The regular meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee was held on Thursday, November 4, 2004, in the Board Room of the Education Centre, Aurora at 7:03 p.m. with Board Chair B. Crothers presiding and the following members present:


Alternates: D. De Filippis

Trustees: S. Korolnek


APPROVAL OF AGENDA

(*)1. Moved by K. Everest, seconded by M. Cannell:

That the agenda be approved as written.

- Carried -

MOMENT OF REFLECTION

M. Bryan read a passage from Jean Vanier’s “Becoming Human” for the moment of reflection. A copy of the moment of reflection will be attached to the minutes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – October 7, 2004

(*)2. Moved by S. Facchini, seconded by I. Lehman:

That the minutes of the October 7, 2004 SEAC meeting be approved as written.

- Carried -

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Board Chair B. Crothers welcomed Superintendent of Education B. Davies and Principal on Special Assignment N. Sanders to the meeting.
M. Bryan announced that November 1st to 7th is Down Syndrome Awareness Week. Information can be obtained at the Down Syndrome Association of York Region’s new website www.dsayr.on.ca.

L. Bernofsky made the following announcements on behalf of Trustee Aldridge:

- Bob Rae has developed a website www.raereview.on.ca that is designed to review funding for post secondary education in Ontario. SEAC members were urged to visit this website and provide input.
- One barrier that could be identified by the ODA committee is the rule that bans the use of cellular phones in the school. In some cases students could use this technology as a tool to help remember homework and other important tasks/dates.

M. Bryan informed the committee that the Canadian Association for Community Living is hosting the National Summit on Inclusive Education on November 24th to 26th, 2004 at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Ottawa.

M. Cannell mentioned that on December 9, 2004 the Markham-Souffville Hospital is showing a film called “It’s a Girls’ World” on relational aggression among girls. There is limited seating so those who wish to attend should reserve a spot.

B. Crothers congratulated Principal of Devins Drive Public School L. Zaretsky who will be receiving the Leadership in Action Research Award by the Ontario Education Research Council.

PRESENTATION

Instructional Intelligence and Tribes

Superintendent of Curriculum and Instructional Services L. Sharratt introduced Curriculum Consultants K. Barker and J. Cutler as well as L. Leesti, Head of Special Education at Aurora High School, to present information on Instructional Intelligence and Tribes. Instructional Intelligence is an ongoing professional development program in the Board and has helped teachers to develop the skills necessary to meet student needs.

Curriculum Coordinator K. Barker defined Instructional Intelligence as “the deliberate choice of instructional strategies and tactics to meet the needs of all students”.

Note: K. Gouthro entered the meeting at 7:20 p.m.
There are four components of Instructional Intelligence: Content Knowledge, Knowledge of the Learner; Knowledge of Instruction and Knowledge of Assessment. When used together, these elements help develop effective work groups that support concept alignment, concept formation and positive coherent output.

Curriculum Coordinator J. Cutler indicated that it has been a pleasure working with Dr. Barrie Bennett on this initiative. She reviewed the ten geographical areas where Dr. Bennett has been conducting research including Canada, England and Australia.

Instructional Intelligence has had a very positive influence on the teaching styles used by L. Leesti, Head of Special Education at Aurora High School, and has increased awareness by:

- identifying strategies that are currently being used in the classroom and finding ways to refine them;
- recognizing how teaching styles can be changed and the ultimate impact on student achievement; and
- introducing more complex strategies that could potentially have a large influence on the classroom.

A sample lesson plan was reviewed and several strategies supported by Instructional Intelligence were highlighted including concept attainment and wait time. By being aware of different strategies, teachers can positively impact the learning process for all students.

**Note:** A. Helps entered the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Several benefits of Instructional Intelligence include:

- increasing student engagement;
- addressing a wide variety of learning styles;
- helping to create a low-risk learning environment that leads to increased student confidence and participation;
- creating more effective and structured work groups;
- promoting individual student engagement;
- providing increased time on tasks for students; and
- improving overall student achievement.

The concept of Tribes was introduced by Curriculum Coordinator K. Barker. Tribes education is a community building process that develops a common set of collaborative skills emphasizing the process of building effective and inclusive learning communities.
Tribes-focused instruction teaches students to help each other work on tasks, set goals, solve problems, monitor and assess progress and celebrate achievements. Learning of academic materials and self-responsible behaviour is assured because teachers utilize methods based upon brain-compatible learning, multiple intelligences, cooperative learning and social development research.

Teachers and administrators in a tribes school work together in supportive groups and enjoy the participatory democratic process and creative collegiality that it promotes.

Both the training of teachers and classroom instruction follow the “Tribes Trail”; attentive listening, appreciation/no put downs, mutual respect and the right to pass. As the class embarks on its journey down the Tribes Trail several very interesting observations can be made including:

- students go through three stages - the first being inclusion, the second influence and the final result is community;
- the role of the group facilitator becomes less overt as the journey progresses; and
- group size and complexity increase.

SEAC members participated in an interactive and fun “Tribes Energizer” activity.

At this time over 500 teachers and administrators are trained in tribes instruction and 25 schools have undertaken this initiative to ensure that all of their staff are trained. For more information on tribes visit www.tribes.com.

Members thanked staff for the presentation on tribes and highlighted how excellent this learning opportunity is for students by involving and integrating them into the school community. There is a noticeable difference in student independence between grades nine and twelve after receiving Tribes instruction.

L. Leesti stated that Instructional Intelligence is a professional model used by many teachers within the Aurora High School community and is not limited to special education classes. The benefits of the learning strategies demonstrated by Instructional Intelligence can be integrated into all classes as it aims to include and meet the needs of every student.

Curriculum Coordinator K. Barker indicated that the collection of purely scientific data based on achievement rates resulting from the Instructional Intelligence program is extremely difficult to obtain. Action research projects demonstrate a clear pattern suggesting that this program has a positive impact on student achievement. A copy of the latest Action Research document on Instructional Intelligence will be distributed to members for information.
Aurora High School has been tracking information three ways to determine if there is a connection between Instructional Intelligence and student achievement.

1. Reviewing the number of referrals to administration and the difference in overall classroom behaviour patterns.
2. Examining teacher and student feedback.
3. Looking at the results of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test from year-to-year.

All the results suggest that Instructional Intelligence has a positive impact on student achievement.

Superintendent of Curriculum and Instructional Services L. Sharratt thanked K. Barker, J. Cutler and L. Leesti for their presentation. She added that this has been an ongoing journey for staff within the Board. She also acknowledged the continued support of Trustees and the expertise of Dr. B. Bennett in making this program a success.

Board Chair B. Crothers extended thanks for the presentation and re-iterated that it is extremely difficult to control all the variables in order to produce scientific research data; however, the collective results of all initiatives that the Board supports build upon each other to improve student achievement.

SPECIAL EDUCATION PLAN

Principal of Special Education L. Moreau indicated that school councils and members of the Board have been invited to provide input on the Special Education Plan. The Special Education Plan Review Steering Committee will review the input received at the first meeting in December and report back to SEAC starting January 2005.

SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES

Several SEAC members expressed concerns about the IEP process including:

- the manner in which learning expectations are developed in relation to the Ontario Curriculum;
- the lack of consistency with the parent/guardian consultation process;
- use of percentiles in the IEP; and
- documentation that is being sent home to parents/guardians to sign.

Principal of Special Education L. Moreau acknowledged these concerns and indicated that feedback is a valuable way to refine the IEP process. Special Education staff continuously work on improving this process from year-to-year. Several in-service training sessions have been conducted to teach staff about the
IEP process. The new electronic IEP tool will help build bridges between IEP’s developed each school year. L. Moreau suggested that concerned parents speak with the school directly in order to ensure that the plan being developed meets the specific needs of their child.

L. Moreau highlighted the importance of using IEP assessments from previous years as well as initiating a consultation process with parents/guardians prior to developing learning expectations. These topics will be re-iterated during training sessions with special education staff.

L. Moreau provided clarification with regard to the percentiles that are identified in the student’s IEP.

Concerns regarding the lack of consistency in the consultation process were addressed by indicating that every student’s situation is different and the amount of parent involvement varies among children, therefore, it is difficult to outline a best practice or a generic model for every situation. Continued and ongoing dialogue between educators and the parents/guardians throughout the school year should be emphasized.

Developing an IEP is like a puzzle where everyone involved plays an important role. It is critical that all individuals come together early in the school year to build a rapport that will set the framework for a positive working relationship.

It was suggested that the consultation process be discussed at the IPRC meeting so that parents who want to be involved have an opportunity to take the initiative.

All SEAC associations should help breakdown the barriers to communication that may exist between educators and families and emphasize the importance of building an ongoing working relationship.

Parents/guardians should be provided with a clear explanation about the purpose of the documentation being sent home for signature.

**REPORT FROM THE BOARD**

Trustee Korolnek reviewed the following topics from the October 28, 2004 Board Meeting.

- Daniel Hernandez, a grade 12 student at Pierre Elliott Trudeau High School was inducted as the Board’s 21st Student Trustee. S. Korolnek commented on the caliber of students who sit around the Board table.
- The Board approved the appointment of Mark Bryan as representative and Lori Copping as alternate representative for the Down Syndrome Association of York Region to the Special Education Advisory Committee.
• The Board approved the appointment of Donna De Filippis as alternate representative for the Learning Disabilities Association of York Region to the Special Education Advisory Committee.
• The Board endorsed the work of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Annual Accessibility Planning Committee.
• The Special Education Advisory Committee Annual Report for September 2003 to June 2004 was received for information.
• The Race Relations Advisory Committee Annual Report was received for information.
• The Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity Education Awards 2004 were presented.
• Superintendent of Education J. Havercroft provided information on his Character Education portfolio.

(*3. Moved by K. Everest, seconded by L. Bernofsky:

That SEAC receive the Report from the Board for information.

- Carried -

SPECIAL EDUCATION REPORT

Superintendent of Curriculum and Instructional Services L. Sharratt reported on a recent visit to Huron Heights Secondary School to receive an update on the inclusion project. This initiative has not been without its challenges; however, students are making positive adjustments and the process will be improved for the next group of students making the transition from elementary to secondary school.

The Literacy Collaborative continues to reflect the Board’s priority of literacy. All schools, Supervisory Officers, Curriculum Coordinators and Consultants and elementary and secondary staff are involved. Over the past week C. Rolheiser and J. Quinn have been working with school teams on change management and the challenges associated. At the same time, school teams are attending literacy content sessions, delivered by curriculum staff.

In the coming weeks several literacy-focused training opportunities will take place. Coordinators will work with individual teams to review specific content that will improve mathematical and reading/writing literacy and the Quest for Effective Schools: Sustaining Student Improvement conference will take place on November 18th to 19th, 2004 at the Sheraton Parkway North Convention Centre. C. Crevola will be giving Literacy Collaborative teams a pre-symposium focusing on effective assessment and how data drives instruction.

It was mentioned that the Literacy Collaborative project is a very positive professional development model and the hard work and dedication of
administrators and teachers is making a noticeable difference in student achievement.
Principal of Special Education L. Moreau outlined that special education consultant teams and teachers from each exceptionality are working together to develop a broad view of literacy development.

The first two series of in-service courses for new SERT’s have been completed and the next two sessions are being planned.

A new in-service training session for ISA1 claims has been developed by the new Technology Teacher J. McDonald is focusing on how to use the technology and how to imbed it into the curriculum. A new resource document is also being developed to help people understand the process of acquiring technology and what to do when it arrives at the school.

The Ministry of Child and Youth Services has invited the York Region District School Board to participate in its most recent autism initiative. At this time specific details are not available; however, information will be provided to SEAC members as soon as possible.

The last ODA meeting involved a presentation by a hearing impaired staff member who provided valuable information about the barriers facing people with this exceptionality. The committee will ask other members of the Board’s community with specific exceptionalities to make presentations to the ODA committee.

A date will be determined for SEAC members to participate in roundtable discussions to generate a list of barriers for submission to the ODA committee.

(4) Moved by M. Bryan, seconded by K. Gouthro:

That SEAC receive the Special Education Report for information.

- Carried -

FUTURE PRESENTATIONS

- Motivational Celebration (December 2004)
- Human Rights
- Change Management
- Computer and Technology Use Discussion
- Workplace Literacy
ADJOURNMENT

(*)5. Moved by S. Facchini, seconded by D. Rose:

That the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting adjourn at 8:53 p.m.

- Carried -

Note: The next meeting is on December 2, 2004.
The Annual SEAC Dinner and Social will start at 5:30 p.m.