



Special Education Advisory Meeting

Thursday, October 21, 2021 6:00 PM

MS Teams Meeting

MINUTES

Present: Chair W. Rose, W. Baker, L. Boswell, P. Boutis, C. Brady, T. Buchanan, B. Bruce, R. Collver, L. DeJong, A. Detmar, M. Dumoulin, J. Gemmill, K. Jones, F. Lainson, K. Mertins, L. Nydam, W. Rose, L. Scott, L. Sheppard, L. Thompson, J. Trovato T. Waldschmidt, J. White, T. Wilson.

Regrets: P. Bagchee, A. Csoff, M. Gatopoulos.

Recorder: P. Curran.

A - 1 **Opening**

(a) **Welcome**

Chair Rose called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. She Informed members the meeting would be recorded.

The Land Acknowledgement Statement was read by Chair Rose.

(b) **Agenda Additions/Deletions/Approval**

Add C-1 Business Arising (d) Nursing Shortage SEAC Input – W. Rose
Amend D-1 New Business (a) to indicate P. Boutis item – P. Boutis
Add G-1 Information Items (b) Nursing Services Update – J. White
Add G-1 Information Items (c) Accessible Features for EQAO / OSSLT – J. White

Moved by: A. Detmar

Seconded by: C. Brady

THAT the SEAC 21-02 Agenda for Thursday, October 21, 2021 be approved as amended.
CARRIED

B - 1 **Timed Items**

(a) **Balanced School Year Pilot Project**

Superintendent Baker explained a committee has been exploring the implementation of a non-traditional calendar which would start in August after a five-week summer break with the extra 20 days spread throughout the year. It is not perfectly balanced but other than the starting date, matches the usual school year calendar as far as Professional Activity dates, statutory holidays, exam and reporting dates. Across Ontario, 29 other school boards as well as many in other parts of Canada and North America are using this model. The research indicates learning loss occurs after a two-month summer break and the time it takes students to catch up affects their educational outcome. The traditional calendar has been in place for 150 years and accommodates parents and teachers who often plan summer vacations based on this schedule.



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The subcommittee has been working on the pilot features for a year now and will submit a report to the Board in November. The pilot is intended for the 2022-23 school year in one Grand Erie elementary school. Further comments are welcome by email to wayne.baker@granderie.ca.

J. White asked if the study included any information on mental health and wellness. Superintendent Baker indicated there is surrogate information on the benefits of shorter, more frequent breaks that reduce student and staff stress and improve behaviour.

C. Brady informed members, her daughter has taught G1 and children with special needs, from a balanced year calendar for 17 years in Australia and notes how both students and staff return from these breaks refreshed while retaining their learning and their routines.

(b) **A Day in the Life of the Speech Language Pathologist (SLP)**

K. Mertins explained the SLP work at all tiers and that speech pathology requires a good understanding of speech and language to assist in implementing strategies for good language development.

Most of their time is spent in tier 3 individualised support for students.

M. Dumolin works the area from the middle of our board from Lake Erie up through the centre of our district. She has an interesting portfolio as part of her time is school based speech language pathology.

A Day in the Life of a Speech Language Pathologist

A. Supporting Students in Classroom

1. How Many Students do you Support in a Week?

The number of students an SLP see in a week varies significantly depending on the work that needs to be completed (e.g., assessments vs. resource team meetings or report writing).

2. How Many Students do you Support in a Year?

A full-time school SLP accepts approximately 120-140 referrals each school year. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) SLPs see fewer students because the service is more time intensive.



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3. How do Schools Access Your Support?

Students who are discharged from Lansdowne Preschool Speech and Language Services in Year 2 of Kindergarten are transitioned to school-based speech and language services

Referrals for individualized, student-specific support are made through discussion at a school resource team meeting.

Information provided by teachers, school staff and parents/guardians help to determine if a referral is appropriate and what type of assessment might be needed (e.g., history of SLP involvement, areas of concern, severity of communication difficulties, etc.)

Parents must provide informed consent for the involvement of Communication Services.

SLPs are available to consult generally with school staff at any time.

B. With Students:

Work 1:1 with students to complete speech and language assessments

Observe students in the classroom setting in order to evaluate needs and abilities

Supervise intervention sessions being conducted by Communicative Disorders Assistants (CDA)

C. In Schools:

Attend resource team meetings, IPRC meetings and/or case conferences

Review student OSRs

Consult and collaborate with teachers

Meet with parents/guardians

Work within classrooms to support whole-class language and literacy programming.

D. In the Office:

Contact parents/guardians to obtain consent, gather background information, share assessment results, provide recommendations, discuss progress and next steps

Write assessment and progress reports

Set goals for CDA intervention

Make referrals to outside agencies

Develop and compile resources for home or classroom use (e.g., visual supports, communication books, home programming materials, etc.)

Respond to emails, manage caseload, schedule visits

Collaborate with other professionals



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E. How Does Your Role Support Students in the Classroom?

Prevention – interventions can prevent literacy and behaviour problems
Collaboration – contribute to goal setting, planning and curriculum accessibility
Modelling – Team Teaching and model intervention activities
Adaptations – recommend task adaptations to augment student success
Screening & Assessment – Group-administered or one-on-one
Identification – Identify speech, language and communications challenges
Intervention – individual treatment, small and large group as well as educators.

Questions:

P. Boutis asked how the team works with a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

K. Mertins explained the SLP will meet with teachers who are seeking to help students develop goals.

C - 1 **Business Arising from Minutes and/or Previous Meetings**

(a) **Ratification of Minutes September 16, 2021**

Page 5, 3rd paragraph text has purple underlined font.

Moved by: L. DeJong

Seconded by: J. Trovato

THAT the SEAC 21-01 Minutes for Thursday September 16, 2021 be approved as amended.

CARRIED

(b) **Special Education and Well-Being Summer Programs Funding 2021-2022**

R Collver commented on September 16, 2021 C-1 (b) and noted Chair Rose considered sending a letter of support requesting funding for next year's programs.

Chair Rose asked for data to support the letter she will draft.

L. Sheppard noted the summer funding has now been rolled into the GSN (Grants for Student Needs) but believes a letter of support will still be beneficial. Staff are compiling data for a Board / Ministry report and will be happy to share that for inclusion in the letter.

(c) **Ltr – K-12 Education Standards and AODA Oct 2021**

Members reviewed the letter developed by the subcommittee members who included P. Boutis, R. Collver, W. Rose and K. Jones.



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L. Boswell asked about #6 (b) the possible inclusion of peer / friend input to a student's IEP. She is aware many students do not want their IEP to be known to others.

P. Boutis shared the recommendation came from a course she is studying, noting that sometimes the IEP gets hidden away and is never seen again. It begs the questions, "why are we hiding this?" And "why are we hiding disabilities". The goal is also to make peer to peer relationships more fulsome and inclusive.

L. Boswell suggested 'voluntary' or 'opportunity' be added to indicate it is not required, but is a choice by the student or family.

P. Boutis will revise the letter before it is submitted.

Moved by: L. Boswell

Seconded by: L. DeJong

THAT the letter outlining Grand Erie DSB SEAC comments in respect to the Education Standards Development Committee's recent work be sent to them with a copy to Accessibility in Ontario.

CARRIED

(d) **Nursing Shortage – Input Discuss from SEAC**

Superintendent Thompson read the communication from the Ministry asking about numbers for students impacted by the shortage. As the matter is on their mind a letter is very timely.

K. Jones was happy with the letter but unsure how the situation can be remedied.

R. Collver participated in a weekly Minister's teleconference where she learned this situation is on his mind and is grateful they followed up with Grand Erie asking for numbers.

J. White mentioned her addition to the agenda may be more opportune at this time. She informed members they received communication from Home and Community Care Support Services to let us know the Ministry of Health amended the self-directed care program for family managed home care and it provides temporary options for students who require nursing services to attend school by providing funding to clients to purchase nursing services. Schools must accept the services and the funding is only available to approved students during the 2021-2022 school year. The board will have to develop partnership agreements to permit this work to happen.



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Moved by: P. Boutis
Seconded by: L. Boswell

THAT the letter requesting Ministries review the nursing shortage and take steps to rectify the situation, be sent as drafted.

CARRIED

(e) **GEPIC Representative from SEAC**

T. Waldschmidt offered to let his name stand. Superintendent Thompson will inform the Director's office.

D - 1 **New Business**

(a) **Annual Update – Grand Erie's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2017-2022 Input Session**

Ms. Mertins outlined the current year's completed updates in section 9.

She shared the Accessibility Committee works collaboratively with the Safe and Inclusive Schools Committee and members review board policies and procedures through an accessibility lens. They also take information from staff and student census reports.

Grand Erie staff were provided with an incredible professional development day this past year and we are happy to announce the development of an accessible Grand Erie application and a Parent Portal.

Information Technology staff, Educational Technology staff, Student Success staff, Special Education staff and Elementary Program staff worked hard throughout this year to increase teacher awareness and implementation of accessible features.

A holistic approach is employed whenever possible, e.g., when the track at a secondary school was upgraded, the approach path was made accessible as well.

Visual cues will be added to stairs, railings, parking lots and any other places where it is required.

Plan to continue with the Rick Hansen Foundation partnership and looking to provide another Ambassador Showcase as they did last year.

Currently rolling out "How Can We Help You?" signs to schools.

Public buildings are required to meet the accessibility deadline of 2025.

Asked SEAC for input on any areas that could be included

P. Boutis asked if the committee is focusing on high level barriers to curriculum, such as adaptive materials, digital documents.



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K Mertins advised the board's web designer will be meeting with the committee to discuss print and how we can bring more uniformity to get maximum accessibility.

R. Collver thanked the Accessibility Committee for their work and expressed her desire that the government makes accessibility a true focus.

(b) **Grand Erie's Student Achievement and Well-Being Plan 2020-2021 – Outcomes for Students with Special Education Needs**

We continue to support educator understanding of effective differentiated instruction and assessment for students with special education needs.

Students are helped to develop their understanding of effective strategies that support their social- emotional well-being and learn how to use them.

Support is directly provided to students whenever possible.

An enhanced focus on supporting educators to meet the strengths and learning and well-being needs of their students.

Lexia Core5 was offered to 3,203 students and 38% advanced at least one grade equivalent level. There was a 33% increase in the number of students who improved skills and achieved success at grade level by the end of the school year.

Lexia Power Up was used by 599 students in grades 6-12 who completed 78,342 units resulting in 17% of participants moving above the foundational skills level.

TeachTown was provided to students in Intensive Support self-contained classes to independently practice and master life skills related to their individual needs. There were 3,498 passed or mastered lessons in this medium.

The provision of LRT (Learning Resource Teacher) support needed to be re-envisioned in order to best support students learning remotely. Involved a triangulation of communication between the principal, LRT and classroom and/or guidance staff to build a shared understanding of student strengths and needs.

Enhanced Autism Training Program was run through the Geneva centre to assist teachers who have students on the Autism Spectrum. The training increased staff confidence and impacted student success positively.



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Strategies to support Students with Complex Needs require collaboration between family, school, and community to ensure the child's needs are met. A virtual environment provides more challenges and requires staff develop new strategies.

Student Mental Health and Well Being was ongoing with social and emotional lessons delivered in person and virtually for which Social Workers received training. Staff worked with Dr. Stephen Lewis to develop the Grand Erie Non-Suicidal Self-Injurious Protocol (NSSI). Professional learning in this area was provided to support staff. The training will be rolled out to administrators as well.

Comments on the value of the summer supports and its positive impact on students were shared.

Priorities for 2021-22

Education for Learners with Special needs

An asset-based focus will support accessible learning for all students
Schools will build the conditions for full participation of Universal design
Schools will provide opportunities using a tiered approach to strategies and supports.

Mental Health and Well-Being

Students have knowledge and skills to tend to their own well-being.
School personnel have the knowledge and skills to support students' well-being using preferred resources.
Staff have the knowledge and skills to tend to their own well-being.

T. Waldschmidt asked about the Lexia advancement. Would like to know the breakdown and if the 33% was included in the 38%.
Superintendent Thompson will get the data for next meeting.

R. Collver asked if the principal hires the Learning Resource Teacher (LRT) and how long they stay in that role. Is there a system guideline for what they should be looking for in the staff member?

J. White stated administrators are provided with some guidelines for the LRT, but cautioned flexibility is required as each school has different needs. They monitor the duration of the LRT in a specific role. Have noticed over the last couple of years they had to train eight (8) new elementary LRT. L. Sheppard noted the secondary LRT movement is slight and usually occurs from LRT changing location but remaining



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in the same role. Superintendent mentioned often LRT move into an administrator's role.

R. Collver would like to see some continuity and encourage staff to remain in the role.

T. Waldschmidt asked how a student would fall under the NSSI protocol.

Superintendent Thompson indicated that the protocol is to help school staff know how to help students who intentionally injure themselves through, cutting, hitting or other means. There are a variety of reasons why students engage in this behaviour and students may come to school with wounds, scars, etc. This protocol will describe how to help the student and the family.

E - 1 Other Business

(a) D. Lepofsky – A Practical Guide to the Duty to Accommodate

P. Boutis asked members to review the video which will be discussed at the next meeting with an opportunity for questions.

W. Rose watched the video which runs about one and a quarter hours but very worthwhile to get an overview of accommodation in a broad sense. The accompanying document contains links to each of the major headings or topics addressed in the video.

F - 1 Standing Items

(a) Policy/Procedures Out for Comment

Members were advised of all policies and procedures currently under review and given instructions for commenting if they so wished.

(b) Trustee Updates

T. Waldschmidt

- i) Thanked everyone for attending tonight.
- ii) Thanked everyone for their work over the summer.
- iii) Thanked the committee who did the research and the daunting work on the letter.

R. Collver

- i) Thanked members for allowing her and Trustee Waldschmidt to bring updates from the board. Sent hope these are helpful and welcomes any feedback.



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- ii) September 30th was Orange Shirt Day and National Day of Truth and Reconciliation. The Indigenous Education Team provided a number of supports to every school aligned with the curriculum to learn about the legacy of residential school system. There was outstanding participation in classrooms across Grand Erie.
- iii) The Board received annual operating and learning plans from the senior team which guide the work of the system and address the goals of Grand Erie. The plans are available on our website.
- iv) K. Mertins mentioned the October Professional Development that focused on Census data and organizational behaviour.
- v) Congratulations to Facility Services for planting 100 trees and placing 100 stones to create peaceful places for sitting and /or reading.

G - 1 **Information Items**

a) **Relic of the Past: Identification Placement Review Committees (IPRC)**

P. Boutis indicated this was interesting to read the institutional history of how the current IPRC was developed over the years.

Superintendent Thompson found it interesting and noted one of the original purposes was to assess the scope of the special services to ensure funding was available. Ministry of Education funding has changed so much that an IPRC is no longer required to secure services for a student. She encouraged members to read it as it is an interesting read.

K. Mertins noted this is a timely item in terms of board and system professional learning and barriers. She will share it with her psychological services and speech/language pathologists as it is a great concrete example of how thinking can change process.

b) **Accessible Features EQAO for OSSLT Update**

We brought concerns about the lock down browser for students who were going to participate in the EQAO

Last year EQAO hired a company to create a lock down browser in which the assessment could be taken electronically but would block access to any research. Grand Erie was not included in the pilot.

As a result many of the accessibility features our students were familiar with were missing, although others were available. This seemed to be a disadvantage to many students. There is now an updated lock down browser but does allow access to Word Q which many of our students use, but the browser's main feature is still read and write. Grand Erie's Information Technology Services department is creating a work around for four students. The first window for assessment has just opened and there will be



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another in the spring so we will be looking for the feedback on how this works for our students.

H - 1 **Community Updates**

a) Inclusion Action in Ontario

P. Boutis explained all information is included in her draft letter.

b) Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN)

i. Gold Standard

ii. ODEN Raising Expectations

F. Lainson recently attended the ODEN Expectations workshop provided for parents and students up to age 12. It provides a different perspective, encourages students to keep their options open and to continue the development of soft skills. Another session will be available on November 23rd. Also on November 9th there was one for students in Grade 6 and above for daytime and evening sessions. She encouraged everyone to attend if possible.

T. Buchanan shared October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month held by ODEN and Community Living. The Grand River dam in Paris is currently lit up in bright blue to show support. They were unable to get Brantford on board the past two years but hoping for next year.

I - 1 **Correspondence**

a) M. Jacques – Offering Presentation on Literacy

J. White mentioned he previously spoke at a Regional Special Education Council (RSEC) meeting.

Members would like to have him speak at a future SEAC meeting.

Chair Rose will look into the details and determine if there is a cost involved and report at the November meeting.

J - 1 **Future Agenda Items and SEAC Committee Planning**

None

K - 1 **Next Meeting**

Thursday, November 18, 2021 | 6:00 PM | MS Teams

At this time, we will continue to meet virtually as the Board Room will not be able to accommodate everyone with distancing and the Board requires attendees to follow COVID protocols.



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L - 1 **Adjournment**

Moved by: P. Boutis

Seconded by: A. Detmar

THAT the SEAC 02-20 meeting held October 21, 2021 be adjourned at 8:11 PM.

Carried