construction equipment include hand over hand to ensure student safety.

5.3 Role of the Itinerant SERT – Supporting Special Classes

Debbie Dignan, Itinerant Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) provided an overview of her role in the Board and described how she is supporting learning in elementary and secondary special classes. Debbie's role can be divided into four pillars as follows (See Appendix A):

- 1. Improving Student Achievement:** Looking at students' assessments and using an appropriate assessment tool to then develop the IEP while monitoring and evaluating student learning.
- 2. Building Staff Capacity through Professional Development and Collaboration:** Providing training and implementation of Alternative Curriculum and assessment. Professional development for staff working with students with special needs. Connecting staff to resources through community agencies and schools and building resources to share across the district.
- 3. Building Parent Confidence – Helping families make informed decisions:** Providing clear and consistent messaging to parents regarding the programs, reporting of students' progress and transition planning. See Appendix B for an example of an information session that Debbie organized for parents of Grade 8 students with special needs who are transitioning to high schools.
- 4. Creating Community Partnerships:** Connecting students and families to services and programs offered in their communities.

Debbie reviewed the Special Education Programs offered within our Board in both elementary and secondary. With a class size of up to 16 students, both elementary schools, Notre Dame in Brantford and St Joseph's in Simcoe, offer transition classes for students who are identified with an intellectual exceptionality or multiple exceptionality. In secondary, the job skills programs are offered at all three high schools and both Holy Trinity Catholic High School in Simcoe and Assumption College in Brantford also offer Personal Active Learning (PAL) and Community Living alternative programs. Debbie shared the work she has created in writing a curriculum for three of the alternative courses offered at the high school such as: KGW – Exploring the World



of Work. Working with the special education department teams, the curriculums contain a course framework and competencies that students will have developed by the end of the course.

6. Correspondence

6.1 Letter from Durham Catholic District School Board

Superintendent Shypula shared the letter received from the Durham Catholic District School Board's SEAC to the Minister of Education, Lisa Thompson, regarding their concerns with recent changes to the provincial funding model for Autism services and the impact that these will have on children, families and school boards (See Appendix C). It was determined that Chairs Christine Dragojlovich and Teresa Westergaard-Hager would create a letter on the behalf of the Board SEAC asking for clarification from the Minister speaking to transition planning and funding for students with ASD going forward into September 2019.

6.2 Letter from Conseil Scolaire Viamonde

Superintendent Shypula indicated that Chair Teresa Westergaard-Hager sent communication on behalf of the Board SEAC to the Minister of Education, Lisa Thompson on November 21, 2018 similar to the letter received from the Conseil Scolaire Viamonde (See Appendix D). This correspondence detailed our support in amending the education act to promote awareness and understanding of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder.

7. Community Agency Updates

Nil Woodcroft – Manager of Early Childhood Intervention Programs, Haldimand-Norfolk REACH

Nil updated that due to changes with autism services made by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCSS), Haldimand-Norfolk REACH is holding Family Nights to meet with parents to review what services they are looking for. Autism Services at REACH is looking into a new model of service in response to the recent Ministry changes.

Updates to the Infant and Child Development Program Guidelines by the MCSS has created a shift in program eligibility. The agency will now be providing services to children until school entry.

Nil shared that HN REACH still has spaces available in their children's Bramble Retreat program. Bramble Retreat is a respite home designed for children under the age of 18 who are diagnosed with a physical or developmental handicap, medically fragile and/or technology dependent requiring nursing supports.

Susan Battin – Senior Therapist and Parent Representative, Lansdowne Children's Centre

Lansdowne Children's Centre is navigating through the changes to the Ontario Autism Program set out by the MCSS. The agency will be moving to a system where Lansdowne no longer receives direct funding. Lansdowne will operate on a fee-for-service model with families choosing the services they wish to purchase with their new childhood budgets. They are actively exploring the types of services they will be able to offer. Lansdowne is focused on supporting the children, youth, families and employees through the changes while they explore and plan what services can be offered in the future.



On April 24, 2019 at 1:30 pm, there is a parent information session along with other community partners to assist families on working with their new budgets.

On Saturday, May 11, 2019, Lansdowne will be hosting their 15th Annual Charity Motorcycle Ride to support the Lansdowne Children's Centre Foundation. Visit <http://www.lansdownemotorcycleride.com/> for additional details.

Jennifer Chapman – Child Welfare Supervisor, Haldimand-Norfolk Children's Aid Society

Jennifer updated on the success of the Haldimand-Norfolk Children's Aid Society annual Easter dinner. Youth have been planning a 'Kindness Rocks' project where they paint rocks and inscribe inspirational quotes then distribute around the city. The hope behind the pay-it-forward project is to spark joy in people's everyday lives. Jennifer will provide additional information at a later date on how the recent Provincial Budget to services from the MCSS over the next three years will affect their agency. The agency will be hosting their annual staff recognition event in May.

Christine Dragojlovich – Clinical Manager, Woodview Mental Health & Autism Services

Christine updated on the teams that will be housed in Woodview's new Harmony Square location and that the hope is to officially open on mental health week on May 5. Bereavement Outreach will be held at this location and the agency hopes to hire another two staff for the location. The suicide coordinator will also work from this office. On Sunday, May 5, 2019, Woodview will be hosting their fourth annual Hook, Line and Thinker Fishing Derby from 10 am to 5 pm at the Mt. Pleasant Ponds. The cost is \$5 to enter the event and there are various prizes to win. The annual Coffee House and Art Show presented by Fortitude Youth View, Woodview's youth engagement group, will be taking place on Friday May 17, 2019 from 6 pm to 8 pm at Freedom House in the old Eaton Centre. The event will hold silent auction items, crafts and opportunities to purchase coffee and snacks. Additional information can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/events/188199461905383/>.

Bill Chopp – Trustee representing City of Brantford

Trustee Chopp shared that the Board is currently waiting to hear back on how the changes within the government will affect our Board and will update the committee at a future date. Trustee Chopp thanked Debbie Dignan for all her hard work and to the presenters and students for sharing their experiences with SEAC.

7. Reports

7.1 Student Achievement Leader: Special Education

Carmen updated on the secondary PD Day, which was planned and organized by Debbie Dignan, and held on Friday, March 29 at Crossing All Bridges Learning Centre in Brantford. Crossing all Bridges is a not-for-profit agency dedicated to providing meaningful educational opportunities to adults with developmental challenges. Educational Assistants were able to experience firsthand the unique programs the organization has to offer to help build participants self-confidence while participating in social inclusion and gaining experience to develop the skills necessary to function as informed members of society. Carmen updated on the presentation provided by Rachel Moreau, Orientation & Mobility Educational Assistant with the Board. Rachel introduced and discussed various eye conditions and demonstrated specific



Orientation and Mobility techniques. Educational Assistants had the opportunity to experience what it is like to be blind or have low vision through various simulations using equipment and games, such as goalball. Rachel also provided tips and a handout on how to keep your eyes healthy (See Appendix E.) Beth Conly-Edwards, Coordinator of the Vision Resource Services and Outreach Department at the W. Ross Macdonald School for the Blind shared a presentation on Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI). CVI is a unique visual impairment caused by neurological damage (from shaken baby syndrome, accidental head injuries and infections such as viral meningitis to name a few) that affects the visual parts of the brain. Beth described the visual and behavioural characteristics of CVI as well as specific interventions that can be used when programming for these students. See Appendix F for the handout supplied.

Carmen updated that Lansdowne Children's Centre offered a 'Parents as Partners' event at St Basil Catholic Elementary School in Brantford on Saturday, April 6, 2019. The purpose of the event is to connect parents with community partners and educate parents on services that the agencies have to offer. The event was hosted in collaboration with the Grand Erie District School Board and BHNCD SB. Sandra DeDominicis (System SERT) is the lead for our Board and assisted with the planning and presenting at the workshop. Carmen inquired to the group on suggestions and ideas on how to increase family participation.

On Friday, April 12, 2019, the Board held their Mental Health PA Day event at Assumption College School in Brantford. Teachers, Educational Assistants (EAs), Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), Special Educational Resource Teachers (SERTs), Library Technician's and Mental Health staff were amongst the staff who participated. Educators received presentations by Dr. Kristen McLeod in the morning on '*Calming the Storm: Trauma Informed Classrooms*' and by Mary Lachapelle in the afternoon on Mental Health Well-Being in the Workplace. Dr. McLeod is a registered clinical developmental psychologist and founder of the Attune Trauma and Regulation Centre in Guelph, Ontario. Mary Lachapelle has been a teacher for over 25 years with qualifications on both elementary and secondary levels and has worked as a Senior Staff Officer at the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association Provincial Office (OECTA) in the Counselling and Member Services Department.

7.2 Superintendent of Education

Superintendent Shypula updated that at the recent Regional Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (RCPIC) meeting held on Monday, March 25, 2019 and based on parent feedback obtained from surveys, Carmen McDermid, Student Achievement Lead: Special Education, Nancy Smykaluk, Itinerant Special Education Resource Teacher and Holy Cross School Special Education Resource Teachers Nancy Mulroy and Tara Spangenberg, presented an information session on self-regulation strategies being implemented across the district. Background was provided describing the inception of self-regulation as a focus for the Special Education Department since 2016 and an overview of the resources that have been provided to each elementary and secondary school to support the creation and effective use calming room/spaces within schools and classrooms. Additionally, the Zones of Regulation resource was shared with members along with a number of evidence-based strategies to assist with regulating student behaviour. Guests were invited to explore, build and take home self-regulation items/tools that are used within our schools.



Superintendent Shypula informed members on changes with the Council for Exceptional Children Chapter 834. The Council for Exceptional Children is an organization involved in raising awareness of special education and local initiatives to support special education. Part of the Executives role is to provide workshops or information sessions for families and educators. Additionally, the Executive hosts an annual Awards Gala to recognize the efforts of students, staff and volunteers who support students with special education needs.

All events and fundraising have been done locally through the chapter. School Boards have not directly supported the chapter with monetary funds. All members volunteer their time and support events and promote the local chapter.

Judith Lapierre, a dedicated and passionate lead on the Executive, initiated this local chapter over 30 years ago. In the past number of years, following Judith's passing, the membership has dropped considerably and the only current participants are Jennifer McLaren Gibbons from the Board and Stephanie Slaman from the Grand Erie District School Board (GEDSB).

This year, the GEDSB has chosen not to proceed with representation on the current Executive due to low membership and has therefore chosen not to be involved in leading and supporting the Awards Gala. It was presented to our Senior Administration Team, that without the partnership with the GEDSB, the Board can not support this event independently and a decision was made that we would not proceed.

Although we know this evening is going to be missed, we are confident that within the district we can continue to recognize and celebrate the gifts and talents of our students, staff and volunteers.

8. Closing Remarks/ Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 am and Carmen McDermid led a closing prayer. Superintendent Shypula thanked members for their contributions to the meeting.