

MINISTER'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE MINISTER

FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2011/2012

Period: June 2011, November 2011 and February 2012

Ministry of Education

MACSE
c/o Special Education Policy
and Programs Branch
18th floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

Ministère de l'Éducation

MACSE
c/o Direction des politiques et des
programmes de l'éducation
de l'enfance en difficulté
18e étage, 900, rue Bay
Toronto ON M7A 1L2



December 13, 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

Please accept this Annual Report on the activities of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (Council) for the fiscal year 2011/2012. Council has valued the opportunity to meet with yourself and 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 2011/12, Council identified the following priorities: supporting transitions of students with special education needs and mental health. The contents of this report provide additional details regarding Council's specific contributions in these areas.

For 2012/13, Council identified the following priorities: accountability and student achievement, and the impact of the *Accepting Schools* legislation on students with special education needs.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you at our next face-to-face meeting, scheduled for February 2013, 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".

John Wilhelm
Chair

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CHANGES TO MACSE MEMBERSHIP

Over 2011/12, the following members retired from Council:

- Ruth Jones, representing Speech and Language Pathologists
- Jean-Baptiste Arhanchiague, representing Teachers and the French Language community
- Raoul Romain representing Learning Disabilities and the French Language community
- Bonny Cann representing the Aboriginal Community

The following new members joined Council:

- Catherine Luetke, representing students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Kim Pearson, representing students with Physical Disabilities
- Cheryl Lovell, representing Trustees
- Dawn Clelland representing Blind and Low Vision
- Marcia Brown, representing Educational Assistants

2011/2012 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 two face to face meetings and one teleconference for this fiscal year, Council members participated in ad-hoc teleconferences and continued to provide feedback through written reports. Members also documented successful practices and challenges that are evident in the special education communities which are reported back to Council.

During the course of the 2011/12 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, including:

- Guidelines for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Blind and Low Vision and Learning Disabilities;
- Mental Health;
- Transitions, including the Youth Transition Project;
- ASD Reference Group;
- *Special Education in Ontario*, K-12
- Early Learning;
- Ontario College of Teachers – review of AQ Guidelines

- *Learning for All, K-12 (2011 Draft)*;
- Special Education Advisory Committees;
- Board Improvement Planning for Student Achievement; and
- Special Education Funding.

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 2011-12 can be found in Appendix 6.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MINISTER

At the end of the 2010/11 fiscal year, Council identified the priorities of transitions and mental health for the 2011/12 fiscal year. At each of the three meetings held this year, time was set aside for the working groups to spend time discussing the focus of their advice and recommendations for the coming year.

Transitions

Council heard a variety of presentations from both the Ministry of Education and other ministries regarding various transition work that is currently underway. In June 2011, following a presentation from the Ministries of Children and Youth Services and Community and Social Services about transition planning for individuals with developmental disabilities, Council developed and approved a Resolution (Appendix 4) related to the need for a single transition plan. In June 2012, Council was informed that these ministries were putting in place a requirement for a single transition plan for this population, to be implemented by September 2013. Council was thanked for their Resolution, which was influential in the decision to move to a single transition plan.

Mental Health

Council heard a number of presentations from the Ministry of Education and other Ministries regarding the status of the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. In February 2012, the Ministries of Education, Children and Youth Services and Health and Long Term Care provided a joint update on the implementation of the initiatives under the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. Council provided a significant amount of feedback and input regarding the strategy, and noted the need for additional resources, capacity building, parent engagement and collaboration in order to most effectively serve students with mental health issues. In February 2012, Council developed and passed a Resolution (Appendix 5) related to the need for all school boards to receive funds to secure a mental health leader for the 2012-2013 school year.

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 2012/2013

For 2012/13, Council identified two priorities: accountability and student achievement, and the impact of the *Accepting Schools* legislation on students with special education needs. Working groups were established to provide specific input and advice on these two areas moving forward. The leads of each of the working groups also participate on the Council's Executive leadership team.

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. Consultations will occur during three scheduled meetings throughout the year. As well, members will be involved in teleconference calls as required, 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. Following each meeting, a summary of evaluative feedback from Council members is provided to all members and to ministry staff. 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, 2011/2012

The Council held three meetings on June 2011, November 2011 (by teleconference), and in February 2012.

June 2011

- The Ministry provided an overview of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Blind and Low Vision Guidelines, Transitions PPM, *Special Education in Ontario, K-12, Learning for All, K-12*, Special Education Advisory Committees, Board Improvement Planning for Student Achievement, Early Learning and Mental Health
- A joint presentation was provided by the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services on the development of a framework to support transition planning for youth with developmental disabilities. As well, a presentation was provided on the Youth Transitions Project.
- Members of the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Reference Group were invited to the June meeting and were provided with an overview of the Ministry's progress in implementing the Minister's ASD Reference Group recommendations and a status update on the province-wide implementation of the Connections for Students model.
- Council was provided with an overview of key directives and requirements related to the Agency Establishment and Accountability Directive (2010) for Classified Agencies and also received an overview of the new Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the Minister of Education.
- The Ontario College of Teachers presented an outline of their approach to draft revisions to Schedule D: Special Education Part I, II and Specialist Additional Qualification (AQ) course guidelines.

November 2011 (Teleconference)

- The Ministry provided key updates on various Special Education programs and initiatives, including *Learning for All, K-12*, Board Improvement Planning for Student Achievement, the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy and Assessing Achievement in Alternative Areas (A4).
- EQAO results were presented which indicated increases in reading and writing for grade 3 and grade 6 students with special education needs.
- The Ministry notified Council that a Learning Disabilities Working Group had been established in June 2011 to inform the preparation of Guidelines for Programs and Services for 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.

February 2012

- Council was consulted on the draft resource: *Approaching Student Behaviour from a Human Rights Perspective* which the Ministry has been developing jointly with the Ontario Human Rights Commission. The resource is intended to help school and system leaders foster a bias-free approach to student discipline and to support positive behaviour and early intervention processes.

- The Ministries of Children and Youth Services, Health and Long Term Care and Education provided a joint update on the implementation of some of the initiatives under the first three years of Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. The update focused on how services and service coordination are being improved for children, youth and families.
- The Honourable Laurel Broten, Minister of Education attended and expressed her appreciation for the work and commitment of Council members. The Minister provided her thoughts on a number of areas that Council could provide input into including: the need for interministerial connections, accountability and the need to continue to focus on student achievement, and the potential impact of the *Accepting Schools* legislation on students with special education needs.

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 2011/2012 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, 2011 - MARCH 31, 2012

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	Catherine Luetke
Gifted	David Mason
Developmental Disability	Susan Blekkenhorst
Blind & Low Vision	Dawn Clelland
Physical Disability	Kim Pearson
Multiple Exceptionalities	Tracy Grant
Emotional/Behavioural Disorder	Robert Savage
<u>Educators</u>	
Council Vice-Chair / Supervisory Officers	Warren Kennedy
Trustees / Roman Catholic Community	Cheryl Lovell
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
MACSE Resolution – Transitions

Whereas, a coordinated approach among service providers enables successful student transition

Whereas, the education sector has had a requirement for school boards to develop a transition plan for students with special education needs since 1998.

Whereas, the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services has developed a transition planning framework for youth with developmental disabilities moving to the adult services system

Be it resolved that: the Ministries of Education, Community and Social Services and Children and Youth Services work together to ensure each person with a developmental disability have a single integrated transition plan.

APPENDIX 5

MACSE Resolution – Mental Health

Whereas, the well-being and mental health of students is of paramount importance to all school boards;

Whereas, MACSE supports the three year Mental Health and Addictions Strategy and recognizes the importance of coordination and collaboration of all partners;

Whereas, there is an urgent and essential need for an employee in each school board to lead the development and implementation of a Board Mental Health strategy and coordinate mental health services including recently funded school initiatives from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care;

Whereas, the 15 school boards who have received funding to hire mental health leaders are already reporting positive outcomes;

Whereas, the success of the mental health strategy requires the participation and contribution of every school board;

Be it resolved that all remaining Ontario school boards receive equivalent funding to secure a mental health leader for the 2012-2013 school year.

APPENDIX 6

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION – KEY THEMES FOR 2011-12

Transitions • Transition planning is effective when transition plans are treated as living documents allowing full participation of parents and students • Transition planning currently does not occur for all students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) except from elementary to secondary • One possible solution would be to delegate one person in the school board as responsible for the development of transition plans. This would ensure consistency of the transition planning process • One successful practice reported by boards is the creation of transition facilitators, who work with students, families, educators and the community to plan for successful transitions from secondary to post-secondary • Greater attention should be given to providing pathways for those students who are reaching the age of 21 and are no longer eligible to attend school • Ongoing collaboration and communication between school boards and community agencies is essential • Transitions from section 23 programs to regular classrooms continue to be a challenge; students may face resistance from receiving schools, principals • Possible solutions include: longer transition times for students, more professional development for teachers, development of sample transition plans, clear Ministry policy regarding transitions, and collaboration and commitment across ministries, district school boards and community partners	Mental Health • The introduction of the Mental Health Leader has been a successful practice and should be expanded to all school boards • Mental health support services remain insufficient among French-Language schools in Ontario. Some francophone students are being referred to English speaking services. • One possible solution to the issue of lack of French-Language resources for mental health support would be to create a provincial network for French-Language mental health support services • Insufficient access to and availability of professional supports and services is also a concern in small communities that may lack mental health professionals, facilities and resources • One possible solution is to enable more input into the mental health infrastructure helping rural jurisdictions to effectively deal with the mental health challenges • A lack of clarity remains regarding definition of roles within and outside the education system • Concerns that the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy will place more responsibilities and pressure on teachers • Professional development should be delivered jointly and includes school boards, educators, and community partners • Partnership building among ministries, district school boards, and community partners to align initiatives • Greater variety in school and community placements
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Exceptionalities • The Speech and Language Demonstration Projects and the establishment of the Provincial Advisory Committee on Speech and Language Services has been a successful practice • Concerns raised about wait times for speech and language services from Preschool Speech and Language Programs (PSLP) and School Health Support Services Program • A successful practice has been the release of Ministry of Education publications, such as: <i>Learning for All – A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2011, Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools</i> and <i>mental health educator guides</i> • There is concern regarding the role of schools in the prevention and identification of vision problems, given that a high percentage of low vision/vision impairment in students is preventable with early detection • A possible solution is for the sharing of information about best practices for schools in the prevention and early identification of students with vision loss • Concern that transitions have not been mandated for gifted students, as the frequency of transitions for gifted students in the past has been very low • New Special Equipment Amount (SEA) guidelines for SEA funding continue to allow more flexibility in providing supports	Individual Education Plans (IEP) • The Ministry should set minimum policy standards, clear policy reporting timelines, and a clear direction regarding the evaluation of whether students with IEPs are making progress • There should be professional development opportunities for classroom teachers to build their capacity in dealing with students with special education needs and the accompanying paperwork • Successful practices include: the production of a Teacher Guide with sample comments and sample IEP goals; provision of clear concise direction for how to report learning on the Progress Report and Report Card for students with IEPs; piloting of an alternative report template to be used for students who are receiving alternative programming outside of the provincial curriculum Partnerships and Collaboration • There remains a lack of coordination among the different providers with regard to the delivery of services supporting students with special education needs • A successful practice has been partnership development with community agencies and parent groups • The growing number of students requiring special education services is increasing workload demands on educational assistants
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