



Special Education Advisory Committee

Minutes - April 10, 2024

A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) was held virtually on Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. with the following members in attendance:

Trustee: Samantha Estoesta, Joe Meissner

Association Members: Jennifer Checkley (Easter Seals), Nancy Lau (Autism Ontario), Christine MacDonald (Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County), Jane Martin (Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy), Sara Penny & Shannon Taylor (Epilepsy South Central Ontario), Jeff Senior & Roberta Thompson (Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society)

Non-Association Members: Carmen Sutherland (Waterloo Region Family Network)

Board Staff in Attendance: Jodi Albrecht (Superintendent, Student Achievement & Well-Being), Leonilda Gil (Administrative Assistant)

Guest: Emily Gray (WRDSB Mental Health Lead), Gwentyth Le-Phuong (WRDSB Psychology & Social Work Lead), Lisa Weiler Haskins (Vice President of WRDSB Educational Assistants Association (EAA))

Regrets: Lilly Adam (YMCA of Three Rivers), Lisa Bonnell (Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children), Michelle Hughes (FASD/ONE Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise), Stephen McCrae (System Administrator), Ami McIntosh (Autism Ontario), Kathy Waybrant (Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy)

Call to Order

Shannon Taylor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Welcome & Territorial Acknowledgement - Jodi Albrecht

Approval of Agenda

Moved by Carmen Sutherland, seconded by Roberta Thompson:

That the agenda of the April 10, 2024 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, be approved.

- Carried -

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Sara Penny, seconded by Carmen Sutherland:

That the minutes of the March 6, 2024 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, be approved.

- Carried -

Business Arising from the Minutes

- None

WRDSB Special Education & Student Well-Being Report - Jodi Albrecht

- Information
 - Labour Update
 - All groups are continuing to engage in local negotiations
 - Question asked if the board can hire Personal Support Workers to support students for toileting instead of the Educational Assistants. J. Albrecht clarified that this is the work of our EAs. We do have emergency supply staff to assist with EA shortage but there are limitations as to their job role.
 - Special Olympics
 - There will be an Open House on April 23rd, 2024 at 6-8 p.m. at the Education Centre for families/caregiver, staff and students to attend and learn more about the Special Olympics. A formal invite will be shared on the Board and school websites.

- Dismantling Ableism in Education Symposium Update
 - [Building Community: Advancing Anti-Ableism in Education Presentation](#)
 - There are separate sessions for students and adults
 - Questions asked for further follow-up:
 - Will there be a student and sibling voice opportunity at the sessions to support advocacy?
 - Will the presenter sessions be recorded or live streamed?
 - Will presentations be shared after the event?
 - Will there be an open booth area for the community partners to share their information in a main common area? Can SEAC attend and have their own booth?
 - Visit the [website](#) for more information
- Promoting a Culture of Inclusivity & Independence Virtual Presentation
 - The Waterloo Catholic District School Board SEAC is hosting a virtual presentation by Dr. Gillian Parekh and Michael Jacques on Promoting a Culture of Inclusivity and Independence on April 23rd, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. and have invited members of SEAC to attend. Michael Jacques is a compassionate and determined young adult with autism and an intellectual disability. Michael, author of "Can't Read, Can't Write, Here's My Book" and "I Belong, Can I Play?", speaks passionately about topics such as learning, inclusion, advocating, independence, and the power of perseverance.
 - Dr. Gillian Parekh is the Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair in Disability Studies in Education at York University. Dr. Parekh, renowned author of "Ableism in Education," brings a wealth of experience as a former special education teacher and research coordinator with the Toronto District School Board. Her expertise in structural equity, special

education, and academic streaming promises invaluable insights.

- See [flyer](#) for more information and [register](#) for the event

- Discussion/Feedback

- Mental Health Presentation - Guests: Emily Gray, Mental Health Lead & Gwentyth Le-Phuong, Psychology & Social Work Lead
 - [Student Mental Health & Wellness Presentation](#)
 - Members feedback:
 - Introducing and making mental health accessible to ACE and special education students
 - Providing mental health training during ACE teacher professional development
 - Providing the skills for students to know how to get help for themselves or another student by encouraging them to reach out to an adult
 - Having an anonymous tool that students can report their concerns about themselves or a student in need
 - Providing newsletter with resources to parents/caregivers so that they know what supports are available for their child since their child might not know or be able to communicate this information
 - Having translation networks for families/caregivers with language barriers and identifying services. Having resource lists that students can use with different languages for families/caregivers and students. Currently working with our community partners in order to provide the support with respect to mental health. Requesting support from School Mental Health Ontario to provide resources in multiple languages for students, families/caregivers.

- Discussions with students are being had about healthy relationships and Public Health also provides prevention support/resources.

Chair Report - Shannon Taylor

- Dufferin-Peel Catholic D.S.B. [follow-up letter](#) to Ministry of Education
 - Members reviewed the letter and agreed to send a letter in support. Trustee S. Estoesta will check with Chair J. Weston if it's required to have both the Chair of the Board and the Chair of SEAC sign the letter or if it can be sent on behalf of the SEAC Chair only and advise.
- New Policy for Review - [Indoor Air Quality](#)
 - Inquired if there is radon testing as part of the proper ventilation follow-up?
 - S. Taylor and J. Meissner shared the discussions that they had with the Air Quality Committee. Acknowledged the work of the Committee in creating this new policy. Confirmed that the Facilities Department continues to update our schools for air quality and are meeting timelines for all the updating of schools.

Trustee Report - Samantha Estoesta & Joe Meissner

- During the March 25th, 2024 Board meeting, there was a presentation on the Board Improvement and Equity Plan Update: Pathways and Transitions. More information can be found on the [website](#).

Round Table Association Reports

1. Carmen Sutherland, Waterloo Region Family Network
 - Acknowledging the Sibling Experience see [flyer](#) for more details
 - Vulnerable Persons Registry see [flyer](#) for more details
 - Visit WRFN website for more information on events www.wrfn.info

2. Nancy Lau, Autism Ontario

- [**Celebrate the Spectrum**](#) **is a month-long celebration!** It doesn't end with the Fly a Flag ceremonies on April 2, 2024. Please encourage your boards and communities to continue to raise awareness so all Ontarians can make their communities a better and more inclusive place for autistic people and their families. There are many ways to celebrate the contributions of autistic people, and to recognize the richness neurodiversity adds to our communities. Throughout the month schools can participate through:
 - o [**Educational Toolkits**](#) – full of information, links to videos, classroom activities and discussion guides, these Toolkits can be used by anyone.
 - o [**The School Giving Challenge**](#) – schools can sign up throughout the month and compete for prizes and recognition.
 - o [**Run your own fundraiser**](#) – funds raised are invested back into our communities.
- [**Scholarship Applications**](#) **are open!** Every year Autism Ontario awards scholarships to outstanding students entering their first year of a post-secondary program across Ontario. Applicants can apply online from April 1-30, 2024.
 - The Eleanor Ritchie Post-Secondary Scholarship - awarded to **autistic** students.
 - The Jeanette Holden Post-Secondary Scholarship - is for students with an **autistic sibling**.
 - The MacDonald Family Post-Secondary Scholarship – for students with an **autistic parent**.

3. Jenn Checkley - Easter Seals

- Red Shirt Day of Action for Accessibility and Action is coming up on May 29. [Link](#) to order Red Shirt Day merchandise

4. Roberta Thompson, Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society
 - AGM/Spring Mini-Conference - Focus on Positive Advocacy in Education and Life After School. See [flyer](#) for more information.
5. Christine MacDonald, Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County
 - [April Financial Literacy Workshop](#) - Kids 8-11 on April 18, 2024 at 7-8 p.m.
 - [May Financial Literacy Workshop](#) – Tweens/Teens 11-14 on May 2, 2024 at 7-8 p.m.
 - [Trivia night Fundraiser](#) on May 25, 2024 at 7-11 p.m.

Date of Next Meeting

The next SEAC meeting date is May 8, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

Adjournment

Moved by Nancy Lau, seconded by Sara Penny:

That the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting be adjourned.

- Carried -

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.