

MINISTER'S ADVISORY COUNCIL
ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE MINISTER
FOR THE YEAR 2008/2009

Ministry of Education

MACSE
c/o Special Education Policy
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Ministère de l'Éducation

MACSE
c/o Direction des politiques et des
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June 10, 2009

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne
Minister of Education
900 Bay Street
22nd Floor, Mowat Block
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Wynne,

Re: Annual Report of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education

I am pleased to present this annual report to you on the activities of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) for the fiscal year 2008/2009.

Once again, this has been a productive year for MACSE as members have enjoyed many opportunities to become involved with a wide variety of Ministry initiatives that impact upon students with special needs. Open dialogue with yourself and members of the Ministry staff have been greatly appreciated by Council members and have contributed to a valued and effective working relationship.

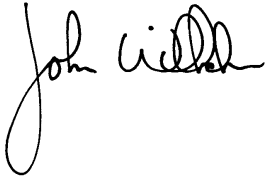
Council has continued to review and revise its own structure. Currently, MACSE members are examining a more focused and time limited/ outcome based approach by concentrating on priority areas. Examples of focus might include finance, Special Education Advisory Councils and collaboration between school boards and children's mental health agencies. Council is also discussing flexibility in structure to respond to specific issues as they arise throughout the school year.

On behalf of Council, I would like to express our appreciation to you for your support and commitment to students with special needs. I would also like to recognize Ministry staff for their ongoing guidance and enthusiasm in working with MACSE. In particular, I would like to thank Mark Agius for his continual assistance. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the involvement of staff of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry

of Health and Long Term Care who continues to work in partnership with MACSE.

As always, I welcome the opportunity to meet with you and ministry staff to continue to discuss ways in which MACSE can advice and support the efforts in meeting the needs of students in Ontario.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Wilhelm". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning of the word "John".

John Wilhelm
Chair

Contents

Part 1:	Activities of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education
Appendix 1.	Summary of 2008/2009 Council meetings
Appendix 2.	Passed 2008/2009 Council resolutions
Appendix 3.	Mandate and structure of Council
Appendix 4.	Membership list 2008/2009

PART 1

Activities of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education in 2008/2009

The mandate of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) is to advise you, as Minister, on matters related to the establishment and provision of special education programs and services for exceptional pupils (students with special education needs), including the identification and provision of early intervention programs for students with special education needs. A more detailed description of the structure of Council and its mandate is attached as Appendix 3.

In order to fulfill this important responsibility, Council responds to proposals or positions of the Ministry of Education and other ministries that have potential impact(s) on students with special education needs. Council's voice is often heard through its representation on various Ministry work groups and other stakeholder advisory bodies. Members also document successful practices and challenges that are evident in the special education community. An example of this is that each member of Council is requested to consult with the organizations in his or her constituency and to table a report at each MACSE meeting reflecting any input received. MACSE's role is to advise you with recommended actions following careful analysis of all of the information.

During the course of this year, MACSE had the opportunity to offer advice or participate in discussions related to a number of significant issues that affect students with special education needs. This included discussions and or recommendations on:

- Individual Education Plans (IEP) Collaborative Review
- Dispute Resolution – Resource Guide/Training for principals and teachers
- School Board Special Education Plans
- Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)
- Ontario Psychological Association (OPA)
- *Learning for All – K-12 (Resource Guide)*
- Special Education Funding
- Curriculum Review
- Literacy and Numeracy
- Children and Youth Mental Health
- Bill 212 – Safe Schools
- Parent Engagement
- Section 23 schools and programming
- Student Support Leadership Initiative / School Board Accountability and Reporting Requirements
- Ministry research practices and direction
- PPM 140: *“Incorporating Methods of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) into Programs for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)”*

MACSE continues to collaborate with other ministries through their participation at Council meetings. Council's voice was also heard through the participation of its Chair in meetings with yourself; Grant Clarke, the (A) Assistant Deputy Minister of the Strategic Planning and Elementary/Secondary Programs Division of the Ministry of Education, and Mr. Barry Finlay, Director of Special Education Strategic Planning Branch. 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.

Consultations

The Chair and other members of Council met on several occasions with officials of the Ministry representing various branches, in order to ensure that the perspective, concerns and recommendations of the Council were understood by those who have the responsibility for developing and implementing policies and programs that impact on exceptional students. These meetings provided the Chair and Council members with an opportunity to inform the Minister, Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Ministers about the work of Council while providing them with an opportunity to respond to Council's priorities, issues and recommendations.

The Chair and other members of Council addressed audiences throughout Ontario, including school board SEAC meetings, parent organizations and professional groups. This gave the opportunity to share information about Council's activities and provided an excellent forum for inviting input on pertinent issues. Members continued to liaise with the sectors they represent and obtain information about successful practices and challenges, which are shared with Council as a whole. This input is used to inform Council's understanding of issues and assists in setting its agenda for the following year.

Self-evaluation

Council maintained its practice of continual assessment of its own effectiveness. A summary of evaluative feedback from Council members is provided to all members and to Ministry staff following each meeting.

MACSE'S resolutions provide guidance with respect to:

- Transportation for students with special education needs
- SEAC information sharing
- EQAO results
- Speech and language services for school aged children
- Effective transition planning and training

As part of Council's deliverables, resolutions are passed through the year and collectively submitted through the annual report. The complete collection of resolutions passed from June 2008 through February 2009 is attached in Appendix 2 of this document.

In addition, this report reflects Council's ongoing advice based upon 2008/2009 key focus and priority areas intended to ensure that students with special education needs are provided with the programs and services they require to attend, participate and progress in school.

Council is pleased to note that a number of resolutions passed during 2008/2009 have confirmed MACSE support for Ministry of Education strategic directions and/or resulted in direct action being taken by the Ministry of Education as a result of the resolution.

Revised 2008-09 MACSE Priorities and Areas of Focus are:

Several areas of MACSE focus from last year have been maintained, but some of the foci for 2008/2009 have changed in order to remain linked to current ministry strategic goals and initiatives.

- Accountability and Evidence Based Practice
- Coordinated/Collaborative Services
- Special Education Funding
- Secondary School Success

Other areas of Focus:

- Curriculum
- Individual Education Plan Development
- Learning for All
- Parent Engagement
- Safe Schools
- SEAC
- Special Education Plan Review

Standing Committees

MACSE further refined the structure of its Standing Committees in 2008/2009. This was done to continue to make the work of Council more strategic and focused and to ensure that the work of the standing committees was well aligned with the government's overarching priorities and those of the Special Education branches. Special attention was given to making sure that individual sector priorities continue to be heard and are woven through the priorities of all ministries, the Special Education Branches and Council. Standing Committee membership is attached as Appendix 3.

System Capacity Standing Committee

During the 2008/2009 year, the System Capacity committee held three face-to-face meetings interspersed with three teleconference meetings. In addition, committee chair Alison Morse was active on MACSE's Executive Committee and individual committee members represented MACSE at numerous consultations and other events.

Funding

The System Capacity Committee took the lead for MACSE in consulting with the Ministry's Declining Enrolment Working Group (DEWG). DEWG representatives attended the October meeting of the committee. The committee made a written submission to DEWG and members attended a DEWG consultation. Over the course of the year, committee members provided opinions on funding topics including:

- The Special Equipment Allocation (SEA)
- The Special Incidence Portion (SIP), and the new
- Measure of Variability (MOV).

Knowledge Transfer

System Capacity Committee members participated in the Ministry consultation on *Learning for All: K-12* which will expand upon *Education for All (2005)*. Discussion occurred at a number of committee meetings on aspects of this document and on the sample Individual Education Plans (IEPs) that the Ministry has developed and which are posted on the website of the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE).

Service Coordination

During the past year, the System Capacity Committee has monitored various inter-ministerial activities from the perspective of MACSE's Service Coordination Logic Model. As the year closes, MACSE members are considering the application of the model in MACSE's work on children's mental health issues.

2008 Report of the Auditor General of Ontario

An activity spanning all three priority areas was the committee's review of the recommendations of the Auditor General of Ontario concerning special education programs and services in the auditor's 2008 Annual Report. The committee is continuing to monitor and provide comment on the implementation of these recommendations.

Student Learning Standing Committee

The role of the Student Learning Standing Committee is to examine and provide input to the Ministry of Education on issues related to student learning. We are particularly focusing on the Ministry goals of high levels of student achievement and reducing gaps in student achievement. Our priority areas for this year were curriculum, IEPs, Learning for All and Transitions.

In the area of curriculum, the committee is reviewing the special education programs and supports for secondary students. We have obtained information on pathways and student success/learning to 18 as well as the proposed Provincial Skills Certificate and curricula which will lead to this certificate. We are liaising with the Ministry on alternative learning expectations and assessment of literacy, numeracy and functional skills for students with very complex learning needs.

In the area of IEPs, the committee is in the process of reviewing and providing input on the IEP samples, as well as gathering information on observable, measurable performance tasks on the IEP. We are also investigating the level of parental involvement in the development of the IEP.

The committee provided feedback on the Learning for All draft documents and participated in the discussion of the roll-out and implementation plan.

The committee reviewed the documents and practices related to transitions and proposed two resolutions, which were passed. Ways to strengthen the link between transition planning and coordinated services continues to be investigated.

Accountability and Partnerships Standing Committee

The Accountability and Partnership Sub-Committee has continued to focus on mechanisms for implementing accountability into general and special education initiatives. This has included participating in MACSE's role in monitoring the implementation of PPM-140 regarding the roll-out of ABA methods throughout English and French School Boards.

As well, this sub-committee has taken a keen interest in the School Effectiveness Framework developed by the Literacy & Numeracy Secretariat and which is presently being piloted in a variety of School Boards. We have identified the need for performance indicators that reflect the needs and goals of special education students within the school community. We have also monitored the IEP Review from an accountability perspective. In our partnership capacity, we continue to support SEAC training as essential piece in achieving public accountability & confidence within our educational system. Next steps for our committee involve reviewing our role in the context of the other two MACSE sub-committees.

CONCLUSION

This report reflects the most significant observations, challenges and recommendations arising from the work of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education for the year 2008/2009. Council is excited about the government's overall education agenda and looks forward to the opportunity to provide input to you as the agenda is implemented.

Yours sincerely,

John Wilhelm
Chair, on behalf of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education

APPENDIX I

Summary of Council Meetings 2008/2009

Membership

Council wishes to acknowledge the contributions of the following members whose terms expired on March 31, 2009:

Peter Chaban, Member representing Learning Disabilities and Chair of the Accountability Standing Committee

Becky Hurwitz, Member representing the Gifted community

John Wilhelm, Member representing Emotional/Behavioural Disorders and Vice-Chair of MACSE.

Meetings

The Council held meetings on June 11-12, 2008, October 22-23, 2008, and on February 18-19, 2009.

The June 2007 meeting agenda included the following relevant topics:

- *Learning for All* (K-12 Resource Guide);
- Safe Schools special education resource guide update; and
- Consultation on the Implementation of the ABA methods

PPM 140 states that MACSE, as well as members of the Autism Spectrum Disorders Reference Group who wish to be involved, will be consulted twice a year regarding the implementation. The first joint consultation was held at MACSE's full Council meeting on November 29, 2007.

The November 2007 meeting agenda included the following relevant topics:

- The importance of current Ministry research and research practices;
- MCYS strategic plan;
- *Learning for All* (K-12 Resource Guide); and
- Presentation by the Council of Directors of Education

The February 2008 meeting agenda included the following relevant topics:

- Collaborative Service Delivery Models for Students with ASD;
- Discussion of Caring & Safe Schools Document; and
- Autism Ontario: Update on Parent Survey

APPENDIX 2

Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education Resolutions for the Period JUNE 2008 TO FEBRUARY 2009

- 08/09.01.01** **WHEREAS:** in light of previous MACSE resolutions and position papers requesting EDU to address concerns about students with special education needs who may be denied curriculum and extra-curricular related programs and services as a result of lack of transportation;
- BE IT RESOLVED:** that MACSE recommends that EDU and school boards be strongly encouraged to ensure that transportation be provided to support students with special education needs to participate fully in curriculum and extra-curricular programs and services, and is equitably distributed amongst all students.
- 08/09.01.02** **WHEREAS:** under Regulation 464/97 every school board in Ontario has a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) whose membership includes parent and community volunteers;
- AND WHEREAS:** the Ministry of Education Regulation 464/97 requires SEAC to be involved in the development of school board Special Education Plans and annual Budgets;
- AND WHEREAS:** the knowledge and skill level of SEAC members varies;
- BE IT RESOLVED:** that the Ministry of Education provide more training opportunities for SEAC members by providing an annual training Webcast, creating opportunities for SEAC networking at regional meetings, reviewing the SEAC e-learning site and other resources to determine how they could be improved to meet SEAC needs for information and sharing of effective practice.
- 08/09.02.01** **WHEREAS:** EQAO has the capacity to collect and report data related to outcomes and accommodations for every exceptionality; and

WHEREAS: EQAO has the capacity to collect and report exemption data for every exceptionality;

BE IT RESOLVED: that when EQAO releases provincial and school board results, they include a breakdown of their special education results according to exceptionalities at provincial and school board level and that this data be shared with the Ministry and school boards.

08/09.02.02

WHEREAS: current policies and guidelines regarding speech and language services for school age children are over 25 years old and out of date; and

WHEREAS: current research indicates that speech and language development is linked to academic and social success; and

WHEREAS: there is significant variability and inequity in the provision of speech services provided for Ontario students;

BE IT RESOLVED: that the Ministry of Education take the lead in working with other ministries and stakeholders (including MACSE) to develop a new framework for the delivery of speech and language services for school-aged children.

08/09.03.01

WHEREAS: the Ministry of Education requires transition planning for students with special education needs who are 14 years of age or older as outlined in Regulation 181/98; and

WHEREAS: the documents *Transition Planning: A Resource Guide (2002)* and *Special Education: A Guide for Educators (2001)* indicate the need for transition planning; and

WHEREAS: MACSE developed a position paper on secondary transitions (2006); and

WHEREAS: the Ministry wishes to enhance coordination between Ministries, and an integrated student planning model has been effective, and there is a need to foster consistent positive practice across the province;

BE IT RESOLVED: that the Ministry gather information on current practice, share samples or exemplars of effective transition

practices for students with all exceptionalities (e.g. on the website) and provide resources for training to principals, guidance counsellors and teachers in effective transition practices.

08/09.03.02

WHEREAS: the Ministry's documents *Special Education: A Guide for Educators (2001)* and *IEP Resource Guide (2004)* recommend preparing individualized plans to assist students with special education needs at all transition points (such as entry to school, between classrooms, between grades and divisions, between schools, between elementary and secondary panels and from secondary to post-secondary/workplace/community); and

WHEREAS: PPM 140 states that "school board staff must plan for the transition between various activities and settings involving students with ASD"; and

WHEREAS: the Ministry's document *Planning Entry to School: A Resource Guide (2005)* provides guidelines for the transition to school process; and

WHEREAS: the Auditor General's Report (2008) recommended that the Ministry of Education should require that schools prepare plans for all transitions - not just transitions from secondary school – and report on the completion and, where applicable, the degree of success of each action in the transition plans; and

WHEREAS: MACSE developed a position paper on elementary transitions (2006);

BE IT RESOLVED: that the Ministry review current regulations and/or develop new regulations to ensure individualized transition plans for students with special education needs, including gifted students.

APPENDIX 3

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 (MACSE). The following describes the mandate and structure of the Council, as it existed during the 2008/2009 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 needs.

In particular, 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.

The membership structure of the Advisory Council was changed in 1996. Instead of seats for specific organizations, the Council now has:

- one seat for each of ten exceptionalities;
- one seat for each of nine educator and professional categories;
- one seat for a student member;
- one seat for Native 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.

APPENDIX 4

**MEMBERS OF THE MINISTER'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON SPECIAL EDUCATION
APRIL 1, 2008 - MARCH 31, 2009**

Exceptionality Community of Interest Represented	Members
<p><u>Educator Groups</u> Principals Supervisory Officers/Roman Catholic Community (Vice-Chair as of January 1, 2009) Trustees Teachers/French Language Community Teachers' Assistants</p>	<p>Robert Stones Warren Kennedy Linda Ward Jean-Baptiste Arhanchiague Lois Parkinson</p>
<p><u>Exceptionalities</u> Learning Disabilities Pervasive Developmental Disorders/Autism Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing Gifted Community Developmental Disability Blind & Low Vision Physical Disability Multiple Exceptionalities Emotional/Behavioural Disorder/Roman Catholic Community (Chair as of January 1, 2009)</p>	<p>Peter Chaban Jennifer Cantello Daw Joanne Cripps Becky Hurwitz Susan Blekkenhorst Sabeena Ali Alison Morse Linda LaRocque John Wilhelm</p>
<p><u>Professional Support</u> Medical Psychologists Social Workers Speech and Language Pathologists</p>	<p>Dr. Arlette LeFebvre Joe Trovato Laura Shepherd Ruth Jones</p>
<p><u>Student / Youth</u></p>	<p>Tyler Meredith</p>
<p><u>Native Community</u></p>	<p>Bonny Cann</p>