



# Special Education Advisory Committee

March 8, 2017

A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) was held on Wednesday, March 8, 2017 at 7:00 pm, in the St Jacobs Learning Hub, Education Centre, with the following members in attendance:

- Trustee members: John Hendry, Cindy Watson
- Association Members: Jennifer Checkley, Mary Cunningham, Janine Oosterveld, Shannon Taylor, Katherine Waybrant
- Association Alternates: Sophia Catania, Faye Zevenbergen
- Non-Association Members: Stuart Cross, Meagan Minott, Carmen Sutherland

Board Staff in attendance: Cindy Benedetti, Scott R Miller, Karin Sonnenberg

Regrets: Colleen Borman, Graham Dunn, Molly Fortier, Sherri Popovich, Kris Pryke, Angela Sider

## Call to Order

Vice-Chair J. Oosterveld called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

## Approval of Agenda

Moved by S. Taylor, seconded by C. Sutherland:

That the agenda of the March 8, 2017, Special Education Advisory Committee meeting, be approved.

Carried

## Approval of Minutes

Moved by S. Catania, seconded by M. Cunningham:

That the minutes of the February 8, 2017, Special Education Advisory Committee, be approved.

Carried

## Special Education Update

The SEAC Agenda and Minutes are in a slightly different format. This is in accordance with new accessibility standards.

S. Miller, Superintendent, Student Achievement & Well-Being, showed a video "Donovan Livingston's Harvard Graduate School of Education Student Speech". Video can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9XGUpKITEJM>

EQAO Results - S. Miller highlighted the EQAO results and discussed the 10-year trend (see attachment EQAO Gr 3-6-9-10 Sp Needs vs All Over Time to 2016.pdf). The majority of WRDSB Students write the EQAO Assessments and this is a provincial trend. The 4% (2016) that don't may include new immigrants, parents choosing not to have the student write, as well as students with Special Education needs. S. Miller fielded questions/comments from members.

Questions that were asked included: How do we close the gap between Special Education and regular students? Assistive Technology, programs such as Fast Forward and a focus on differentiated instruction and universal design for learning have been working towards that goal.

Gr 9 EQAO math (applied) – drop in both (regular and special education). Many students coming from Gr 8 have been on modified programs. There isn't a lot of choice going into high school to modify curriculum. This could explain the drop. Teachers have been given previous years' tests to assist them in getting students ready for testing.

Gr. 10 OSSLT (Literacy Test) - slight drop for both regular and special education students. Students need to pass this test to graduate. If they don't, they take a Gr 12 literacy course.

Budget Update - S. Miller presented information regarding the special education budget and how the ministry funds special education students (see attachment SEAC Special Education Funding Model.pdf). The allocation for special education hasn't changed for many years. Many boards are writing to the Minister of Education about what they believe are inequities in funding for special education.

Grants have not yet been received for 2017-18.

Grants for this year have been Autism Supports and Training, Reading Intervention Pilot Project and Ontario Autism Program. S. Miller explained what the WRDSB has done with the funding received.

Approximately 10% of the board's overall budget is directed towards special education.

Transition Planning Presentation - Consultants Kathy Berwick, Marilyn Webb, Teresa Burch, and Elizabeth Di Benedetto will be coming to the April SEAC Meeting to talk about transitions. Most of our resources are focused on early intervention. K. Waybrant suggested that we provide questions for the consultants prior to the presentation. SEAC did work on a document regarding transitions a few years ago, but it was never completed. Please send any questions or comments to S. Miller before the April meeting and he will pass these onto the consultants.

Some questions/comments were presented.

For older students - finding a placement in the community (work co-ops). Try to work with community partners to find spaces to go to. Build relationships with companies. Perhaps the grade 12 + years could be used to build these relationships with community partners. Not only a placement in school but a future there after school. S. Miller explained about the experiential learning program the WRDSB has developed for special needs students which is unique to Ontario.

Trustee C. Watson said this conversation should happen at the Ministry level. It seems that many students are doing volunteer work and not getting compensated.

Special Education Town Hall - Recently the Board held a Director's Town Hall session. An invitation went to students, parents, staff and community members to attend and have the opportunity to take a look at the big picture for public education in our region and to talk directly with the education leaders in our district. It was successful with about 100 people attending.

S. Miller suggested a SEAC Town Hall meeting with members discussing what's on your mind and what are you hearing from your association. Since tonight's meeting was missing members, it was decided to continue this discussion at next month's meeting. It would also give members some time to discuss the questions with their associations.

A suggestion was made to do an open forum about Special Education and invite students, parents, staff and community members.

Other Special Education News - A PD day was held on February 24 for secondary department heads and administrators. There was a good turnout and great discussion.

Starting in September 2017, all elementary congregated classrooms will be on regular bell times.

Junior life skills classes are continuing to be consolidated. It has been determined that these students can be better serviced through regular classrooms and special programs through their junior years (Grades 4 to 6).

### **Other Business**

Thank you to those of you who have volunteered to be on the Strategic Planning Working Group and the Special Education Plan Working Group. We will be in touch to organize times to meet in the near future.

### **Round Table Association Reports**

Time sensitive reports were sent out earlier.

### **Trustee Report**

Trustee J. Hendry requested some clarification on a recent Board report regarding student transportation. Were these changes made with some consultation with the Special Education office? The changes are good for the overall budget but are they good for the student? S. Miller said the biggest change for special needs students attending their home school was that now they are using regular busing instead of special education busing. It was also answered that all students who demonstrate a need for special education transportation are getting it.

### **Chair Report**

S. Miller discussed a recent letter that the Bluewater DSB sent to the Minister of Education regarding special education funding (this was a joint letter from the Board of Trustees and SEAC). Karin will send the letter to the group. Scott suggested that this may be something SEAC would want to endorse, in collaboration with the trustees.

Karin will send out the SEAC meeting dates for 2017-18. All are being held the second Wednesday of the month, with the exception of March, due to March break. Any feedback regarding the dates would be appreciated by the next meeting date.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

The next SEAC meeting date is Wednesday, April 12, 2017 at 7:00 pm in the St. Jacobs Learning Hub, Education Centre.

### **Adjournment**

Moved by F. Zevenbergen , seconded by M. Cunningham:

That the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting be adjourned.

Carried

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.