

**MINISTER'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON
SPECIAL EDUCATION**

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE MINISTER

FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2010/2011

Ministry of Education

MACSE
c/o Special Education Policy
and Programs Branch
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Ministère de l'Éducation

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18^e étage, 900, rue Bay
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February 6, 2012

The Honourable Laurel Broten
Minister of Education
900 Bay Street
22nd Floor, Mowat Block
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Broten,

RE: Annual Report of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education

First of all, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you within your first few days as Minister of Education. On behalf of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment. Council looks forward to working with you and providing advice to support continued improvements for students with special education needs.

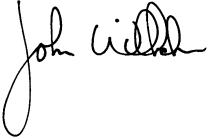
Please accept this Annual Report on the activities of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (Council) for the fiscal year 2010/2011. Council has valued the opportunity to meet with ministry staff about successful and promising practices related to students with special education needs. The Special Education Policy and Programs Branch continues to be a tremendous support to Council and has assisted Council in providing timely and informed advice.

For 2010/11, Council identified the following priorities: transitions, Section 23 programs (educational programs in care, treatment, custody and correctional settings), funding, Special Education Advisory Committees and Board Improvement Planning for Student Achievement. The contents of this report provide additional details regarding Council's specific contributions in these areas.

For 2011/12, Council identified mental health and transitions as key priorities. These topics would be of interest to you given your former role as Minister of Children and Youth Services, and require continued collaboration between ministries.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you at our next face-to-face meeting, scheduled for February 8th and 9th, 2012, to continue to discuss ways in which Council can continue to support your ministry's efforts in meeting the needs of students with special education needs in Ontario.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Wilhelm". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Wilhelm".

John Wilhelm
Chair

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2010/2011 ACHIEVEMENTS

The mandate of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education is to advise the Minister of Education on matters related to the establishment and provision of special education programs and services for students with special education needs.

Council's voice is often heard through its representation on various ministry working groups and other stakeholder advisory bodies. In addition to three face to face meetings, Council members participate in teleconferences and provide feedback through written reports. Members also document successful practices and challenges that are evident in the special education communities which are reported back to Council as a whole. Council also responds to proposals or positions of the Ministry of Education and other ministries that have the potential to impact on students with special education needs.

During the course of the 2010/11 year, Council had the opportunity to offer advice and participate in discussions related to a number of areas that affect students with special education needs. Council provided advice and was consulted on several topics including:

- Safe Schools;
- Mental Health;
- *Learning for All*, K-12;
- Special Education Advisory Committees;
- School Health Support Services Review input and feedback; and
- Parent Engagement consultation.

As part of their roles and responsibilities, Council members are required to consult and collaborate with their constituency groups regarding issues related to special education. Council members reach out to community groups before and after meetings. A summary of key themes for 2010-11 can be found in Appendix 5.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO FORMER MINISTER DOMBROWSKY

At the June 2010 meeting, the first meeting of the fiscal year, the former Minister of Education, Minister Dombrowsky, initiated a discussion about priority areas that could benefit from focused Council discussion. These areas included: transitions, Section 23 programs (Educational Programs in Care, Treatment, Custody and Correctional Settings), funding, and Board Improvement Planning for Student Achievement. A summary of key themes and recommendations from 2010-2011 are identified below:

Transitions

- Council has participated in several discussions with ministry staff on transitions. Throughout the 2010-11 year, Council provided feedback as a group and also developed a smaller working group to provide more focused input.
- Council reviewed and provided input into the development of the Policy/Program Memorandum on Transitions Planning for students with special education needs. As well, Council members provided advice regarding its implementation.

Funding

- Council members participated in the Grants for Student Needs Funding Formula

Consultations, including one hosted by former Parliamentary Assistant MPP Yasir Naqvi.

- In October 2010, Council passed a resolution on special education funding (attached in Appendix 4). The resolution indicated support for revisions to the current funding model and acknowledged the increases in the number of students with special education needs. In the resolution, Council recommended that a new funding model should result in no less funding to any school board than was received in the previous school year.

Board Improvement Planning for Student Achievement

- Council participated in several discussions regarding the Board Improvement Planning for Student Achievement process.
- Council has expressed support for the inclusion of special education in the Board Improvement Planning for Student Achievement process and for the use of SMART (Specific Measurable Attainable Realistic and Timely) goals.
- In June 2010, the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education Working Group on Board Improvement Plans submitted recommendations to the ministry, which included a key focus on accountability measures.

Section 23 programs

- It was determined that Section 23 programs would be considered as part of the overall discussion on transition planning.

Special Education Advisory Committees:

- Council recommendations from October 2009 on Building the Capacity of Special Education Advisory Committees continue to be implemented.
- Council reviewed highlights from the Special Education Advisory Committees survey that was distributed during the 2010/11 school year to district school board's Special Education Advisory Committees for input into the following areas: Special Education Advisory Committee practices; Special Education Advisory Committee learning website; Special Education Advisory Committee Orientation; Public Engagement; and an area for any additional comments.
- Council expressed support for the recommendations that the ministry has implemented including changes to the Special Education Advisory Committee learning website, direct correspondence to Special Education Advisory Committee chairs and Directors of Education through email and designated ministry Special Education Advisory Committee contacts.
- Council indicated their commitment to assisting the ministry with any further recommendations being implemented.

Review of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education

Between October 2010 and February 2011, the Ministry of Education undertook a review of Council. Overall, the review was extremely positive about the value and importance of the Council. Many members commented that their involvement on the Council is both a challenging and rewarding experience. Respondents were positive about the effectiveness of the Council and the ability of Council to continue to achieve its' mandate. Several recommendations were made to reflect feedback from members, including opportunities for continuous improvement through five year reviews of the Council, increased transparency

regarding the appointment process and improvements to the Council's meeting format through the introduction of an annual planning cycle.

Anniversary of Bill 82

At the February 2011 meeting, the Council acknowledged the anniversary of Bill 82, the *Education Amendment Act*, 1980, which represented a significant shift in the delivery of programs and services for Ontario students with special education needs. This legislation meant that for the first time, all children, regardless of disability, were to be provided with the opportunity for a publicly funded education and that school boards in Ontario were required to ensure that special education programs and services were provided to exceptional pupils.

Council Chair and members also participated on a number of advisory committees and attended meetings with a variety of organizations in order to represent the strengths, needs and concerns of students with special education needs.

THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES FOR 2011/2012

In June 2011, the Council identified two priorities for the 2011-12 fiscal year; mental health and transitions. Working groups were established to provide specific input and advice on these two areas moving forward. Standing items on each agenda will include Funding and Board Improvement Planning for Student Achievement. The Council also responds to ad-hoc requests for feedback and consultation as needed. Members will continue to work with ministry staff to ensure that the advice provided is aligned with ministry priorities.

In the upcoming year, the Council will continue to respond to areas related to the provision of services for students with special education needs. In doing so, consultations will occur during three scheduled meetings throughout the year. As well, members will be involved in several teleconference calls, will participate in discussions or forums as they arise, and will respond to the ministry's ongoing requests for advice and feedback.

The Council maintained its practice of a continual assessment of its own effectiveness. A summary of evaluative feedback from Council members is provided to all members and to ministry staff following each meeting. As a result of suggestions made by Council members, the ministry has made several changes, including increasing opportunities for informal dialogue and networking with other Council members and ministry staff.

APPENDIX 1

SUMMARY OF COUNCIL MEETINGS, 2010/2011

The Council held three meetings on June 2010, October 2010, and in February 2011.

June 2010

- Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) results for 2008-2009 were shared, which highlighted a narrowing of the gap in achievement for students with special education needs with the provincial standard.
- Update on the implementation of Policy/Program Memorandum 140 (Incorporating Methods Of Applied Behaviour Analysis Into Programs For Students With Autism Spectrum Disorders), including a presentation on the results of the follow up surveys related to Policy/Program Memorandum 140.
- Former Minister Dombrowsky discussed Council's priorities for 2010-11.
- Presentations on Early Learning, Guidelines for Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Blind-Low Vision, Financial Literacy and Caring and Safe Schools.

October 2010

- The first day of the Council meeting included a presentation on funding by ministry staff, with opportunity for input from members. During the second day of the Council meeting, a resolution was passed on funding (see Appendix 4).
- An overview of the review of Council was provided, including key themes emerging from a survey sent to Council members, representatives from other ministries and staff from the Ministry of Education.
- Presentations included: an update on Special Education Advisory Committees, Board Improvement Planning for Student Achievement, Transition Planning and Parent Engagement.
- Former Minister Dombrowsky attended and Council members shared promising practices from the field, opportunities for collaboration and personal success stories.

February 2011

- Grant Clarke, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Learning and Curriculum Division, presented high level priorities from the Division and the ministry.
- The results of the review of Council and next steps were presented to members.
- Presentations included: *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools*, *Learning for All K-12*, Board Improvement Planning for Student Achievement, Transitions Policy/Program Memorandum, and Supporting Oral Language Development K-3.
- Discussion on Priorities for the 11-12 fiscal year took place.
- Council welcomed new members Christian McLary and Janette Seymour, who represent students and Pervasive Developmental Disorders respectively.
- Council acknowledged the contributions of the following members whose terms expired on March 31, 2011:
 - o Linda Ward, representing Trustees
 - o Joanne Cripps, representing Deaf and Hard of Hearing
 - o Alison Morse, representing Physical Disabilities

APPENDIX 2 MANDATE AND STRUCTURE OF THE COUNCIL

The Advisory Committee on Special Education was established in 1974, and has been renewed continually from that date. Its name was later changed to the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education. The following describes the mandate and structure of the Council, as it existed during the 2010/2011 year.

The Council advises the Minister of Education on any matter related to the establishment and provision of special education programs and services for exceptional students, including the identification and provision of early intervention programs for students with special education needs.

According to the Order-in-Council, the Council:

- responds to proposals or positions of the Ministry of Education or other ministries, as submitted to the Council, from time to time;
- identifies concerns in the delivery of special education programs and services for exceptional pupils and provides information, advice and recommendations for ministry consideration;
- submits an annual report and recommendations to the Minister; and
- meets up to three times a year for a maximum of 4 ½ days per year.

Council has the following representation:

- one seat for each of nine exceptionalities;
- one seat for each of nine educator and professional categories;
- one seat for a student member;
- one seat for Aboriginal Communities;
- one non-voting seat for the Ministry of Community and Social Services;
- one non-voting seat for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services;
- one non-voting seat for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;
- one non-voting seat for the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities; and
- two representatives each for the Francophone and Roman Catholic communities, appointed from among the members above.

Council members are appointed for up to two terms of three years each. The ministry sends a 'Call for Applications' letter to organizations with an interest in Special Education in the areas related to the upcoming vacancies. Potential candidates are requested to apply directly to the Public Appointment Secretariat where the applications are gathered and transmitted to the Minister's Office. The applications are then assessed and submitted for Minister's decision.

APPENDIX 3

MEMBERS OF THE MINISTER'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON SPECIAL EDUCATION APRIL 1, 2010 - MARCH 31, 2011

Membership

Exceptionality/Community of Interest	Members
<u>Council Chair</u>	John Wilhelm
<u>Exceptionalities</u>	
Learning Disabilities / French Language Community	Raoul Romain
Pervasive Developmental Disorders/Autism	Janette Seymour
Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing	Joanne Cripps
Gifted	David Mason
Developmental Disability	Susan Blekkenhorst
Blind & Low Vision	Vacant
Physical Disability	Alison Morse
Multiple Exceptionalities	Tracy Grant
Emotional/Behavioural Disorder	Robert Savage
<u>Educators</u>	
Council Vice-Chair / Supervisory Officers	Warren Kennedy
Trustees / Roman Catholic Community	Linda Ward
Principals	Marlene Pike
Teachers / French Language Community	Jean-Baptiste Arhanchiague
Educational Assistants	Marcia Brown
<u>Professionals</u>	
Medical Practitioners	Dr. Arlette LeFebvre
Psychologists	Joe Trovato
Social Workers / Roman Catholic Community	Marianne Saade
Speech and Language Pathologists	Ruth Jones
<u>Aboriginal Community</u>	Bonny Cann
<u>Student / Youth</u>	Christian McLary
<u>Past Chair</u>	Lynn Ziraldo

APPENDIX 4
COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON FUNDING
OCTOBER 14, 2010

WHEREAS: MACSE supports revision of the current special education funding model and

WHEREAS: There are many intricacies and complexities of developing a fair and equitable model across all Ontario school boards and

WHEREAS: The Special Education Grant needs to be aligned with the total Grants for Student Needs (GSN) and

WHEREAS: Although there is progress in measuring positive outcomes for students with special education needs and there has been progress in implementing system efficiencies such as collaboration between publicly funded school boards and other ministries, there is also a recognition that a great deal of work lies ahead and

WHEREAS: School boards have indicated an increase in students with special education needs and

WHEREAS: At this time, reduction in funding to any school boards' special education allocation could result in a reduction of programs and/or services and

WHEREAS: School boards will need time to adjust to a new funding model.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: A new funding model should result in no less funding to any school board than they received in the 2010/2011 school year to ensure that there is no reduction in the current levels of programs and services.

APPENDIX 5

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION – KEY THEMES FOR 2010-11

Transitions • Transitions supports, such as programs for students leaving an expelled program and returning to secondary school, showed a positive impact on school performance and attendance. • However, transitions can also pose challenges for students, particularly when specialized equipment needs to follow the student. Members noted that there is a shortage of Passport funding for students leaving school.	Exceptionalities • Students who are blind or have low vision may not be able to fully participate in activities; some teachers may lack tools or information to effectively include students who are blind in sports and activities. • Parents of students with physical disabilities have expressed concerns regarding safety plans for emergency evacuations which require the student to wait in the building at a designated point. • Enrolment of students who are deaf in post-secondary education has declined significantly.
Mental Health • A number of mental health issues were noted, including alcohol and drug use among students, strategies for providing information and strategies to parents and educators on mental health awareness, access to psychiatric services in rural areas, stigma around mental health and suicide issues and difficulties in maintaining funding to support creative approaches to mental health education and awareness. • Concerns about programs such as the School Health Support Program, including lack of consistency across the province, wait lists and parent confusion about the program.	Special Education Advisory Committees • Special Education Advisory Committees have appreciated the additional training and support, and opportunities to network with other Special Education Advisory Committee members. • It would be helpful to provide annual Special Education Advisory Committee training sessions and information and support to school boards about effective member recruitment and retention strategies. • Some have expressed concerns regarding difficulties recruiting and retaining a full Special Education Advisory Committee membership.
Partnerships and Collaboration • Successful practices include partnerships to develop early intervention, education and awareness programs and training on mental health issues for teachers, schools parents and students at risk. • Some members noted that there are challenges with respect to establishing partnerships with mental health agencies.	Parent / Family Engagement • It would be helpful to have parent brochures/fact sheets to help families understand special education programs, services and funding. • In particular, new immigrants to Canada have difficulty accessing and understanding information about special education programs and services.
Transportation • Safe transportation needs to become a provincial priority; the ministry should encourage school boards to work with schools and families to provide accessible transportation. • The ministry should remind school boards of their responsibility to monitor school safety plans and ensure that individual student safety plans are compliant with all relevant regulations and legislation.	Professional Development • Teachers need increased awareness of initiatives that will help them to increase their knowledge and skills. • School staff who work with families from different ethno-cultural backgrounds require specialized training and resources. • The ministry could develop a forum for sharing ideas of effective/successful practices.

