

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF THE
MINISTER'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

November 30, 2011

TELECONFERENCE

Members

John Wilhelm, Chair
Warren Kennedy, Vice-Chair
Lynn Ziraldo, Past Chair
Tracy Grant
Ruth Jones
David Mason
Marlene Pike
Raoul Romain
Marianne Saade
Marcia Brown
Robert Savage
Janette Seymour
Joe Trovato
Cheryl Lovell
Kim Pearson
Dawn Clelland
Catherine Luetke
Jean-Baptiste Arhanchiague
Susan Blekkenhorst

Regrets:

Christian Mclary
Dr. Arlette Lefebvre
Bonny Cann

Non Voting Members

Jane Cleve for Susan Capling, Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS)
Jane Cousens, Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU)
Mary Iannuzziello, Ministry of Health and Long-term Care (MOHLTC) (Regrets)
Christine Hughes, Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) (Regrets)

Regional Office

Jim White, Sudbury North Bay Regional Office
Royal Piche, Toronto Regional Office
Moira Sinclair, Toronto Regional Office

Provincial Schools Branch

Nancy Sanders, Director (Regrets)

French-Language Policy and Programs Branch

Irène Charette, Manager

Special Education Policy and Program Branch

Barry Finlay, Director
Anita Bennett, Manager
Julie Williams, Manager
Maureen Cox, Education Officer /Team Lead
Ruth Swan, Education Officer
Venetta Miranda, Council Secretary
Angela MacLennan, Data/Research Analyst
Celine Ranger-Rush, Education Officer (Bilingual)
Paul Grogan, Education Officer
Caroline Parkin, Senior Policy Advisor
Mike Gildea, Senior Policy Advisor
Michel Laverdiere, Education Officer (Bilingual)
Naila Manji, Senior Policy Advisor
Trudy Blugerman, Senior Policy Advisor

ITEM	WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS	John Wilhelm, Chair
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The Chair, John Wilhelm, greeted members and thanked them for their flexibility in being able to participate via teleconference and welcomed Marcia Brown, the new representative for Educational Assistants. The Chair had an opportunity to speak with Minister Broten just days after the election. The Minister is aware of the work that Council is doing and particularly interested in Council's two priorities of transitions and mental health. The Minister has expressed an interest in attending the next MACSE meeting in February, and Council may need to start earlier or finish later to accommodate the Minister's attendance. John reminded members that since the Council operates on a fiscal year, the two working groups on transitions and mental health will try to identify concrete deliverables for the February meeting.

ITEM	SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE	Barry Finlay, Director Julie Williams Ruth Swan Maureen Cox
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EQAO Results – Barry Finlay

Barry indicated that the EQAO results show increases in reading (14%) and writing (34%) for grade 3 students with Special Education Needs (2002-3 to 2010-11). For grade 6 students for the same time period, there was a 20% increase in reading and a 24% increase in writing. The math results were not as positive and this continues to be a focus for the ministry moving forward. Barry noted that MACSE will be consulted on a proposal developed by EQAO involving the data that is included in EQAO results. This will be a topic for further discussion.

Learning for All, K-12 – Julie Williams

Julie Williams indicated that the ministry has recently received approval to proceed with the release of the revised draft of Learning for All, K-12. The goal is to post it on the Ministry of Education website. The ministry earmarked some funds to continue to support the 18 lead school boards. On December 2, 2011, the Ontario Council for Exceptional Children will be hosting a conference in the Toronto area where some of the lead school boards will be presenting their work to support Learning for All K-12. The ministry is also seeing references to Learning for All K-12 in the Board Improvement Plans for Student Achievement which is positive.

Board Improvement Planning for Student Achievement (BIPSA) – Julie Williams

BIPSA continues to grow and evolve. Last year, the Special Education leads were able to visit one third of all school boards. This year, the leads will be visiting all school boards. The Student Achievement Division of the ministry held a first meeting in September where school boards were given an opportunity to share regionally and to identify a challenge for the coming year. There will be two more ministry team visits this year, one between November and January to focus on implementation and the other between March and May 2012 to focus on monitoring. It was noted that some school boards are experiencing challenges with respect to data collection and monitoring. The ministry continues to look for evidence that students with special education needs are being included in the BIPSA process. The ministry will continue to share information with MACSE on the trends that are being identified for this year.

Mental Health and Addictions Strategy – Barry Finlay

The Mental Health and Addictions Strategy entitled *Open Minds, Healthy Minds - Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy* was released in June 2011. In November 2011, a memo was sent out to Directors of Education to outline the main components of the strategy. This is an inter-ministerial strategy involving the Ministries of Education, Children and Youth Services, Health and Long-Term Care and Training, Colleges and Universities. For the Ministry of Education and school boards, the focus will be on early identification and intervention through appropriate referrals. In the first year, fifteen (15) school boards will be funded to hire Mental Health Leaders. This is the first year of a three year roll-out.

The ASSIST team is being funded by the Ministry of Education and being led by Dr. Kathy Short from Hamilton Wentworth District School Board to help school boards to build system and school capacity to support students with mental health and addictions needs. Dr. Short is working with the Hospital for Sick Children and the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health and others to provide appropriate models of assessment.

Working Together for Kids Mental Health is an initiative being led by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services involving four communities last year: Belleville, Niagara, Halliburton and Sudbury. This year, it will be expanded to six communities, with the goal of expanding this initiative provincially within three years. As well, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care also has “service collaboratives” which focuses on integrating services within communities to improve service delivery for children, youth and adults.

There is a significant amount of work underway with respect to mental health and addictions. All involved ministries continue to work closely together to ensure clear mandates and optimal use of resources. MACSE will be kept apprised of the strategy as it evolves.

Learning Disabilities Working Group – Ruth Swan

According to provincial data from 2009/10, approximately 44% of exceptional students have a learning disability (LD). This is the largest exceptionality group of the twelve exceptionalities. The ministry's PPM 8 on Learning Disabilities was issued in 1982 and has not been revised. Since then, a significant amount of research has been done in the field of LD and school board practices have evolved.

The Learning Disabilities Working Group (LDWG) was established in June 2011 to inform the preparation of Guidelines for Programs and Services for Students with LD, to identify resources that have proved to be effective in supporting the achievement of students with learning disabilities, to review and assess the relevance and currency of PPM 8 on learning disabilities and to provide recommendations to the ministry. So far, the LDWG has had three meetings. The Working Group includes stakeholders, educators, parents and academics with expertise in LD. MACSE will be consulted as the work with the LDWG proceeds.

Assessing Achievement in Alternative Areas (A4) – Maureen Cox

This year, the ministry is beginning Phase 2 of the A4 project. Phase 1 of the project took place in the 2009-2010 school year. The focus of the A4 project is on students who do not have programs based on the provincial curriculum and do not participate in the provincial assessment.

This represents approximately 1% of the student population, or 17,000 students. In Phase 1, the ministry funded regional projects with school boards to enhance assessment processes and data collection using draft guidelines developed by the ministry. Phase 2 of the project will focus on data collection and reporting. There are seven school boards that will be leading these projects. It is hoped that by the end of this year, findings and additional resources developed through Phase 1 and Phase 2 projects will be shared with all school boards. The ministry will provide MACSE with further updates as Phase 2 evolves.

Transitions Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) – Barry Finlay

The PPM on transitions is in approvals. The PPM is consistent with MACSE's past resolutions on transition plans and related to the most recent resolution on a single transition plan for young people with developmental disabilities.

Special Education Funding – Barry Finlay

Barry provided an update on Special Education funding within the context of the state of the global economy. Ministry staff have initiated the process of briefing the Deputy Minister on funding for the 12-13 year and it is anticipated that the ministry will be developing a long-term funding plan. The ministry continues to work with funding experts around the world, with the help of Dr. Doug Willms. Data is being collected which will help to create a model to respond to the unique profiles of school boards.

Questions and Discussion - All

- It was clarified that the ministries of Community and Social Services and Children and Youth Services are establishing protocols to ensure that every young person with a developmental disability has a transition plan. At the last MACSE meeting, a resolution was developed to support the need for a single transition plan for students with a developmental disability.
- A member recognized the significant amount of work that has taken place around mental health and addictions, and noted the need for strong leadership in the field. The ministry will be working closely with the 15 District School Boards to demonstrate the critical importance of this leadership role in being able to effectively implement the mental health and addictions strategies in school boards.
- It was noted that current EQAO results do not include gifted students.
- Questions were raised regarding the status of Learning for All as "draft". The ministry reiterated the plan to finalize the document which is targeted for the fall 2013.
- A question was raised regarding what role MACSE might be able to play in streamlining the various initiatives that are underway with respect to mental health in order to maximize the benefits for students. The Ministry of Education is working with other ministries on an integrating statement which will help to bring some clarity to the relationship among the various initiatives. It is important that MACSE members, in representing their constituency groups, provide insight into these issues.
- A question was raised regarding whether EQAO scores are available for the Provincial Schools. MACSE Secretary Venetta Miranda will follow up.
- It was noted that 1% of the total population in school boards were alternative curriculum students. It is possible that there may be students who are on alternative curriculum who have not been formally identified.

John thanked members for their participation on the teleconference.