



Special Education Advisory Committee

Minutes - February 8, 2023

A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) was held virtually on Wednesday, February 8, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. with the following members in attendance:

Trustee: Fred Meissner & Marie Snyder

Association Members: Jennifer Checkley (Easter Seals), Jane Martin (Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy), Christine MacDonald (Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County), Sara Penny (Epilepsy South Central Ontario), Jeff Senior & Roberta Thompson (Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society), Huseyin Unver (YMCA of Three Rivers)

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

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

Guest: Joe Bell (System Administrator, Learning Support Services - Safe Schools/Pathways to Success)

Regrets: Lisa Bonnell (Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children), Michelle Hughes (FASD/ONE Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise), Shannon Taylor (Epilepsy South Central Ontario), Kathy Waybrant (Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy)

Call to Order

Sara Penny called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Welcome & Territorial Acknowledgement - Jodi Albrecht

Approval of Agenda

Moved by Roberta Thompson, seconded by Fred Meissner:

That the agenda of the February 8, 2023 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, be approved.

- Carried -

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Roberta Thompson, seconded by Carmen Sutherland:

That the minutes of the January 11, 2023 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, be approved.

- Carried -

Business Arising from the Minutes

- None

WRDSB Special Education & Student Well-Being Report

- Labour Update - nothing new to report
- Transportation Update
 - We continue to monitor and make adjustments where necessary. Transportation is working hard to prioritize our students with special education needs. STSWR sends us a monthly update with information. Consultants continue to be in touch with families if there are any concerns with transportation.
- Class Closures
 - At times we may need to close congregated classes due to staffing shortages mostly with Educational Assistants (EAs)
 - We have a process for schools to work through before closing a class. Schools have contingency plans to support students when staff is absent to prevent class closure. For the most part the contingency plans have allowed classes to stay open. If that's not possible, administrators contact the Family of Schools Superintendent to get support. The Special

Education Department Team coordinates central staff which include itinerants that may go to the school to support.

- When a closure is necessary, there is collaboration between the school, the Family of Schools Superintendent, Superintendent of Special Education, Associate Director and Director as to next steps. We also endeavour to rotate the classes that need to be closed.
- For the most part, we have had few class closures; we try our best to keep our congregated classes open.
- Alternate educational experiences should be provided to support students during these closures including access to technology so students can still participate in learning
- Transition to Secondary - Joe Bell & Steve McCrae
 - Course selection process has started where there are various strategies to connect students with guidance and classroom visits
 - Schools are in the planning stages for special events for students. We make sure that all students can participate in all of these events.
 - This is the board's first year using myBlueprint program for course selection for students in grades 7 to 12. The portal for parent access is being updated. Students can use myBlueprint to map out what their course selection can look like.
 - Student voice and choice is important
 - An important part of transition from grade 8 to 9 is the information nights. All secondary schools have an event for students and families to attend. There are also school visits for students to participate in during the school day.
 - Principals connect with families and special education consultants to help guide them through the planning and transition process for students.
 - The S4S system provides a secure sharing of information about a student's needs including accessibility. School board staff work closely to remove barriers for students and make sure that the student's needs will be met.

- We have specialized program sites for our multilingual learners (MLL) and have a variety of teachers that support the students. They will assist the student in building their program.
- Students have the ability to change their pathway throughout their time in high school. Grade 9 is de-streamed in most subject areas.
- For ACE students, parents are involved in the transition process
- At times, students might audit a class and see the options for integration and inclusion within a class
- Feedback Review- [SEAC Feedback Highlights](#)
- [Student Support Process](#)
 - We are continuing to reduce the Integrated Support Program (ISP) in schools which has a focus on supporting students with anxiety. Last year it was reduced due to the lack of applications for the program.
 - We are better able to support and integrate students in the regular classroom.
 - We are continually evolving and working to support all educators in their classrooms to serve students well.
 - There will be a transition process and communication shared with families going forward with any changes in the ISP program.
- Remote Learning for 2023-2024 Feedback Gathering
 - We are looking for feedback related to offering a remote learning option to students for the new school year. The number of students requesting this option has decreased over the last year and more students are back in person.
 - There is a significant number of families who would like the option of remote learning
 - Positive feedback from some members that this worked for their families and was a good experience
 - Concern that it may cause more anxiety in students. This should be a specialized program and not a simple choice. This can cause segregation for a student. Should only be chosen if it benefits the best

needs of the child. We need to make sure that the students continue to be engaged in their learning if online is available. Need a process that students know what their options are and make sure it's a good fit for a student's education.

- Members would be in support of maintaining a remote learning option

Chair Report

- Website and handbook updates
 - Committee members have not had a chance to meet yet but are hoping to meet in February

Trustee Report - Fred Meissner & Marie Snyder

- None

Round Table Association Reports

1. Jennifer Checkley, Easter Seals
 - Summer camps available for registration, see [website](#) for more details
 - [March is Easter Seals Month](#)
2. Carmen Sutherland, Waterloo Region Family Network (WRFN)
 - [Acknowledging the Sibling Experience](#) - ASE was created to bring siblings of individuals who are neurodiverse together
 - [Kaleidoscope Kids](#) - Thursdays from 3-5 p.m. at Kidsability
3. Huseyin Unver, YMCA of Three Rivers
 - Reach out if you have any newcomers with special education needs so he can provide support
 - Prayers and condolences for the families of the Turkey-Syria earthquake. There is support available with the YMCA if anyone needs counselling or assistance.
4. Christine MacDonald (Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County)
 - We are running a social skills and executive skills program in partnership with the Guelph Library

- We are researching a new study skills program that we hope to offer in the spring. See website for more details <https://ldawc.ca/services.html>.
5. Jane Martin, Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy
- [OFCP Bulletin](#) - Ontario Brain Institute Resource
6. Roberta Thompson, Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society
- Skills for Independent Living Information Night for parents, caregivers and future participants (13+) on Thursday, March 2 from 7-9 p.m. @ KW Habilitation Services.
 - We are getting ready to celebrate World Down Syndrome Day, March 21st. If anyone would like a poster, pamphlets, or lawn signs contact Roberta Thompson: berta.thompson@gmail.com
7. Sara Penny - Epilepsy South Central Ontario
- On Sunday March 26th at 2-4 p.m. we will be hosting our first ever Epilepsy Awareness Kick off in Waterloo region!
 - We're happy to announce that we are teaming up with Victoria Bowling Lanes in Kitchener to bring you an afternoon of fun and entertainment! It's a great time for anyone with an interest in epilepsy to help raise awareness, connect with others in the community, challenge myths and help dismantle the stigma of epilepsy in Waterloo region. For more information and to purchase tickets, please visit: www.trellis.org/bowling-for-epilepsy. Tickets are limited so sign up today!

Date of Next Meeting

The next SEAC meeting date is March 8, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

Adjournment

Moved by Roberta Thompson, seconded by Carmen Sutherland:

That the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting be adjourned.

- Carried -

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.