



Special Education Advisory Committee

Minutes - September 13, 2023

A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) was held virtually on Wednesday, September 13, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. with the following members in attendance:

Trustee: Carla Johnson

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), Shannon Taylor (Epilepsy South Central Ontario), Roberta Thompson & 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), Stephen McCrae (System Administrator)

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

Call to Order

J. Albrecht called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Welcome & Territorial Acknowledgement - Jodi Albrecht

Approval of Agenda

Moved by Shannon Taylor, seconded by Roberta Thompson:

That the agenda of the September 13, 2023 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, be approved.

- Carried -

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Roberta Thompson, seconded by Christine MacDonald:

That the minutes of the June 14, 2023 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, be approved.

- Carried -

Business Arising from the Minutes

- None

Round Table Association Reports

- Introduce yourself
 - Members provided introductions of themselves and their associations
- Summer 2023 organization update
 - Roberta Thompson, Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society
 - [Any Which Way You Can-A-Thon](#) will take place on September 24th at 1-4 p.m. at Waterloo Park.
 - [Up Side Down Charity Golf Tournament](#) - registration is open
 - Speech & Music Social Groups are up and running
 - Conference on mental health will be held in November
 - Check out [website calendar](#) for upcoming events
 - Nancy Lau & Ami McIntosh, Autism Ontario
 - Autism Ontario has a number of resources available to help families settle into the new school year:
 - **Back To School Resource Collection.** This collection of resources aims to support caregivers in transitioning their child to school by building routines for success and supporting positive communication with their child's school team. There is information and strategies for

parents and caregivers of children at all stages in their school journey.

<https://bit.ly/AOBackToSchool>

- **Education Series: Navigating the Special Education System.**
September 19, 2023 at 12:00 p.m. Panelists will provide valuable insights and practical tips to effectively navigate special education, especially if your child is just entering school or has recently been diagnosed. <https://bit.ly/3Y4dlEw>
- To find out more information on activities in your area check out our newsletter at: <https://www.autismontario.com/newsletter>
- 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](#) for more details.
- Carmen Sutherland, Waterloo Region Family Network
 - [Individual Education Plan \(IEP\) Workshop](#) on September 27th, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. at the Waterloo Region District School Board. There will be a chance to ask questions so feel free to send them before the workshop. Register at info@wrfn.info.
- Jennifer Checkley, Easter Seals Ontario
 - Easter Seals Ambassador Applications are due September 30, 2023. There are regional and provincial opportunities. Visit the [website](#) for more details.
- Jane Martin, Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy
 - [An Introduction to Parent and Caregiver Advocacy in Ontario's Schools](#) Free Webcast on September 20th, 2023 at 7 p.m.
- Anything you would like us to do/focus on this year as SEAC?
 - Members would like to be more engaged with schools and families to assist with questions and transitions in order to better support students
 - Sharing of resources from associations on the SEAC website for families and school staff to use

- Assist families to advocate for students and fill in the gap to support families whose children have similar diagnoses. Important to get information out to families so that they know what SEAC is and how members are available to assist.
- Try to foster more belonging in the school system by connecting with administrators and staff in supporting students including new immigrants with cultural barriers
- Encourage peer to peer communication with SEAC members
- Training and orientation for new SEAC members
- Continue with guest speaker presentations which allow members to provide feedback on WRDSB initiatives
- Allow more time for round table discussions at the beginning of our meeting as opposed to at the end of the meetings

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

- Ministry of Education Updates
 - Bill 98 is a new requirement for schools to post a detailed summary of PD day activities at the school and board websites. The School Year Calendar Committee submits all of the plans to the Ministry two weeks in advance of the PD Day.
 - [Policy/Program Memorandum 169 \(PPM 169\)](#) focuses on student mental health. It comes into effect January 1, 2024. We will be bringing a team together to do this work. We are in the process of hiring a new Mental Health Lead who will support this work. This will involve a three-year mental health and addictions strategy and a one-year action plan.
 - The staff on the Mental Health & Strategy Committee will share their plans to SEAC at a future meeting and request feedback

- Labour Updates
 - Meetings are being held at the central table with the Province, not locally. We have 9 collective agreements that have expired and negotiations are in the process. They are still in the early stages and we will continue to provide monthly updates.
- School Start-Up
 - Everyone centrally at the board started the first day of school assisting at a school. It was nice to see the energy and excitement with students and staff.
 - There were a number of transportation issues related to the database but consultants and STSWR have been working hard to get kids transported to school
 - Acknowledgement to all staff for the hard work that is involved in getting a school up and running for the first day of school
 - Staff are working on IEPs that will be sent home in mid-October. Collaboration with staff and families engaging to honour student and family voices when preparing the IEP.
 - We will continue to have our SEAC meetings virtually as this allows more flexibility for members and we can always reassess throughout the year
 - Last year we applied for a grant from the Ministry to fund a conference for Removing Barriers for Children with Disabilities. The board was approved for the grant and there is a team of people that will be dedicated to this work. They are in the initial planning stages and we will invite this group to come and present at a meeting to share what they are working on. The conference will take place at the end of May.

Chair Report

- Vote for SEAC Chair 2023-2024
 - Jodi Albrecht called for nominations for the role of SEAC Chair

- Jennifer Checkley nominated Shannon Taylor for Chair, Shannon Taylor accepted the nomination
- There were no other nominations for Chair. Shannon Taylor was acclaimed as SEAC Chair.
- Shannon Taylor encouraged members to reach out to assist as Co-Chairs when they are able to
- In Shannon Taylor's new role as Chair, she will have 1:1 meetings with new association representative members and provide orientation on behalf of SEAC

Trustee Report - Carla Johnson

- We have two new Trustees, Samantha Estoesta for Waterloo/Wilmot and Joe Meissner for Woolwich/Wellesley
- First Board meeting will be on Monday, September 18th, 2023

Date of Next Meeting

The next SEAC meeting date is October 11, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

Adjournment

Moved by Shannon Taylor, seconded by Roberta Thompspon:

That the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting be adjourned.

- Carried -

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.