



CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF EASTERN ONTARIO

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

March 7, 2007

St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School, in Russell

Present:

SEAC Members:

Sue Wilson (Chair), Trustee
Nancy Kirby, Trustee
Karen McAllister, Trustee
Fran Brauneisen, Association for Community
Living
Rose-Marie Martin, Learning Disabilities
Association of Ontario

Regrets:

Ann McGahey, Member-at-Large, OEETA
Suzanne Whitney, Integration Action for
Inclusion of Leeds & Grenville
Christina Edge, Autism Society of Ontario

Board Resource Staff:

Dr. Donaleen Hawes, Superintendent of Education
Tom Jordan, Principal of Special Education
Paula Perrault, Special Education Co-ordinator
Judy Dallas, Special Education Consultant

Guests:

Richard James, Principal, St. Thomas Aquinas,
Russell
Karen Carriere, Vice Principal, St. Thomas
Aquinas, Russell
Margaret Benke, Principal, St. Mary-St. Cecilia,
and parent at St. Thomas Aquinas, Russell
Lynn Lalonde-Villeneuve, Catholic School Council
Chair, St. Jude, Vankleek Hill
Michael Crossan, Principal, Pope John Paul II,
Hammond
Lori-Ann Zylstra, Special Education Resource
Teacher, St. Thomas Aquinas, Russell
Mary Jane Murphy, Student Support Worker,
St. Patrick, Rockland
Terry McEvoy, Community Living of North
Grenville
Marlene Picard, Principal, St. Jude, Vankleek Hill
Julie Furlotte, Catholic School Council Chair, St.
Thomas Aquinas, Russell
Cindy May, Special Education Resource Teacher,
St. Thomas Aquinas, Russell
Diane Boucher, Special Education Resource
Teacher, St. Thomas Aquinas, Russell
John White, parent, Pope John Paul II, Hammond
Rick Stalberg, parent, Pope John Paul II, Hammond
Kim Lamanne, parent, Pope John Paul II,
Hammond

Meeting Called to Order

Dr. Donaleen Hawes called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Dr. Hawes welcomed all Special Education Advisory Committee members and guests to St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic High School, and thanked Richard James, Principal, Karen Carriere, Vice Principal and their staff for hosting the meeting.

All members and guests introduced themselves.

I. Opening Prayer

Tom Jordan led the group in a prayer entitled “Anyway” (words on a wall in Mother Teresa’s Hospital, in Calcutta).

II. Approval of Agenda

Moved by: Fran Brauneisen

Seconded by: Sue Wilson

III. Approval of Minutes

Moved by: Rose-Marie Martin

Seconded by: Fran Brauneisen

IV. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Dr. Hawes facilitated the election of the Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee.

- Sue Wilson was nominated to serve as Chairperson, by Nancy Kirby
- the nomination was seconded by Rose-Marie Martin, and confirmed by all
- Fran Brauneisen was nominated to serve as Vice Chairperson, by Sue Wilson
- the nomination was seconded by Rose-Marie Martin, and confirmed by all

Sue Wilson officially welcomed all members and guests to St. Thomas Aquinas.

V. Association Updates

Rose-Marie Martin, Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

- a copy of a letter from Peter Chaban, Chair, Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, to Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Education, and a copy of a response letter from Peter Chaban to Kathleen Wynne, regarding the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario's concerns around changes to the IPRC process were shared
- a question was raised around the Ministry of Education/OPA Partnership for Assessments
- a request was made for a copy of the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario Model Projects to Promote Student Behaviour Proposal
- York University is again offering **Project Advance** which is a six week summer institute that prepares learning disabled students for post-secondary education by focusing on learning about academic support strategies, study and life skills, assistive technology and the availability of campus support. More information can be obtained from Maureen Haig, Coordinator, Project Advance, 416-736-2100, ext. 22543, or by e-mail at Maureen@yorku.ca. **Applications are to arrive no later than May 4, 2007.**

Fran Brauneisen, Association for Community Living

- The Canadian Association for Community Living and Community Living Ontario are joining forces to present a National Conference from May 30 – June 1, 2007. It will be held in Toronto. The theme is “**Re-inventing Community Supports**”. The conference will follow three important streams relating to the theme:
 - **System Transformation** – discovering how local community agencies are transforming themselves to deliver more inclusive and individualized supports
 - **Rebuilding the Grassroots Movement** – beyond services and supports to social change
 - **Community Development** – opportunities to engage with one another to learn from the experiences of diverse communities
- The deadline for reservations at the Sheraton Centre, in Toronto, is April 29, 2007.** There is a range of fees for participants. For more information go to www.cacl.ca, or www.communitylivingontario.ca/conference2007. The Community Living Ontario Annual General Meeting will follow the conference on June 2, 2007.
- Fran provided a copy of the newsletter for Community Living Ontario entitled, **Community Living Connections**. This informative and entertaining resource is published twice a year.
 - **Introduction to Inclusive Education**, a book by Anne Johnson (published by John Wiley and Sons, Canada, 2007) was shared. There is a multimedia text using an electronic version as well as the printed one to integrate video clips, self-assessment quizzes, interactive exercises and hyperlinks throughout. Anne Johnson has impressive credentials and has spent many years in the Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto. She is currently working in the Curriculum Department. She has a keen interest in special education.
 - Marilyn Dolmage will be presenting a one-day workshop on **Inclusion**, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., on March 31, 2007, at General Vanier Intermediate School, in Cornwall.

The cost to register is \$5.00. For more information, contact Colleen Kelly-Jansen at 613-543-3737, ext. 229, or by email at ckellyjansen@cldc.ca.

VI. Department Updates

We have been successful in hiring a new Psycho-educational Consultant for the Board. Her name is Trish Gill. She is presently working for Developmental Services of Leeds and Grenville, and will be starting with us on March 19, 2007.

The Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario is partnering with the Upper Canada District School Board and RNJ Youth Services to set up an alternative to the suspension program for Leeds and Grenville. The site will be in Prescott at the Lions Club Hall. Three staff members will be onsite, a clinical Youth Worker from RNJ Youth Services, a Child and Youth Worker from the CDSBEO, and an Instructional Assistant from the UCDSB. The program will be ready for students on March 19, 2007.

We participated in the two-day Ministry IEP review days. The first day involved Dr. Hawes and some parents, and the second day involved a secondary school principal and Board staff. The Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario was the only board present that took this opportunity to conduct our own internal audit. This has really helped in developing next steps which are presently ongoing now to address the concerns found, and to move our schools forward.

The 'pilot phase' of Assessment Capacity Building Project will be beginning this month. We did submit a proposal to the Ontario Psychological Association for funding, and we received \$160,000.00. Our plan will be targeted at Grade 2 teachers to help them gather excellent assessment data on their high risk students, to increase their level of expertise in interpreting this data, and teach them how to connect this information to high yield intervention strategies. With all three of these in place, we will be able to make better decisions around programming, intervention strategies, type and use of resources and referrals for professional assessments. All of these will lead to an increase in student achievement for our high risk students. The department will be doing a more in-depth presentation on this initiative to the Special Education Advisory Committee in the near future.

Dr. Hawes updated the group on the Anti-Bullying Guidelines from the Ministry of Education.

- a brief presentation was made at the end of last year to SEAC
- the Ministry has gathered information from parents and School Boards
- the Ministry is encouraging Boards to develop/implement anti-bullying programs
- the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario purchased many excellent resources, and program kits were distributed to all schools from the money that we received last year
- the Ministry will be bringing forward a new legislation to amend/supplement the Safe Schools Act (these changes are not expected this school year). In light of this, it was

suggested that we move Anti-Bullying Guidelines from Future Topics to Department Updates (which will come back to the Special Education Advisory Committee when we have more information)

VII. Some Assembly Required – A Presentation on the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario’s Transitions Program by Rose-Marie Martin

- the original SOAR program (elementary) has been very well received and has been adopted by a large number of schools
- the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario received a large number of requests from secondary schools for a program that could be used in classes such as Learning Strategies – they developed SOAR for High Schools: Promoting Self-Knowledge in Youth with Learning Disabilities

Rose-Marie Martin provided an overview of the Some Assembly Required Program (SOAR), the resource:

- helps student to deal with the emotional baggage attached to learning disabilities
- looks at the positive aspects of differences in people
- stresses that people do not all learn in the same way
- deals with the fact that strengths are much more important than weaknesses
- examines various learning styles
- looks at other factors that can negatively influence learning (e.g., florescent lights, noise level in the room, anxiety)
- encourages students to discover what works best for them and ask for what they need (self-advocate)
- describes what learning disabilities are
- discusses how a learning disability will affect academics
- looks at implications for a student’s social life
- ties in other issues, such as, physical problems and executive functioning

The program also examines issues such as the role of:

- assistive technology to “level the playing field for LD students”
- Individual Education Plans (IEP’s)
- Individual Placement and Review Committees (IPRC’s)
- accommodations and modifications to curriculum
- assessments
- post-secondary life

A Parent Guide and a Resource Guide are both available from the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario at their website, www.ldao.on.ca.

Sue thanked Rose-Marie for presenting and for sharing this wonderful resource with us.

VIII. Assistive Technology Symposium Overview

Paula Perrault provided an overview of the Assistive Technology Symposium.

- the Ministry of Education invited all Boards to send a team to Toronto for a Ministry Symposium in September, 2006
- the need for the symposium comes out of the Education for All document
- Paula shared an overview of the main themes that were common throughout the symposium:
 - for most students, their achievement is in-line with their potential
 - for some students, there is a huge gap between potential and performance (e.g., a learning disabled student)
 - the goal of assistive technology is to close the gap and enhance the performance
 - the importance of Universal Design for Learning (e.g., handicap ramp that is necessary for some, but useful for all) was an important theme
 - different options (not just one program or solution)
 - the use of assistive technology can be very helpful when trying to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of individual learners
 - assistive technology is designed to “maintain a flow of ideas” in the special needs learner
 - the ability is often there in a special learner, using assistive technology allows them to communicate it to others in a way that all can understand

Paula also noted that we are very pleased with how our school teams have embraced the use of assistive technology and as a Board, we are seeing the results in increased learning in our special needs students.

Sue Wilson thanked Paula for her informative presentation.

IX. Questions from the Floor

Sue Wilson opened the floor to questions.

A parent expressed concerns around how the Special Education process works, who to turn to when a parent is concerned, and how does one best advocate for their special needs child. Issues around adequate funding for resources (material and human), as well as what mechanisms are in place for a parent to ensure that their child’s needs are being met (accountability concerns) were addressed.

Dr. Hawes responded to the question:

- the process always starts with meetings at the school, with the school team (Principal, Classroom Teacher, perhaps other resource personnel such as the Special Education Resource Teacher, Student Support Worker)
- Principals, Classroom Teachers and Special Education Resource Teachers are integral parts of the team

- as educators, we do sometimes have questions about a learner that aren't easy to answer. For this reason, the Board has Resource Staff (Special Education Consultants, Speech and Language Pathologists, Crisis Worker/Behaviour Consultants, Psycho-educational Consultants) that can be called in to assist students, parents and school teams
- results from school based observations/assessments would be the first indicators that a student is struggling
- results from the school based assessments can lead to more intensive types of assessments, if deemed necessary (e.g., speech language, psycho-educational)
- the establishment of the team and the home school connections are critical
- when necessary, the development of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and an Individual Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) meeting are both formal, legal processes (very good accountability tools)
- establishing who is on the support team, along with the home school communicating connections are critical

Dr. Hawes concluded by stating that the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario recognizes that it is extremely important for parents to be advocates for their special needs child(ren), and we encourage parents to get involved at all levels. If parents have specific questions or concerns about their child, they can seek out answers from the school team and central resource staff.

X. Topics for Future Meeting

- Gifted Website

XI. Correspondence Received

- A letter from the Deputy Minister of Education was shared for information
- Suzanne Whitney, Integration Action for Inclusion of Leeds & Grenville, provided the following information via email:
 - Integration Action for Inclusion and the Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders, are currently planning a Special Education Advisory Committee training event. Minister of Education, Kathleen Wynne, along with some other members of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education, will be in attendance. Possible dates are June 2, or June 3, 2007, in Toronto. More information will be coming in the future.

XII. New Business

Sue Wilson officially welcomed Nancy Kirby, Trustee, and Vice Chair of the Board to the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting.

XIII. Chairperson's Update

Sue Wilson shared that St. Thomas Aquinas CHS, in Russell, will be hosting the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario Board Meeting on May 1, 2007. Sue invited and encouraged all interested stakeholders to come out to this meeting.

Sue also provided the following update on the Parental Involvement Committee:

- The committee met in the middle of February, 2007
- The two Trustees on the committee are Todd Lalonde and Robin Reil
- The parent representative for Prescott-Russell is Michelle Forrester (parent from St. Patrick & St. Francis Xavier CHS)
- Thus far, a survey has gone out to all Catholic School Councils (responses due back by March 2, 2007) on the topic of parental communication and parent engagement
- The next step will be to analyze and share the results of this survey

Sue will provide follow-up information in the future.

XIV. Good News Sharing

Members and guests shared many items of good news with the group.

XV. Next S.E.A.C. Meeting - April 10, 2007, at Bishop Macdonell, in Cornwall – All SEAC members are asked to bring their copy of the CDSBEO Annual Special Education Report 2006

Directions to Bishop Macdonell, in Cornwall

- take Hwy #401 Cornwall East
- exit off Hwy #401 at McConnell Avenue
- at the stop sign, turn right (South) heading toward Cornwall
- go past the hospital, you will see 5th Street, turn right on 5th Street
- stay on 5th Street until you see Adolphus Street, turn left on Adolphus Street
- go down two blocks, school is on the right hand side on the corner of Adolphus Street and 3rd Street
- parking for the school is on 3rd Street

XVI. Closing Prayer

Members of the group shared the "Board Prayer"

XVII. Motion to Adjourn the Meeting

Sue thanked the students who volunteered to provide babysitting services for this meeting, and wished all members and guests a safe and restful March Break.

Sue also thanked Richard James, Principal, Karen Carriere, Vice Principal, and all staff for providing such a warm welcome.

Moved by: Fran Brauneisen

Seconded by: Rose-Marie Martin

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!