



Special Education Advisory Committee

Minutes - October 11, 2023

A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) was held virtually on Wednesday, October 11, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. with the following members in attendance:

Trustee: Samantha Estoesta, Joe Meissner

Association Members: Jennifer Checkley (Easter Seals), Nancy Lau & Ami McIntosh (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 (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)

Regrets: Lisa Bonnell (Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children), Michelle Hughes (FASD/ONE Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise), Stephen McCrae (System Administrator), 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 Sara Penny, seconded by Carmen Sutherland:

That the agenda of the October 11, 2023 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, be approved.

- Carried -

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Nancy Lau, seconded by Jennifer Checkley:

That the minutes of the September 13, 2023 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

- Welcome to the new Trustees, Samantha Estoesta & Joe Meissner
- Labour Update - Nothing new to report
- The Waterloo Region Family Network (WRFN), Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB) and Waterloo Region District School Board held a workshop on the Individual Education Plan (IEP). The presentation shared information to new families regarding the IEP process and families that have already been through the process. It provided an opportunity for families to ask questions and was well attended.
- IEPs will be coming home next week. There were issues with the S4S processing system but it is working now to allow teachers to complete their IEPs.
- Guest: Esther Wainaina - Removing Barriers for Students with Disabilities
 - [Dismantling Ableism in Education Symposium Presentation](#)
 - Received grant funding from the Ministry in the amount of \$40,000 which will be used to organize the symposium taking place in May 2024

- Feedback requested from members including if they see any planning gaps or areas for consideration, ideas for maintaining accountability and meaningful connections with stakeholder groups, disability groups and community partners.
 - Making sure that the event is accessible for all including elevators, ramps and space around the facility
 - Ensuring the common areas for food are accessible for participants to move around the area and be able to get to a seat safely with their food without tripping hazards
 - Allow distance between tables and have volunteers to assist participants where needed
 - Accessible washrooms with lifts or change area provided
 - Recommended to connect with students so they can provide a voice or have a student panel discussion because lived experience from students is important
 - A connection to teaching staff would be good as they deal directly with the students
 - Recommendation of the book Ableism in Education by Gillian Parekh
 - Allow space for representation from different disabilities
 - Ensuring this is a safe space for students to share their experiences
 - Consider finding representation from our local groups that are on SEAC who have students that just graduated from the system to provide feedback and bridge any gaps

Chair Report

- [Thames Valley DSB Letter to Ministry Re: SIP](#)
 - Reviewed letter and members agreed to review our previous [letter](#) in support of other boards sent in May 2023 and decide if a follow-up letter is required.

Trustee Report - Samantha Estoesta & Joe Meissner

- Trustees Samantha Estoesta and Joe Meissner provided introductions of themselves and are looking forward to being part of this committee

Round Table Association Reports

1. Nancy Lau & Ami McIntosh, Autism Ontario
 - Live Moderated Webinar Panel: Exploring and Engaging Autistic People's Experiences with Applied Behaviour Analysis on October 17, 2023, 12:00 - 1:30 p.m., registration - <https://bit.ly/45Oy8o6>
 - *This presentation is brought to you by Brock University and Western University. To move forward as a field comprised of people who value ethics, progress, and neurodiversity-affirming practices. Applied behaviour analysis (ABA) researchers and practitioners should listen to the experiences and perspectives of the community to meaningfully support Autistic people. This virtual panel is situated within a larger ABA initiative focused on improving the practice of ABA. This synchronous virtual event will allow participants the opportunity to engage with panel members. The goal is for participants to understand a sample of current ABA sentiments and ideas for progress.*
 - **The Journey to Adulthood Discussion Workshop** (*for parents and caregivers of autistic youth ages 16-20*) on Wednesdays, October 25 - December 6, 2023 at 7:00 – 8:30 p.m., registration <https://www.autismontario.com/civCRM/event/info?id=8966>
 - The Journey to Adulthood Discussion Workshop is a virtual workshop open to parents and caregivers province-wide. It is a series of six discussions featuring topics relevant to the transition from youth to adulthood. Each session includes discussion and resources around specific topics on the journey to adulthood. Registration is limited, opens October 13, 2023 at 7:00 PM.

- **Autism Ontario Presents: Exploring Autism** on October 26th at 12-1 p.m., registration at <https://bit.ly/3PbZgqh>
 - This webinar aims to introduce autism and neurodiversity. We will discuss autism and neurodiversity, the features of autism, and provide information on how autistic people may perceive and interact with their environment. We will also discuss how you can be an ally, offering practical tips and strategies on how to create an inclusive environment and support autistic people in your home, school, or community. At the end of the webinar, participants will have an opportunity to ask questions and participate in a live Q&A session with a member of the Autism Ontario team.

2. Carmen Sutherland, Waterloo Region Family Network

- Parent concern brought forward from a parent whose child is considered gifted with a learning disability. The student was able to be part of the enrichment program but the parents declined as the program was virtual. The parent is therefore requesting that the Board consider the in person format be reinstated.
 - J. Albrecht shared that the enrichment program is provided at different levels. There is an area enrichment program that was once a week and since covid it has remained online. The biggest challenge is transportation. The virtual approach allows us to continue with this program. Students can still receive support through the student support process. J. Albrecht will connect with C. Sutherland and the parents to review their concerns.

WRFN Update:

- IEP workshop in October was very well received and attended
- WRFN Camp Day at Camp Ki-Wa-Y in St. Clements on October 14, 2023. Register at <https://WRFN-Camp-Day-2023.eventbrite.ca>.

- You are invited to join us at Waterloo Region Family Network's **Annual General Meeting** (AGM) on **Wednesday, October 18 from 7 - 8 pm** at The Family Centre (65 Hanson Ave, Kitchener). To register, please email info@wrfn.info.
- **Holiday Cooking Class:** Saturday, November 4 at 5 p.m., cost is \$150 for WRFN Families, \$220 for Community Supporters
 - The incredible team at The Culinary Studio will host a virtual cooking lesson, walking you through the preparation of a delectable Mexican meal for four people. **All ingredients will be delivered to your house in advance of a 5 p.m. start.** You will be given a choice of red or white wine to compliment your culinary creation! A dessert of mini key lime tarts with chocolate crust will also be provided to complete your dining experience.
 - Please register no later than October 20:
<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/waterloo-region-family-network/events/virtual-family-cooking-event/>.
 - When you register, please indicate any dietary accommodations you may require, and whether you'd prefer red or white wine. Also, **please send us your mailing address by emailing Oula at oula.almadhoun@wrfn.info** so we know where to send your ingredients.
 - **This event is open to those living in Waterloo Region and Wellington Region **only** because of logistics involved in delivering fresh ingredients to participants' homes.*

3. Christine MacDonald, Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County

- 9th Annual Family Conference on October 21st, 2023 at St. James Secondary School in Guelph. See registration [link](#) and [workshop summaries](#) for more details as there are still spots left if you are interested.

- Free Monthly Workshops - [Navigating the Homework Highway with ADHD](#) coach Beth Timlin. The first session starts on the 16th and we still have spots available to parents and students.
4. Jeff Senior, Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society
- Any Which Way You Can-A-Thon was a big success raising over \$70,000. The money goes towards different activities and bursaries that are not usually covered by other funding.
 - There is a conference in November on transition to adulthood
 - Concern brought forward about students that are away for various appointments eg. weekly speech therapy wherein they are required to fill out a [Documenting Patterns of Non-Attendance for Elementary Students](#) form
 - The form is seen to be negative and not inclusive of a family being able to change a student's schedule if there is a school event or field trip taking place which would be a missed opportunity for the student
 - J. Albrecht to connect with J. Senior to discuss further

Date of Next Meeting

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

Adjournment

Moved by Sara Penny, seconded by Carmen Sutherland:

That the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting be adjourned.

- Carried -

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.