

UPPER GRAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

The Special Education Advisory Committee of the Upper Grand District School Board met on Wednesday, February 8, 2012, at 7:00 p.m. in the Boardroom at 500 Victoria Road North, Guelph.

The following Association Members were present:

Pauline Busby, Community Living Guelph-Wellington, Kim Brenner, Parents for Children's Mental Health-Wellington County, Sharon Dills, Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County, Jason Offer, Association for Bright Children (ABC), Don Richardson, Integration Action for Inclusion in Education and Community (Ontario), Sue Shaw and Carrie Proudfoot, Autism Ontario-Wellington County, Stacey Stevens, VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children and Katie Vanderyt, VIEWS for Children Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision.

Present from Staff were:

Heather Boswell, Superintendent of Program, Leta Vos, Carla Anderson and Barb Tomkins, Special Education Consultants, Trudy Counter, Coordinator-Communication, Language and Speech Services, Jacqueline Foster, Special Education Coordinator/Consultant, Sandra Szpular, Collaborative Projects Lead/Special Education Coordinator.

The following Trustees were present:

Marty Fairbairn and Jennifer Waterston.

The following members sent regrets:

Heather Clemmer, Easter Seals Ontario, Laurie Whyte, FASworld Canada (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders), Sandra Roberts, Secondary Vice-Principal, and Tracey Lindsay, Principal of Program.

The following members were absent:

Beth Haworth, Community Member-at-Large and Christine Kay, Elementary Principal.

Jennifer Waterston called the meeting to order and welcomed Wanda Hehn from Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) Central West Region and Michelle Campbell, Supervisor of Library and Media Services at the Upper Grand DSB.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Pauline Busby

That the agenda of the meeting be approved.

The motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The following amendment was made to the minutes of the meeting held January 11, 2012;

- Page 2, second last paragraph, addition of the sentence, **“It was also suggested that a workshop be scheduled.”**

Moved by Marty Fairbairn

That the minutes of the meeting held on January 11, 2012 be approved as amended.

The motion carried.

APPOINTMENT OF THE NEW SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVE

Heather Boswell, Superintendent of Program, reported that a letter was received from Autism Ontario, Wellington Chapter, requesting that Carrie Proudfoot be appointed as the alternate representative to SEAC. At the January 24, 2012, Board meeting the following resolution was adopted:

“THAT the Board appoint Carrie Proudfoot as alternate representative on SEAC for Autism Ontario, Wellington County for the term ending November 2014.”

Heather Boswell also reported a letter was received from Easter Seals Ontario, requesting that their representative, Heather Clemmer, be granted a leave of absence until next fall due to an existing conflict that prevents her from attending meetings at this time.

Moved by Pauline Busby

That Heather Clemmer, Easter Seals representative to SEAC, be granted a leave of absence until the fall of 2012.

The motion carried.

UG2GO – STUDENT PORTAL

Through a Powerpoint, Michelle Campbell, Supervisor of Library and Media Services at the Terry James Resource Centre of the Upper Grand DSB, presented an overview of the UG2GO student portal. Access is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from school or from home using a single individual login and password. The accessibility features that are in keeping with legislative requirements, were highlighted and include the ability to be read by any screen reading software. Michelle demonstrated various components of the elementary and secondary sites and provided handouts illustrating the initial screen and a brief summary of what is available through each link. It was noted there is also a link to UG2GO on Twitter and Facebook for the latest library news and tips.

Carrie Proudfoot inquired about how UG2GO is advertised to parents. It was reported

that information has been provided to Principals for dissemination to teachers. Information has been included in school newsletters, bookmarks have been distributed to children, and presentations have been given in classrooms, to teachers and parent groups as requested. Information also appears on each school website. Michelle Campbell reported that she is able to present to outside organizations, but indicated that the resource is for use by the Upper Grand DSB only, due to copyright and other restrictions on the resources being accessed.

In response to a further inquiry by Carrie Proudfoot, it was clarified that there is a link button to switch from the secondary site to the elementary site and that there is full access to UG2GO during the summer months.

Kim Brenner indicated the need to ensure the parents are aware of this wonderful resource in order to increase its use outside the classroom. Barbra Tomkins agreed noting that children use the resource when it is assigned as homework and that use at home often depends on the use by the teacher in the classroom. It was noted that there seems to be less use of the resource in the high schools and it was explained one reason for this may be that the high schools also have their own library websites.

Don Richardson suggested that advertising through Facebook could be an effective way to advertise UG2GO and Michelle Campbell will investigate the possibility.

Sue Shaw inquired if a tutorial could be added to the school websites that would provide parents with an overview of the resources available through UG2GO. Carrie Proudfoot and Don Richardson spoke in support of the idea and suggested consideration be given to adding a link on the websites to a brief 3 minute video capturing the highlights as presented this evening.

Pauline Busby inquired about how to find out the user login and password. It was explained that it is the same as used at school and that the login is the first 2 letters of the student's first name, the first 3 letters of the student's last name, and the last four digits of the Ontario education number (OEN). The password is created by the student and is reset each September as well as two or three times throughout the school year. The login and password are necessary as some of the information being accessed is purchased by the board and there is a responsibility to keep it private to those within the Upper Grand DSB.

DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES ONTARIO (DSO) – CENTRAL WEST REGION

Through a Powerpoint, Wanda Hehn, Access Intake Coordinator from Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) Central West Region, presented information outlining the transition to Developmental Services Ontario. She explained that DSO began operation on July 4, 2011, is administered by Sunbeam Residential Development Centre, and helps adults apply for developmental services and supports in their community. The principles of the transformation included citizenship; fairness and equity; accessibility and portability; safety and security; and, accountability and

sustainability. The transformation includes Passport and Direct Funding Options. In addition, the regional centres were closed and new legislation resulted in the establishment of provincial eligibility criteria and a provincial application process through the DSO's. The DSO will confirm eligibility for services and supports by reviewing documentation from a psychological assessment, using standardized criteria for cognitive ability, adaptive functioning and age of onset. She stressed that the criteria for all three areas must be met in order to access adult services. Handouts "What You Need to Know About Eligibility...and MCSS-Funded Adult Developmental Services," and "Eligibility Confirmation Checklist," and the DSO Brochure "Helping People Achieve Their Goals," were distributed at the meeting. Wanda reviewed the application process and the steps to determine service and support needs. She explained the legislation currently calls for an application update every five years. It was explained that currently the DSO is conducting staff training, introducing the process throughout the community, transitioning the wait list for people currently on a waiting list, and assisting with completion of application packages. It was noted that the transition to the DSO has not created new services or eliminated waiting lists. A central database has been created for the service wait lists so that the Ministry can identify crisis points across the province.

Pauline Busby inquired if there was funding available for the psychological assessments for the children 18 and under or if the families are required to pay. It was explained that the DSO does not cover the cost, noting that some extended health benefits cover some or all of the cost and that if an individual has had an assessment in the past that provides information that meets the cognitive, adaptive and age of onset criteria, it would be acceptable.

Carrie Proudfoot inquired about the length of current wait lists for services. Wanda Hehn clarified that if someone is seeking adult services they can be referred to the DSO as early as 16 years of age to confirm eligibility. The application package can then be completed at 17 and a half years of age which may result in them being placed on a wait list for a specific service. It was explained that as part of the transition, assessment of the current wait list is still underway and that accurate information regarding the lengths of wait lists is not yet available.

In response to an inquiry from Don Richardson, it was clarified that the "population mean" referred to on the Eligibility Confirmation Checklist is based on normal statistical sampling and is the terminology taken from the clinical manual.

Pauline Busby spoke about the confusion that still exists amongst parents regarding what they need to do to start the process for their children. She asked if the schools could assist in disseminating the information. The various means by which information has been distributed was outlined. DSO is finalizing their website and it will provide links to information for parents to access outlining what should be done and at what ages. In addition, Leta Vos explained that the secondary DD class teachers have been provided with the information to send home with the students.

Pauline Busby expressed concern for the students currently in the DD classes that would not be eligible for service under the DSO criteria and how their needs can be addressed as they transition into adulthood noting that planning for and obtaining job skills will be more important for them in the future.

Sue Shaw also expressed concern that there are children with special needs, e.g. anxiety, that are currently being propped up in school who won't have service as they become adults.

Mary Sue Crawford indicated that the psychology department has provided training in an effort to have their assessments meet the DSO criteria and the Social Workers have been apprised of the changes so that they are aware when attendance issues arise.

Concern was raised that the cost of the testing could be prohibitive to some portion of the population making it difficult for them to get on the wait list. The question was raised as to whether the Board would have the ability to identify and test these children before age 18 through the Board's system. Heather Boswell explained that Board staff can assist but cannot assume the responsibility to direct assessments to this purpose. The assessments through the Board are done in order to make appropriate programming decisions. Programming decisions may also be based on a doctor's diagnosis.

Trudy Counter asked how current the psychological assessment would need to be for consideration by the DSO. It was explained that each assessment is looked at individually and that the age of the assessment is not the issue, but rather the fact that many assessments conducted when the children were very young do not include the adaptive component. Mary Sue Crawford explained the difficulty with the suggestion of conducting a partial assessment and clarified that if there is no pre-existing diagnosis, that a full assessment would be required.

Pauline Busby suggested that the issue is significant enough that it should be brought to the attention of the Ministry of Education as a concern and suggested that SEAC could write a letter expressing concern that there will be students requiring these assessments that could potentially result in a cost to the family and create an additional barrier for these students to access service. Consensus supported the idea and staff was directed to draft a letter to bring forward to the March SEAC meeting for consideration.

Wand Hehn clarified that when the DSO went into effect on July 11, 2011, anyone 18 on that date who was either receiving service or was on a wait list was grandfathered as part of the transition.

CHANGES TO SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSES FOR 2012-2013

Jacqueline Foster, Special Education Co-ordinator/Consultant, reviewed the planned changes to special education classes throughout the Upper Grand DSB for 2012-2013. She highlighted the changes by school location for the Learning Disability, Mild

Intellectual Disability, and Developmental Disability classes which were based on the applications received using geographical and demographical information. The site for an additional Primary/Junior class in Guelph is still to be determined. An increase in resource teacher time for the Board equivalent to 1.0 FTE was also proposed for budget consideration.

OPEN FORUM

Stacey Stevens reported on VOICE family camp being held August 10-12, 2012 at Bark Lake in Irondale and that registration begins at the end of this month. Stacey will forward the brochure electronically for distribution to SEAC members.

Don Richardson spoke about feedback he received in talking to other parents about the Equity and Inclusive Education Policy. The question was raised regarding the various external organizations providing programs within the school environment, e.g. science in the classroom, and whether or not they are aware of the policy and consider ways in which they can accommodate students before they introduce activities in the schools. He suggested consideration be given to having a requirement that external organizations sign off that they have read and understand the policy. Sandra Szpular reported that as part of the Collaborative Agreements, relevant policies are reviewed and will be provided as part of the full orientation package that is being developed for outside agencies.

Sue Shaw reported on upcoming monthly events being put on by Autism Ontario Wellington Chapter for the children and their families as well as camps being planned during March Break. Parent support groups are held on the last Tuesday of the month at Play Sense from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. The events are listed on their website.

Kim Brenner spoke about the Canada A.M. program earlier today that featured a mental health segment including a town hall with Sarah King of PCMH on the panel talking about stigma and mental health. Kim also reported that the Guelph/Wellington County PCMH meeting on April 3rd will feature Dr. Dan Dalton, a psychologist from Fergus, who will talk about children with behavioural issues. The meeting is open to any parents of children with mental health issues and will include a question and answer period.

Sharon Dills spoke about the spring and fall events that are being planned by the Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County. An athlete from Guelph who is learning disabled and is training for the Olympics is being invited to present at the spring event and a technology workshop is being considered for the fall. In addition a full day stress management workshop for parents is also being planned, and the date and time will be circulated when finalized. Storm Tickets are still on sale with a dollar from each ticket being donated to the LDA.

Katie Vanderyt spoke about the music camps being held at the Brantford School for the Blind at the end of this month and again in April, free of charge. In addition bookings for the summer camp are now being accepted.

UPDATES FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT OF PROGRAM

Heather Boswell indicated that the Special Education Department is working on class placements for next year and that the information will soon be sent to the Principals. Heather also reported that Sandra Szpular and Mary Sue Crawford have been working with our community partners on implementation of Mental Health Workers in School and the Community ABA Program. These recently funded programs are putting our collaborative protocols to the test. We continue to work with principals regarding decisions on IEPs and ensuring that these new community resources complement the services we provide.

TRUSTEE REPORT

Marty Fairbairn reported that for each cellular call or text message made through Bell until 11 p.m. today, a nickel is donated to Mental Health Ontario.

MEETING SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATION(S) AND MOTION(S)

Staff will draft a letter to the Ministry of Education for presentation at the next SEAC meeting regarding the requirement and costs of psychological assessments for the DSO application process.

Jason Offer noted that presentations made at the January 10th Program Committee meeting by Sandra Szpular and Beth Charles are to be brought forward for presentation to a future SEAC meeting.

Trudy Counter asked if the IEP draft previously circulated to parents for feedback will be brought back to SEAC. Sandra Szpular explained that it has been submitted to the Ministry of Education and that no response has been received to date.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Pauline Busby
That the meeting be adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

The motion carried.