HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
AGENDA
SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, May 29, 2013

Location: Helen Detwiler School - Library  7:00 p.m.

1. Call to Order
   (a) Message from the Chair

2. Approval of Agenda

3. Approval of the Minutes – February 27, 2013

4. Business Arising from the Minutes
   (a) Correspondence Responses - pls. see item 7 (Correspondence)

5. Department Update
   a) Special Olympics Update
   b) Website Update – Corporate Communications – timed items: 7:05 p.m.

6. Members’ Update

7. Correspondence

8. Other Business

Future Meetings of Special Education Advisory Committee (venue: Helen Detwiler School – Library)

Wednesday, June 12, 2013

[IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND, PLEASE ADVISE CHIT REVILLA AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE – 905-527-5092, EXT. 2273 or e-mail: chit.revilla@hwdsb.on.ca]
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, March 27, 2013 (Helen Detwiler School - Library)

Those present:
Lita Barrie, VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children and SEAC Vice-Chair (Chair Pro Tem)
Judith Bishop, Trustee
Alex Johnstone, Trustee
Mika Forrester, Association for Bright Children of Ontario (alternate)
Doug Foster, CHOICES - Supporting People with Developmental Disabilities
Adrian Mackey, The Children's Aid Society of Hamilton
Dawna Petsche-Wark, Autism Ontario (H-W Chapter) (alternate)
Tracy Sherriff, P.A.L.S. – Parent Advocacy Learning Support Group

In attendance:
Vicki Corcoran, Superintendent of Education - Leadership and Learning
Don Grant, Superintendent of Business and Finance
Denise Dawson, Manager of Budget
Michelle Bates, Social Worker and Mental Health Lead

Also in attendance:
Jeremy Abrahams, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, District 21
Maria Carbone, Hamilton-Wentworth Principals’ Council - Elementary
Linda Lauppe, Hamilton-Wentworth Principals’ Council - Elementary
Wilma Minaker, Canadian Office and Professional Employees Union, Local 527

Regrets:
Judy Colantino, Down Syndrome Association of Hamilton and SEAC Chair
Mary Jane Gable-Flock, Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brand Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) - Hamilton Branch (alternate)
Jenny McEwen-Hill, McMaster Children's Hospital Developmental Pediatrics and Rehabilitation Portfolio
Heather Moffat, Hamilton-Wentworth Principals' Council - Secondary
Bernadine Nabuurs, Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brand Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) - Hamilton Branch
Stephanie Orphanacos, McMaster Children's Hospital Developmental Pediatrics and Rehabilitation Portfolio (alternate)
Barbara Reeves, Autism Ontario (Hamilton-Wentworth Chapter)
Pat Senft, Community Living Hamilton
Sandra Starr, Association for Bright Children of Ontario
Lynn Vanderbrug, Lynwood Charlton Centre

1. Call to Order/Welcome
Advising she received regrets from Chair Colantino for tonight’s meeting, L. Barrie (Chair Pro Tem) called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m., welcoming everyone.

(a) Message from the Chair
None.

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<th>Item</th>
<th>Discussion/Decision</th>
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<td>2. Approval of Agenda</td>
<td><strong>Note:</strong> There was already quorum during the consideration of items 1 to 4 of the agenda.</td>
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<td><strong>Moved by D. Petsche-Wark, seconded by T. Sherriff:</strong> That the agenda be approved. <strong>CARRIED.</strong></td>
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### 3. Approval of the Minutes

**Revisions:**
- Item 5 (Correspondence, page 3; second paragraph,)
  #2 - replace "J. Bishop" with "J. Colantino".
- Item 6 (Department Updates, page 3; second paragraph, first bullet re Dundas School Strategy), insert after "two" the words "autism classes".

**Moved by A. Johnstone, seconded by D. Foster:** That the minutes of the February 27, 2013 meeting be approved as amended.  
**CARRIED.**

### 4. Business Arising from the Minutes

#### a) Correspondence Responses

**Correspondence Responses**
The Chair referred to Heather Moffat's draft letter (lay down) to the Ministry of Education dated March 27, 2013.

**Moved by J. Bishop, seconded by A. Mackey:** That the draft letter from SEAC (lay down) requesting for (a) specific inclusion of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder in the Ontario Secondary School Physical Education program and (b) a review of ways to include a more comprehensive special education component in Ontario Teacher Colleges' pre-service programs be approved and sent to the Minister of Education.  
**CARRIED.**

### 5. Department Update

#### a) Budget

In providing an overview, Don Grant (Superintendent of Business and Finance) noted the priorities resulting from the public consultation, to which the Board will direct funds, if available, include: HWDSB's Early Years Strategy, Program Strategy, Special Education and Wireless initiative.

Denise Dawson (Manager of Budget) reviewed pages 47 (Special Education Preliminary Budget - Staffing Summary), 48 (Special Education 2013/2014 Preliminary Budget - Summary - Total [Expenditures and Revenues]), 49 (Summary of Special Education Enrolment Statistics and 50 (Comparison of Special Education Expenditures versus Revenue).

The full information package on Special Education Budget will be sent to SEAC members via email.

In response to questions, the following clarifications were provided:
- The foundation grant has impact on special education teachers.
- Non-IPRC students may have IEPs and others may be receiving educational support but do not have IEPs. K-2 strategy students can also be in this category.
- There is continuing support from the Ministry for
autism, mental health along with other Ministry initiatives.

At the recent OPSBA Board of Directors' meeting where Liz Sandals (new Minister of Education) was a guest, Trustee Johnstone advised that the minister confirmed that all Ministry grants will be reviewed in the fall.

Advised that Superintendent Grant will be retiring at the end of the school year, the Chair offered him the committee's best wishes.

Superintendent Corcoran voiced her appreciation for the continued support from trustees for special education.

On behalf of SEAC, the Chair thanked the presenters for their time and efforts.

There was agreement among the members that SEAC (through the Chair) send a letter to the Board expressing appreciation for its continuing support for special education.

Mental Health Strategy
In providing an overview, Superintendent Corcoran noted that this strategy was developed as part of having a positive school climate and learning environment. She then reviewed briefly the strategies developed based on tiered interventions.

Michelle Bates (Social Worker and Mental Health Lead) spoke about the process of promoting social-emotional learning/literacy, programs (School Mental Health ASSIST -- Awareness, Strategy Selection and Implementation Support Team --, Positive Action, Coping Power), training programs available to teachers and HWDSB staff's collaboration with community groups which are also addressing mental health issues.

The following clarifications were offered in response to questions:
- Staff will have to look further at continuity for this program. However, if schools already have a program in place, they will not be asked to switch to this.
- Grade 5 was chosen as the starting level for the Coping Power intervention.
- The classroom teacher can make the referral through the school principal who will gather the relevant information.
- Staff is looking at how to expand through some other ways social-emotional communication skills.
- Because suicide prevention is a very difficult issue, staff are working on this in collaboration with many community partners looking into this area.
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<th>The Coping Power program is currently used at Parkview and Mountain Secondary Schools. Parkview School wants to have this program for all its Grade 9 students due to resulting improvements on social relationships among students in the program.</th>
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<td>HWDSB’s Mental Health team would like to see the expansion of the literacy modules by next year in spite of this being a large commitment. A closer working relationship with the schools will be helpful in figuring out how and when to do this.</td>
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<td>Staff will share the mental health learning strategies/models with Parent Engagement and Early Learning Department which also oversees child care centres. The Best Start initiative can also be a helpful link.</td>
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<td>The parent piece is a significant area to address and support, particularly in light of difficulties with waiting times for intervention programs and resources.</td>
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<td>The Opening Up video mentioned in the report was first presented at the last Joint SEAC and PIC meeting. The feedback received from SEAC was incorporated into the second revised video which has considerably been improved. This video can be accessed online through Google search.</td>
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The Chair expressed SEAC’s appreciation for M. Bates’ excellent presentation, thanking her for the hard work in this key area.

6. Members’ Updates

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<tr>
<th>Autism Ontario (H-W Chapter)</th>
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<td>D. Petsche-Wark referred to the upcoming Autism Day of Ontario event on Tuesday, April 2nd, inviting members to attend.</td>
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<th>Association for Bright Children of Ontario</th>
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<td>M. Forrester advised of the association's annual general meeting which will be, for this year, strictly for SEACs and Executive members.</td>
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<th>P.A.L. S. - Parent Advocacy Learning Support Group</th>
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<td>T. Sherriff referred to the flyer she shared previously regarding the Assistive Technology Camp, an annual activity for students aimed at providing them a better understanding and encouragement in terms of technology. She emphasized that this camp program is not age specific.</td>
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<th>VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children</th>
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<td>L. Barrie noted the organization's upcoming annual conference, stating she will send the flyer to the Recording Secretary for sharing with SEAC members.</td>
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7. Correspondence

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<th>District School Board of Niagara re Special Services at Home (SSAH) and Development Services of Ontario Agency (DSO)</th>
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<td>District School Board of Niagara re Special Services at Home (SSAH) and Development Services of Ontario Agency (DSO)</td>
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<td>The members agreed to refer this letter to the SEAC volunteer members who are looking into this issue.</td>
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8. **Other Business**  
   a) **Joint SEAC Meeting**  

Superintendent Corcoran advised that this annual event will take place on Monday, April 22, 2013, 7:00 p.m. at Dr. Nicholas Mancini Centre in Hamilton and a very engaging speaker will be coming. The event flyer will be shared with SEAC members as soon as available.

**Council for Exceptional Children**  
Superintendent Corcoran distributed copies of CEC’s event flyer for its annual mini conference (An Inspirational Evening with Brian Amarelo) scheduled for Thursday, April 4, 2013, 7:00-8:30 p.m. at Cathedral High School.

**Adjournment:**  
Moved by D. Foster, seconded by D. Petsche-Wark: That the meeting be adjourned, this being done at 9:00 p.m.  
CARRIED.
1. Lakehead District School Board re Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Special Education Preparatory Courses for all Teacher Colleges in Ontario (dated March 26, 2013).

2. Lakehead District School Board re Termination of Special Services at Home (SSAH), Barriers in Applying to the Developmental Services Ontario (DSO), Waiting Lists after School, and Inadequate Funding for those with Severe Disabilities (dated March 26, 2013).

3. HWDSB SEAC letter to the Ministry of Education endorsing support for the above Special Education issues (dated March 27, 2013).

4. Durham District School Board re Special Education Funding, specifically the Special Education Per Pupil Amount (SEPPA) and High Needs Amount (HNA) - (dated April 3, 2013).

5. Association for Bright Children of Ontario (ABC) re Changes to Grade Five Gifted Programming (dated May 13, 2013).

6. Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board re Special Education Preparatory Courses and an Additional Qualifications Course in the area of Mental Health (dated May 8, 2013).

7. HWDSB SEAC letter to the Board (through Chair of the Board Tim Simmons) expressing thanks for the Board's continuing support for Special Education.
March 26, 2013

The Honourable Liz Sandals
Minister of Education
14th Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Dear Madam Minister:

At its meeting on February 20, 2013, the Lakehead District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee agreed, by consensus, to send a letter in support of the letter received from the Upper Grand District School Board that supported the Near North District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee concern about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and the Wellington Catholic District School Board's SEAC requesting Special Education preparatory courses for all Teachers Colleges in Ontario.

We also encourage and respectfully request that the Ministry of Education:

- examine the health curriculum and modify it so that Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder can be discussed with students before Grade 11; and
- move towards establishing comprehensive Special Education preparatory courses becoming a mandatory part of the pre-service programs for all Teachers Colleges in Ontario.

Your consideration of these requests is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Laura Sylvestre
Chair
Lakehead District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee

cc SEAC Chairs – Ontario District School Boards
Michael Barrett, President, Ontario Public School Boards' Association
March 26, 2013

The Honourable Ted McMeekin, Minister
Ministry of Community and Social Services
6th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1E9

Dear Mister Minister:

At its meeting on February 20, 2013, the Lakehead District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee agreed, by consensus, to send a letter in support of the letter received from the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board dated January 14, 2013 addressing the following four items:

- Termination of Special Services At Home (SSAH);
- Barriers in Applying to the Developmental Services Ontario (DSO);
- Waiting Lists After School; and
- Inadequate Funding For Those With Severe Disabilities.

The Lakehead District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee concurs with the Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board’s concerns regarding these four programs. We would like to:

- appeal to your Ministry to re-consider the decision to terminate SSAH for individuals who have an intellectual disability when they reach the age of 18;
- ask your Ministry to review and consider repealing the specific requirement that determining eligibility for the DSO program is a psychological assessment for those who already have extensive medication documentation of developmental disability, or alternately to make funding (of approximately $2000) available so that families can afford the costs of private assessments.;
- request that the Ministry of Community and Social Services find the funding necessary to provide SSAH from age 18 to school leaving and then Passport dollars, so that there is no break in the continuity; and
- request that the Ministry of Community and Social Services broaden the funding bands in all four categories of the Passport Programme to allow a maximum of $50,000 for those with high needs and that housing/accommodation support dollars be made available to families who choose to have their child live at home or in the community.

Your consideration of these requests is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Laura Sylvestre
Chair
Lakehead District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee

cc SEAC Chairs – Ontario District School Boards
Michael Barrett, President, Ontario Public School Boards’ Association
March 27, 2013
The Honourable Liz Sandals
Minister of Education
Mowat Block, 18th Floor
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7Z 1L2

Dear Madam Minister:
The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee sends this letter in support of the concerns of the Upper Canada District School Board SEAC, the Near North District School Board SEAC and the Upper Grand District School Board SEAC in regard to the specific inclusion of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder in the Ontario Secondary School Physical Education Program.

In the outdated but currently taught 1998 Secondary School Physical Education health curriculum there is no specific inclusion of FAS or its methods of prevention. As we await the development and release of the new curriculum we request that you consider where this topic would fit and include it as part of one of the grade 9 health units. Many secondary school students only participate in phys-ed in their first year of high school and thus the topic needs to be included and discussed at the grade 9 level in order to reach as many students as possible. We fully support the suggestion of these SEAC groups and acknowledge the importance of sharing the information about the dangers of consuming alcohol during pregnancy with our youth.

The HWDSB SEAC also request that you examine ways to include a more comprehensive special education component in Ontario Teachers College’s preservice programs. This request is made in support of numerous other SEAC groups in the province and we agree that there needs to be greater emphasis placed on the knowledge and implementation of an IEP and the IPCR process.

We also request that the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP) be considered as an opportunity for professional development of new teachers with respect to the unique requirements of students with special needs. This mandatory program for new teachers could include a specific component involving special education training that is presently not required.

The HWDSB SEAC strongly believes that new teachers would benefit from a more in depth study of the accommodations, modifications and unique teaching practices that students with special needs require to be successful.

Yours truly,

Judy Colantino
Special Education Advisory Committee Chair

Lita Barrie
Special Education Advisory Committee Vice Chair

cc: SEAC Chairs, Ontario Public District School Boards
SEAC Chair, Ontario Catholic District School Boards
Ontario College of Teachers
Minister’s Advisory Council on Special Education
April 3, 2013

Honourable Liz Sandals
Minister of Education
Mowat Block, 22nd Floor
900 Bay St,
Toronto, ON
M7A 1L2

Dear Madam Minister:

The Durham District School Board’s Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) wishes to add their support to the recent letter sent to the Ministry on December 12, 2012 by the Wellington Catholic District School Board’s SEAC in highlighting their concerns with the current funding model for special education.

The Education Act on Special Education and the Regulations made under the Act requires school boards to provide exceptional pupils with special education programs and special education services that are appropriate for their needs. Two major components of the funding available for this purpose falls under the Special Education Per Pupil Amount (SEPPA) and the High Needs Amount (HNA).

The SEPPA is based on total student enrolment, but it uses data that is out of date by more than three years, so any board with an increasing number of identified students is not allocated funds to adequately cover the needs of the number of students.

The HNA, while meant to support students with high needs, is partly reliant on census data which was last done in 2006. This dated data does not reflect the true numbers of students or the cost to provide the support required for these students. Given that the federal government has discontinued the long form census, the current source of this information is no longer available.

The Durham District School Board (DDSB) has seen a steady increase in the number of identified students in the past seven years (+3.1%), while the overall student enrolment has decreased in the same timeframe. (-2.7%).
This trend has continually left the DDSB with a significant deficit in the amount of funds available to support our most vulnerable students and the board has been forced to fill this deficit by diverting funds from other sources within the budget. With the continuing strains on funding overall, this cannot continue. Other districts have been forced to drastically cut staffing and support for students to balance their budgets.

We realize that the Ministry has provided an overall increase in funding for special education. However, the increase does not cover the increase of costs for wages and day-to-day operations and we believe that this is due, to the factors we have stated above.

The DDSB and SEAC are committed to providing quality education and support so that every student can reach their full potential, but we can only achieve that goal with the appropriate level of funding from the Ministry of Education. We strongly urge the Ministry to correct the inequities in the current funding model for special education to allow all of our students to succeed.

Sincerely,

John Watkins
SEAC Chair
Durham District School Board

cc: SEAC Chairs, Ontario Public District School Boards
SEAC Chairs, Ontario Catholic District School Boards
Joe Dickson, MPP – Ajax/Pickering
Christine Elliott, MPP – Whitby/Oshawa
Tracy MacCharles, MPP – Pickering/Scarborough East
John O'Toole, MPP – Durham
Jerry Ouellette, MPP – Oshawa
Laurie Scott, MPP – Haliburton/Victoria/Brock
May 13, 2013

Mr. John Malloy
Director of Education

Dear Mr. Malloy:

Re: Changes to Grade Five Gifted Programming

Members of the Hamilton Chapter of ABC and ABC Ontario met on May 2, 2013, with Vicki Corcoran, Superintendent of Education – Leadership and Learning; Ben Nywening, Psychological Consultant; Beth Carey, Itinerant Gifted Teacher and Susan Dunn, Consultant to learn of changes to the gifted programme at the HWDSB for September 2013. In addition Judith Bishop, Trustee; Alex Johnstone, Trustee and Judy Colantino, SEAC Chair, were also in attendance.

To summarize the meeting, the Board is proposing to eliminate all Grade Five gifted self-contained classes beginning September 2013 in favour of expanding the newly created Gifted Centre. While students will still be screened for giftedness in Grade Four, a full spectrum of placement options will not be available until Grade Six. Prior to our meeting, the HWDSB had not consulted with ABC or the HWDSB SEAC in developing the suggested changes. ABC supports the expansion of the Gifted Centre, but has requested that the Grade Five gifted self-contained classes remain open.

ABC acknowledges, with gratitude, the dedication of the Board’s special education staff, classroom teachers, in-school learning resource teachers and other staff in trying to meet the needs of the gifted students in the HWDSB. The efforts to try to reach classroom teachers and LRTs and provide information on gifted learners and programming is to be commended. Also, by adding an additional itinerant teacher, the Gifted Centre can be expanded to Grades 6-8 thereby providing additional service for those students. However, ABC is concerned that many gifted students’ needs will not be met within the proposed changes and we view this as a step back, rather than forward. We hope to work together with the HWDSB in addressing these concerns.

The programming changes highlight the following concerns:

- A “range of placements” is not offered to gifted students in accordance with ministry regulations
- An “inclusionary philosophy” is taking precedence over evidence-based research on gifted education. As a result, some students’ educational needs are not being met; therefore, placing them at risk.
- ABC supports Inclusion IF: it places the student in the most enabling learning environment or zone of proximal development

**Range of Placements**

Through the Gifted Centre sessions, HWDSB staff intend to gain knowledge of the gifted students in order to recommend placement for Grade Six. However, students will visit the Centre for only six days in the school year. Furthermore, these students did not suddenly become gifted at the end of grade 4. By
then, gifted students have completed six years of school without having their learning strengths and needs properly identified. Contrary to popular belief, not all gifted children flourish without special help. Many deliberately limit their achievement in order to gain peer acceptance. Others become so bored that they clown, disturb others or daydream – or are isolated reading in a corner to pass the school day. Most regular assignments provide little challenge for gifted children and they become accustomed to working much below their capacity. They actually learn “how not to learn”. This is only exacerbated with the focus on EQAO activities as we are now not teaching to learn, but teaching to the EQAO test.

With the proposed elimination of grade 5 special class for September 2013, HWDSB’s gifted learners will have to wait yet another year.

According to legislation and defined standards (see attached Appendix), the HWDSB is required to provide a full range of placements and to ensure that placement decisions are in keeping with the students’ needs and in accordance with parental preferences. Yet, with the proposed changes, HWDSB only offers to its gifted pupils a Regular Classroom until grade 6 when a special class option becomes available. Also, the HWDSB’s special education plan does not define how students will be selected for special class. The long waiting list for gifted special class (22 students in 2012-13) is a clear indicator that parents want special classes and that they have given the regular class placement six years to demonstrate that regular class is not meeting the needs of their student.

As the HWDSB is not offering a full range of placement options to the Board’s gifted students, this means that:

- many of the identified gifted pupils in the HWDSB are not having their academic and social-emotional needs met appropriately,
- many gifted students are not placed in the most enabling learning environment or one that is commensurate with their learning abilities and fast rates of acquisition,
- many gifted students are in placements that are not in accordance with parental preferences.
- The Board is making the students “fit” the only one existing placement model instead of making the placement “fit” the students’ needs.

“Inclusion” and the Neighborhood School.

Currently, the HWDSB offers its grade 5 gifted students six “clustered session” days per year. The HWDSB offers differentiation as an extension of the regular classroom.

How can this be appropriate to the student if their needs, as identified through the IPRC, cannot be met within the regular classroom? Leading researchers repeatedly assert that gifted students learn best with their intellectual peers:

Jim Delisle in Education Leadership (1999) notes: “Inclusionary practices for gifted students and upgraded curriculum for all students have actually caused a decline in the rigor of academic options for able learners.”

Karen Rogers, Re-Forming Gifted Education (2002): In her recommendations for in-school provisions for the gifted student, Rogers’ first choice is ability grouping, due to its substantial positive effect on both
academic achievement and student motivation. “Teachers and parents must find ways to allow gifted or talented students to spend the majority of their learning time in the academic core areas with others of like abilities and interest. Rogers concluded: “It seems that the arguments opposing full-time grouping for gifted children are based more on an educator’s personal philosophy than on research results.”

Matthews and Foster report: “teachers involved in the field believe that self-contained classrooms are the best way to provide appropriate intellectual stimulation, as well as opportunities to meet and interact with other of like mind and interest.” Being Smart About Gifted Education (2005)

ABC supports the inclusion policy of gifted children in the regular classroom IF:

- this is just one placement option within a full continuum of placements offered to gifted children in the HWDSB
- this provides the most enabling learning environment to gifted children AND
- this is consistent with parental preferences.

ABC does not support the inclusion policy defined by HWDSB IF:

- the philosophy takes priority over the needs of the child,
- the inclusion policy takes precedence over the legislation, regulations and policy memoranda enacted by the Ministry of Education,
- the Board does not offer a full continuum of placement options to its gifted children.

The Inclusion Policy being promoted by the Board serves to limit offering the most appropriate learning environment for gifted students. Gifted children, who are by definition asynchronous in their development can be many years ahead of their chronological peers; however, the use of the Inclusion Policy and the lack of a full continuum of placements mean that many of our gifted children are not in a placement that truly meets their academic, social, and emotional needs.

Despite the Board’s best intentions, it is difficult to define consistent plans for meeting the needs of gifted students in the regular classroom. As discussed during the meeting, an LRT’s time is heavily utilized with struggling primary readers. The deployment of an LRT’s time is directed by their individual principal. The Board’s new initiative to educate teachers on gifted students is “coffee house” style and is not mandatory. The reality is that teachers are stretched thin and differentiated instruction is difficult with split classes, multiple IEPs and exceptional circumstances in almost every classroom. Gifted students remain, in large part, unchallenged in their home school – ABC hears this feedback from hundreds of parents.

ABC is pleased that over the past two years that the HWDSB has made great strides in enhancing gifted programming with the addition of an itinerant teacher in 2012 and now the hiring of a second itinerant teacher for 2013-14. ABC is thrilled that the HWDSB is creating a policy on acceleration. We are, however, extremely troubled that the addition of the second itinerant teacher was at the expense of all grade 5 gifted self-contained classes.

We urge the HWDSB to seek impact statements from students to obtain their voice of how gifted programming has benefited them. In addition, we urge the Board to measure results from the gifted centres at the end of the school year so that the Board can examine what is the better investment – gifted centres or special class. Measurement should include students, parents and the students’ home school
Mr. John Malloy  
Page 4 of 5  
May 13, 2013

At no point during our meeting was the word “parent” used by the Board. This is deeply concerning. We encourage the HWDSB to elicit the voices of parents other than a three year old survey which was not addressed to the parents of identified students, but rather was sent to LRTs to copy and distribute, which was inconsistent at best. **Furthermore, the survey does not preclude the legislated requirement to ensure that placements are in accordance with parental preferences.**

ABC urges the HWDSB Trustees and Administration to consider the overwhelming evidence demonstrating that gifted students require a range of educational placements to ensure success in academics and life. We respectfully request that the door to special class not be closed for grade 5 and that if at IPRC, it is agreed that special class placement is in the best interest of the child, that he/she be placed in the grade 6 class thereby making it a grade 5/6 split (as is the model today). ABC Hamilton looks forward to collaborating in meeting the needs of gifted students.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra Starr, HWDSB SEAC Rep  
Gloria Petitti, President  
Association of Bright Children  
Hamilton Chapter  
Association of Bright Children  
Hamilton Chapter

cc Vicki Corcoran, Superintendent of Leadership and Learning (Instructional Services)  
Elizabeth Rutherford, Principal, Spec Ed  
Judi Colantino, Chair, SEAC  
David Croome, President, ABC Ontario  
All HWDSB Trustees  
Members of HWDSB Special Education Advisory Committee
Appendix--Regulations

The Ministry of Education states that a range of options will be made available for students whose needs cannot be met within the regular classroom, in a memorandum to Directors of Education, Superintendents of Special Education and Principals, June 9, 1994.

The range of placement options are described in the Ministry of Education in A Guide for Educators, 2001. These placements are:

- **A Regular Class with Indirect Support.** The student is placed in a regular class for the entire day, and the teacher receives specialized consultative services.

- **A Regular Class with Resource Assistance.** The student is placed in the regular class for most or all of the day and receives specialized instruction, individually or in a small group, within the regular classroom from a qualified special education teacher.

- **A Regular Class with Withdrawal Assistance.** The student is placed in the regular class and receives instruction outside of the classroom for less than 50 percent of the school day, from a qualified special education teacher.

- **A Special Education Class with partial Integration.** The student is placed by the IPRC in a special education class where the student-teacher ratio conforms to Regulation 298, section 31, for at least 50 percent of the school day, but is integrated with the regular class for at least one instructional period daily.

- **A Special Education Class Full-time.** The student is placed by the IPRC in a special education class, where the student-teacher ratio conforms to Reg. 298, section 31 for the entire school day.

Furthermore, Reg. 181/98 states: When making a placement decision on a referral under section 14, the committee shall, before considering the option of placement, consider whether placement in a regular class with appropriate special education services,

A) Would meet the pupil’s needs; and
B) Is consistent with parental preferences. O. Reg. 181/98 pg. 17(1).
May 8, 2013

Liz Sandals
Minister of Education
Mowat Block, 18th Floor
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Dear Honourable Liz Sandals,

I am writing on behalf of the Special Education Advisory Committee of the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board with regards to lending our support of other Boards and their respective SEACs as it pertains to Special Education Preparatory courses becoming a mandated requirement for all teachers graduating from a College of Education in Ontario.

We value every student as an individual with unique strengths and needs. We aim to develop a personalized, proactive transition process to support strengths and needs of every student and with this in mind, it is critical that every teacher in our system is considered to be a “special educator” who differs only in the extent of their training and expertise. In order to close the gap and assist each teacher to thrive in an ‘inclusive environment’, it is paramount that special education preparatory courses become part of the requirement for all future graduates.

One of the guiding principles for special education includes school teams, with input from parents/guardians, health and social agencies in order to coordinate the planning, delivery, and evaluation of the accommodations and program modifications for pupils as per their IEP.

Classroom teachers have prime responsibility for the education of all pupils, identified or otherwise, in their classes. This is not unique to the Board or throughout the province. Teachers having a prerequisite Special Education Preparatory Course would benefit all students in that they would have heightened knowledge and awareness of equity and inclusion, collaboration and partnerships, individual differences, transition planning, developing student independence; all of which would include additional opportunities for the development of the teacher’s capacity to service all students.

The Special Education Advisory Committee of the Board is also suggesting that an Additional Qualifications (AQ) course be developed in the area of Mental Health. The Open Minds, Healthy Minds, Ontario’s Comprehensive Mental Health, and Addictions Strategy document states the following:

“Building school-based capacity

For children and youth, the first signs that they are struggling with mental health issues may be at school – in the form of changes in behaviour, an inability to focus, or a drop in their marks. To help schools and teachers see those first signs and act, we will:

• Implement mental health literacy and cross-sectoral training on early identification and intervention for educators;
• Implement programs through schools and community-based agencies to enable early identification and referral for treatment;
• Enhance mental health resources in schools.”

This focus on mental health issues requires a tremendous amount of training in order to fully understand and identify the concerns/addictions and therefore, the development of an AQ course dealing with this complex subject matter would go hand in hand to continue the goal of the Ministry of Education to “Reach Every Student”.

We would welcome the opportunity to have you visit our region and participate in a round table discussion with regards to these concerns. We would certainly encourage our co-terminous board and the organizations/agencies that make up the Special Education Advisory Committees to join us. If you are able to arrange time in your schedule to meet with us, please contact Superintendent of Education, Bill Chopp at 519-756-6505 at extension 244 or email him at bchopp@bhncdsb.ca.

Sincerely,

Dianne Wdowczyk
Chair, Special Education Advisory Council

cc:  June Szeman, Chair of the Board
     Chris Roehrig, Director of Education
     Bill Chopp, Superintendent of Education
     Dave Levac, MPP - Brant
     SEAC Chairs, Ontario Catholic and Public School Boards
Mr. Tim Simmons  
Chair  
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board  

Mr. Simmons:  

On Wednesday, March 27, at a meeting of the HWDSB Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Superintendent Don Grant and Manager Denise Dawson presented the HWDSB budget as it pertains to Special Education.  

The members of SEAC wish to thank the Board of Trustees for including Special Education as one of the priorities of the Board in its budget considerations. Further, the committee wishes to thank the Board for its continuing support for Special Education supports and services. SEAC appreciates your devotion to providing the supports necessary for all students, including those with special education needs, to succeed. The statement, "All Students Achieving Their Full Potential" is alive and well in Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board.  

Sincerely,  

Judy Colantino  
SEAC Chair  

Lita Barrie  
SEAC Vice-Chair