

Minister's Advisory Council On Special Education

Annual Report To The Minister

For The Fiscal Year 2013/2014

Period: June 2013, October 2013 and February 2014

Ministry of Education

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c/o Special Education Policy
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Ministère de l'Éducation

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September 15, 2014

The Honourable Liz Sandals
Minister of Education
900 Bay Street
22nd Floor, Mowat Block
Toronto, Ontario
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Dear Minister Sandals,

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 2013/2014. 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 2013/14, Council identified the following priorities: providing feedback on the discussion paper released by the Ministry Building the Next Phase in Ontario's Education Strategy and providing input on the School Board Efficiencies and Modernization Consultation particularly around special education. The contents of this report provide additional details regarding Council's specific contributions in these areas.

For 2014/15, Council identified the following priorities: Full Day Kindergarten and Early Intervention and Special Education Exceptionalities, Guidelines and Interventions.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you at our next face-to-face meeting, scheduled for October 2014, 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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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 2012/2013 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.

Changes to MACSE Membership

Over 2013/14, the following members retired from Council:

- Tracy Grant, Multiple Exceptionalities
- Marlene Pike, Principals

The following new members joined Council:

- Jim Van Buskirk, representing Social Workers
- Shelly Durance, representing Teachers
- Braxton Hartman, representing Students/Youth
- Domenica Leone, representing Supervisory Officers
- Lucille Norman, representing Multiple Exceptionalities
- Sharon McWhirter, representing Speech and Language Pathologists

Please see Appendix 1 for membership list.

2013/2014 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. 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 2013/14 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:

- Resources to support students with Acquired Brain Injury and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome;
- Draft Guidelines developed by the Learning Disabilities Working Group
- Mental Health;
- Individual Education Plans;
- Transitions;
- Learning for All K-12;
- Care, Treatment, Custody, and Corrections (CTCC) Education Programs;
- Individual Pathways Program;
- Supporting Bias-Free Progressive Discipline in Schools Resource Guide;
- Board Improvement Planning for Student Achievement;
- School Board Efficiencies and Modernization Strategy;

- Supporting Programs in Alternative Areas; and
- *Stepping Stones, A Resource on Youth Development*

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 2013-14 can be found in Appendix 2.

Recommendations to the Minister 2013-14

For 2013/14, Council identified the following priorities: providing feedback on the discussion paper released by the Ministry of Education entitled *Building the Next Phase in Ontario's Education Strategy* and providing input on the School Board Efficiencies and Modernization Consultation particularly around special education. 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.

The contents of these reports provide additional details regarding Council's specific contributions in these areas.

Building the Next Phase in Ontario's Education Strategy

The working group's work focused around responding to seven specific questions which are outlined in the context of the paper. The questions focused around the following areas:

- The skills, knowledge and characteristics students will need to succeed after they have completed school
- Well being
- Equity
- Child Care and full-day kindergarten
- Student engagement
- Effective use of technology in teaching and learning
- Partnerships

Input for the School Board Efficiencies and Modernization Consultation

The working group supported student-centred, respectful, dynamic, accessible, and accountable special education policies, programs and services, processes, conduct and relationships, and reflected in the group's development of guiding principles. The working group identified the following areas related to special education and gathered feedback based on these:

- Underutilized and small schools
- Declining enrolment
- Improving accountability
- Sharing efficiency savings

- E-books and e-learning
- New technologies
- Getting the right balance; and
- Moving ahead together.

To inform the gathering of feedback on these focus areas the working group established a set of guiding principles.

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 2014/2015

For 2014/15, Council identified two priorities: Full-Day Kindergarten and Early Intervention and Special Education: Exceptionalities, Guidelines, and Interventions. Working groups were established to provide specific input and advice on these two areas moving forward. The leads 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 continues to build on some changes from previous years which include increasing opportunities for informal dialogue and networking with other Council members and ministry staff. Council also felt the additional time allocated for the working groups during the day's agenda was an effective use of time.

Appendix 1

Members of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education
April 1, 2012 - March 31, 2013

Exceptionality/Community of Interest	Members
Council Chair Exceptionalities Learning Disabilities / French Language Community Pervasive Developmental Disorders/Autism Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing Gifted Developmental Disability Blind & Low Vision Physical Disability Multiple Exceptionalities Emotional/Behavioural Disorder Educators Supervisory Officers, Roman Catholic Community Trustees Principals Teachers Educational Assistants Professionals Medical Practitioners Psychologists Social Workers Speech and Language Pathologists Aboriginal Community Student / Youth Past Chair/Advisor	John Wilhelm Suzanne Bonneville Janette Seymour Catherine Luetke David Mason Laura Lachance Dawn Clelland Kim Pearson Lucille Norman Robert Savage Domenica Leone Cheryl Lovell Marlene Pike Shelly Durance Marcia Brown Dr. Arlette LeFebvre Joe Trovato Jim Van Buskirk Sharon McWhirter Marion Macdonald Braxton Hartman Lynn Ziraldo

Appendix 2

Community Collaboration – Focus Areas for 2013-14

Council continued its focus from the previous year on the following areas:

Transitions

- Alignment of language around transition planning especially between the new Individual Pathways Program (IPP) and the Individual Education Plan (IEP) is important to avoid confusion.
- The importance of student voice in the transition process continues to be a key area. The IPP could play a role in encouraging student voice and support students during the IEP process.
- The creation of transition tip sheets for parents has been a successful practice
- Some school boards are having students create self-advocacy cards from their IEPs that makes them aware of their strengths and needs.
- Transition planning is effective when transition plans are treated as living documents allowing full participation of parents and students.
- Transitions from secondary to post-secondary for students with special education needs continue to be an issue.
- Teaching students self-advocacy skills is important to aid in the transition process.
- Ongoing collaboration and communication between school boards and community agencies is essential.

Mental Health

- MACSE supported the Ministry funding a Mental Health Leader for each school board which occurred in the 2013-14 school year.
- Mental health support services remain insufficient among French-Language schools in Ontario. Some francophone students are being referred to English speaking services.
- Council indicated that *Supporting Minds, An Educator's Guide to Promoting Students' Mental Health and Well-being* has been well received.
- Some of the mental health challenges in the education sector include: identification of students' issues/problems, navigating the complex network of community supports, understanding at the school level how to support students with mental health needs.

Exceptionalities

- Categories of exceptionalities need to be updated since concepts and terminologies are old. The creation of a task force to undertake the work would be a good first step.
- There needs to be a repository of effective practices in dealing with students with learning disabilities. All exceptionalities would benefit from similar resources.
- The establishment of the working group on Learning Disabilities was well received. Establishing working groups for all exceptionalities would be a great next step to help bring consistency in identification across the education sector.
- There continues to be an increase in the number of students who have special education needs and mental health issues.
- Students with complex needs remain a challenge for school boards.
- Students accessing services beyond the school system remains a challenge, such as youth accessing psychiatric services in a timely fashion.

Partnerships and Collaboration

- While there has been movement towards greater interministerial collaboration across ministries, there remains a lack of coordination among the different providers with regard to the delivery of services supporting students with special education needs.
- Collaboration across sectors remains a challenge when there is not a joint focus.
- There is a need to focus on the early years since there are increasingly more high needs children entering the school system at an early age.
- There continues to be a growing number of students requiring special education services which is increasing workload demands on educational assistants.
- Parent, and Student engagement are key in the development of IEPs.

Appendix 3

Summary of Council Meetings, 2013/2014

The Council held three meetings on June 2013, October 2013, and in February 2014.

June 2013

- The Special Education Policy and Programs Branch (SEPPB) provided an update on the following:
- PPM 156 – Supporting Transitions for Students with Special Education Needs is now released and will take effect September 2014
- Mental Health – funding was made available for all boards in Ontario for mental health leaders. School boards received \$25,000 to implement the strategy.
- ASSIST initiative will expand and carry on beyond the 3 years.
- Care, Treatment, Custody and Corrections (CTCC) Education Programs
 - CTCC programs are education programs provided within care, treatment, custody and/or correctional facilities for students who are unable to attend a regular school because of their need for care, treatment or rehabilitation
 - Transitions and well-being are a large component for students in CTCC education programs. A seamless transition is required for these students returning to their community and school
- Representatives from the Ministry of Education's Student Success/Learning to 18 Branch provided an overview of The Individual Pathways Plan (IPP). The IPP would be the primary planning tool as students proceed through school to initial postsecondary destination. The plan will:
 - help students develop the knowledge and skills for developing and revising education and career/life plans during the course of their lives;
 - help students make successful transitions from grade to grade and from school to school as they progress through elementary and secondary school;
 - help students make successful transitions from elementary to secondary school; and
 - ensure that all students have a plan in place for their initial post-secondary destination when they leave secondary school (apprenticeship, college, community living, university, workplace)

October 2013

- The Ministry provided key updates on various Special Education Programs and initiatives, including the government's Mental Health and Addiction Strategy, *Open Minds, Healthy Minds*, and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services' (MCYS) *Moving on Mental Health: A system that makes sense for children and youth*.

- Members were provided an overview of the School Board Efficiencies and Modernization Strategy in relation to special education. A detailed explanation was provided on the Special Education Grant and the High Needs Amount.
- The Special Education Policy and Programs Branch shared highlights of the Individual Education Plan Trends Report, 2012. School boards reported ongoing professional learning in four major areas that has contributed to improvements including:
 - Awareness development
 - Professional development
 - Resource development; and
 - Internal reviews

February 2014

- The ministry continues to work with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) on integrated transition planning for youth with developmental disabilities and how to transition these youth into adult services and long term support. The Select Committee on Developmental Disabilities shall present an interim report to the House no later than February 26, 2014 and a final report no later than May 15, 2014.
- All 72 school boards received funding for a Mental Health Leader in 2013-14.
- Three new working groups have been approved for the following exceptionalities: Giftedness, Developmental Disability/ Mild Intellectual Disability and Behaviour.
- PPM 8 on Learning Disabilities is currently in edit with an anticipated release date of Spring 2014. Implementation of the revised PPM is targeted for September 2014.
- PPM 156 on Supporting Transitions for Students with Special Education Needs - Implementation of PPM 156 will begin in September 2014.
- On April 29th 2014, the Ministry plans to bring together all boards for a one-day Learning for All K-12 (L4All K-12) Professional Learning Day. This one day session will include updates from the Ministry of Education, findings from district school boards and breakout sessions featuring presentations by district school boards highlighting projects pertaining to several areas of focus including PPM 156 Supporting Transitions for Students with Special Education Needs, IEP and IPP/Creating Pathways to Success.
- MCYS also provided Council with an update on *Moving on Mental Health*, the transformation of the child and youth mental health funded system, along with the work being done with the SEPPB to improve educational outcomes for youth in Section 23 education programs in youth justice settings.
- Part of the transformation will be core mental health services that will be made available in communities across Ontario, with other specialized services available regionally or provincially. Defining core services will make the system more transparent to parents and young people, as well as those who help families find the services they need.