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## SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, March 22, 2018

BOARDROOM

6:30 P.M. – 9:00 P.M.

Chairperson: Kelly Smigielski

Vice-chairperson: Maria Castiglione

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TRUSTEES/MEMBERS WHO ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND THE MEETING ARE ASKED TO PLEASE NOTIFY SUSAN MARIUTTI, (705) 748-4861 ext. 227.
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### A. Call to Order:

1. Opening Prayer:

We acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional territory of the Mississauga Anishinaabe

2. Approval of Agenda
3. Declarations of Conflicts of Interest
4. Excusal from Attendance  
R.A. That, \_\_\_\_\_ be excused from attendance at the March 22, 2018  
Special Education Advisory Committee meeting.
5. Approval of the Minutes of the February 15, 2018 meeting *(A.5 attached)*
6. Business Arising from the Minutes

### B. Recommended Actions/Presentations:

1. Remarks: Chairperson
2. Supporting Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students *(Eric Hansen, Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing)*
3. Remarks: Superintendent of Learning/Special Education
4. Ministry of Education Auditor General Report: Letter to write  
[http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en17/v1\\_308en17.pdf](http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en17/v1_308en17.pdf)
5. Draft Parent Guide
6. Draft SEAC brochure

7. Report from SEAC members

**Arlene Godby**

Autism Ontario

Information attached.

**Kelly Smigielski**

Grandview Children Centre

- March 24th, Club Carib of Oshawa is hosting a fundraiser dinner with silent auction in support of Grandview Kids. Entertainment will be provided by Oshawa Sounds of Steel and the Hummingbird Dancers of Oshawa
- April 7<sup>th</sup>, Durham College students are hosting a road hockey even in support of Grandview Kids
- There are still some spots open for various recreation programs such as Taekwondo: Beginner and Lego for Children with Developmental Disabilities. Programs start last week of March so spots will fill quickly
- Adolescents PT program just completed a six week pilot program of Restorative Yoga. With positive feedback, they hope to continue this program. One group was focused on adolescents with limited mobility and alternate seating/resting/stretching positions.

**Maria Castiglione**

Community Representative

- Speech, Language & Hearing Association of Peterborough Conference, May 3, 2018  
(flyer attached)

**C. Information Items:**

1. Correspondence from Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario (C.1 attached)
2. Correspondence from Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord (C.2 attached)
3. Response to Auditor General Report from The Association of Chief Psychologists with Ontario School Boards (C.3 attached)

**D. Old Business:**

**E. New Business:**

**F. Next Meeting:**

1. Thursday, April 19, 2018  
Boardroom, Catholic Education Centre  
6:30 – 9:00 p.m.
2. Agenda Items
3. Selection of Member for Opening/Closing Prayer:

**Future Meetings**

Thursday, April 19, 2018

Thursday, May 17, 2018

Tuesday, May 29, 2018 Special Olympics Opening Ceremonies (Memorial Centre, 7 pm)

Thursday, June 21, 2018

**G. Conclusion:**

1. Closing Prayer: Ruth Ciraulo
2. Adjournment.

# **Autism Ontario Peterborough Chapter Events**

## **Parent/Caregiver Support Group - RDSP Presentation**

**April 19 2018 | 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM**

Join Autism Ontario for our Peterborough Parent/Caregiver Support Group.

This month we will have Nikki Mulvihill coming in to do a presentation on the RDSP and answer our questions.

This support group is for parents/grandparents/caregivers of children with ASD.

Connect with other families in your area and discuss topics that effect and interest you. Gain support and insight from local families. This is meant as a place for parents/caregivers to discuss, as such it is not an appropriate environment for children - thank you for understanding.

Planning on attending? Please [Register Here](#)

## **Laser Tag for Youth & Teens (11-18yrs) with ASD**

Join Autism Ontario an exclusive use game of laser tag! This event is sure to get your adrenaline pumping!

There are a maximum number of 20 children/teens with ASD able to register for this event. This Potential Programme event is open to children 11 to 18 years with ASD.

Registration only via Eventbrite.

Registration is required. Please note there are 2 dates to choose from.

[March 15th, 2018](#)

[April 29th, 2018](#)

## **Home Depot Workshop**

This workshop is expecially for Autism Ontario and is for children 6 to 16 years with ASD. Our workshop leader will bring out the "Mystery Bag" and we'll be making a fun craft together!

Spaces are limited. Registration is required.

Registration only via Eventbrite. Register [Here](#)

## **PEAK Rock Climbing in Lindsay**

Are you between 7-18 years old? Want to try indoor rock climbing?

Then come out and enjoy this drop-in at the PEAK Indoor Rock Climbing and Adventure Centre, an indoor adventure facility where they follow a 'challenge by choice' philosophy. You'll be provided with adventure-based program, activities, as well as awesome indoor rock climbing and challenges on vertical elements!

This event is open to children 7 to 18 years with ASD.

We have two dates to choose from. Registration is required.

[Sunday March 25, 2018](#)

[Sunday April 29, 2018](#)

## **Peterborough Rock Climbing Club**

Peterborough Rock Climbing Club is back!

This 6 week program will help you to develop your climbing skills, learn to work with a partner (the person who belays you), and have fun! Spend 90 minutes a week climbing in the gym testing your strength, reflexes and having fun! Spaces are limited. Registration is required.

Please note that due to the high cost of this program (\$250 per climber), there will be a one-time fee of \$50 per climber. This event is only open for children with ASD who are 8 to 18 years old.

Payment and Registration will only be accepted via Eventbrite.

[Kids/youth aged 8-12 with ASD](#)

[Teens aged 13-18 with ASD](#)



## Autism Ontario Peterborough Chapter



30 mins •

**RAISE THE FLAG: Tuesday, Apr 3, 2018:**

Join us in making your school and community more inclusive place for people with autism!

Please share this poster with your local school and ask them to please register (look for Peterborough Chapter in the drop down menu).

They will have access to our Educator Toolkits which include activities and educational videos. They can share your school's stories of inclusion and acceptance. Flags are also provided free of charge, but are on a first come first serve basis.



**'We believe in the world being a more inclusive place for all.'**

### **What is Raise the Flag?**

Raise the Flag, through the simple act of raising a flag, unites families, schools, communities, government and professionals in recognizing World Autism Awareness Day, and brings to light the struggles and triumphs of people on the autism spectrum.

### **Why we Fundraise**

The funds raised through Raise the Flag go to supporting children and adults with autism and their families living in Ontario. Last year, Autism Ontario supported over 20,000 people through our programs, events and services.

### **How Does My School Get Involved?**

Register and you'll receive a flag to fly in celebration of World Autism Awareness Day 2018 (WAAD). You also have access to our Educator Toolkits which include activities and educational videos.

### **When do we Raise the Flag?**

WAAD falls on Easter Monday, April 2 in 2018, so celebrations will be held on Tuesday, April 3, 2018.

**Teachers, register today and access the Educator Toolkits at:**  
**[www.raisetheflagforautism.com](http://www.raisetheflagforautism.com)**

# Speech, Language and Hearing Association of Peterborough Conference

**Thursday May 3rd, 2018, 8:00 am - 3:00 pm**

**Peterborough Golf and Country Club**  
1030 Armour Road, Peterborough



## **Presenters:**

Alan Faigal ECE, BA, MA, Move to Learn...Learn To Move

Judy Keith AuD : Central Auditory Processing

Jaqui Alleyne, SLP and Veni Govenor, SLP: Social Language Communication Skills



Speech, Language & Hearing  
Association of Peterborough

**slhap@live.ca**

# Speech, Language and Hearing Association of Peterborough Conference

## Bios and Learning Objectives:

**Alan Faigal : E.C.E., B.A., M.A., National Youth Outreach Director Culture Shock Canada.**

### LEARN TO MOVE...MOVE TO LEARN

Alan is an educator and community animator who teaches in the Early Childhood Studies Program at Ryerson University.

#### Workshop objectives:

- Learn how music and movement fosters inquiry based teaching, empathy, literacy, story-telling, and social change.
- Learn about new resources for music and movement
- Participate in interactive movement activities

**Judy A. Keith, AuD., Aud(C), Reg. CASLPO, Doctor of Audiology.**

### AUDITORY PROCESSING IN YOUNG CHILDREN

Judy earned her degree of Doctor of Audiology through AT Still University, Phoenix, Arizona. She is the Kawartha Pine Ridge region's Infant Hearing Program audiologist. Judy founded and operates hearing clinics in Bridgenorth and Peterborough.

#### Workshop Objectives:

- Learn about auditory processing in children and how it impacts on learning, language and behavior.
- Learn how to identify signs of auditory processing difficulty
- Learn strategies and supports for parents, caregivers and teachers at home and in the classroom

**Jacqui Alleyne, SLP Reg. CASLPO and Veni Govender, SLP Reg. CASLPO are Speech-Language Pathologists working at Five Counties Children's Centre (FCCC).**

### SOCIAL LANGUAGE/COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN YOUNG CHILDREN

FCCC provides Speech Language Pathology services, helping children with communication challenges including feeding, articulation, language, voice, stuttering and social communication skills.

#### Workshop objectives:

- Learn about social communication skills in young children
- Learn about these skills in the context of home and in the classroom
- Learn strategies and supports for these developing skills in children

**Thursday, May 3, 2018**

**Registration & Coffee 8:00 am - 8:50 am  
8:00 am - 3:00 pm**

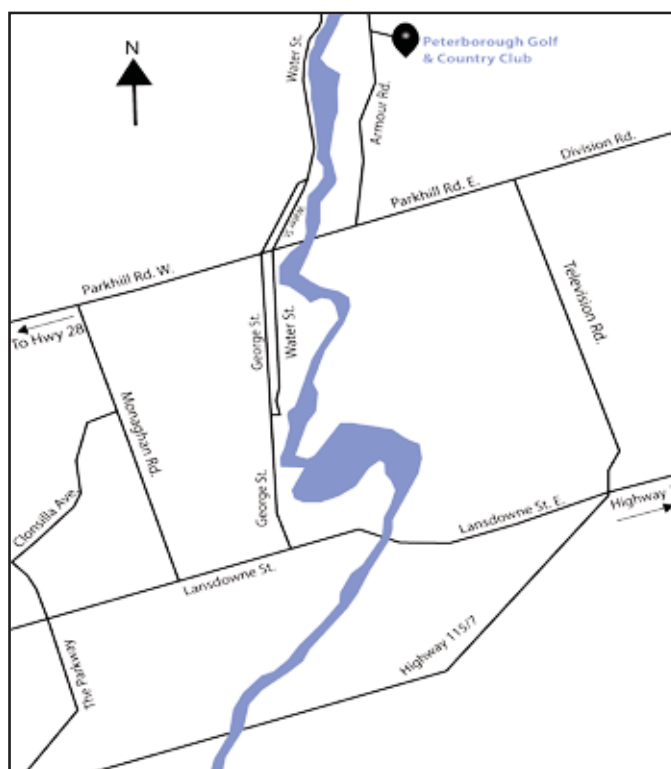
**Peterborough Golf & Country Club**  
1030 Armour Road, Peterborough

**\$80 professional**

(\$70 Professional Early Bird if booked by April 6, 2018)

**\$35 parent/student**

**For more info: slhap@live.ca**



**Registration:** to SLHAP, c/o FCCC conference, 872 Dutton Rd, Peterborough ON K9H 7G1

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

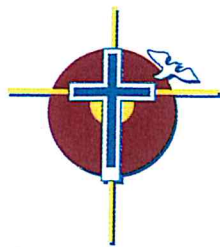
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I am participating as: ☐ Parent/Caregiver ☐ Teacher ☐ Child Care Staff ☐ S.L.P. ☐ Student ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Lunch will be provided at the workshop with a choice of foods that include meat and vegetarian options. If you have a specific food allergy or diet, please bring your own prepared lunch so that you are assured that your dietary requirements are met. Regrettably, the committee is not able to provide a lunch which accommodates all of the food allergies which are likely to be present in a large group of people. Please bring your own water bottle. Styrofoam cups will be provided for tea and coffee.

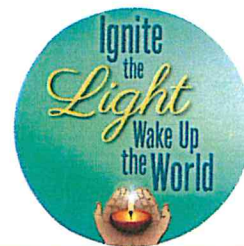
**Costs:** Professional Early Bird Rate \$70.00 (after April 6, 2018 - \$80.00), parent/student rate: \$35.00. Payment must be received by April 20th, 2018

**Payment:** By cheque made payable to Speech, Language and Hearing Association of Peterborough, OR for further information and password for making payment by e-transfer please contact SLHAP@live.ca



# CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF EASTERN ONTARIO

Box 2222, 2755 Highway 43 - Kemprville, Ontario - K0G 1J0  
 Phone: 613-258-7757 Toll-Free: 1-800-443-4562 Fax: 613-258-7134  
[www.cdsbeo.on.ca](http://www.cdsbeo.on.ca)



January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Minister Indira Naidoo-Harris  
 Minister of Education  
 22<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Mowat Block  
 900 Bay Street  
 Toronto, Ontario  
 M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Indira Naidoo-Harris,

The Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario and the Special Education Advisory Committee is writing this letter in support of Bill 191. SEAC, the Administration and Board of Trustees is highly supportive of the necessity of recognizing the importance of the Ministry of Education amending the Education Act to ensure staff are informed of the causes and impact of FASD and the strategies that can be implemented to support students with FASD.

Our Special Education Advisory Committee has brought in a guest speaker to inform the committee about the importance of advocacy in supporting students with FASD, the myths, and the types of things the Board can do to support parents and students with FASD. In addition, we have had training workshops with staff and consultants with a provincially renowned speaker. The Board encourages the Ministry of Education to recognize the identification and provide supports for students with FASD. Our Board and SEAC requests that other School Boards, SEACs, MPPs, OCSTA and other groups support the government in taking action to recognize and respond to the needs of students with FASD.

Our School Board passed a motion, at the board meeting on January 16, 2018, from SEAC which recommended that a letter be sent to the Education Minister, with copies sent to all Special Education Advisory Committees in the Province, OCSTA and MPP's in the Board's jurisdiction, encouraging her to bring Bill 191 forward for a second and third reading as soon as possible. This would amend the Education Act to require Ontario School Boards to promote awareness and understanding of FASD including best practices for students impacted by FASD, and facilitate collaboration with local parents and FASD Support Groups in the undertaking of this promotion.

The Board strongly recommends that the Ministry of Education and School Boards across the province promote an awareness and understanding of FASD and share best practices for students impacted by FASD. We would like to thank you in advance for your support.

Yours in Catholic Education,

Todd Lalonde  
 Chair of the Board

Sue Wilson  
 Chair of SEAC

cc: CDSBEO Board of Trustees  
 John Cameron, Director of Education  
 ✓ All Catholic School Boards' SEAC Committees  
 MACSE  
 OCSTA  
 Regional MPPs



Monday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018

To whom it may concern:

For two years now, trained teams from various agencies and community partners have been working together to understand and drive forward the strategy for students with special needs.

Right from its first announcement, this strategy seemed promising. However, since its implementation, it poses significant challenges and brings many questions that remain without clear answers from the Ministry. The concerns are legitimate and deserve special attention, so that the strategy can be updated to eliminate redundant processes, facilitate access to specialized services, and simplify application processes for parents of children requiring services in occupational therapy, speech therapy or physiotherapy.

We firmly believe that community and collaborative planning should include our leading mental health agencies as well as any other agency providing services. There is a need for a review of service areas, a process for requests linked to the hubs, and consistent procedures for the province. In order to make this strategy update possible, we believe that provincial planning is necessary.

We raise the following specific issues:

- How to ensure that the parent can tell his story only once if the intake service does not cross all services and ministries?
- How to ensure that the parent can be served in their language?
- What technological tool will the province put at the disposal of boards and agencies? We require a common tool, adapted to the language of the IEP and that can be compatible with daycares, agencies and school boards, in short, with any service provider. In its letter dated March 9, 2017, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services indicated that in the coming months, ministries would consult with local steering committees on the need for a single integrated technology platform to support the implementation of new service delivery models. We are still waiting for such consultation.
- How can the reports generated by a tool for the intake interview be used to ensure fairness with regard to services?
- How can electronic hubs provide information and resources to parents and guardians to answer questions and support their process?

- What human resources are included in the implementation budgets?
- What will be the recruitment plan for competent specialized practitioners who will be able to serve Francophone and Aboriginal families well, and how to ensure that these services are available throughout the province? What will be the contingency plan if it is difficult to recruit such people in certain areas?
- What steps will be taken to train school teachers, board support staff, and child care staff to collaborate in this strategy, while recognizing that there may be constraints to be considered with regard to collective agreements and working conditions? For example, coordination and delivery of services throughout the school year, etc.

The development of provincial tools and guidelines for all partners would contribute to more cohesiveness across the province and would also allow for a better understanding of the needs of our families and the various shortfalls and challenges with the goal of rectifying them.

In short, we respectfully ask the government and ministry authorities to review the strategy, specifically the service coordination component and the integration of rehabilitation services component, with a view to redefining them so that they are feasible and effective and beneficial for our young people in need. We also ask that once the strategic map has been developed by the various ministries, start-up funds are given to key players to implement the agreed strategy.

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) for the *Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord* thanks you for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely,

  
Monique Ménard

Director of Education  
Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord

  
Diane Sarrazin-Dubeau

President, SEAC  
Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord

C.C.      Directors of Education of the 71 School Boards  
Special Education Advisory Committees of the 71 School Boards  
Ministry of Education  
Ministry of Children and youth services  
Ministry of Community and Social Services  
Denys Giguère, French-Language, Aboriginal Learning and Research Division  
Denis Filiatrault, One Kids Place



The Association of  
*Chief Psychologists with Ontario School Boards*

Section on Psychology in Education  
**ONTARIO PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION**

February 23, 2018

The Honorable Indira Naidoo-Harris, Minister of Education  
14<sup>th</sup> Floor, Mowat Block, 900 Bay Street  
Toronto ON M7A 1L2 [minister.edu@ontario.ca](mailto:minister.edu@ontario.ca)

Ms. Bonnie Lysyk, Auditor General of Ontario  
20 Dundas Street West, Suite 1530  
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2C2

### **Response to the Ontario Auditor General's 2017 Report regarding psychological services and wait times**

The Association of Chief Psychologists with Ontario School Boards (ACPOSB) and the Ontario Psychological Association's Section on Psychology in Education (OPA SecPE) appreciate the Auditor General's 2017 Report drawing attention to the important issues concerning psychological services in school boards. We would like to contribute to a better understanding of the issues raised, and to addressing these issues more effectively.

The Association of Chief Psychologists with Ontario School Boards represents the leaders of psychological services departments in school boards across Ontario, currently with close to 50 members who represent over 600 psychology professionals in school boards. The Ontario Psychological Association's Section on Psychology in Education membership consists of psychologists and psychological associates<sup>1</sup> involved in psychological services for school age children in Ontario. Both organizations are deeply invested in improving psychological services for Ontario's children and youth, and appreciate the opportunity to provide this input. Below is the Executive Summary of the report findings and the response/input provided. A more detailed explanation of all the issues follows.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **A. Findings from the Report**

#### **Auditor General's 2017 Report: Chapter 3, 3.12**

#### **4.5 Special Education – Inequitable Resource Allocations and Long Wait Times for Services<sup>2</sup> (page 641)**

The main findings of the report are the following: long wait times; increased number of external assessments; varying wait times between schools in the same board.

### **B. Student needs addressed by School Psychology**

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<sup>1</sup> psychologists and psychological associates will be at times referred to as "psychologists" for simplicity

<sup>2</sup> The report is based on collecting data from four Southern Ontario school boards

Both research findings and Ministry directions support a model of school psychology that is beyond the “refer, assess, identify” model, which is outdated and does not meet the needs of students and schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In section C, OPA SecPE and ACPOSB would like to add the relevant information about the role of psychologists in our publicly funded schools.

### **C. The Role of School Psychology**

As described in the *Professional Practice Guidelines for School Psychologists in Ontario*<sup>3</sup>, and based on principles in *Learning for All*<sup>4</sup>, current psychological service provision is based on a pyramidal, multi-tiered prevention/intervention model, whereby the intensity of supports and the levels of intervention are provided based on need, and includes a range of different services.

The Auditor General’s report seems to rely on a “refer, assess, identify” model of school psychology, which is an outdated model. The report implies that

- conducting assessments is the main focus of school psychology
- waiting for a psychological assessment is a barrier for students with special education needs to get formal support (i.e. assessment is required for IPRC)
- psychological assessments are primarily used for identification purposes.

**In the section below we would like to provide additional information to increase the clarity of this issue, including the nature of the “barrier” and the factors behind it.**

#### **1. Accessibility of psychological services**

Access to psychological services varies across district school boards. However, school psychology services are **the only publicly funded psychology services** that are widely available to children and youth in Ontario that can address their educational needs, including psychological/psycho-educational assessments.

#### **2. Supply-demand imbalance in psychology services**

The current supply of school psychology services is not able to keep up with demand for many reasons, including:

- a. Expectations for the range of school psychology services have expanded and are aligned with the changes in education practice in Ontario.
- b. Services are governed by professional regulations (College of Psychologists of Ontario) to ensure high quality services
- c. There is a need for comprehensive assessments that aim to describe the child’s learning profile, help the teacher better understand the child, and provide meaningful educational recommendations.
- d. Requests for services are triaged, and significant severe needs will be addressed as priorities (e.g., those presenting a threat to the student’s own or others’ safety). Because of this triaging, “wait-times” will vary among students, and the “average wait time” can be deceptive.
- e. Inconsistent staffing and support for psychological services by boards.
- f. Demands from outside of Education (by medical doctors, child protection, post-secondary institutions, etc.)

#### **3. Change in roles**

As indicated earlier, and in alignment with the Ministry of Education’s expectations, school psychologists are involved in a broad range of services to support students. However, the paradigm shift from the old model of school psychology (primarily focused on assessment for identification) to the current model including early intervention hasn’t happened in all school boards and schools, resulting in the inappropriate use of psychology resources.

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<sup>3</sup> *Professional Practice Guidelines for School Psychologists in Ontario* (Ontario Psychological Association, 2013)

<sup>4</sup>

## **D. Conclusion**

The report by the Auditor General recommended:

"To ensure all special-needs assessments are completed in a timely and equitable manner, we recommend that school boards:

- establish reasonable timelines for completing psychological, and speech and language assessments;
- have access to all assessments wait lists at the board level and use this information to reassign assessments to specialists who have smaller workloads;
- implement a plan to clear backlogs; and
- track use of external assessments to better gauge demand." (page 643)

In order to be able follow these recommendations, the underlying issues need to be addressed:

- Consistent staffing levels for school psychologists across Ontario will be necessary to ensure fair and equitable access to psychological services to all Ontario students. By ensuring consistent and equitable staffing levels for other professionals (such as guidance and social work staff), effective collaboration between professionals can significantly contribute to the Ministry of Education goals of student well-being, as well as "supporting students in successful education and career/life planning."
- More community based psychological services are needed to address the need for psychological services in the areas of health (including psychological assessments asked for by medical doctors); justice, university and colleges, child protection, disability support, that school psychologists are currently being asked to provide. If other appropriate ministries and community services could support these needs, this would ease the demand for school psychology services, currently funded only by Education.
- In order to address the province-wide shortage of qualified school psychologists, there is a need to purposefully and systematically support graduate training programs (via supporting practicum and residency placements).
- Consolidating the culture of using in-class and in-school early intervention in schools before a full psychological assessment is requested would help target students for full assessment more accurately. In the Ministry of Education's Policy and Program Memorandum No 8 (2014), there are guidelines regarding pre-assessment intervention, assessment and intervention, including the Individual Education Plan, which are applicable for all exceptionalities. With this approach, students truly in need for a Tier 3 intervention would be referred for assessment.

## **FULL RESPONSE**

### **To the Ontario Auditor General's 2017 Report regarding psychological services and wait times**

The Association of Chief Psychologists with Ontario School Boards (ACPOSB) and the Ontario Psychological Association's Section on Psychology in Education (OPA SecPE) appreciate the Auditor General's 2017 Report drawing attention to the important issues concerning psychological services in school boards. We would like to contribute to a better understanding of the issues raised, and to addressing these issues more effectively.

The Association of Chief Psychologists with Ontario School Boards represents the leaders of psychological services departments in school boards across Ontario, currently with close to 50 members who represent over 600 psychology professionals in school boards. The Ontario Psychological Association's Section on Psychology in Education membership consists of psychologists and psychological associates<sup>5</sup> involved in psychological services for school age children in Ontario. Both organizations are deeply invested in improving psychological services for Ontario's children and youth, and appreciate the opportunity to provide this input. Below is the brief summary of the report findings and the response/input provided.

## **A. Findings from the Report**

### **Auditor General's 2017 Report: Chapter 3, 3.12**

#### **4.5 Special Education – Inequitable Resource Allocations and Long Wait Times for Services<sup>6</sup> (page 641)**

"All four boards we visited had lists for special needs students waiting to be assessed or served by professionals in the areas of psychology or speech and language. At all four boards, special-needs students are usually offered preliminary services in the suspected area of need by the classroom teacher in consultation with the specialists before they are formally assessed by the specialists. However, the assessments by specialists provide insight into a student's unique needs that allows the school board to devise a long-term plan for services that best meet the student's needs." (page 641)

The main findings of the report are the following:

1. About a quarter to a third of the students on the wait lists had been waiting for a psychological assessment for over a year, some for longer. "These assessments are used by each board's Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC), which determines whether a student meets the criteria of a specific exceptionality, and recommends the appropriate placement for receiving special-needs supports and services." (page 641)
2. In some cases the number of external psychological assessments increased, possibly "due to parents paying for a private assessment of their child in order to avoid wait times or being able to have the assessment done by a specialist of their choosing." (page 642)
3. "The wait times for specialist assessments can vary significantly based on the school the student attends." (page 643)

## **B. Student needs addressed by School Psychology**

### **1. Research concerning student needs**

Research studies in psychology have consistently indicated that, in addition to academic learning, students' social-emotional well-being and competencies (such as self-awareness and self-understanding, empathy, social relationship skills, etc.), as well as a growth (vs fixed) mindset are critical for mental health and life success, and need to be built and developed from an early age. With a strong sense of who they are, and the understanding that they can always develop and improve their skills (growth mindset), students are better able to be engaged, to successfully plan for their future.

Psychological services in schools have an important role in cultivating students' social-emotional learning, self-awareness/self-understanding and mental health. This is achieved not only by providing comprehensive student assessments, but also by consulting and collaborating with teachers, guidance counsellors and social workers, and by helping teachers understand and support students with varying needs, including those with special education needs.

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<sup>5</sup> psychologists and psychological associates will be at times referred to as "psychologists" for simplicity

<sup>6</sup> The report is based on collecting data from four Southern Ontario school boards

## **2. Ministry of Education response to student needs**

A number of Ministry of Education documents, resources and initiatives are focused on fostering student well-being and mental health<sup>7</sup>. Among the four domains of well-being (cognitive, emotional, social, physical), the importance of skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, cognitive flexibility, understanding, managing and coping with emotions, self-awareness, social relationships, communications) are emphasized. School psychologists are highly qualified mental health professionals, and have an important role to play in all levels of mental health and well-being supports, from promotion to prevention and intervention, at the individual, classroom, school and system level.

The Ministry of Education document<sup>8</sup>, *Creating Pathways to Success*, puts students in the centre of their own learning, viewing them as the architects of their own lives. Students are encouraged to discover who they are, explore opportunities, pursue their passions, and design personal pathways to success." .... "It takes a whole education community – teachers, administrators, students, and parents – as well as the broader community to support students in successful education and career/life planning." (page 7) The program goals described in this document include the goal to "ensure that students develop the knowledge and skills they need to make informed education and career/life choices...." (page 8)

In order to achieve the goals stated in this document, as well as to ensure overall positive mental health for students (as described in *Open Minds, Healthy Minds* and *Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education*), such collaboration is critical. When teachers, guidance counsellors, special education teachers, and psychologists operate in separate silos, it is not only inefficient, but also counterproductive, as students may receive inconsistent messages from the different professionals involved.

In order to facilitate this collaboration, it is important to have a better understanding of the role these professionals play in supporting students.

**OPA SecPE and ACPOSB would like to add the following information about the role of psychologists in our publicly funded schools.**

### **C. The Role of School Psychology**

"School psychologists are integral and important members of the student services team, as well as of the district's organizational structure. School psychologists provide a wide variety of educational and mental health services to school districts, school staff, students, and their families. It is important to note that school psychologists, along with their multidisciplinary team colleagues, can be instrumental in providing services to ensure the best outcome for children and youth facing barriers in learning." (2013 OPA<sup>9</sup>)

Based on principles as described in *Learning for All* (2013, Ministry of Education), psychological service provision is based on a pyramidal, multi-tiered prevention/intervention model, whereby the intensity of supports and the levels of intervention are provided based on need.

The Auditor General's report implies that:

- conducting assessments is the only focus of school psychology. In fact, students, families and teachers are supported by school psychologists in many other ways.

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<sup>7</sup> *Open Minds, Healthy Minds* (2013) , *Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education* (2016), Ministry of Education

<sup>8</sup> *Creating pathways to success: An education and career/life planning program for Ontario schools* (2013) Ministry of Education

<sup>9</sup> *Professional Practice Guidelines for School Psychologists in Ontario* (Ontario Psychological Association, 2013)

- Waiting for a psychological assessment is a barrier for students with special education needs to get formal support (i.e. and assessment is required for IPRC). It is important to note that a) not all students referred for a psychological assessment have special needs, and b) the assessment does not in all cases lead to an IPRC identification. As well, addressing student needs through good teaching for the student is not denied pending an assessment. The Ministry in its documentation indicates that an Individual Educational Plan, as well as Differentiated Instruction, can occur regardless of whether formal assessment or IPRC has taken place.
- access to psychological assessment is primarily used for identification purposes, while, in fact, the purpose of a psychological assessment is to help in better understanding the child's learning profile so that teaching strategies can best be devised. Recommendations from the psychological assessment need to be tied to the development of the IEP.

**In the section below we would like to provide additional information to increase the clarity of this issue, including the nature of the “barrier” and the factors behind it.**

### **1. Accessibility of psychological services**

Access to psychological services varies across district school boards, and does have varying limitations (such as geography: large distances to be covered in northern boards, shortage of psychologists especially in French boards). However, school psychology services are **practically the only publicly funded psychology services** that are widely available to children and youth in Ontario and that can address their educational needs, including psychological/psycho-educational assessments. With the shortages in community based mental health services, school psychologists are often the go-to service providers for these types of services in schools as well. Therefore, school psychology services have critical importance. It is important to note that no other ministry besides the Ministry of Education funds services for psychological assessment on a meaningful scale. However, school psychologists are often expected to address these student needs-related to health, university and college assessments, justice, corrections, child protection, etc., which inevitably leads to a capacity problem. Parents receiving services from community based psychology practitioners in private practice often aims to address this gap.

Currently about 50 district school boards identify that they have psychological services through the listing of the Association of Chief Psychologists With Ontario School Boards. Based on data collected, it is estimated that about 40 thousand school age children and youth receive some form of support through psychological services every year.

### **2. Supply-demand imbalance in psychology services**

The current supply of school psychology services is not able to keep up with demand for many reasons, including:

#### **a. Expectations**

Expectations for the range of school psychology services have expanded and are aligned with the changes in education practice in Ontario. Instead of the main “gatekeeper/ assessor” role psychologists had in the past, psychology professionals in schools now are expected to provide prevention services and support at the classroom level; early intervention to students at risk; as well as intervention to support students with significant needs (assessment, diagnosis, intervention, mental health counselling). At the same time, the number of psychology professionals in schools has not increased, and the demand for assessments has not decreased, - and, in fact, may have increased. (For example, many school boards require a psychological assessment for the identification of certain categories of exceptionality.)

#### **b. Professional regulations to ensure high quality services**

Psychoeducational/psychological assessments can only be completed by (or under the supervision of) **a Psychologist or Psychological Associate, registered by the College of Psychologists of Ontario**. There is a province-wide chronic shortage of such professionals. Newly hired professionals who replace retirees are most often new to the profession and require (as per College of Psychologists

regulations) a year or longer professional supervision by senior psychologists, which is time consuming and impacts on the time required for each assessment completed.

In Ontario, diagnosis is a controlled act, and the only school-based professionals who can make diagnoses (such as Learning Disability, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Mood Disorder, etc.) are registered psychologists/psychological associates. It is also important to recognize that these diagnoses are based on comprehensive evaluations of a student's functioning, often including standardized testing of intellectual, academic and adaptive functioning. Such measures are an integral part of psychological assessment, and imperative to ensure an accurate and meaningful diagnosis.

**c. Need for comprehensive assessments**

In addition to providing information about the strengths and needs of the student to support IPRC decision-making, the purpose of the psychoeducational/ psychological assessment is to describe the child's learning profile, help the teacher better understand the child and provide meaningful educational recommendations. This information is a critical component of the student's self-understanding, contributing to the quest "Who am I?" and "Who do I want to become?" as described in *Creating Pathways to Success*. Therefore, **assessments consist of thorough and in-depth collection and interpretation of test results and other data**. Such an assessment may take 20 to 30 hours (including feedback sessions and report-writing). Again, it is important to recognize that this current practice is different from previous practice, when school psychology had more of a gatekeeping role; that is, when the main purpose of the assessment was to establish whether or not the student met identification criteria for an exceptionality.

**d. Wait-times for assessments**

Wait- times vary by the severity of student need, as well as board by board. Requests for services are triaged, and significant severe needs will be addressed as priorities (e.g., those presenting a threat to the student's own or others' safety). Because of this triaging, wait-times will vary among students, and the average wait time can be deceptive. In addition, "wait lists" are handled and created differently by boards, and due to the different methods used, these are often not comparable.

**e. Inconsistent staffing and support by boards**

School boards are not mandated to have Psychological Services, and the availability of trained psychologists, as well as psychologist-to-student ratio, varies greatly among boards and depends on the individual board's priorities at any given time. In most cases, this ratio is far below the recommended 1:1000 students ratio indicated in the *Professional Practice Guidelines for School Psychologists in Ontario*<sup>10</sup>. In the 2017 People for Education survey, "61 % of elementary principals and 50% of secondary principals report insufficient access to psychologists to meet the needs of their students."<sup>11</sup> Even with the increasing demand for more psychology services, boards may opt to use their funding to increase other types of services (e.g. social work, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, etc.). When boards' priorities change, psychology services often become targets of cutbacks, either in personnel, or in other supports (i.e. funds for test equipment, technology, case management systems, etc.), or both. This inevitably has an impact on efficiency and productivity of psychology staff.

**f. Demands from outside of Education**

Currently, school psychologists often receive requests by community services to conduct a psychological assessment on a student, for reasons outside of educational programming. For example,

<sup>10</sup> Ontario Psychological Association, 2013

<sup>11</sup> People for Education – Annual report 2017, page 6

occasionally a medical doctor will request that the school psychologist provide an assessment to aid the medical practitioner in their diagnosis. As well, assessments are often requested by Developmental Services Ontario to support after-school services. Assessments are also sometimes asked to facilitate interventions in a Day Treatment program. School psychologists are often asked to provide psychological assessments to help with the provision of accommodations in college or university. All of these outside requests put a burden on the school psychologist, who is responsible for providing assessments for the students to help with programming while they are in the boards.

### **3. Change in roles**

As indicated earlier, and in alignment with the Ministry of Education's expectations (as described in *Learning for All*), in addition to conducting assessments, school psychologists are involved in a broad range of services to support students:

- Primary (Tier 1) level: broad scale universal consultative, preventative and proactive interventions are provided to entire schools or classrooms, such as whole class programs (e.g. building resilience, healthy relationships and positive mental health); and the provision of professional development and training to school staff, students and parents on topics such as mental health, special education needs, etc.
- Secondary (Tier 2) level: targeted consultation, prevention and intervention services are provided to at-risk groups or individuals, such as the provision of needs-based group intervention (e.g., anxiety reduction, anger management, social skills development), consultation to teachers and school staff, crisis response, and involvement in threat and risk assessment teams.
- Tertiary (Tier 3) level: intensive intervention and remediation efforts are tailored to individuals with significant needs. These may include psychological assessment and assessment based counselling (self-understanding, self-awareness, self-advocacy); behavioural assessment and programming, and development of positive behaviour support plans and safety plans; provision of individual counselling/intervention, etc.

In some school boards and in many schools, the paradigm shift from the past to current model of school psychology to include pre-assessment early intervention hasn't happened. Through the joint Ministry of Education-OPA "*Student assessment project*" (2007-09), boards established successful promising practices for pre-assessment early intervention, using psychological assessments as next steps only when these early interventions were not effective. However, this approach did not survive in many schools, where an assessment is often required before any help/intervention can be provided to a student.

Some other obstacles to implementing successful early interventions:

- a. More capacity building is required for regular classroom teachers to provide pre-assessment accommodations and support students in the regular class.
- b. Early intervention programs for struggling students need to be more readily available and applicable to schools as pre-assessment interventions.

### **D. Conclusion**

The report by the Auditor General recommended:

"To ensure all special-needs assessments are completed in a timely and equitable manner, we recommend that school boards:

- establish reasonable timelines for completing psychological, and speech and language assessments;

- have access to all assessments wait lists at the board level and use this information to reassign assessments to specialists who have smaller workloads;
- implement a plan to clear backlogs; and
- track use of external assessments to better gauge demand." (page 643)

**In order to be able follow these recommendations, some of the underlying issues need to be addressed.**

- Consistent staffing levels for school psychologists across Ontario will be necessary to ensure fair and equitable access to psychological services to all Ontario students. By ensuring consistent and equitable staffing levels for other professionals (such as guidance and social work staff), effective collaboration between professionals can significantly contribute to the Ministry of Education goals of student well-being, as well as "supporting students in successful education and career/life planning."
- Additionally, more community based psychological services are needed to address the need for psychological services in the areas of health (including psychological assessments asked for by medical doctors); justice, university and colleges, child protection, disability support, that school psychologists are currently being asked to provide. If other appropriate ministries and community services could support these needs, this would ease the demand for school psychology services, currently funded only by Education.
- Furthermore, in order to address the province-wide shortage of qualified school psychologists, there is a need to purposefully and systematically support graduate training programs (via supporting practicum and residency placements).
- Consolidating the culture of using in-class and in-school early intervention in schools before a full psychological assessment is requested would help target students for full assessment more accurately. In the Ministry of Education's Policy and Program Memorandum No 8 (2014), in addition to the new definition of the Learning Disability exceptionality, there are guidelines regarding pre-assessment intervention, assessment and intervention, including the Individual Education Plan, which are applicable for all exceptionalities. With this approach, students truly in need for a Tier 3 intervention would be referred for assessment.

Respectfully submitted, on behalf of the Association of Chief Psychologists with Ontario School Boards (ACPOSB) and the Ontario Psychological Association Section on Psychology in Education (OPA SecPE),



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