



Special Education  
Annual Report

2014-15

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# Introduction

The Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board (BHNCDSD) Special Education Department is committed to every student in our school district. We strive to inspire and support learning by assisting in creating safe, healthy, inclusive and engaging Catholic learning environments. Our mission is to provide opportunities for challenge and choice as we prepare all of our students for success in life.

The Annual Report was compiled from information provided by members of the Special Education Department and community partners. It has been reviewed and presented for approval to the BHNCDSD Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) on June 17, 2015 and to the Board of Trustees on June 23, 2015. The Annual Report will be submitted to the Ministry of Education by July 1, 2015 and posted on the Board website.



## Special Education Plan

In accordance with Regulation 306, each school board is required to prepare and approve a report on the special education programs and services provided by the board and to submit it to the Ministry. Each board is required to maintain a Special Education Plan, review it annually, amend it as needed to meet the current needs of students, and submit any amendments to the Ministry for review.

This year, the Special Education Plan has been reviewed and updated and will be submitted to SEAC and the Board of Trustees in September 2015 for approval. The plan will then be sent to the Ministry of Education for review. The plan will be available on the Board website on October 1, 2015.

## Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

In the past school year, the BHNCDSD SEAC initiated a campaign to invite new community members to join SEAC. The results have been positive; however, SEAC will continue to seek additional community members in 2015-16. The membership of SEAC for 2014-15 was as follows:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Dennis Blake (Sept. – Nov.)	Trustee Representative
Carol Luciani (Dec. – June)	Trustee Representative
Leslie Telfer	Superintendent of Education
Catherine Custodio	Haldimand-Norfolk Children's Aid Society

Colleen Demarest	Parent Representative (Norfolk)
Krista Emmerson	Parents for Children’s Mental Health
Jill Esposto	Brant Family and Children’s Services
Christine Pearce	Woodview Mental Health and Autism Services
Carmen McDermid	Student Achievement Lead, Special Education – BHNCDSD
Tracey Taylor	Development Services Manager, H-N REACH
Paul Sanderson	Contact Brant
Heather Shisler	Lansdowne Children’s Centre
Lisa Stockmans	Parent Representative (Norfolk)
Teresa Westergaard-Hager	Norfolk Association for Community Living

Throughout this past school year, representatives from various community agencies presented an overview of the mandate of their agencies. This will continue in 2015-16 as new members will have the opportunity to present information on their respective agencies.

The 2014-15 SEAC heard presentations on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), the Gifted Program, Assistive Technology, Transition Plans, the Student Work Study Teacher (SWST) and Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) Partnership, the Ontario Special Needs Strategy, and Camp Unity. The Committee also heard presentations from the Board’s Speech Pathologists, Haldimand-Norfolk Children’s Aid Society, and had the opportunity to attend a Student Achievement Leadership Training (SALT) session.

**The 2014-15 SEAC meeting schedule was as follows:**

<b>2014-15 SEAC Meeting Schedule</b>	
September 10, 2014	February 18, 2015
October 8, 2014	March 11, 2015
November 5, 2014	April 8, 2015
December 3, 2014	May 20, 2015
January 14, 2015	June 17, 2015

## Programs and Services

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### System Special Education Resource Teachers (SSERTs)

The four SSERTs have been assigned to elementary and secondary schools to support and enhance student achievement. Their role is to collaborate with school teams and community agencies, building capacity among elementary and secondary teachers, SERTs, Educational Assistants and parents by providing in-services within the schools and in the community (Parents as Partners, Individual Education Plan, Identification Placement Review Committee process). The focus this year has been to better understand the learner by exploring student profiles, the student with a learning disability and their learning profile, assessment, and evaluation (Hawaii Early Learning Profile, Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test, Structured Learning).

The SSERTs assist in the development of student profiles through assessment, observations and program recommendations. The assessment process includes an Ontario Student Record (OSR) search, test administration, dialogue with school team, data collection, consultation with Board Psychologist, preparation and organization of results and recommendations through written report, presentation and sharing of the results with school team and parents. The complete process takes up to 10 hours per assessment. This valuable information could result in the development of an Individual Education Plan and possibly the formal identification of the student (IPRC). The SSERT reviews and supports the school team in preparing IPRC paperwork and packages. This process ensures appropriate placement and student success.

Transitioning is an area of focus for this team. Assistance is provided when planning and implementing entry into school for students with high needs, as well as transitioning into secondary school and beyond. This liaison with community agencies, school teams and parents helps to ensure a seamless transition for students with specific needs.

Through resource creation and information sharing, school teams have been supported in building capacity, maintaining consistency, and facilitating communication with parents. This facilitation contributes to the ongoing building of parental confidence in our Board.

Assessments	Gifted Screens	IPRCs (school or system level)	SEA Support Letters granted	Case Conferences
207	37	249	9	131

**Student Achievement Leadership Training Presentation (SALT)**

**LD ... Learning Abled not Disabled**

This professional development opportunity focused on students with a learning disability and both the personalization and precision which is required in instruction to allow the student to reach their highest potential. Enhancing teacher practices and strengthening teachers’ sense of efficiency with respect to better understanding a student with a learning disability was the purpose of the presentation. This interactive workshop provided background information to promote an understanding of the characteristics of the student with a learning disability (bell curve), and further developed awareness of accommodations, modifications and alternative programming, strategies that support the student (definition from the curriculum planner and brainstorming), and effective test format development (Creating Good Tests). Technology is essential for many students with a learning disability; therefore, math software and on-line resources to support students were shared. Participants were also introduced to the new “Learning Profile”, a tool designed to promote self-advocacy and voice for a student with a learning disability. During conferencing with the System SERT, students gain a better understanding of their strengths and needs in order to advocate for specific accommodations as outlined on the Individual Education Plan.

This professional learning opportunity allowed for the participants to learn about integrating technology in their math lessons to accommodate our Learning Disabled student population.

Participants learned about:

- making accommodations for test taking
- the use of virtual manipulatives as an accommodation and a source for acquiring them
- strategies using video and audio recordings in math class

Participants also were briefed on digital resources available to them to help with math instruction and learning.

## **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) – A Growth Mindset, Reframing Perceptions**

Over 40 secondary teachers were selected to attend a half-day workshop to gain a better understanding of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Teachers were selected based on having a student in their class (credit bearing course) with a confirmed diagnosis of FASD. Teachers learned that students with this diagnosis have permanent brain damage and, therefore, learning, behaviour, memory and social skills are affected. Participants were provided with evidence-based classroom strategies, as well as resources, in order to support the students' deficits. Time was permitted for each school team to discuss the student and apply their new learning to ensure a consistent management plan. Teachers reported that the knowledge gained from the workshop reframed their perception of their student's profile and shifted their thinking and mindset.

## **Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

There are currently 44 Hard of Hearing students and 65 students with Central Auditory Processing / Auditory Processing Disorder (CAP/APD) in the Board.

### **Services provided this past school year included:**

- Provided a hearing awareness workshop for teachers, EAs and SERTs that are involved with Hard of Hearing students.
- Hearing awareness presentations in classrooms.
- Acquisition of Special Equipment Amount (SEA) and materials to support students who are Hard of Hearing and have CAP difficulties.
- Monitor and trouble shoot such equipment.
- Performed regular checks on ear molds, hearing aids and cochlear implants, and FM systems.
- Provided in-services for the specialized equipment.
- Repaired SEA equipment, as required.
- Consulted on students' IEPs.
- Provided and installed noise reducing strategies for the classroom environment.
- Attended case conferences, team meetings, IPRCs, and parent interviews.
- Acted as a liaison, support and referral source for families and other agencies.
- Interpreted audio logical reports.
- Provided accommodations/modifications and programming strategies.
- Supported students with pre/post teaching.
- Assisted students and families in connecting and networking.

## 2014-15 Hearing Awareness Workshop: Building Capacity for Teachers, Educational Assistants and SERTs

This workshop is designed for teachers, educational assistants, ECEs and SERTs with mainstreamed hard of hearing students. There were nine participants who experienced the effects of a mild hearing loss while performing a specific academic task common in many classrooms. The participants read an audiogram and understood the basic implications for language development and its impact on academic and social success. The participants discussed a variety of strategies to address the language and overall communication needs for hard of hearing students. The participants had an opportunity to troubleshoot basic difficulties with hearing aids. They were shown how FM systems and cochlear implants function.

## Vision Impairment

During the 2014-15 school year, individualized orientation and mobility programming was implemented for 30 students in 16 different schools. The primary role of the orientation and mobility educational assistant includes teaching students who are blind or partially sighted the necessary skills to travel safely, efficiently, gracefully and independently, with or without a mobility device, in any environment. Further involvement of the orientation and mobility educational assistant includes observations, consultation with school staff, and goal setting for Individualized Education Plans. Direct one-on-one orientation and mobility training was also provided for numerous students, educational assistants, early childhood educators and teachers. Peer awareness presentations using vision simulators were also delivered in several schools.

Additional resources for teachers, support staff, and parents were provided including documents from CNIB, daily physical activity adaptations, individualized orientation and mobility family booklets, and an environmental accessibility checklist.

The role of the orientation and mobility educational assistant also includes facilitating collaboration between service providers, schools, community organizations, and vision rehabilitation specialists. As a result, six new referrals to The W. Ross Macdonald School were submitted to complete a functional vision assessment. The objective of the assessment is to build teacher capacity when instructing students who are blind or partially sighted. Furthermore, in collaboration with school staff, the orientation and mobility educational assistant implements accessibility standards. Necessary changes to the physical and social environment were guided by the principles of universal design for the built environment. The implemented changes included marking stairways, creating accessible cafeterias, and addressing potential travel hazards.

This year, the St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre also had the privilege to host the fourth annual orientation and mobility networking day for orientation and mobility instructors across the province to collaborate and share resources.

# Special Equipment Amount (SEA)

## Overview of SEA Support

At the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board, students with special needs are supported with equipment via the SEA process. Recommendations for special equipment are forwarded on behalf of students to the SEA team who then review and process each claim, organize recommended items (including specialized equipment outside of technology) and then arrange for, and/or provide the necessary training.

All items for SEA are ordered through the SEA team who then coordinate with the Information Technology Department to ensure the needed hardware and software are installed. The SEA team also reviews emerging technologies and their application to special needs students.

The SEA team is conscious of the amount of technology and specialized equipment in the system and is at all times looking to utilize efficiencies in the system, including the recycling of equipment. The SEA team has created and maintains a database of equipment which can be referenced when items for students are needed. This helps in terms of reducing costs and increasing the speed of SEA claim processing. The team has also reached out to our community partners to inform them that surplus SEA equipment exists in our system and they are welcome to view and recommend this unassigned equipment to students under their care in our system. This has helped both financially and in terms of efficiency due to the fact that equipment does not have to be ordered or purchased for students in need. It need only be transferred.

## Training Services

The Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board SEA team has endeavoured to build capacity among teachers and students in the area of assistive technology. The philosophy that assistive technology is good for all, but essential for some, is vigorously employed here. All students requiring assistive technology are trained alongside their teacher(s) and classmates. This method allows for capacity building in our schools in that a “room full of experts” can help each other to use the technology.

To ensure understanding, a two-step training process is used. The first step includes all parties (teachers, students, educational assistants and parents) where a general training of software use is provided. Step two in the process involves an individual training session(s) which takes place within two weeks of the first session. The second session involves reviewing the basics previously learned and then focusing on achieving student learning expectations within the context of the Individual Education Plan.

## Special Equipment Amount Claims

There have been 88 SEA claims processed and implemented during the 2014-15 SEA year. These include students with assistive technology requirements, deaf and hard-of-hearing needs, and students who require specialized equipment (such as standing frames, bikes, chairs, etc.)

Students who received assistive technology were trained along with their classmates and teachers. This year 650 students have been trained in the use of Text-to-Speech ((Kurzweil) software. Additionally, 25 teachers and 10 educational assistants were trained in Kurzweil alongside their students. Furthermore, 29 students were trained in Speech-to-Text (Dragon, Talk Typer and Dictation.io software. This year 367 students were trained in Word Prediction (Word Q) and Graphic Organizer software (Smart Ideas), as well as 14 teachers and three educational assistants.



The table below details the Kurzweil training completed:

Grade	School	Students Trained	Teachers Trained	EAs Trained
5	St. Theresa	27	1	1
6	St. Theresa	29	1	
7	Our Lady of LaSalette	28	1	
4	Our Lady of LaSalette	24	1	1
5	Notre Dame Caledonia	33	1	1
3	Notre Dame Caledonia	20	1	
8	Sacred Heart, Paris	31	1	
4	Sacred Heart, Paris	29	1	1
4	Sacred Heart, Paris	23	1	
3	St. Patrick's, Caledonia	26	1	1
5	St. Cecilia's	30	1	
8	St. Basil	28	1	
4	Sacred Heart, Langton	29	1	1
7	Sacred Heart, Langton	36	1	
4	Sacred Heart, Langton	28	1	
6	St. Leo	30	1	1
5	Holy Cross	24	1	1
4	Holy Cross	22	1	
7	Our Lady of Providence	30	1	
8	Christ the King	27	1	
3	Christ the King	17	1	1
3	St. Joseph's	21	1	
6	St. Michael's, Dunnville	27	1	1
4	Jean Vanier	24	2	
6	St. Pius X	1		
5	St. Pius X	1		
7	St. Michael's, Walsh	1		
9	St. Mary Brantford	1		
8	Our Lady of Providence	1		
7	Sacred Heart, Paris	1		
8	Sacred Heart, Langton	1		
Totals		650	25	10

**Speech to Text (Dragon/Talk Typer, Dictation.io) training completed:**

Grade	School	Students Trained
7	St. Gabriel	1
4 & 7	Our Lady of LaSalette	2
4,7 & 8	Sacred Heart, Paris	3
3	Notre Dame, Caledonia	1
5	St. Cecilia's	2
3,7 & 8	St. Basil	3
4 & 7	Sacred Heart, Langton	2
6	St. Leo	1
6	Blessed Sacrament	1
7 & 8	Our Lady of Providence	5
4 & 5	Holy Cross	2
7	Resurrection	1
7 & 8	St. Joseph 's	2
5 & 6	St. Peter	2
6	St. Frances Cabrini	1
Total		29

**Word Prediction (Word Q) and Graphic Organizer (Smart Ideas) training completed:**

Grade	School	Students Trained	Teachers Trained	EAs Trained
4	Our Lady of LaSalette	24	1	
5	St. Cecilia's	30	1	
6	St. Leo	30	1	1
3	St. Basil	17	1	1
4	Notre Dame, Caledonia	27	1	
7	Our Lady of Providence	30	1	
4	Holy Cross	22	1	
4	Sacred Heart, Paris	29	1	
6	St. Theresa	27	1	
8	Christ the King	27	1	
3	Christ the King	17	1	1

Grade	School	Students Trained	Teachers Trained	EAs Trained
3	St. Joseph's	21	1	
7	St. Joseph's	37	1	
6	St. Michael's, Dunnville	27	1	
8	St. Basil	1		
7	Our Lady of Providence	1		
Totals		367	14	3

## Applied Behaviour Analysis Program Services

During the 2014-15 school year, the Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Program Lead carried a caseload of 75 students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This included four students involved in the Connections for Students model. The role of the Lead included classroom observations, consultation with school staff to problem solve and troubleshoot, assist with goal setting for Individual Education Plans, provision of strategies, and to act as a liaison between schools and community agencies. As a member of the transition team for the Connections Students, support was provided to principals, teachers and families during transition to school, and following discharge from Intensive Behavioural Intervention programs.

Professional development provided to staff included a half-day training session to educational assistants on the use of ABA strategies in the classroom. Further professional development was provided to 170 elementary classroom teachers and Early Childhood Educators on ASD, ABA principles and strategies, and transition planning. Peer awareness presentations about ASD were given in several students' classrooms.

Membership on the ABA Networking Group for the South West Region and attendance at a provincial ABA Learning Day were areas of professional development for the role of ABA Program Lead. Committee involvement for the ABA Program Lead included the Local Autism Implementation Committee at Haldimand-Norfolk REACH, the Hamilton-Niagara Regional Autism Intervention Program (HNRAIP) Education Committee and the HNRAIP Regional Advisory Committee.

### Applied Behaviour Analysis In-Services – April 28, 30, May 1, 2015

Training was provided to 170 elementary teachers and Early Childhood Educators during six half-day sessions. Participating staff included those who currently have a student with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in their classroom, as well as staff who are projected to receive students with ASD in 2015-16. Information was provided on ASD, Applied Behaviour Analysis principles and strategies, Ministry of Education requirements of Policy Program Memorandums 140 and 156, and transition planning.

# Gifted Education

## Gifted Supplementary Modules

Gifted Supplementary Modules were offered through Special Education Services to provide opportunities and challenges in order to extend learning and leadership skills of those students identified as Intellectual: Giftedness. The modules were created to enhance classroom curriculum. Students from Grades 4 to 8 were brought together to experience extended learning on a variety of topics.

Participation in the modules promoted higher level thinking, problem solving, collaboration, leadership and creativity. It was evident that these students enjoyed the many learning opportunities and applied their skills to the modules in an extraordinary way.

Students attended designated modules including:

Grade	Participants	Total Sessions	Supplementary Gifted Modules 2014-15
4	22 students	7	'Young Authors'
			Academic Challenges, Windsor Math Contest
			Team Building - Dancing Creek
5	20 students	7	Robotics - creating robots, Toyota tour
			'Science Matters'
			Scientist in Schools - Flight and Circuits
			Academic Challenges, Windsor Math Contest
6	17 students	7	Team Building - Chicopee Leadership Program
			Toronto Film Festival - 'Let's Make a Movie'
			'Science Matters'
			Scientist in the School - Flight and Circuits
			Academic Challenges, Windsor Math Contest
7	20 students	7	Team Building - Chicopee Leadership Program
			Altitude Program (MAC)
			Technology (Computer Programming), and Mathematics
8	15 students	7	'Float Your Boat' - Skills Ontario
			Altitude Program (MAC)
			Technology (Computer Programming), and Mathematics
			'Float Your Boat' - Skills Ontario
Total	94 students		Math On-Line Challenges (D2L)
	22 students		Confirmed Students for 2015-16

### **'Toy Story' Team Advance to the Provincials (Skills Ontario Competition)**

The Skills Ontario Cardboard Boat Races provide the opportunity for intermediate students in Ontario to test their math and technology skills in an exciting and competitive environment. At the Regionals, the team members representing the 'Toy Story Team' advanced to the Provincial Competition. Team members included Thomas Dubois, Hannah Slik, Ethan Dobrowolski and Sophia Polillo.

The Provincials were hosted in Waterloo on March 4, 2015. Congratulations to the 'Toy Story Team' for their stellar representation and enthusiasm in this event. This year, the students also had the opportunity to meet Rick Mercer and were televised throughout the day for the Mercer Report.

Congratulations to all teams that participated in this event!



## Speech and Language Services

The Speech-Language Pathologist Team has provided the following support services to students and staff of the Board during 2014-15:

- Assessment (97 students) and consultation (76 students) for students presenting with a variety of communication challenges including non-verbal students and students with reduced understanding and/or expression of language (i.e., vocabulary, concepts, grammar, social communication, etc.), early literacy, speech sound production difficulties, voice and nasality concerns, and stuttering difficulties.
- Individualized home and/or class programming suggestions including direct demonstration.
- Initiation of referrals to outside agencies (CCAC, TAC, Audiologist, ENT, Cleft Lip and Palate Team).
- Management of students involved with outside agencies for speech and language services including:
  - Brant and Haldimand-Norfolk Preschool Speech and Language Programs
  - HNHB and SW Community Care Access Centres (CCAC)
  - Technology Access Clinic (TAC)

- Participation in Entry to School Case Conferences for students transitioning into the school board.
- Recommendations for Specialized Equipment Amount (SEA), as needed.
- Collaboration with Speech-Language Pathologists through involvement with the Association of Chief Speech-Language Pathologists in Ontario School Boards (7 meetings).
- Involvement in the Special Needs Strategy, including the Coordinated Service Planning and Integrated Delivery of Rehabilitation Services (1/2 day bi-weekly starting in October).
- Collaboration with community partners on early literacy current best practices.
- Trained in PECS Level 1 and Learning Language and Loving It.
- In-services to Special Education Resource Teachers on Oral Language, Phonological Awareness and Vocabulary.
- In-services to Educational Assistants on Phonological Awareness.
- In-service to community on Oral Language through Working Together Symposium.

## Behaviour Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT)

The Behaviour SERT co-teaches and co-learns alongside the classroom teacher to establish the needs of students in the classroom in order for them to work at a level appropriate to their abilities and needs. The role of the Behaviour SERT has been to build capacity among staff and students in the area of self-regulation. The evidence-based strategies from the 'Tools for Life Relationship-Building Solutions' along with 'The Zones of Regulation' are resources introduced to all elementary schools. The Behaviour SERT introduces the strategies from these programs/resources which are designed to offer a common language for students to assist them in developing relationship-building solutions. 'Tools for Life' identifies expectations that complement curriculum expectations and assessment strategies. 'The Zones of Regulation' resource provides strategies to teach students to become more aware of, and independent in controlling their emotions and impulses, managing their sensory needs, and improving their ability to problem solving conflicts.

The Behaviour SERT collects meaningful, raw, observational data that is then reviewed, shared and discussed. The purpose of this data is to determine the level of intervention specific to the student's needs in order for him/her to gain access to opportunities for achieving self-regulation. One of the key aspects is for students to be able to self-assess their own learning. Hence, encouraging students to take an active role in the learning process and evaluate their levels of understanding, personal interests and types of strategies used to self-regulate their social-emotional learning.

All teachers are expected to evaluate each student's achievement of learning skills for each reporting period. Each of the strategies introduced are directly related to one or more learning skill and both the Tools for Life and The Zones of Regulation strategies are designed for teachers to easily assess, evaluate and report student progress.

### Direct Classroom Services provided by the Behaviour SERT

To date, the Behaviour SERT has implemented 'The Tools for Life' strategies across the system in:

All 29 Elementary Schools	944 students	42 teachers	9 ECEs	12 EAs
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The criteria to receive Behaviour SERT support in the 2014-15 school year was based on the total number of agency and/or school referrals requesting support.

The Tools for Life and The Zones of Regulation strategies have been intensively implemented in:

4 Elementary Schools	14 teachers	7 ECEs	10 EAs
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### System support provided by the Behaviour SERT

- Tools for Life and The Zones of Regulation presentations in classrooms
- Observe, reflect, assess and share raw observational data with classroom teachers and school principals
- Provide a working and sharing workshop for ECEs in specific schools
- Provide an informational workshop, (including a make and take opportunity) about Tools for Life strategies for EAs on Professional Development days
- Presentation and roll out of The Zones of Regulation strategies and visuals to school SERTs at Community of Practice Meetings
- Build teacher capacity (modeling, common language)
- Providing self-regulation visuals
- Providing classroom management suggestions around self-regulation
- Presentation and development of 'cooling zones' in the classroom
- Attend case conferences, team meeting and parent meetings when requested
- Provide accommodations/modifications and programming strategies for exceptional students
- Support students in the classroom struggling with self-regulation

## Professional Development

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### Community of Practice Meetings

The 2014-15 academic school year saw 34 Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs) and three Secondary Special Education Department Heads participate in six Community of Practice (COP) meetings to enhance teacher practice and to further support student achievement.

Key topics covered included effective Individual Education Plan (IEP) development and key messaging with parents, implementing individualized numeracy and literacy strategies including Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA) next steps, designing incentive/rewards programs, exploration of secondary pathways, and examination of system supports including Mental Health Lead, Social Workers, Child and Youth Workers, Behaviour SERT, ROKS (Reaching Out to Kids in Schools) workers, MHANs (Mental Health Nurses) and community supports.

As part of the Board's Mental Health Strategic Plan, SERTs and Department Heads were among those who received Safe Talk training. This training better prepared them to be able to identify persons having thoughts of suicide and to be able to connect them to suicide first aid resources. SERTs also received training on the Tools for Life program which is a relationship-building solutions program designed for children and adults using common language, strategies and tools to help students develop resiliency.

## New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP)

The NTIP Special Education session was offered to further build teacher capacity in special education and to increase an understanding of student profiles. The focus of the session included exceptionality profiles, writing effective Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and an overview of the roles of the school team and system level supports. Improving the confidence level of new teachers in their ability to address special education needs in their classroom was the key focus for the day.

## Educational Assistants' Professional Development

All elementary and secondary educational assistants had an opportunity to participate in Professional Development days throughout the school year. Topics were chosen based on recommendations to support their own professional development and to provide support with respect to meeting the unique needs of the students with whom they work.

### Professional Development included:

#### **ABA Strategies**

Applied Behaviour Analysis strategies are effective in helping to understand and change behaviour. This workshop provided an overview of ABA principles and how they look within the classroom.

#### **Tracking**

Tracking is an important part of monitoring and reporting on student's progress with respect to IEP expectations. This workshop reviewed the Do's and Don'ts of tracking, and reinforced the link between the IEP and manageable tracking.

#### **Phonological Awareness**

Phonological Awareness is the understanding that language is made up of smaller parts (i.e., words, syllables, sounds). This workshop provided participants with an understanding of Phonological Awareness, the impact on literacy, as well as providing hands-on activities/techniques that can be used with students in the classroom.

#### **Self-Regulation**

What is self-regulation and the importance of self-regulation, particularly in the early years, was discussed in this workshop along with the philosophy and evidence to support the importance of it. How to develop self-regulation in the classroom using evidence based programs was discussed. There was also an opportunity to develop items to take back to schools, ready to use in setting up a 'cooling zone' in classrooms.



### **A Growth Mindset: Reframing Perceptions about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)**

This interactive workshop examined the profile of a student diagnosed with FASD. Participants gained a better understanding of how FASD is diagnosed; the impact of FASD on learning; and strategies that we can be used to help these students be more successful. Participants grew in their mindset of FASD as many misconceptions of this disorder were dispelled.

### **Exploring Information Technology**

The use of technology is ever increasing and ever present in our school system today. This session explored many of the tools and processes available. They explored: the Ontario Educational Resource Bank (OERB), how to download videos, how to search the web using google and the basics of the new email system exploring the portal. Participants had the opportunity to learn and explore Desire 2 Learn and Destination Reading.

### **Yoga**

Yoga helps one to be healthier in body, mind and spirit. The benefits apply to adults and children alike. Benefits for all include; reducing stress and tension, boosting self-esteem, improving concentration as well as creating a sense of calm and well-being. In this workshop EAs were immersed in a climate of playful experiential learning! Together they explored creative games and activities, breathing practices, pocket poses, chanting, musical movements and children's yoga flows appropriate for self-practice and/or for working with children.

### **First Aid**

Participants were trained in the basic CPR, First Aid and Defibrillator certification for the work place. The training provides knowledge and confidence to effectively manage an emergency situation.

### **Nonviolent Crisis Intervention**

The Nonviolent Crisis Intervention program is considered the worldwide standard for crisis prevention and intervention training. The program focuses on the safe management of disruptive and assaultive behaviour. Training is provided in preventive techniques to assist with de-escalating acting-out behaviour. The core of the program is learning how to provide for the Care, Welfare, Safety, and Security of all those who are involved in a crisis situation. EAs learn team intervention strategies and techniques as well as physical control and restraint positions to be implemented when physical control is necessary as a last resort due to an individual's dangerous behaviour.

## **Educational Assistants' Lending Library**

The Educational Assistant Resource Library is operated out of St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre. Materials are acquired on a regular basis, based on requests from Educational Assistants, and on needs arising from areas of system focus. At the current time, approximately 230 items are available. Items range from professional reading to children's books, toys and games. During the 2014-15 school year, more than 80 items were borrowed by Educational Assistants and Special Education Resource Teachers.

# Special Projects

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## Learning Upgrade Project 2014-15

Learning Upgrade offered 20 free licenses per school for the 2014-15 school year. The Special Education Department purchased licenses centrally for schools. Special Education Resource Teachers were asked to send in the number of licenses they were requesting for their school - through this process, 120 licenses were ordered. Accounts were created for 120 students in our board, with the licenses distributed at the Special Education Community of Practice meeting on January 15, 2015. The official launch date was January 16, 2015.

### **The Breakdown of the Data**

- There are 120 individual student licences issued across 26 elementary schools. (Jean Vanier ordered 20 of their own licences, which is not included in this data.)
- 53 of these licences have been assigned Reading Upgrade only.
- 51 of these licences have been assigned a Math Upgrade licence only.
- 16 of these licences have been assigned both a Reading Upgrade and a Math Upgrade licence.
- The Math Upgrade has nine different courses, a course for each grade from Grades 1-8 and a Review course. The school team decided what grade level course they want each of their students in.
- The licences were issued to students between Grades 2-8.

There are five teacher whiteboard licenses issued. The whiteboard licenses are designed for teachers to use for whole class instruction.

- The three elementary transition class each have their own whiteboard licence.
- The two secondary community living classes each have their own whiteboard licences.

All licenses expire at the end of this school year.

## Transitioning into School (Kindergarten/ELKP)

We recognize how critical the transition into Kindergarten is for many of our young students who have special needs. The partnership between parents and agencies can assist with getting to 'know our learners' and further promote a seamless transition. This process was enhanced by the following initiatives:

### **Entry into School Meetings with Community Agencies**

'Entry into School' meetings were held at Haldimand-Norfolk REACH (seven students presented) and Lansdowne Children's Centre (LCC – 10 students presented and two flagged students) in February 2015. With parental consent, the agencies provided valuable information regarding the new students entering our system with whom they have concerns. The resource teachers provided student background, strengths and needs, agency involvement (i.e., speech, occupational therapy, physiotherapy), diagnosis (if applicable), and a report summary of helpful information and contacts. The Student Achievement Lead for Special Education and System Special Education Resource Teachers attended and dialogued about each student to gain a better understanding of their profile and to do some initial transition planning.

## **‘Parents as Partners’ – Community Connections**

The Parents as Partners workshops are designed to support families with the transition into the Early Learning Kindergarten Program. The series of three workshops included both Haldimand-Norfolk REACH (Townsend) and Lansdowne Children’s Centre (Brantford) families. The workshop topics included Preparing for Kindergarten, Communicating for Success, How Kindergarten Programs Support Students with Special Needs, the Parent Role in the Individual Education Plan (IEP), and the Identification Placement Review Committee (IPRC) process. Parent attendance included over 20 families registered in Brantford and approximately four families in Haldimand-Norfolk. Two System Special Education Resource Teacher representatives attended each workshop to support the presenters (as informal and formal support), enhance parent confidence, and to build new partnerships as we prepare for a seamless transition for new kindergarten students into school.

## **Parent Resources**

In an effort to build capacity and develop parental trust, a Case Conference Guide for Parents was created and distributed prior to the System Level Case Conference. The guide outlined what to expect when preparing for a case conference, tips for parents as their child transitions into school, roles and responsibilities, community contacts and ways to further promote speech-language and fine motor skills.

## **System Level ‘Entry into School’ Case Conferences – The Multidisciplinary Team**

Case Conferences were attended by parents, Student Achievement Lead, System Special Education Resource Teachers, home school team, agencies and daycare providers. At this time, the student was introduced and information was gathered. It was also an opportunity for parents to share information and to meet with the school team. This year we hosted 10 system-level case conferences in Brant and five in the Haldimand and Norfolk areas.

## **Visits – ‘Getting to Know You’**

Daycare and classroom visits were arranged as needed by the school team and system staff with parental consent.

# Supporting our Faith Journey

## **Supplementary Retreats**

As part of the ‘Supporting our Faith Journey’ program created by the Special Education Department, three retreats were held at St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre. The retreats were geared toward students with an intellectual disability, students with Autism (who could make transitions easily), and/or students who could benefit from a simplified supplementary ‘hands on’ program. The children spent an exciting and engaging day participating in a variety of faith-centered activities. This day was designed to help exceptional students increase their understanding as they prepared to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation, First Communion, or Confirmation.

**Each retreat provided the opportunity for the students to:**

- read and discuss the Scriptural Reading related specifically to the sacrament
- learn about the sequence of events when receiving the sacrament
- tour the church and highlight key symbols in the church
- rehearse the steps involved in receiving the sacrament using visual representation and assistance from the priest
- highlight specific vocabulary relevant to the sacrament through vocabulary BINGO, concentration, fishing for important vocabulary, etc.
- engage in a modified ‘hands on’ learning opportunity, incorporating drama (making and using character puppets) to help students gain a better understanding of the sacrament
- use technology (iPad) to engage in religious games and puzzles to reinforce comprehension
- take home a variety of ‘hands on’ activities, including a parent guide with instructions to further promote practice and repetition

The retreats were well received and enjoyed by all. The students gained a better understanding of the sacrament, increased their confidence to receive the sacrament, and experienced the opportunity to make new friends. The students were eager to share the day’s events and activities with both their peers and their families.

## Student Work Study Partnership

The Board’s Student Work Study Teacher (SWST), a temporary Ministry of Education Research position, and Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs) with the BHNCDSD, formed a partnership to work in K-8 classrooms observing and documenting the learning of “Students of Mystery”. Together they documented student learning and created an ongoing record of the student’s learning journey. The purpose is to gather data directly from the desks of students on how they learn, rather than focusing on the teacher’s instruction. With the use of pedagogical documentation, the SWST along with the SERT, observes, listens, asks the student questions to learn more about their thinking and idea processing. The SWST and SERT meet with the teacher afterward to collaborate a plan of action to improve the student’s learning. The SWST/SERT partnership has three key learnings: a deepened understanding of students as learners in the classroom, key assessment and instructional practices that help students move forward in their learning and uncovering obstacles that may be impeding learning.

## Policies and Administrative Procedures

In order to update student support for 2014-15, the following policies and administrative procedures are being reviewed and will be submitted to the Board Policy Committee in September 2015:

- Management of Student Medical Needs in School Policy. This is a new policy which will include the following revised administrative procedures:
  - Protection of Anaphylactic Pupils
  - Concussions
  - Diabetes
  - Administration of Medication to Students
  - Provision of Health Support Services in School Settings

- P/PM 149 Community Partnerships Policy, and an additional administrative procedure for Establishing Working Relationships with Third Party Professional/Paraprofessional, will be added. This administrative procedure will address partnerships with community agencies not covered in P/PM 149.

Rick Petrella, Chair of the Board

Chris N. Roehrig, Director of Education & Secretary

Prepared by Leslie Telfer, Superintendent of Education



**BRANT HALDIMAND NORFOLK  
CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

322 Fairview Drive, P.O. Box 217, Brantford, ON N3T 5M8  
T 519.756.6369 E info@bhncdsb.ca

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[www.bhncdsb.ca](http://www.bhncdsb.ca)