

CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF EASTERN ONTARIO

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

January 9, 2007

Board Office, Kemptville

Present:

SEAC Members:

Sue Wilson (Chair), Trustee
Ann McGahey, Member-at-Large, OECTA
Suzanne Whitney, Integration Action for
Inclusion of Leeds and Grenville
Christina Edge, Autism Society of Ontario
Fran Brauneisen, Association for Community
Living

Board Resource Staff:

Dr. Donaleen Hawes, Superintendent of Education
Tom Jordan, Principal of Special Education
Paula Perrault, Special Education Co-ordinator
Pam Dunk, Behaviour Consultant/Crisis Support
Worker

Regrets:

Rose-Marie Martin, Learning Disabilities
Association of Ontario

Guests:

Judith Boucher, Principal, St. Patrick, Rockland
Irene Tweddle, Education Assistant (CUPE)
Dave Connors, parent/CSC member, St. George,
Long Sault, and St. Mary-St. Cecilia, Morrisburg

Meeting Called to Order

Sue Wilson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Sue welcomed all members and guests, and all members introduced themselves.

I. Opening Prayer

Tom Jordan led the group in a prayer by Archbishop Oscar Romero entitled, "Creating the Church of Tomorrow".

II. Approval of Agenda

Moved by: Suzanne Whitney

Seconded by: Fran Brauneisen

III. Approval of Minutes

Moved by: Fran Brauneisen

Seconded by: Ann McGahey

IV. Roots of Empathy Presentation

Pam Dunk, Behaviour Consultant/Crisis Support Worker, and Judith Boucher, Principal, St. Patrick School, in Rockland, presented an overview of the Roots of Empathy Program, which is being piloted in 16 of our schools.

Pam and Judith provided some important background information;

- In order to implement the Roots of Empathy Program the school must have a community partner (e.g., the Health Unit, in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville)
- Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario began the implementation of the Roots of Empathy Program in January 2006 by training 1 school
- funding from the Ministry of Education's Anti-bullying allocation allowed 15 additional Student Support Workers to be trained in September, 2006
- a video that highlighted the program in action was shared
 - Roots of Empathy is a classroom program to help children become more competent citizens today, and more competent parents tomorrow
 - children learn how babies learn and react to the world, and in turn, the students learn about themselves
 - the program teaches emotional literacy (the ability to identify feelings and give them names)
 - teaches problem-solving by focusing on the relationship between infant and parent (e.g., when a baby cries, it is for a reason) which teaches students about problem-solving
 - teaches diversity and caring (love comes in every colour, and every language)
 - students take the knowledge and skills that they learned with their classroom baby and extend it to how their friends and classmates are feeling, and how they respond to how others are feeling and acting
 - integrates into the curriculum (language arts, mathematics, science, arts, etc.) and is extended by the classroom teachers
 - builds community by making very positive connections
 - the program encourages and teaches responsibility
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Pam Dunk provided an overview of the training requirements;

- very strict guidelines which require all facilitators to complete the training and receive their certificate in order to implement the program
- four days of training are needed
 - three days initially, then one day follow up
 - trainers currently come from Ottawa
 - program is implemented by Student Support Workers with the support of the classroom teachers
 - support documents and resource binders are included
- school teams decided which classroom (s) would to implement the program
- participating schools receive a package of material (e.g., baby safe zone blanket, toys, doll to prepare and practice for a real baby, literature collection, video)
- Pam also shared a scrapbook of pictures from several schools within our Board

Judith Boucher provided an overview of the program at St. Patrick;

- the program consists of nine themes, presently St. Patrick is on theme four
- Baby Ella's first visit was in October, 2006
- there are pre-visit discussions and activities that take place, then the baby visit and parent(s) come into the classroom which is followed by post-visit activities and discussions
- the Grade 3 class at St. Patrick has written two books so far: "Why Is the Baby Crying?" and the other is called "Losing Our Teeth"
- the students are always very excited when Baby Ella comes to visit
- Judith also shared some of the extension activities (e.g., "Something That I Did That Made Me Proud" posters which were created by the students)
- a bulletin board is displayed in the hallway so the entire school is involved – it follows Baby Ella's progress

Next Steps

- our hope is to expand the number of schools involved in the program based on available funding
- finding a community partner (such as local Health Unit) in any new area is critical to the program going forward
- an information session for the Cornwall area is planned for early February, 2007

A question and answer session took place and Sue Wilson thanked Pam and Judith on behalf of the group.

V. Association Updates

Suzanne Whitney, Integration Action for Inclusion of Leeds and Grenville
Nothing to report at this time.

Christina Edge, Autism Society of Ontario

Christina provided a copy of the document entitled “Autism Ontario’s Response to the Special Education Transformation: The Report of the Co-Chairs with the Recommendations of the Working Table on Special Education”.

- In this response, representatives of Autism Ontario outline their concerns, questions and issues related to the “Special Education Transformation” document. It strives to reflect the realities experienced by parents of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Ontario.

Fran Brauneisen, Association for Community Living

Fran provided the department with a copy of the Community Living Ontario resource binder: “Kids Belong Together”. Some of the highlights of the resource binder, such as the Inclusive School Checklist and the training materials were discussed.

VI. Special Education Department Update

Tom Jordan shared the following information;

- some students from St. Luke CHS, in Smiths Falls, catered the Christmas luncheon at the Western Region Board Office on December 21, 2006. Students (along with the guidance of their teacher, Stefan Sagat, and educational assistant, Debbie Closs) planned the meal, did the shopping, prepared the food and served the food. The meal was excellent and the students were justifiably proud of their accomplishment. Consideration will be given to using these students for future catering events.
- teams from the Board will be visiting each school (starting with the secondary schools) to work with, and mentor, the Special Education teams there on how to improve the quality of the IEP’s for all students.
- we are in the process of forming a Principal’s Special Education Advisory Group that will meet to discuss challenges that all schools face, and collectively search for positive solutions to problems. The first meeting will take place in January, 2007.

Changes to IPRC (Individual Placement and Review Committee) Process

Paula Perrault distributed a draft letter of how we will inform parents about some of the Ministry proposed changes to the IPRC process:

- changes will only affect the parents of students who are placed in a regular classroom
- parents have the option of requesting an IPRC, or dispensing with the process

A discussion surrounding the wording of the letter took place and some changes to the letter were incorporated.

STOMP Update (Council of Directors of Education Project)

- the pilot phase with the first four coaches is just finishing
- four more coaches will be involved in training over the next three weeks

- we will invite our teacher consultants, Michael Glofcheskie and Gloria Stowell, to do a presentation in the near future

Increased Funding for Primary Assessments

Dr. Hawes provided the following update concerning increased funding for primary assessments:

- we have received the initial \$25,000 to develop our Board plan which must be submitted by January 12, 2007
- we are hoping to get an additional \$135,000 (maximum for a Board our size)
- our plan is designed to decrease waiting lists, and increase the capacity to assess students at the primary level
- all schools have filled out Psychological Processing Checklists (PPC) for their most needy profile of students for JK-4 (actual names are not part of this information gathering process)
- this information has helped to identify the amount of students across our Board who will benefit from our plan
- the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario proposed plan will target Grade 2 students, and will build capacity with Grade 2 teachers
- the timeframe will extend from January, 2007, through June, 2008
- the plan will be piloted in six schools and then expanded to families of schools
- we are proposing that Kara Casey, Psychological Associate for our Board (and qualified teacher) will be taking the lead in this project
- this initiative will fit in nicely with some of the other projects we have underway as a Board (e.g., Data2 Project)

VII. Correspondence Received

We have received the following:

- letter from the Ottawa Carleton District School Board to the Minister of Education expressing special education funding concerns
- letter from the Toronto District School Board to the Minister of Education expressing special education funding concerns
- letter from the Ontario Association of Education Advocates expressing a concern for the establishment of standards and ethical practices for those acting as advocates for children with special needs in the schools
- information about upcoming Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) seminars and clinics was sent in by Ruby Mekker, Special Education Resource Teacher, St. Mary School, Chesterville

VIII. Agenda Topics

- Kim Little, Best Start Co-ordinator for Leeds and Grenville, has requested some time at the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting on February 13, 2007, to discuss

Best Start initiatives and how they impact/serve special needs students. Tom Jordan will confirm with Kim.

IX. Topic for Future Meetings

- Gifted Website
- Transition (LDAO Program – March)
- Transition to Adulthood (April)
- Assistive Technology Symposium
- Anti-Bullying Guideline Draft Policy (awaiting more information from the Ministry)

X. Chair's Report

The Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario Parent Involvement Committee has not met.

XI. Good News Sharing

Members and guests shared various items of good news.

XII. Next S.E.A.C. Meeting – February 13, 2007, at St. Mary-St. Cecilia, in Morrisburg

- take Morrisburg exit off Hwy. 401
- turn south on Hwy. 31
- at the stoplights, merge to the right, which is Hwy. 2 heading west
- after the Giant Tiger, turn left off highway onto Augusta Street (Catholic cemetery is at the corner as well)
- drive down Augusta Street until you get to the fifth street, which you can turn right on to (Shea Drive)
- the physical number of the school is 40 Augusta Street (but it doesn't follow the numerical order of the street)

XIII. Closing Prayer

Tom Jordan led the group in the "Board Prayer".

XIV. Motion to Adjourn the Meeting

Moved by: Ann McGahey

Seconded by: Christina Edge

The meeting was adjourned by Sue Wilson at 8:35 p.m.

We invite all parents and interested staff to attend SEAC meetings, and for SEAC members to bring guests to each meeting.

We are people of God Transforming the world!