

The Special Education Newsletter

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Summer 2007 Issue 11

What's New in Special Education? Special Education Transformation

The report, *Special Education Transformation, 2006* provided recommendations to the Minister of Education following a discussions about critical issues in special education raised by stakeholders across the province including students and parents.

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Founded on the guiding principles of Education for All, the report addresses the following topics:

1. Student Success and Access to Curriculum
2. Professional Development
3. Identification and Support Options
4. Service Integration
5. Parent Collaboration
6. Accountability and Reporting
7. Research
8. Special Education Funding



Through the Catholic lens, the Dufferin-Peel vision points to an alignment of the Transformational goals and recommendations by transforming Board, Family of Schools and school based practice. Programs and services for students would be personalized through a cycle of continuous assessment for learning. The report can be accessed at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/speced/transformation/>

Making and Renewing Friendships

Bryan D'Sousa : PIP Teacher St Edmund Campion

On February 15, 2007 St. Edmund Campion played host to its Inaugural Planning for Independence Valentines Day Dance. The dance was attended by 301 students and 127 staff across Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board and Parkholme from the Peel District School Board. The event gave the opportunity for students with special needs to interact and make and renew friendships. The students were able to demonstrate their skills, abilities and their love of life.

The dance was made possible by the unwavering support of Campions' principal Wally Selhiar and Brampton West Special Education Consultant Diane Barless. This support combined with all the staff and students from the various schools across both boards made this event a great success.



What's New in Special Education? Focus on Supports for Students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

The Autism Spectrum Disorders Reference Group, established by the Ministry of Education in 2006 has published its findings and recommendations in a document that has been sent to all schools, "Making a Difference For Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Ontario Schools, From Evidence into Action".

Recommendations which will be implemented over 07-08 include:

- Directing school boards on the use of ABA (Applied Behaviour Analysis)
- Creating a resource guide for teachers, educational assistants, administrators and other staff on effective ways to teach students with autism
- Providing team training for principals, school staff and others to better support students with autism
- Posting relevant evidence based autism research on the Ministry of Education's website
- Encouraging boards to establish multidisciplinary teams that include parents and provide input into a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- Researching and designing ways that the ministries can partner to educate students with autism

A PDF version of the full report can be downloaded from the Ministry website
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/nr/07.02/autism.html>

Child and Youth Workers Week

Dave Jull : Senior Child and Youth Worker

*When you saw only one set of footprints...it was then that I carried you.
"Footprints in the Sand" - Author Unknown.*

Child and Youth Workers of the Dufferin-Peel CDSB celebrated CYW Week May 7th through May 11th with the publishing of a tip sheet a day from the International CYW Network articles from the publication "Today". The article titles posted on Outlook/ Board Information/ Board Communication included:

Help them feel like they Belong

Help your Children develop feelings of Self Esteem

Talk to your Child about the News

When teens won't talk, Parents need new tactics

Hugging.

As stated in our mission statement, CYWs respond to the behaviour and social / emotional needs of students through direct intervention and consultation. Child and Youth Workers support, advocate, and facilitate on behalf of students. Child and Youth Workers contribute to the development and implementation of preventative programs to foster healthy school environments, in collaboration with other professionals, family, and community. To learn more about Child and Youth Workers in Dufferin-Peel refer to our website at <http://www.dpcdsb.org/CYW/index.htm>

Together for Autism at Blessed Trinity and St. Bernard of Clairvaux School

Tina Marano : Teacher Librarian : Blessed Trinity and St Bernard of Clairvaux



This year marks the 6th anniversary for Toonies for Autism, now "Together for Autism". The event takes place in schools all across Ontario. Children learn about autism and are encouraged to bring in a donation of a toonie or two on the last Friday in April to continue on going research and education.

Autism is a complex developmental disorder that appears in the first two years of a child's life. It affects the way the brain works. No two individuals with autism is alike. It is a life-long disability with no cure.

This year, both Blessed Trinity School and St. Bernard of Clairvaux School became involved in the campaign. Throughout the month of April, students had an opportunity to learn about autism. They heard first hand accounts on how it feels to live with autism, watched videos and read books. On Thursday April 26th and Friday April 27th all students and staff wore orange and or purple, to show support and donated a toonie or two. It was a great way to end the month. Together \$873.00 was raised for Autism Ontario.

Autism, part of our world, not a world apart.



Mrs. Bev Cronin (EA) and Mrs. Mary Briggs (EA) Tristan Davey and Ashley Jardine holding prizes won from Together for Autism Event from Blessed Trinity School

Supportive Sites : Braille Bug® Web Site

Ruth Jones : Chief Speech Language, Vision and Hearing

When you first look at something written in braille, all you see (or feel) is a jumble of dots! However, like any other code, braille is based on a logical system. Once you understand it, you'll be able to read and write braille easily. That's because braille is not a language, it's just another way to read and write English or any other language, such as Japanese.

The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) has created the Braille Bug® web site to teach sighted and visually impaired students about braille. The site is rich with engaging games and activities as well as information on important role models in the blindness and vision loss field. The site is divided into sections including : What is Braille?: Reading Club; Games and Secret Messages ; Louis Braille ; Helen Keller Kids Museum Online; Parents and Teachers and Are You Ready for Real Braille? Though designed for kids, this site is a great resource for adults as well. Access the Braille Bug® Web Site at <http://www.afb.org/braillebug/>

Sixth Annual Conference for Gifted Education 2007

Anne Paquin : Teacher Self Contained Gifted

The Sixth Annual Conference for Gifted Education hosted by Durham DSB was an enjoyable and educational day for myself as a teacher of a congregated gifted class.

The guest speaker was Joanne Foster, co-author of the award winning *Being Smart about Gifted Children: A Guidebook for Parents and Educators* © 2005. Ms Foster teaches Educational Psychology as well as Gifted Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE).

Her keynote address focused on three issues – traditional beliefs, truths about supporting gifted learners and trends for the future. Ms Foster challenged the assumption that all gifted learners are better serviced in an integrated classroom citing a board that was opting to close their self-contained classes based on this premise. She brought up several pieces of research that refuted this suggestion. Ms Foster challenged the belief that gifted children will "learn it on their own" and can "take care of themselves" and the contention that gifted education is "elitist". She was most emphatic that gifted students need classes just like students on the other end of special education spectrum need their own classes. That does not mean they are totally isolated in their schools, as many teachers integrate these children with other children for different sorts of activities like school trips, plays and certain units of learning.

Ms Foster also examined the ways we are testing children to enter the gifted program. Many teachers brought up the concern that we are not getting to all the gifted children. Her insights were thought-provoking.

Another benefit of this conference was the opportunity to talk and share with other teachers of the gifted from across Ontario. It was great to talk to teachers and parents about educating our gifted population.

What's New in Special Education ? Individual Education Plan Review

In February 2007, Ministry of Education staff and School Boards collaborated to review a small sample of student Individual Education Plans and corresponding report cards .

Board staff and parent representatives participated in this Ministry of Education intra-board IEP review session. Ministry goals for this session were to:

- Review Ministry expectations for development and implementation of IEP
- Highlight connections among IEP, curriculum and Provincial report card
- Focus on student achievement and accountability to parents
- Enhance leadership capacity in IEP development

The Board Plan to Improve Student Achievement will continue to guide our improvement of Individual Education Plans as an authentic planning tool that relates appropriately with report cards. Revisions to the IEP engine will align with Education for All, Student Success and other Ministry Literacy and Numeracy initiatives.

Awareness and information sessions introducing the changes have been provided to Special Education Teachers in all Families of Schools. Next steps in the implementation will continue in the Fall.

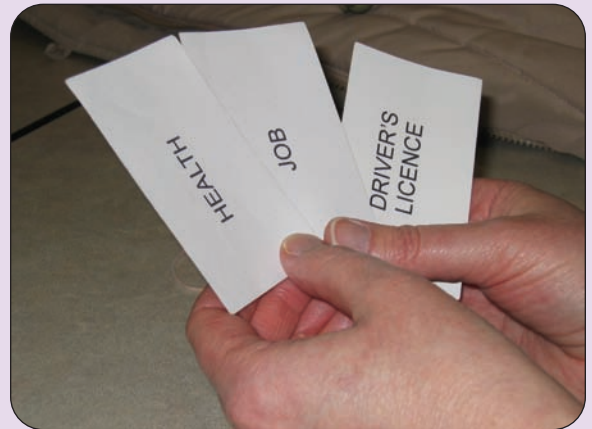
Diversity Workshop : Disability Awareness

Cherie Rahkola : Special Education Consultant

The Community Relations Department sponsored a Diversity Workshop on Disability Awareness at St Marcellinus on January 30th. Chris D'sousa , Board Equity Officer, introduced Linda Soulbere and Frances Tolhurst of the Coalition for Persons with Disabilities to a large group of Dufferin-Peel educators. The audience were challenged through discussion and activities to re-examine their own attitudes and awareness of disability issues. Different types of disabilities were acknowledged in the areas of mobility, sensory, developmental/cognitive, learning and mental health. The discussion was to expose abled-bodied participants to the barriers and challenges facing persons with disabilities. Participants were directed to prioritize their job, health, driver's license, home and family. Participant's reactions were shared as they were directed to make choices (give one up) and then had choices made for them (had one taken away) in these areas. It was both a thought and emotion provoking experience.



Facilitators Linda Soulbere (behind) and Frances Tolhurst (in front) from the Coalition for Persons with Disabilities.



Psychology is for Everyone!

Debra Lean : Chief Psychologist

The Dufferin-Peel Psychology Department celebrated the third annual Psychology Month in Canada in February. The message for Psychology Month in 2007 is that "Psychology is for Everyone". Through discussion and collaboration with teachers, parents and the community, the goal is to enhance both social/emotional needs and academic learning to support a seamless school/home/community system for each child.

School psychology staff provide a variety of services to fulfill this goal including prevention and early intervention strategies, counseling and treatment, consultation, assessment and diagnosis, and in-services for educators and parents.

To celebrate Psychology Month, the Department published fact sheets of interest to everyone. Topics included: Cyber Bullying; Dealing with Oppositional and Defiant Students ; The psychology of reading: From theory to practice in the classroom and Executive Functions and the Disorganized Student.

These fact sheets are posted in the Resource section on the Psychology Department webpage at <http://w3.dpcdsb.org/CEC/About+Us/Departments/>

All Saints ASD Class - A Successful Open House!

The All Saints ASD Class Team



Superintendent Nick Milanetti accompanied by Shirley Kendrick Principal All Saints and Fred Osterman Teacher ASD class presenting a piece of artwork created by the students in the class to Superintendent Sheila McWatters to thank her for her support.

On Thursday, March 29, 2007, All Saints hosted an open house to thank all the staff, families and community supporters who took part in creating a re-energized ASD class. The open house featured light refreshments and presentations to four individuals without whom the class renovations and addition would not have been realized: Mr. Marshall Morgan, Mr. Frank Belcastro and Superintendents Mr. Nick Milanetti (Mississauga South) and Mrs. Sheila McWatters (Special Education and Support Services).

"It was a great opportunity for All Saints staff to meet so many parents, teachers, board staff and valued visitors." said the ASD class team. "We welcomed all their questions with reference to our program, routines and materials that we use daily with our students. We loved our positive interactions with all our guests and enjoyed being able to show our wonderful new addition to our ASD class." We

are so appreciative to all who helped us with the new space and our transforming program.

We were inspired by comments from Superintendent Sheila McWatters who felt that "the environment is truly a reflection of the safe caring and inclusive learning invitations offered and proudly accepted by the students and the adults within the All Saints community."

We are a blessed Catholic community to welcome these special student, families and all who came to celebrate with our students "...each one called by name." Isaiah 43:1



Educational Resource Workers, Jennifer Lawson, Dagmar Huber and Rosy Mundadan welcoming guests to the open house.

"Mission Transition 2007", PIP Wellness Day

Jennifer Da Silva : Needs Moderate Communication Teacher St. Joan of Arc Secondary School

On Friday, June 1st, 2007 students from Planning for Independence Programs in the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, attended the first PIP Wellness Day, at the Canadian Coptic Centre. "Mission Transition 2007" was a one-day conference opportunity for year 6 & 7 senior students from Planning for Independence Programs. The goal of this conference was to build and enhance opportunities for student achievement and transition into post-secondary life, with an over-all theme of "wellness". The conference included workshops on Passport Initiative, Personal Perspective and Yoga and was attended by students, staff and parents.

"The path to balanced excellence and joyful living lies in living highlights" Terry Orlick

Professional Development for Teachers of Needs Moderate/Needs Severe: Communication; Self Contained ASD and Planning for Independence Programs

Secondary teachers from the Planning for Independence Programs and Communications programs were invited to attend a full day professional development on Thursday April 12th, 2007 at the Mississauga Grand Banquet Centre. Elementary teachers from Needs Moderate/Severe classes, Communication classes and Self Contained ASD classes attended a full day professional development on Tuesday April 24th, 2007.

In both sessions, the professional development opportunities included a review of the communication tools and assistive technology equipment, an in-service on the use of the Brigance assessment tool appropriate to the panel and participation in an IEP review and update.



Participants received two Brigance assessment binders to support the assessment of and program development for students with alternative

program needs. Jill Devlin reviewed and highlighted the existing communication tools that were purchased for the self contained classes last year. Phil Caetano showcased and demonstrated assistive technology he has had success with in his program at St. Bernard of Clairvaux. Kylie Richardson Boardwide Special Education Consultant Secondary facilitated the secondary IEP update and review and Cherie Rahkola Boardwide Special Education Consultant Elementary facilitated the Elementary update and review. The feedback from both sessions welcomed

the resources and applauded the opportunity to network with colleagues.

Secondary School Special Events Track and Field Meet for Athletes with Physical and Developmental Challenges

On May 15th and 16th, 400-500 students from 38 secondary schools across the Region of Peel participated in the ROPSSAA (Region of Peel Secondary School Athletic Association) Special Events Track and Field Meet. The event was hosted by St Marcellinus Secondary School. The Special Events Track and Field Meet was for athletes with physical and developmental challenges. Various categories were established for both groups which established a common criteria for competition such as the use of a manual wheelchair versus use of an electric wheelchair in competition.

Field events included precision throw, target throw, distance throw, softball throw, shot put, standing and running long jump, and high jump. Track events included 30m slalom electric wheelchair, 50m, 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m, 4x50m co-ed relay, 4x100m co-ed relay, and 4x50m wheelchair relay.

An Inspired Onlooker

Kylie Richardson : Boardwide Secondary Special Education Consultant

The spirit of inclusion was celebrated in many venues this academic year. Congratulations to the Planning for Independence Special Events organizing committees. Events have included the *Planning for Independence Art Show, Inaugural Valentine's Day Dance, ROPSSAA Track & Field for students with physical and developmental disabilities, Talent Show, and Day of Wellness.*

PIP Subject council, co-chaired by Barb Gugliemi and Carol Jones, has provided a rich source of resource sharing and planning in a collaborative Catholic environment. They have accessed various Board supports, such as Mary Davis Board-wide Co-op consultant, who facilitated Ministry personnel to come and present a workplace safety workshop to PIP teachers.

Planning for Independence classrooms and their co-op placements are a witness to God's work in progress. These classrooms are models of safe, caring, and inclusive communities, where the dignity of young adults are preserved and where young people's unique gifts are nourished. This was exemplified in a recent outing with a group of Father Michael Goetz Planning for Independence students to their co-op placements at Square One Shopping Centre.

Bea Harris, General Manager of La Senza, has gainfully employed a former Father Michael Goetz Co-op student. The student has worked at La Senza for over nine years, beginning with co-op placements over a two year period and then serving as a LaSenza paid employee for the past seven years. According to Bea Harris, the condition of employment was not based on any sense of charity, but rather was based on the fact that the developmentally disabled, autistic student could provide value to the company. The student completes very specific repetitive tasks effectively, efficiently and quickly. The General Manager reports that not only is the former Dufferin-Peel student responsible, respectful, punctual and cooperative but that she also performs her duties quickly, accurately and with pride. Bea stated with passion, "The former Dufferin-Peel student is not a "disabled" employee; rather she is a "La Senza" employee.

Third Annual Joe Sax Activity Festival – June 12th @ Iona S.S.

*Patrick Cahill Event Coordinator
SERC, St. Catherine of Siena Elementary School*

The Third Annual Joe Sax Activity Festival was celebrated on June 12th at Iona Catholic Secondary School. The day was created so that Special Needs students in the Mississauga South Family of Schools could represent their school and participate in modified physical activities.

The event gets its name from a distinguished member of the Dufferin-Peel teaching family. It is named in memory of (and tribute to) Joe Sax, former teacher at Iona S.S., distance coach for the Mississauga Track Club, member of the Toronto Olympic Club and the former Canadian record holder for the 3 000m steeplechase. Joe passed away in late 2004.

The Activity Festival exemplifies how the Dufferin-Peel community continues to live the Board Mission Statement "to provide, in a responsible manner, a Catholic Education which develops spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, social, and physical capabilities of each individual to live fully today and meet the challenges of the future, thus enriching the community."