



# Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-06

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, February 18, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

## MINUTES

### SEAC Members

**Present:** Chair W. Rose, L. Boswell, P. Boutis, C. Brady, B. Bruce, R. Collver, A. Csoff, L. DeJong, A. Detmar, M. Gatopoulos, K. Jones, J. Trovato, T. Waldschmidt, T. Wilson.

**Regrets:** T. Buchanan, M. Carpenter, L. Scott, R. Winter.

### Resource Staff

**Present:** L. Boudreault, K. Mertins, S. Slaman, L. Thompson,

**Regrets:** P. Bagchee, J. White

### Guests:

**Present:** J. Gemmill, ITS Staff, L. Munro, Superintendent of Education, C. A. Sloat – Alternate Trustee, C. Smith, Manager Business Services, R. Wyszynski, Superintendent of Business.

**Recorder:** P. Curran.

**A-1 Opening** **W. Rose**

(a) Welcome W. Rose

Chair Rose welcomed everyone, called the meeting to order and read the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

(b) Agenda Additions / Deletions / Approvals W. Rose

Moved by: K. Jones

Seconded by: P. Boutis

**THAT** the SEAC 20-06 Agenda for Thursday, February 18, 2021 be approved as circulated.

**CARRIED**

**B-1 Timed Items** **W. Rose**

(a) Budget Definitions and Input into the 2021-22 Budget Process R. Wyszynski/C. Smith

Mr. Wyszynski introduced himself as Superintendent of Business who explained he and the Manager of Business Services put together a summary of the Special Education Funding document for SEAC.

Ms. Smith provided an overview of the details contained in the Special Education Funding SEAC document which was circulated to members.



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Six types of funding specifically for special education are available. Enveloped funding is dedicated to area of designation, i.e., may not be used for any other expense. In this instance, the items shown are for supporting students with special needs. These envelopes include a provision to put into reserves any unspent funding for use in the next fiscal year.

### **Special Education Per Pupil Amount (SEPPA) - \$20.0M**

Provides funding to every school board to assist with the costs of providing additional support to students with special education needs. SEPPA is based on total enrolment of all students, not just those with special education needs. Funding is allocated on grade levels increasing with older students and is comprised of both a per pupil amount and a board amount.

### **Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount Allocation (DSENA) - \$16.0M**

Addresses the variation among school boards with respect to their population of students with special education needs and school boards' ability to support these needs. Historical data is used by the Ministry to calculate the funding for each board.

Includes four components Special Education Statistical Prediction Model, Measures of Variability, Base Amount for Collaboration and Integration and Multi-Disciplinary Supports Amount.

P. Boutis asked for clarification on the Base Amount for Collaboration and Integration and was informed it is a pocket of funding to support students with a variety of needs which required involvement from staff in other departments.

### **Special Equipment Amount (SEA) - \$1.0M**

Supports the purchase of equipment that may be required by students with special education needs. Funding is provided through two components, a per pupil amount and a claims-based amount.

The per pupil amount provides computers, robotics and specialized furniture. The claims-based amount is for the purchase of non-computer-based equipment for which the board must bear the cost of an \$800 deductible.

This amount was underspent last year and the Board was permitted to carry forward 219K to support this year's equipment purchase.

### **Education and Community Partnership Program (ECP) Allocation (previously Care, Treatment, Custody and Correctional Amount (CTCC Amount)) - \$538.2K**

Partnerships between school boards and government-approved facilities and may include a range of program types that support students who cannot attend regular school due to their primary need for treatment or while in custody.

Provision of education in these facilities is subject to a formal agreement such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), between a district school board and the facility.



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Recognized costs include teachers' salaries and benefits, educational assistants' salaries and benefits, and classroom supplies.

### **Behaviour Expertise Amount (BEA) Amount \$403.9K**

Allocation comes from two components, ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) Expertise Professional and ABA Training, professional development, resources and programs and release time:

Funding may only be used for ABA training purposes.

### **Special Incidence Portion Allocation (SIP) - \$30K**

Supports pupils who require more than two full-time staff to address the health and safety needs of both the students who have extraordinarily high needs related to their disabilities and/or exceptionalities and others at their school. Boards must submit a claim for this funding which has a maximum allowable per claim of \$28,235.

### **Grants for Student Needs (GSN)**

Funding that supports a number of expenses, some of which are enveloped (dedicated). Salaries, transportation, facility management and Information Technology make up the bulk of expenditures and there is a small amount that is discretionary, i.e., local needs.

### **Expenditures for Fiscal 2020-21**

Are estimated at \$39.9M and support staffing, software, textbooks, programs and equipment to support special needs students in the following ways: (38.45%), Educational Assistants (41.05%), Professional and Paraprofessionals (14.0%), Coordinators and Consultants (4.01%), Supply Staff (1.08%), Textbooks and Supplies (0.94%), Staff Development (9.26%), Computers (0.12%) and School office (0.09%).

Members asked what they could influence or suggest and were informed by the Superintendent of Business that the funding doesn't change much from year to year and that the overall budget is balanced in a regular year. If they want to increase something, a reduction in another non-enveloped area must be suggested. He asked that members identify where the pressures exist, and staff will review this information.

Superintendent Thompson suggested this discussion occur at the March meeting and that members wishing to learn more about the budget process visit the Board's event page to watch for scheduled budget meetings. <https://granderie.ca/board/event/all-events>

During the budget process, a budget survey is usually distributed for feedback from stakeholders. This is a good conduit for collecting feedback for the upcoming budget cycle.

(b) Grand Erie's Virtual Learning Academy – SEAC Input

L. Munro

Superintendent Munro introduced herself and explained her portfolio includes support for the Virtual Learning Academy (VLA) which currently has 4,500 students. The virtual school has been operating for about nine months and she is now gathering stakeholder data to help



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determine its feasibility as an ongoing entity. At this point, there is no direction from the Ministry of Education, but senior administration wants to be prepared. She was provided with consent to record this portion of the meeting.

Question #1 What do you believe is working well in the VLA?

P. Boutis shared her daughter is in a regular class and asynchronous learning. It works well as her teacher became more comfortable with technology. Students became more adept at logging on and off. The board has organized it well and it is good for students with social anxiety and may help with differentiated instruction. She felt the use of itinerant teachers worked well.

W. Rose noted she doesn't have a child in the VLA but is grateful for the feedback and they can learn from this experience.

L. DeJong noted she is seeing more parents engaging and better understanding their child's educational needs. Parents are adapting. There is some real pride from parents who share pictures of their child's work with Lansdowne Children's Centre staff.

Question #2 What do you see as the biggest challenges?

P. Boutis suggested the lack of peers and socialization. She also asked how elementary students were assessed and how is attendance recorded? Is EQAO going to be conducted or will it be cancelled? Her family rearranged their home life and appreciated the opportunity to learn more about how her children learn and how to teach but is unsure of the expectations overall and learning is often determined by how independent the child is and whether the family is able to carve out enough home time to instruct or help students.

R. Collver also noted we need to be mindful of technology issues arising from increased internet activity if we move forward.

K. Jones concerned about parent overload. Many of her colleagues are finding it difficult to help their children while holding down a job at the same time and are also not getting time away from their kids.

W. Rose suggested a virtual school be built into each home school, so they would not have difficulty with technology and students could have a half day of virtual learning and still experience their socialization.

K. Jones noted Grand Erie had experienced considerable connectivity issues with in-school virtual learning.

L. DeJong said many parents are struggling. Schools put a lot of effort in providing work and connecting with the Educational Assistant. Younger children especially are missing the routines in school as well as the socialization. Also, families who have more than one child in VLA experience even more stress, even if an older child can help.

L. Boswell noted the social and mental health concerns especially among older elementary and secondary students who prefer to be connected with friends. Contact Brant is noticing some depression as they are missing their school friends.



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T. Waldschmidt noted virtual school means children don't get to leave home resulting in no clear beginning and end of their school day. If the child doesn't hit their benchmarks during the day, the parent may ask them to spend additional time learning, e.g., after dinner.

M. Gatopoulos has four young children in VLA, and found the inconsistent schedule required a lot of running back and forth. The play-based curriculum is hard to keep kids focused especially with three team meetings daily. He asked to have it reduced to twice daily and is still struggling.

L. DeJong shared parents are concerned about trying to fit into the schedule and the child is often stressed as they can't get on. Parents have asked for variability on how they use the class and want permission to take work away. Worried about the effect on children who are seeing this level of stress in their parents and wondering where is the benefit from this process?

Question #3 Is there a desire to continue to offer a Virtual Academy in 2021-2022?

Superintendent Munro asked attendees to place their response in the chat feature.

Question #4 Anything else you want us to know?

There were no further questions or comments.

Superintendent Munro thanked the group for their valuable input which will be very helpful in future planning.

### **C-1 Business Arising from Minutes and/or Previous Meetings** **W. Rose**

(a) Ratification of Minutes January 21, 2021

Moved by: M. Gatopoulos

Seconded by: L. DeJong

**THAT** the minutes for SEAC 20-05 be approved as circulated.

**CARRIED**

### **D-1 New Business** **W. Rose**

(a) Standard 2 – The Board's General Model for Special Education, Appendices B & C

L. Thompson

Under Grand Erie's vision – it should be noted that not all school boards support congregated classes.

This standard includes eight guiding principles and is intended to clarify the general model for the public.

Discussion:

An in-depth review of the eight guiding principles and extensive feedback from SEAC members was obtained. This feedback will be included in not only Standard 2 of Grand



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Erie's Special Education Plan, but also included in the review of Policy P1 – Special Education Guiding Principles, which is coming up for review in April 2021.

**E-1 Other Business W. Rose**

- (a) Regional Special Education Council – January 29, 2021 Updates K. Mertins

Regional Special Education Counsel involving school boards in Ontario's Southwest region meets three times a year.

Legal presentation speculated about the kinds of human rights claims likely to come out of the COVID context where the focus is anticipated to be around adverse impact (when someone is unable to participate in a service because of their protected ground) rather than overt discrimination.

Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) Right to Read Commission meetings resume in April 2021 where discussion about recommendations will continue; report may be out in May 2021.

Accessibility K-12 Standards Development Committee have completed their work; publication date is not yet announced but the process will involve a 45-day consultation period where anyone can respond (Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility).

Meeting minutes: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/standards-development-committee-meeting-minutes>

Bill 172 has passed 2<sup>nd</sup> reading: requires school boards to develop policies and guidelines with respect to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) and that Teacher's Colleges and Early Childhood Education programs be required to provide FASD training.

[https://www.ola.org/sites/default/files/node-files/bill/document/pdf/2020/2020-02/b172\\_e.pdf](https://www.ola.org/sites/default/files/node-files/bill/document/pdf/2020/2020-02/b172_e.pdf)

- (b) L. Boswell informed members that Contact Brant recently received funding and hired an FASD coordinator.

**F-1 Standing Items W. Rose**

- (a) Policy/Procedures Out for Comment P. Curran

Members were advised the three documents currently out for comment guide staff in their day to day operations. They were invited to review and send comments to [kathryn.giannini@granderie.ca](mailto:kathryn.giannini@granderie.ca) by February 25, 2021.

[F101 Hospitality and Food Expenses](#)

[P102 Procedures for Experiential Learning Programs](#)

[SO24 Copyright - Fair Dealing Guidelines](#)



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- (b) Trustee Update – Current Board Activities T. Waldschmidt / R. Collver

Budget process is well under way.

Board Room will be re-opened for physical meetings, but trustees have decided to remain with virtual meetings.

Media attention has been focused on the asymptomatic target testing required in at least 5% of our schools, which translates to three schools per week in Grand Erie. Working with local health units to help prioritize the schools for testing which are in high transmission or elevated case areas. Testing is a combination of self diagnosis and RT-PCR tests. A less invasive method is also being pursued, especially for younger students. Testing will be voluntary and will require parental / guardian consent.

As a result of a recent retirement, we are welcoming April Smith from Avon Maitland DSB who comes to Grand Erie with a wealth of experience.

The board developed a new position of Principal Leader for Indigenous students. They will also be responsible for equity.

Board received funding to provide technology to students and staff.

Board Room is being updated to improve the audio and video to continue engagement.

Weekly conversation with the Minister of Education to receive guidance which informs communications and last minutes decisions.

Still working on the revised multiyear plan and will be engaging with many stakeholders to develop the next brochure.

L. Boswell asked if the switch in dates of March Break required change to e.g., cleaning schedules in schools.

R. Collver noted the switch required many things to happen behind the scene, calendars were revised, and assessments were rescheduled. Generally spring break is a time when schools receive extra attention but currently the cleaning is at such a high level that it is not required this year.

R. Collver and T. Waldschmidt would like any feedback on this agenda item and invited members to provide a list of any areas where they would like the trustees to focus.

L DeJong noted it is really helpful to get the high notes of what the board is doing and would like to keep this communication open.

L. Boswell remarked it is nice to know how the board is addressing situations and is helpful when they are working with families of the board.



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**G-1 Information Items W. Rose**

(a) None.

**H-1 Community Updates W. Rose**

(a) None.

**I-1 Correspondence W. Rose**

(a) None.

**J-1 Future Agenda Items and SEAC Committee Planning W. Rose**

(a) SEAC Goal Setting - W. Rose

Would like to have a discussion to set goals when board staff are not present. She and P. Boutis discussed a survey with directed questions to members with the purpose of collecting input. PAAC on SEAC provides guidance on what they can accomplish. K. Jones has spent a long time working on Monkey Survey but may be easier to send questions in email or use Google doc which will collect information in spreadsheet. P Boutis would like to have this conversation and will compose some questions for input to get the topic underway.

(b) Discussion of Budget Suggestions – L. Thompson

(c) Universal Design Discussion - P. Boutis

**K-1 Next Meeting W. Rose**

(a) Thursday, March 11, 2021 | MS Teams | 6:00 p.m.

**L-1 Adjournment W. Rose**

Moved by: L. Boswell

Seconded By: T. Waldschmidt

“**THAT** the SEAC 20-06 meeting of February 18, 2021 meeting be adjourned at 8:09 p.m.”

**CARRIED**