



Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-07

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, March 11, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

SEAC Members

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

Regrets: P. Boutis, M. Carpenter, A. Csoff, L. Scott, R. Winter.

Resource Staff

Present: P. Bagchee, L. Boudreault, K. Mertins, S. Slaman, L. Thompson, J. White

Guests:

Present: J. Gemmill, ITS Staff, S. Gibson, Grand Erie DSB Trustee

Recorder: P. Curran.

A-1 Opening **W. Rose**

(a) Welcome

Chair Rose welcomed everyone, called the meeting to order at 6:04 and read the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

(b) Agenda Additions / Deletions / Approvals W. Rose
Add D-1 New Business (c) EQAO Grade 9 Math Assessment and OSSLT Assistive Technology Limitations – J. White

Moved by: C. Brady

Seconded by: M. Gatopoulos

THAT the SEAC 20-07 Agenda for Thursday, March 11, 2021 be approved as amended.

CARRIED

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

(a) Book Club 47 ;02 Trustee S. Gibson

Trustee Gibson informed members she recently met with Joe Tice, the board's Indigenous Education Lead and is very excited about the proposed book club initiative. Together they chose a book and have invited SEAC and GEPIC committee members, trustees and senior management to read the book with a plan for a later virtual discussion.

"Pride and Rezjudice", written by Sara General is a fictional light read and was chosen as a positive story which will help promote understanding and enjoyment of the Haudenosaunee culture.



Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-07

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, March 11, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

Trustee Gibson and Mr. Tice will meet virtually with the author who is a resident of the Six Nations of the Grand River on Turtle Island and hope everyone enjoys Ms. General's work. This book as well as her other publications is available at the Good Minds Book Store, 188 Mohawk Street Brantford for \$14.99 and a Kindle version of this book is also available on Amazon.ca for \$3.68 (Mar 12/21). (<https://www.sarageneral.com/bio>).

Good Minds will deliver for anyone not able to get into the store. This publication is not yet available at libraries within our district.

In response to members questions, Trustee Gibson informed a flyer is in development and planned for the end of March. She asked that members please reach out with any other questions via email.

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

(a) Ratification of Minutes February 18, 2021 W. Rose

i. K. Jones noted the connectivity issues were indicated in this board, not "other" at the bottom of page 4.

Moved by: L. Boswell

Seconded by: K. Jones

THAT the minutes for SEAC 20-06 be approved as amended.

CARRIED

(b) Budget – SEAC Input Activity J. White

Members were provided with two questions and broken into small group discussion for 10 minutes after which ideas were presented to the main group.

1. Considering our Guiding Principles, are there any misalignments in the use of funds?
2. Where would you prioritize new and / or additional positions?

Group 1 –

- When comparing staffing and spending between the elementary and secondary panels, it seems that the tiered approach is much stronger in elementary (more LRTs and EAs). More self-contained classes in secondary. This doesn't seem to align with guiding principles and tiered support. Why is there less pressure to keep students in the regular classroom at the secondary level?
- We did discuss some of the reasons for spending differences – enrollment is different in each panel and the cost of a teacher is different in each panel. Also, there is an increase in the number of self-contained classes at secondary because this is the time when many parents of special education students want to move from regular class to self-contained class.
- If some self-contained budget was diverted to hiring additional EAs, could there be more inclusion at secondary. EA support is integral to inclusion. More EAs are needed.



Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-07

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, March 11, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

Group 2 –

- Generally felt the funds were appropriately distributed
- Seems to be a lack of transition support for people leaving school at age 18

Group 3 –

- Generally, agree with distribution of funds.
- Building use of other support staff at the higher level to better communicate with parents; using increased Educational Assistant support to build capacity and engagement instead of waiting for students to demonstrate model behaviour.
- Programming for enrichment teachers, e.g., weekly / monthly packages delivered to classroom teachers.
- Create blocks of virtual enrichment programming.
- Could alternative curriculum resources be created for the classroom teacher to deliver.
- Flip the roles in the classroom so that the teacher spends more time with the child with exceptionalities than does the Educational Assistant.
- Provide more EA support for integration opportunities.
- Develop / encourage peer to peer supports.
- Integration and transition support teacher to support, monitor and follow up on self-contained classroom transitions, especially complicated transitions.
- Transition support teacher 18 to adult.

Group 4 –

- Didn't have enough information to identify priorities of fund distribution.
- Need support workers to ensure social work, etc. in place to help build resiliency for integration in virtual modules.
- Many parents still don't understand the Educational Assistant allocation process.
- Students in the middle are often left out and just getting by; need help in behaviour modification.

Group 5 –

- Noticed the increasing support in classroom for students and staff struggling with Mental Health and how it fits nicely with the information shared in January
- Reduced suspensions, how are behaviour concerns supported for home learners
- Psycho Education consults are on the fence as the real need for them is often in opposition to lack of understanding how learning differences present.

Ms. White thanked everyone and invited them to add any additional information to the MS Form from the link they received.

She also reminded everyone that the draft board report for allocation of educational assistants will be shared at the April meeting.



Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-07

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, March 11, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

Grand Erie is using version 7 of the Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test or C-CAT which is a universal screening process for all grade 3 students designed to measure a student's ability to reason in areas of Verbal (words), Quantitative (numerical) and Nonverbal (spatial).

Students are given a score for each of the three areas and an overall score which is designed to indicate the scope and strength of a student's overall cognitive ability for learning.

The results provide individual information, which was used as determination for enhanced learning support, but educators recently began exploring different ways to use C-CAT information.

Exemptions are a school-based decision in collaboration with parents but are discouraged as students are accommodated whenever possible and preclude the need for exemptions in many cases.

Ms. White explained it was being presented to SEAC again because of administration barriers imposed by COVID. A virtual assessment is available but is US based and provides concerns about the administration of home testing.

C-CAT will be administered this spring to students learning face to face with an opportunity provided for those students in virtual learning to test in the fall, providing all tests occur before October as outlined by provincial requirements.

Notification letters will go to families both in school and in virtual learning outlining the process available for both formats.

D-1 New Business W. Rose

(a) Survey Monkey W. Rose

The survey is intended to elicit more interaction from members, to decide on topics of interest to members and to determine if any members wish to present on a topic.

Chair Rose hopes to have a link for the survey ready for the next meeting.

(b) Staff Highlights – SEAC Input L. Thompson

The Special Education Management Team (SEMT) recently met with the Chair and Vice-Chair and discussed the return of system staff presentations on their role in special education.

Members suggested they also speak about how many students they serve, how many schools they work in and would like to hear about a typical day on the job.

Would also like to learn about the resources they bring to the classrooms and how they support the teacher.



Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-07

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, March 11, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

E-1 Other Business

W. Rose

- (a) EQAO Grade 9 Math Assessment of Mathematics and Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test- Assistive Technology Limitations **J. White**

Wanted SEAC to be aware that this year EQAO will be a fully digital assessment platform in a lockdown browser which has significant implications for students requiring assistive technology to support their output to show what they know. Students will only have access to the technology available in the lockdown browser.

Grand Erie students use three assistive technology applications, but EQAO hired a third-party vendor to create the assessment platform and they chose Kurzweil as the only assistive technology that will be available in the lockdown browser. Also, some of its features may not be available or may not be presented in a familiar format for students. Staff is working diligently with school administrators and learning resource teachers to help ensure families understand the limitations of the digital model.

Grand Erie Information Technology staff is currently working with the third-party vendor to allow Word Q, but Dictate will not be available.

Practice tests are available to help students become familiar with the current platform and format, but staff feel this is not equitable.

Grade 9 assessment for math does not count toward their final grade unless the student and teacher have agreed upon it ahead of time.

OSSLT test must be attempted before students can access the course.

Members agreed to endorse a letter from SEAC announcing the committee's displeasure with the decision to hire the vendor who did not fully take assistive technology into consideration. W. Rose will compose a letter with assistance from J. White.

It was suggested that parent and student voices be included in the letter which will also be presented to the Grand Erie trustees and senior administration for endorsement.

- (b) Bylaw 8 – Committees of the Board, Draft SEAC Terms of Reference **L. Thompson**

Committee members were presented with a draft revision with proposed amendments that will come to the Board of Trustees in June.

The draft now includes reference to virtual meetings, has language updates and the addition of Section 3.10 Guests.

R. Collver requested all references be "Superintendent with responsibility for Special Education" for consistency. She also suggested clarification on 7.1 involving making recommendations by SEAC to the Board.

Chair Rose confirmed SEAC endorsed the proposed changes.



Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-07

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, March 11, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

- (c) Educational Assistant (EA) Allocation Process J. White

Allocation will happen in two steps this year.

In a tiered support approach, Educational Assistants are part of and support the classroom teacher / educator team where the main foci is the implementation of evidence-based practices in Learning for All, knowing the student, differentiated instruction and Universal Design for Learning.

The middle tier provides accommodations that are more intensive and individualized. There are fewer learners in this tier and the school Learning Resource Teacher (LRT) and in some cases, system support staff works closely with the classroom teacher / educator team to implement appropriate strategies and support.

The top tier involves Educational Assistants (EA) as a human resource who is available when the most intensive support is required. This may include students in self-contained classes or students in regular grades. EA support the students with extensive and pervasive Special Education needs.

EA are assigned to a school, not to individual students or programs and are designed to support the teacher or classroom and intentionally assist students with developing independence wherever possible. It is recognized that some students will require direct ongoing support from an educational assistant throughout their education.

Special education staff work collaboratively with Teacher Consultants and school administrators from March to the end of May to determine individual school allocations.

Administrators have flexibility to reassign EAs in different areas of their school where need, on any given day, exists.

The board report will be shared with members at the April SEAC meeting.

- (d) Right to Read K. Mertins

Ms. Mertins informed members she and Superintendent Thompson attended the virtual presentation with a few other staff who were all surprised at the messaging that was in such sharp contrast to the parents' comments last year who said the "right to read" was the reading of print and let's not confuse it with anything else and get everyone on the same page.

- Five (5) presentations over two hours were given by researchers/pre-service teacher professors from six (6) Ontario universities summarizing the "Right to Read" submission made to the Ontario Human Rights Commission.
- The main point of the submission was in advocating for the commission to broaden the scope of the inquiry from 'reading' to 'literacies' which they defined much more broadly to include both print language and visual information in relation to cultural context.



Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-07

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, March 11, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

- They also made the point that how literacy is defined depends on where on the globe literacy is happening and who is doing the defining; noted that what constitutes literacy has changed over time (i.e., in the 1700s the ability to sign one's name was the hallmark of literacy).
- Affirmed that oral language is the foundation of all literacy:
"Talking is the main way children get to know the world, understand complex events, and encounter different perspectives...engaging in stimulating talk is the only way young children can expand their *own* language skills – learning words, putting sentences together, and practicing the 'rules' of talk, such as taking turns in conversation." (Resnick & Snow, 2009, p3)
- Asserted that there is no universal method to teach reading; what works for one student does not work for all students.
- Talked about the importance of developing an appetite to read for pleasure and that this is in relation to a broad range of texts including those that are visual.
- We were challenged to change the "dominant narrative" about people who struggle with reading by recognizing that disability is a social construct and warned to be aware of "*scientism*" which is the unwarranted application of narrow science to underscore the recurring message that a "one size fits all approach has never worked and will never work"
- Teacher pre-service training is good.

Recent Study: Do children learn to read better with discovery learning than with explicit instruction?

<https://www.technologynetworks.com/neuroscience/news/instruction-or-discovery-study-suggests-a-clear-winner-when-learning-to-read-346103>

(e) SEAC Attendance Recording and Membership

W. Rose

When she and the Vice-Chair met with SEMT they discussed increasing two-way participation between members and staff to share the knowledge everyone can bring to the table.

We all need to be in attendance to engage in these discussions. Most members attend regularly, but sometimes life events take priority or technology is less than reliable. Obligations for attendance are set out in O Reg. 464/97 and Grand Erie DSB Bylaw 8.

If you are unable to attend a meeting, please notify the Recording Secretary. If you always provide notice but are about to miss the third successive meeting, please let W. Rose know so the Committee can pass a motion to excuse your absence for an extended period of time.

If you have not provided notice for your absence for three successive meetings, you will be deemed to have forfeited your seat at the table.

We want to encourage participation of all voices and going forward the Chair will track attendance to ensure a full membership is available.



Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-07

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, March 11, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

F-1 Standing Items

W. Rose

(a) Policy/Procedures Out for Comment

P. Curran

Members were advised on how to direct comments or concerns on the current policies and procedures available for comment.

Although not all policies are specific to special education, they will impact most staff and some students.

(b) Trustee Update – Current Board Activities

T. Waldschmidt / R. Collver

Trustee Waldschmidt explained the board celebrated Black History month in February and noted Banbury public school students brought awareness through daily announcements, murals and other activities to individuals who had made a difference in the world. Teachers reported the students were very engaged and gained an understanding of the importance of these persons' contributions.

He noted that February 24 was pink shirt day to oppose bullying with the 2021 theme, "Lift Each Other Up"

Also commented on the Spotlight on a Grand Erie staff member, what lessons they learned along their journey and the meaning of teamwork to them.

Social Workers who help students cope and who help them find solutions were celebrated.

Trustee Collver shared the Ministry's initiative to target asymptomatic testing; working with a third-party vendor to ensure we have the capability to do this for our students.

She noted the budget is at the front of everyone's mind right now and Grand Erie is waiting for the Ministry to release the 2021-22 GSN (Grants for Student Needs). The budget survey is posted to our website; please take a few minutes to answer the questions.

The Virtual Learning Academy (VLA) survey for parents is only available until March 12, 2021. A favourable response does not indicate a commitment by the board, the survey is intended only to gauge interest in this learning format.

Grand Erie Parent Involvement Committee (GEPIC) is offering a virtual spring series of Speakers which can be found at this link: <https://www.granderie.ca/board/news/join-us-gepic-virtual-thursday-spring-speaker-series>

Trustee Collver also acknowledged the hard work by staff across Grand Erie to ensure student safety and well being while learning. The many lessons learned during this pandemic will be of benefit going forward.



Special Education Advisory Committee SEAC 20-07

Virtual MS Teams

Thursday, March 11, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

- G-1 Information Items W. Rose**
- (a) None.
- H-1 Community Updates W. Rose**
- (a) None.
- I-1 Correspondence W. Rose**
- (a) LDAO SEAC Circular – March 2021 W. Rose
- EQAO and the OSSLT information are included in this document as well as other items.
- (b) Ltr – Hastings and Prince Edward DSB re COVID Vaccine Priority W. Rose
- This letter was recently received.
- J-1 Future Agenda Items and SEAC Committee Planning W. Rose**
- (a) SEAC Goal Setting W. Rose
- Haven't sent survey monkey yet but thank you for the information and education.
- K-1 Next Meeting W. Rose**
- (a) Thursday, April 22, 2021 | MS Teams | 6:00 p.m.
- L-1 Adjournment W. Rose**
- Moved by: M. Gatopoulos
Seconded By: K. Jones
"THAT the SEAC 20-07 meeting of March 11, 2021 meeting be adjourned at 8:07 p.m."
CARRIED