

**Meeting Highlights**  
**Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE)**  
**February 9-10, 2021**

**Tuesday, February 9, 2021**

**Welcome and Opening Remarks** – Peggy Blair, Chair, MACSE

- Introduction of new members and reminder re conflict of interest rules, the requirement to declare any potential conflict, and confidentiality.

**Ministry Update - Overview and Update on Special Education** – Jeff Butler (Assistant Deputy Minister) and Claudine Munroe (Director, Special Education/Success for All Branch)

- Reviewed new funding supports for students with special education needs and the Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools.
- New funding supports discussed included the Supports for Learners program, Safe Return to Class Fund, and New ASD Funds.

**The Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education**

- The Minister explained that throughout this pandemic the priority of the Ministry been to keep both students and staff safe and he reflected on the importance of pathways to employment for students with special education needs.
- Members commented that they were very appreciative of the new funding supports provided by the Ministry during this pandemic and voiced concern about the mental health issues unique to students with Special Education needs during this time.

**Nancy Naylor, Deputy Minister of Education**

- Discussed the student-friendly tools in the Student Mental Health Action Kit launched the previous month.

**School Mental Health-Ontario (SMH-ON)** – Dr. Kathy Short, Theresa Kennedy and Dr. Deanna Swift

- Presented the School Mental Health Action Plan for 2020-2021 including pandemic specific resources.
- Members commented on the need for a tailored approach to students with different exceptionalities and mental health issues especially for students of color.

**EQAO** - Laurie McNelles, Chief Operating Officer (interim); Joanne Rinella, Chief Assessment Officer (A); Dr. Cameron Montgomery, Chair, Board of Directors

- Provided a review of the delivery model and digitalization of the new assessment system for EQAO testing and its accessibility features.
- Members requested more information regarding accommodations. Laurie McNellis agreed to share additional resources including sample tests confidentially with members of MACSE at a future date.
- Members asked if paper copies would be available to students who do better with pen and paper then digitalization and availability upon request was confirmed.

**Accessibility Standard Update** – Lynn Ziraldo, Standards Development Committee Chair

- Provided an update. MACSE member, Ben Smith, is also on the SDC.

- On January 19, 2021, the SDC voted on its initial recommendations report, and the Education Technical Sub Committee report. Final edits will be made in preparation of the submission of the initial report to Minister Cho before posting for public input.

**Education Statistics and Analysis Branch (ESAB)** – Claire Corinthos, Senior Manager; Anil Thomas, Manager

- Presented about the public posting of special education enrolment data (by exceptionality, at the provincial level) as a new Open Data dataset.
- Members asked if boards would be supported in the analysis of board data and were informed that guidance to boards would be provided.

**Special Education Committee: The Kinoomaadziwin Education Body (KEB) & Ministry of Education (EDU)**

- An overview of the Anishinabek Education System was provided.
- Members expressed appreciation for the overview of this education system and look forward to the release of the Special Education Guidelines which will provide guidance on student assessment identification, parent and community engagement, Communication, and student transitions.

**Community Collaboration**

- Members discussed the community collaboration submissions from constituencies.

**Wednesday, February 10, 2021**

**De-Streaming Grade 9** – Dianne Oliphant – Director, Skills Development & Apprenticeship Branch; Jhonel Morvan – Acting Manager, French-Language Teaching and Learning Branch; Paul Grogan – Education Officer, Special Education/Success for All Branch

- Starting in September 2021, a de-streamed Grade 9 math course will help educators to create the conditions for all students to be successful and prepared for the senior program in secondary school, and to pursue their postsecondary pathway of choice.
- Members commented on a disconnect; when students are not successful in math, they are placed in applied math.
- A member commented that students who are blind and low vision tend to receive curriculum resources midway through the semester.
- A suggestion was made to have a summer booster course for students entering secondary school.
- Members noted that there is a high growth in the numbers of students with learning disabilities in locally developed courses.

**Remote Learning Guide for Students with Special Education Needs** – Jess Whitley, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Inclusive Education; Michelle Hagerman, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Educational Technology; Amal Boultif, Ph.D., professeure adjointe, didactique du français (all from the University of Ottawa)

- The Remote Learning Guide is intended to assist with future and ongoing support of students with special education needs during remote learning by collecting current and longstanding effective practices.
- Members discussed the role of the family regarding the important role of technology for both students and parents.
- Council members suggested mentioning mental health and well-being in this guide and that a scan of school boards best practices would be useful.

**Implementation of Changes to JK-3 Suspension Policy** – Dianne Persaud, Manager; Suhail Iqbal, Senior Policy Advisor; Eilyn Medina, Policy/Program Advisor (all from the Safe & Healthy Schools Branch)

- The Safe Schools Unit provided an update on the implementation of changes to junior Kindergarten to grade 3 (JK-3) suspension policies.
- Members noted the importance of fairness in the interview process and stated the importance of a trauma informed interview lens.
- Members inquired about the statistics on voluntary withdrawal for a student as well as modified/reduced school days.
- Peggy Blair noted the importance of a functional behavior assessment (FBA) and members noted that principals must have a holistic view of the child before making a decision to suspend.
- Lynn Ziraldo suggested that the Safe Schools Team review *Shared Solutions* and *Caring and Safe Schools*.

**Bullying Definition, Proposed Approach** – Dianne Persaud, Manager; Susan Brown, Senior Policy/Program Advisor; Jazba Singh, Policy/Program Analyst (all from the Safe & Healthy Schools Branch)

- Presenters thanked MACSE for its recommendations and the Unit provided an overview of work taken to modernize the definition of bullying and supports for intervention and prevention.
- The change to the *Education Act* for the definition of “Bullying” would be high level, with details provided in a PPM.
- Members asked where the community intersects in prevention and intervention.
- MACSE members commented:
  - Anti-bullying needs to be woven into the curriculum and daily instruction of students. The intersections of various forms of oppression should be considered (i.e., race, gender, sexual orientation, exceptionality, socio-economic status). The definition should include the enumerated grounds of discrimination in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.
  - MACSE reiterated the need for a standard school climate survey to track and compare the prevalence of bullying in school boards.

### **Community Collaboration**

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### **Closing Remarks**

- Members recognized Bruce Drewett, who will retire from the OPS later in February, for his dedication and commitment to the OPS and work related to special education.
- Claudine Munroe agreed to follow up with the Professional Teachers and Standards Branch regarding the specialist education qualifications and the requirements for employment prior to taking the course.
- The Chair extended thanks to all participants and ministry staff who supported MACSE’s work and the preparation of this meeting.