



Special Education Advisory Committee

Minutes - November 13, 2024

A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) was held virtually on Wednesday, November 13, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. with the following members in attendance:

Association Members: Jennifer Checkley (Easter Seals), Nancy Lau & Ami McIntosh (Autism Ontario), Jane Martin (Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy), Jeff Senior (Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society), Shannon Taylor (Epilepsy South Central Ontario)

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

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

Guest: Carolyn Gingerich & Rhonda Hower (Math Consultants Curriculum), Siobhan Watters (System Administrator Learning Services), Tiffany Harrow (Parent from WRDSB), Lisa Weiler Haskins (VP Educational Assistants Association)

Regrets: Lilly Adam (YMCA of Three Rivers), Lisa Bonnell (Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children), Samantha Estoesta & Joe Meissner (Trustees), Michelle Hughes (FASD/ONE Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise), Christine MacDonald (Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County), Roberta Thompson (Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society), 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 Nancy Lau, seconded by Carmen Sutherland:

That the agenda of the November 13, 2024 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, be approved.

- Carried -

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Ami McIntosh, seconded by Jeff Senior:

That the minutes of the October 9, 2024 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, be approved.

- Carried -

Business Arising from the Minutes

- Jenn Checkley, Easter Seals, Wondered about the slide show from the Anti-Ableism Symposium presentation and if members were able to share it with people outside our group. She would like to share with the Easter Seals rep for Ontario. Jodi Albrecht, WRDSB Superintendent, shared that she can share the presentation.

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

- System Updates
 - Last month at the October meeting, Teresa Dunat, Special Education Consultant, came and shared information about the Anti-Ableism Symposium held in May and what we learned from the event. From the last meeting we gathered information from this group and are working on a plan for next steps to facilitate another event. We continue our focus on students and are committed to ensuring we have participants from both mainstream and ACE settings.
 - SEAC asked to add students from grades 7 & 8. We are looking for a venue to accommodate the size of the group, it may need to have parallel days to include everyone.

- Currently looking at students in grades 9-12, from ACE and mainstream settings to be included. Then another day for grade 7 & 8 students.
 - Students that were involved last year will be part of the planning. We are inviting their voices to plan the next symposium.
 - The staff that will be attending will be learning through another facilitator. We would like the collective student voice to influence what the staff are learning.
- Information on Transitions
 - Funds are available through the Ministry to support improving educational outcomes for our students. Transitions can be a barrier into school, between schools, leaving secondary school, attending post secondary education, within the community, and in joining the workforce.
 - Staff will work collaboratively with the Board and with agencies to develop a plan of action.
 - Focus on developing resources and tools to have successful transitions for all students.
 - Working on maintaining consistency as a long term goal.
 - Will come back to SEAC a few times throughout the year to get feedback on the work.
 - Want to raise awareness to all staff, students, families, teachers in the classroom, and community members.
 - [Regional Assessment Resource Centre](#) (RARC).
 - Supports students with disabilities across the province that are transitioning to post secondary.
 - They are holding a [Transition Information Night](#) on Nov 26, 2024 from 6-7pm.

- The WRDSB is currently working on the 3 year Mental Health and Addiction Plan for the 2025-26 to 2028-29 school years. The group will come and talk to SEAC in the future and get feedback.
- Discussion/Feedback
 - Math Achievement Action Plan - Presented by Siobhan Watters (System Administrator, Learning Support Services), Rhonda Hewer & Carolyn Gingerich (Math Consultants Curriculum)
 - [Math Achievement Action Plan Presentation](#)
 - Feedback:
 - Questioned if ACE teachers were included in decision making. Siobhan Watters responded yes, and they are now at a school level assessing what materials in the plans are going to be used in congregated settings and are also exploring through discussions with other school boards. They are finalizing concepts at this time.
 - For a student with disabilities solely relying on tech is very challenging; need to make sure that things are balanced with other teaching strategies.
 - Math has a lot of words and students with accommodations are trying to figure out how to navigate reading and comprehension on top of learning math.
 - Students who have mobility issues, trouble with coordination, or limited dexterity, may lack the strength or power to apply pressure to utilize tech being provided. Looking for solutions/modifications to make things equitable and inclusive to all students.
 - Tools like Google read and write need to be added to EQAO to support our students. Brought in the SEA team to help them know how to use technology to teach math.

- Asking for future work with the Fast Forward program to help share resources for the grade 9 de-streamed curriculum.

Chair Report for discussion/feedback - Shannon Taylor

- [SEAC website](#)
 - The website has been updated with a more supportive lens making it more inviting and easier to understand for those trying to access SEAC.
 - Would like to get a sense of how many people are engaging with SEAC through the website from families and the community.
 - Contemplating adding a drop down on the website to capture how people connect and reach out to SEAC.
 - Informed the website has a translation option on the upper right side. This can translate the text to other languages and is helpful for MLL learners and families.
- Topics of learning for the year
 - Facility dogs or Service dogs would be a topic to discuss and learn about, to support families, and schools.
 - Adding reports by the different SEAC associations. Learning about their associations and challenges they are experiencing in school. Possibly involving students to share success stories. Really interested in hearing from our students and how they are experiencing learning within the WRDSB.
 - Health class information, including sexual health within the special education system. Specifically looking at congregated classes and ACE classes.
 - Understanding how special education is set up in the WRDSB. What is available in the elementary and secondary panels, and where are

the specialized programs located. Finding out how many kids are identified with a learning disability for exceptionality.

Trustee Report - Samantha Estoesta & Joe Meissner

- A Special Budget meeting took place at the same time as SEAC and therefore no Trustees were able to attend but they provided the [Trustees Report](#).
- Joe Meissner and Samantha Estoesta will be continuing to support SEAC as it is a 4 year term.

Round Table Association Reports

- Nancy Lau, Autism Ontario
 - [OCEC Conference](#)
 - On the November 1, 2024 PD session, Ami McIntosh & Nancy Lau joined the EAs and CYWs for their training day along with other community partners. 800 EAs participated in this event.
 - [Pathways to Special Education Support: Meet & Greet for Families](#)
 - Still having sessions by region to meet staff and SEAC reps for the different boards. Offering sessions during the day, and looking at meeting the needs of people who cannot meet during the day.
 - Visit their [website](#) for current updates.
- Jeff Senior, Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society
 - Decade Galla happened after our last meeting. Great event 500 people attended. Lots of vendors and guests. Madison Tevlin (advocate, actor) was the keynote speaker.
 - Photographer Hilary Gauld took photos for the Decade Calendar and will have exciting things to share throughout the year.
 - Read a book this summer that I would like to pass along: Shut Away when down syndrome was a life sentence.
 - Visit their [website](#) for current updates.
- Carmen MacDonald, Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County

- New Family Resource Coach, Lisa Cook.
 - From the WRFN Family Pulse Newsletter: “With over a decade of experience in the non-profit sector and over 20 years in marketing and communications, Lisa has honed her ability to develop effective communication strategies that benefit her organization and the families it serves. At the core of Lisa’s work is her unwavering commitment to problem-solving. She thrives on collaborating with families, understanding their unique circumstances, and crafting tailored solutions that empower them. Lisa firmly believes that every child and family deserves access to the support they need to foster a sense of belonging within their community and school.”
 - Two of our Family Resource Coaches, Erin, and Marla have moved on to other opportunities and we are so happy for them.
- Visit their [website](#) for current updates.

Date of Next Meeting

The next SEAC meeting date is December 11, 2024 at 7:00 p.m

Adjournment

Moved by Nancy Lau, seconded by Jane Martin:

That the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting be adjourned.

- Carried -

The meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.