



# Special Education Advisory Committee

December 9, 2021

MS Teams Virtual Meeting

## AGENDA

### Land Acknowledgement

The Grand Erie District School Board recognizes the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe people, as the traditional peoples of this territory. We acknowledge and give gratitude to the Indigenous peoples for sharing these lands in order for us to continue our work here today.

### AGENDA

Item	Info.	Dia.	Res.	Responsibility
LEAD				
<b>A-1 Opening</b>				
(a) Welcome/ Land Acknowledgement Statement			√	W. Rose
(b) Roll Call			√	W. Rose
(c) Agenda Additions/ Deletions/ Approvals		√	√	W. Rose
LEARN				
<b>B-1 Timed Items</b>				
(a) A Day in the Life of the Psychoeducational Consultant	√	√		K. Mertins/Carol Purslow
(b) Standard 16 – Transportation* i. K-12 Accessibility Standards – Transportation*	√	√		J. White/Phil Kuckyt

Learn Lead Inspire



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Item	Info.	Dia.	Res.	Responsibility
<b>LEAD</b>				
<b>C-1 Business Arising from Minutes and/or Previous Meetings</b>				
(a) Ratification of Minutes November 18, 2021*			√	W. Rose
(b) Special Education Guiding Principles – i. P01 - Service Provision for Students with Special Education Needs* ii. Standard 2 Update* iii. Standard 2 Original* iv. Appendix B Update* v. Appendix B Original*	√	√	√	J. White
(c) SEAC Ltr of Support for Summer Programs*	√	√	√	W. Rose
<b>LEARN</b>				
<b>D-1 New Business</b>				
(a) Self-Contained Planning – Input Session	√	√	√	J. White
(b) Technology Access Clinic (TAC) – wait lists	√	√	√	K. Mertins



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Item	Info.	Dia.	Res.	Responsibility
<b>LEAD</b>				
<b>E-1 Other Business</b>				
(a) SEAC Chair and Vice-Chair Election Process for January 2022	√			J. White
(b) Guest Speaker – Michael Jacques	√	√	√	W. Rose
<b>INSPIRE</b>				
<b>F-1 Standing Items</b>				
(a) Policy/Procedures Out for Comment Send Comments on the following Policies and Procedures to: <a href="mailto:policiesandprocedures@granderie.ca">policiesandprocedures@granderie.ca</a> by January 13, 2022 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">F2 Budget Development Process</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">SO-008 Community Partnerships</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">SO-08 Community Partnerships</a></li> </ul>	√			W. Rose
(b) Trustee Updates	√			R. Collver/T. Waldschmidt
<b>LEARN LEAD INSPIRE</b>				
<b>G-1 Information Items</b>				
(a) Nil				



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Item	Info.	Dia.	Res.	Responsibility
LEARN LEAD INSPIRE				
<b>H-1 Community Updates</b>				
(a) Nil				
LEARN LEAD INSPIRE				
<b>I-1 Correspondence</b>				
(a) Nil				
INSPIRE				
<b>J-1 Future Agenda Items and SEAC Committee Planning</b>				
(a) Transitions – Transitions to Post-Secondary Destinations	√			W. Rose
<b>K-1 Next Meeting</b>				
Thursday, January 20, 2022   MS Teams	√			W. Rose
<b>L-1 Adjournment</b>				
Meeting adjourned at p.m.			√	W. Rose

Learn Lead Inspire

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## AGENDA

Note: Column Abbreviations

\* Attachments to the agenda

Info. Item for information only

Dia. Item for dialogue

Res. Item for resolution or recommendation

SEMT Special Education Management Team

AGENDA ITEM(S)

Standing:

- LDAO SEAC Circular September, November, February, April and June (as available).



## Special Education Advisory Meeting

Thursday, November 18, 2021

MS Teams Virtual

### MINUTES

**Present:** B. Afman, P. Bagchee, L. Boswell, P. Boutis, C. Brady, T. Buchanan, R. Collver, L. DeJong, J. Gemmill, K. Jones, F. Lainson, K. Mertins, L. Nydam, R. Rose (Chair), L. Sheppard, A. Smith, L. Thompson, J. Trovato, T. Waldschmidt, J. White.

**Regrets:** B. Bruce / T. Sault, A. Csoff, A. Detmar, M. Gatopoulos, L. Scott, T. Wilson.

**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 and read the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

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

Add I-1 Correspondence (a) Ltr – Halton DSB re Return to Semester Oct 2021

Moved by: L. DeJong

Seconded by: L. Boswell

THAT the SEAC 21-03 Agenda for Thursday, November 18, 2021 be approved as amended.

**Carried**

#### B - 1 Timed Items

##### (a) Destreamed Math and the Inclusion of Students with Special Education Needs

Superintendent Smith presented a video showing the history of streaming academic courses in Ontario, originating in the mid-19th Century. This practice was eventually deemed discriminatory based on perceived ability. Current educators know when students are streamed early on in their academic career, they are often unable to move into another area when their skills or interests change.

In the 1950's the Hope Commission promoted ability grouping and the building of special education schools. In 1961, three educational streams were created, Arts & Science, Business & Commerce, and Science, Technology & Trades and hundreds of vocational schools were built to develop Ontario's workforce. Ultimately, it became clear vocational schools were dead-end programs. In Toronto, these schools primarily consisted of students from racialized, working-class, or single-parent families and had a graduation rate of only 20% with little to no preparation for apprenticeship programs.

In 1980, a new curriculum with levels of Advanced, General and Basic was introduced, although streaming was essentially still intact.

Destreaming was introduced in 1988 to combat drop-out rates but many educators were frustrated and felt unsupported during this transition period. Even so, initial



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reports found destreaming to moderately improve students' attendance and achievement. Most school boards did begin destreaming in 1993.

Restreaming was introduced in 1999 with Academic, Applied and Essentials streams. While the structure was never intended to divide students along lines of ability and disability class and race, this was exactly the result.

Currently, destreaming is intended to dismantle this practice. Ontario is the last province in Canada which still promotes streaming. Students are asked to make academic decisions too early when they are streamed.

Superintendent Smith presented G9 Mathematic achievement data and noted the majority of students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) are enrolled in the Locally Developed program.

The Ontario Ministry of Education is working to help school boards address the policies and practices that have historically and negatively impacted students through streaming. This will be achieved by striving toward the new goals:

1. Create a cultural shift to identify and dismantle systemic discrimination and structural inequities.
2. Increase Educator Capacity so they can develop effective culturally-responsive instruction, assessment and evaluation in destreamed, multi-level classrooms.
3. Increase Student Engagement, Achievement and Well-being.

G9 teachers are working with program staff and leaders to receive learning and unpack the new G9 destreamed Math curriculum for the 2021-2022 school year.

Learning will continue as the G9 Science curriculum will be destreamed in 2022-2023 and G9 French, English and Geography will only be offered at the Academic level.

Shared goals in schools:

1. Pay attention to barriers and how they overall and intersect
2. Develop pedagogical practices that are differentiated, culturally relevant and responsive
3. Hold high and appropriate expectations of students
4. Create the conditions necessary to ensure positive identity as a mathematics learner

The changes in the G9 Math curriculum skills were discussed and the Ministry has developed an online Parent Guide.

What does it mean for students with diverse needs?

Understanding the diverse cultural knowledge, experience and competencies to the students, educators can build on students' identities and lived experiences to help them apply the principles of Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated



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Instruction to provide multiple entry points and maximize opportunities for all students to learn.

Superintendent Smith reviewed a comparison of High Expectations vs what they are not to ensure we do not limit students.

Professional learning and obtaining student voice will reinforce the relationship between the Lead Learner and the Co-Learner.

Questions:

T. Waldschmidt - were the topics listed on the one slide removed from the new Math curriculum in place now?

Answer:

No, they are now carried from G1 through to G9 although in the younger grades would look very different. Working with Educational Technology Team who are bringing in applications and devices and robotics. The new part will teach students where the applications work in the real world.

R. Collver – please elaborate on what the Ministry is offering for Capacity building and what we are doing to support teachers with the new curriculum.

Answer:

The new elementary curriculum just came to school boards in June 2020 and a small team was able to write a comparison for teachers. In September there was an open session for teachers and a spring session for principals to walk them through the new curriculum to help them understand. This year, a small team of Math coaches will work in secondary schools to help deliver the new curriculum. Dr. Christine Suurtamm is also working with school teams by being responsive to teachers' questions and providing classroom resources. All G9 classes are provided with manipulatives.

Staff is working on developing a responsive model and researching inclusive practices to help students learn in one space.

L. Boswell – Destreaming and universal design are great but realistically how can they meet the needs of students who are not challenged as well as the students who struggle to understand?

Answer:

The Universal Design is definitely where our learning will be focused to know how we can create questions that will challenge everyone.

One of our big fears is our focus will be on those students who struggle as we know they come with less experience and skill development. This will be a challenge for every class, and we are hoping to partner with G8 teachers as well.





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L. Boswell – Can you please explain multiple entry points?

Answer:

Entry level for all requires teachers to really know their students and gather their input to help determine where they are on the continuum of learning so they can decide on the next step for the student. This will require a lot of work to ensure everyone understands and learns.

C. Brady – provided some historical background on a Ministry of Education pilot project conducted with four teachers from Hagersville SS 1990-91. The biggest challenge was to teach differentiated instruction to secondary teachers.

Answer:

Superintendent Smith asked C. Brady to share more information about the history at the secondary level.

W. Rose – Will French and geography eventually be destreamed?

Answer:

There is a new science curriculum coming in June 2022. The applied level in French, English and geography courses will be retired. We have not received official notice but believe revised curriculum will eventually be announced for those subjects as well. We have reached out to other boards who have piloted revised curriculum, but we know there will be limited research as courses were impacted by COVID.

W. Rose -

As it seems destreaming will work much better in smaller classes, is there sufficient funding to support smaller classrooms?

Answer:

Class sizes were discussed as negotiations were ongoing when the new curriculum was introduced. However, we are funded for a certain number of students and bound by collective agreements. There has been some advocacy from other boards, and we maintain hope, but will continue to think creatively and positively to accomplish goals. These questions will be considered and taken forward as staff continues planning.

W. Rose – would like feedback on how destreaming works for G9 students with special needs or those who learn very quickly. Please let SEAC know if they want a letter to support funding for smaller class sizes.

Answer:

The initial change will create a profound impact on student lives and from recent data on students with Individual Education Plans as a starting point we know it will continue to change.



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(b) **A Day in the Life of the Communicative Disorders Assistant**

K. Mertins explained that the Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP) whose role we heard last month works hand in hand with the Communicative Disorders Assistant (CDA) to address speech and language needs for Grand Erie students.

CDA Tier 1 assistance particularly in the kindergarten and G 1 years is to provide classroom support on how to develop good language skills. In Tier 2 they conduct small group sessions and some individualized intervention. Most of their time is spent at the Tier 3 level is spent with students who require intensive individualized or targeted intervention.

B. Afman is a CDA who works in the central part of the board from Simcoe through Waterford and to the south end of Brantford.

1. How Many Students do you Support in a Week?  
Communications Disorders Assistants typically support 30-40 students in a week for individual / group intervention plus any in-class programs that may be available.  
  
They work in 7-10 schools per week and often travel between two or three schools per day.
2. How Many Students do you Support in a Year?  
CDA support 80-100 students per year plus deliver any in-class programs for students with FM / hearing needs.
3. How do Schools Access Your Support?  
School staff follow the In School Resource Team (ISRT) and the Resource Team (RT) models for students for whom they are concerned.  
Referrals are sent to the Speech / Language Pathologists (SLP) who will complete an assessment and if they think the student would benefit from group or individual intervention, will prepare goals that the student and CDA will work on together.  
CDA are clinically supervised by the SLP.

#### A Day in the Life of a Communications Disorder Assistant (CDA)

CDA usually have a set schedule so they are in the same school on the same day each week.

They check email or make phone calls to parents to ensure COVID screening has been completed.

Students are seen during instruction blocks and are encouraged to reach the goals set by the SLP. CDA also take notes on student progress at each session and usually update the classroom teacher when the student returns to class.

CDA deliver Tier 1 programs and consult with teachers about the needs in their class and how they can be supported by CDA.



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Nutrition breaks are spent catching up on notes, emailing homework, connecting with school staff.

Days are juggled around student needs and classroom schedules to ensure students are seen when struggling with transitions and to prevent intervention from disrupting a favoured class or event.

CDA may remain in one school for the day or travel between two or three. They communicate with SLP via email and phone during the week.

Friday is typically a prep day, preparing individualized sessions for each student, preparing material and homework, preparing COVID screening email, consulting with SLP, participating in department meetings, catching up on student sessions that may have been missed for various reasons during the week.

4. How Does Your Role Support Students in the Classroom?  
CDA Interventions can help prevent literacy and secondary behaviour problems and they collaborate on education goal setting planning and curriculum accessibility. They participate in modelling through team teaching and recommend adaptations for student success. CDA can screen students but are not permitted to conduct assessments. They identify speech and language challenges that directly impact student success and their evidence-informed interventions include individual treatment, small and large group instruction and consulting with other educators.

Chair Rose thanked Ms. Afman for sharing her role with SEAC members.

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

##### (a) Ratification of Minutes October 21, 2021

Change F-1 Standing Items (b) Trustee Update, (i) R. Collver noted the word in #4 should be changed from MENSA to Census.

"K. Mertins mentioned the October Professional Development that focused on ~~MENSA~~ Census data and organizational behaviour."

Moved by: C. Brady

Seconded by: J. Trovato

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

**Carried**

##### (b) D. Lepofsky – A Practical Guide to the Duty to Accommodate\* – Video Link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y32XvjWmDAQ>

P. Boutis reviewed the contents of the video and encouraged members to view it for themselves.

The Ontario Human Rights Code is several decades old now but it establishes certain grounds that cannot be used to discriminate against persons in the



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provision of employment, housing and services. It also applies to public and private schools.

Disability is broadly defined and includes mental health, medical disorders, temporary or permanent physical disability and learning disability. It is overlaid on every other piece of legislation in Ontario.

The concepts of direct discrimination vs adverse discrimination have melded. Includes the identification of discrimination whether it was intended to be discriminatory or not.

The Society of Creative Flexibility which dovetails nicely with universal design.

It's important to realize that a person's disability can change radically over time and will require different accessibility.

Notice if you create a barrier when you begin something new. Plan, then trial and modify if necessary.

Keep in mind the three Principles of Accommodation:

1. Dignity – are children required to offload at the back instead of same door as peers.
2. Individualization – creativity is the soul of accommodation, e.g., not giving everyone the same chair
3. Integration – full participation

K. Mertins enjoyed listening to the passion and how Mr. Lepofsky is able to make concrete ideas from abstract concepts.

L. Boswell asked if parents could seek additional Educational Assistant (EA) support through Ontario Human Rights code.

P. Boutis understands EA are supporting the classroom and teacher and from a dignity perspective most students don't want an adult attached to them. As well, parents and students do not direct the accommodation, it is a decision made by the board using available resources.

J. White discussed the need to collaborate with student and family to understand the best way to help support the student. There will be some circumstances where a student needs one to one support. She reminded members a main goal is to help students develop independence while learning.

#### (c) **Standard 1 – The Board's Consultation Process and Appendix A**

F. Lainson reviewed the revised standard which included updated dates and the revised questions determined by SEAC last year. Public consultation questions asked, 1. What information were you looking for when you looked up the Grand Erie



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District School Board Special Education Plan? 2. Were you able to locate the information that you were seeking? 3. Were your questions answered? 4. How might we make it easier for you to locate information related to special Education in Grand Erie? 5. Would you like someone to reach out to you to address your specific situation? Participants are provided an option to list a school they are associated with.

The new consultation will include the Learn Lead Inspire Vision and our new Mission and our Education Priorities.

The Mental Health and Child and Youth Strategies will now be covered under another area.

R. Collver asked if proposed changes for standards could be shared with members ahead of time as it's hard to read the screen.

R. Collver – the questions for consultation are excellent.

#### (d) **Input on the Term “Special Education”**

L. Sheppard noted the meeting agenda package included a summarized version of data submitted from educational staff, parents and students on using the term “Special Education”. This data was collected throughout October on the recommendation of SEAC from the September 2021 meeting. L. Sheppard shared that there were a variety of input, perspectives and options on the topic based on the questions:

1. Should Grand Erie District School Board stop using the term “Special Education”?
2. Why?
3. Provide some key words or a name that you think could be used to better represent the responsive interventions.
4. Who are you?
  - a. Parent
  - b. Student
  - c. Board Employee
  - d. Community Member
  - e. Other

SEAC members shared some additional input about the challenges with re-branding, and that there is support to proceed but that along side a new name needs to come a change in attitude, culture and mindset. Additional input included the need to do behind the scenes work before considering a name change to ensure that it fits with what is being evolved. There was also written input submitted that identified the need to further gather voice from parent and student populations to fully represent those parties.



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(e) **Lexia Data Collection Update**

In response to T. Waldschmidt question from the data shared at October's meeting, F. Sheppard confirmed the 33% of students who improved were included in the total 38%.

While some students did not increase their grade level, they did experience improvement in their reading skills.

(f) **AODA Education Standard Recommendations**

Members were encouraged to read the recommendations along with the referenced K-12 standards.

K. Mertins shared the Ontario Human Rights Commission has also weighed in and provided the following link for inclusion in the minutes.

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ohrc-submission-k-12-education-standards-development-committee-its-2021-initial-recommendations>

D - 1 **New Business**

(a) **A Bold New Vision – Grand Erie's Multi-Year Strategic Plan 2012-26 and Annual Learning and Operating Plan 2021-22**

Members were reminded Annual Learning and Operating Plan for 2021-22 which includes board's new vision of Learn Lead Inspire and the Mission Statement, "Together we build a culture of learning, well-being and belonging to inspire each learner".

Director Roberto connected the multi-year strategic plan to the 2021-22 annual learning and operating plan to move Grand Erie forward toward our vision. To achieve this everything we do, from the classroom to the boardroom, will reflect our priorities of Learning, Well-Being and Belonging.

**Learn**

To increase learning outcomes in mathematics for students by providing appropriate professional learning and coaching to support the implementation of effective instruction and assessment strategies.

**Learn**

To increase the overall reading proficiency of all students by providing appropriate professional learning and coaching to support the implementation of effective instruction and assessment strategies.

**Learn**

To prepare every student for their post-secondary destination (apprenticeship, community, college, university, workplace) by providing appropriate professional learning and by developing a centrally designed tool to track key indicators for each cohort to be used to develop individual supports.



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#### Lead

The well-being goals will increase the knowledge and skills of staff to better support learners in developing the capacity to tend to their own well-being through appropriate professional learning, combining research, connecting differentiated job-embedded coaching and supports, providing tier one social emotional and wellness resources for staff.

#### Inspire

To create multiple experiences where all learners feel a sense of belonging and are engaged in their learning by inviting a greater diversity of community voices to increase capacity and deepen understanding to remove systemic barriers and to deliver and act upon the staff census survey and to support leader learning in implement practices and response that are trauma informed, and reflect an anti-racist, anti-oppressive, equity and human rights lens.

#### Inspire

Through appropriate professional learning, and enhancing the Equity Champion program at the school level.

#### Inspire

Deepen our system commitment to reconciliation and improve education achievement outcomes for all First Nations, Métis and Inuit students through appropriate professional development and promoting and participating in reconciliation community engagement opportunities.

#### Operational Goals

All support services teams, Communications, Business Services, Facilities Services, Human Resources, Information Technology Services, Leadership have established goals, strategies and success criteria to support Grand Erie's Mission to build a culture of Learning, Well-being and Belonging to inspire every learner.

#### Questions:

W. Rose - does the board have partnerships with the Woodland Cultural Centre (WCC).

#### Answer:

No formal agreement with WCC, but we do have partnership agreements with Six Nations of the Grand River and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. WCC offers an online tour of the centre which many schools have accessed.

L. DeJong – is the professional development offered to board trustees and committee members?



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Answer:

Trustees are engaged in many learning sessions, e.g., indigenous education, oppression and white supremacy. If SEAC is interested in this type of learning, we can organize it for members.

(b) **T.H.R.I.V.E – Virtual Mode Program to Provide Enriched Learning Opportunities for Students**

J. Hughes is the teacher who provided slides to explain the classroom program.

**T** Transferrable Skills; **H** Higher Order Thinking Skills; **R** Research Skills; **I** Innovation and Inquiry Skills through a **V** Virtual **E** Experience

Thrive is daily classroom program which is also provided in a virtual environment for students with advanced cognitive ability. It is project based and focuses on the development of Deep Learning Competencies. It leverages student interest and strengths, provides opportunities to work with like minded peers, encourages transfer of skills from T.H.R.I.V.E to daily living and contributes to student well being and belonging.

Schools submitted recommendation packages in October which were reviewed by a team of Principal Leader for Special Education, Program Coordinator, School Program Support Lead, Teacher Consultant Gifted and the THRIVE teacher.

The student input was very interesting including the difference in their voices and their self perspective. Twenty-eight students were welcomed to the program which runs weekly for 120 minutes, commencing November 8, 2021.

Observation indicates this program was a huge success. Student engagement was high and many examples of collaboration, leadership and a desire to learn were demonstrated beginning on the first day.

Students will continue in this program for the remainder of the school year and will receive progress reports. Additional students may be introduced in January 2022. The annual outcomes will be reviewed to determine if continued participation is warranted in the program.

Questions:

L. DeJong – is there an opportunity for the teacher in the classroom to give some feedback when the student returns to a physical classroom?

Answer

Planning to collect data after first term to determine the effectiveness of the program. Many of the applications to the program came in letter form so we have some information of how the teacher understands the students.

L. DeJong - what do the resources and supports look like that are provided to the teacher of the home school to practice and use those skills in their regular classroom?





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Answer:

THRIVE is an enhancement to the students' regular classroom. Resources will be provided for the classroom teachers and the intent is that this will continue in the main classroom.

(c) **Policy/Program Memorandum 81 Provision of Health Support Services in School Settings**

The board received notification in October that there will be a review of PPM 81 which first governed the development of this policy in 1984.

This is the policy that frames how the Ministries of Health, Education, and Children, Community and Social Services work together to support students who require health support in the form of nursing care and in the form of rehabilitation through occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech/language therapy to be successful in school.

Locally what this means is how boards of education work with the Lansdowne Children's Centre a Ministries of Children, Community and Social Services funded agency which provides School Based Rehabilitation Services (SBRS) It is now known as Home and Community Care Support Services, previously known as Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN), previously known as Community Care and Access Centres (CCAC) and previously known as School Health Support Services (SHSS). Changes to Standard 7 will need to be updated with service provider names.

(d) **Remote Learning Guide for Students with Special Education Needs**

The Ministry of Education created remote learning guides for educators and one for parents using successful strategies submitted by school boards.

Although the guides support the tiered approach to strategies and interventions and focus on universal design for learning and response to instruction, they are tailored for use in a virtual education setting.

The Board is grateful to the Ministry for this response.

E - 1 **Other Business**

(a) **Transitions to School – Review of Current Process and Input Session**

Staff have identified some barriers and gaps as well as repetitive problems and are seeking input from SEAC.

Welcome to Kindergarten Guide - Provides resources available on our website to help students transition to school. Some schools also used team meetings to help orient families.

A Transition Guide for School Teams – Nineteen types of transitions are identified in this reference tool developed for school staff when supporting transitions of student with special needs.



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Grand Erie DSB works collaboratively with Lansdowne Children's Centre (LCC) and with Haldimand-Norfolk REACH who provide local Home and Community Care Support Services.

**Kindergarten and Transition to School:**

In February they provide the board's program coordinator with "All About Me" reports for each student with special needs coming into the board for the first time.

Information is shared with the appropriate Teacher Consultant (TC).

In April, LCC provides "All About Me" reports for students with complex needs and any reports that were not available in February.

The TC will inform the appropriate school through the In-School Resource Team Meeting and provides an overview of the student's needs. The parent is encouraged to register their child, then the Learning Resource Teacher (LRT) arranges a case conference with the school staff, the community agency, the parent(s), and day care staff if applicable and any appropriate board staff. Case conferences are conducted in May or June to plan for the following September. If medical support is required during school hours, then the Home and Community Care Support Services representative is also included.

Planning includes a transition visit in late August and can include gradual entry, the creation of visual supports and use of a transition object. At this time, medical plans are developed if needed. When a Transition Plan (Pre-IEP) is developed in LITE it becomes part of the IEP (Individual Education Plan) if one is eventually written. In Kindergarten an IEP is not required unless the student needs medical equipment. If the student needs SEA (Special Equipment Amount) equipment staff will see if there is some already available within the board.

**Autism and Transition Modes**

PPM (Policy Program Memorandum) 140 provides direction on the use of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in a school setting. ELite has the ability to create a transition plan before an IEP is developed. This plan for all students with Autism so staff have shared access to the goals, strategies and plans. It requires parental input, community agency collaboration and school team implementation and assists students' transition from home to school, from classroom to classroom or activity to activity, and from IBI services to school full time. Advanced planning is critical for students' successful transitions.

There will be some changes to services including a group-based Entry to School Program being planned by the Ministry for students who are entering school for the first time, whether in KG or G1. Supports skill development and key domain for students to complete the program prior to entry in school. For the first six months' of transition, the family and the educators have access to targeted consultation from the staff who consolidated the Entry to School Program. It is anticipated this will be in place for the 2022 school year so will require staff planning and collaboration.



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The Ministry has also announced changes to the Connections for Students Program which was six months prior to leaving school and six months after school and is now moving to an eight-week service with greater access. Facilitators from Hamilton health sciences are now available to go into multiple environments which will facilitate the transition program.

Many transitions were interrupted by COVID and have discussed how this can be picked up again.

Based on the existing transition processes, are there any gaps you can identify that we can continue to improve upon to support transition for students, families and staff? A QR code will be available in the chat room that will open a survey.

The K-12 Education Standards sub-committee identified some barriers which also exist in Grand Erie.

Access to all SEA items required by student

Ensure all participants are at meetings or case conferences

Fidelity in the implementation of the plan and data collection to plan forward  
Gradual entries.

L. DeJong – this has been a difficult year so starting a conversation requires a lot of staff energy. Is there a way to increase exposure to the “All About Me” document as there is much power in it with the child’s voice.

W. Rose shared they never knew their child’s teacher name ahead of the school year. This would be very helpful in helping child to become familiar. This practice was discontinued as parents would often call the school to ask for a different teacher.

Also sometimes the staff changes labour day weekend.

W. Rose – student input should be broader than the input from teachers and families. A forum is being created to get student input to foster and maintain those relationships

(b) **OnSIS data for Students with Special Education Needs  
– December agenda item – what is the focus for discussion?**

Next month SEAC will receive the ONSIS data which indicates how many students are in each exceptionality as well as the number of students who have been through Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC).

We see a similar trend annually and a comparison of Grand Erie students to those across Ontario can be provided.



## Special Education Advisory Meeting

Thursday, November 18, 2021

MS Teams Virtual

### MINUTES

Members agreed they would like to see this data as well as the comparison to last year's data.

R. Collver asked what the special education management team does with this data and asked why the ministry thinks this information is so important.

#### F - 1 Standing Items

##### (a) Policy/Procedures Out for Comment

Members were advised of all policies and procedures currently under review and advised comments be directed to [policiesandprocedures@granderie.ca](mailto:policiesandprocedures@granderie.ca) no later than November 24, 2021.

##### (b) Trustee Updates

R. Collver

- We have launched a process for the renaming of Ryerson Heights Elementary School. Please go to our website and fill in the submission form by January 17<sup>th</sup> 2022.
- We have introduced a process for spectators at secondary sports events. The athletes will be provided two paper tickets from the school.
- Spectators must be fully vaccinated, wear a mask and seated two metres from any person outside their household.
- Balanced School Year Pilot Project was presented to trustees on November 8th. The report recommends not to implement at this time. The board will make final decision November 22nd.
- The big news today is our secondary schools can return to regular timetabling for semester two. We just received the memo this afternoon - so lots off unpacking to do around the memo from the Ministry of Education.

T. Waldschmidt.

- Wished everyone well and thanked members for attending the meeting.

#### G - 1 Information Items

##### (a) **Regional Special Education Council (RSEC) Updates.**

Regional Special Education Council (RSEC) meetings are held three times a year for senior leaders in Special Education in school boards from the Southwest part of the province.

Claudine Monroe, Director of Special Education and Success for All Branch gave an update from the Ministry for the first half of the morning.

Her portfolio is being re-structured to separate Special Education from Mental Health & Wellbeing which will have its own branch and its own Director.



## Special Education Advisory Meeting

**Thursday, November 18, 2021**

MS Teams Virtual

### MINUTES

Across the province, 17.7 percent of students have special education needs with 47 percent of these students identified through an IPRC and 53 percent not identified. 88 percent of students with special education needs are paced in regular classrooms for more than half of the instructional day.

Learning Disability is the largest category of exceptionality (35.2 percent) and Autism Spectrum Disorder is the fastest growing exceptionality (15.1 percent).

She reviewed the money that has been provided to schools to support students with special educational and wellbeing needs, noting that the Ministry is looking at summer programming dollars at the present time and reminding that money already allocated for after school programming for students with autism can be spend in the summer 2022.

She acknowledged the provincial challenge with Nursing supports given the provincial shortage of qualified staff indicating that a survey had been sent to boards to gather more data; Ministry of Education is working with the Ministry of Health to find solutions; she is aware of equity issues where some parents are able to provide the nursing care to their children and others are not and that barriers may be different in rural parts of the province.

She talked about an Entry to School Program to support neurodiverse students for 6 months prior to school start by building skills that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services is working on. This program is supposed to be implemented next year so we can expect to hear more about that.

Ministry of Education is in regular discussion with the Right to Read Commission, emphasizing that reading interventions and supports are for all learners, not just those with special education needs. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) has developed a list of effective evidence-based reading intervention programs that will be shared with school boards in the next couple of months.

She highlighted Project Search which is in a pilot year with a number of school boards. The program is a one-year employment preparation program for independent/high functioning students with Intellectual Disabilities. Grand Erie was selected to participate in the pilot so you will be hearing more about it.

She talked about a pilot program to support early intervention in math for students with special education needs. Students in grades 4-6 are the focus of the project that is providing high yield instructional strategies and supports in math.

Finally, she reviewed that the K-12 Education Accessibility Standards were out for consultation until November 1 reminding that the final report is advice to government who will determine which recommendations to implement and how to implement them. She encouraged everyone to become familiar with the document noting that there were implications across all programs.



## Special Education Advisory Meeting

Thursday, November 18, 2021

MS Teams Virtual

### MINUTES

Second half of the morning was a facilitated discussion about current issues in school boards with the content generated from participants. This included staffing challenges in many roles, approaches to developing skills of Universal Design for Learning, asset management for outdated/outgrown specialized equipment, the role of Behavior Analysts, OnSIS (data collection) rules to mention a few.

R. Collver noted the discussion about summer supports and how the Ministry is looking at funding. She reminded the chair about a proposed letter.

Chair Rose informed members she has been in touch with special education staff and will draft a letter for the end of the week. She would like approval by email.

#### H - 1 Community Updates

(b) Nil

#### I - 1 Correspondence

(a) **Ltr – Trillium Lakelands DSB – Support for Bill 172 FASD Oct 05/21**

No action required at this time.

(b) **Ltr – Halton DSB – Return to Regular Semester**

No action required at this time.

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

- (a) OnSIS Data for Students with Special Education Needs; has been planned
- (b) Suspension, Expulsion and Exclusion – Students with Special Education needs 2020-21
- (c) Summer Program
- (d) Mr. Jacques – W. Rose promised to follow up with guest speaker

#### K - 1 Next Meeting

**Thursday, December 9, 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.

#### L - 1 Adjournment

Moved by: R. Collver

Seconded by: M. Gatopoulos

THAT the SEAC 21-03 meeting held November 18, 2021 be adjourned at 9:29 PM.

**Carried**

Learn

Lead

Inspire

## Standard 16: TRANSPORTATION

The purpose of the standard is to provide details of the Board's transportation policies to the ministry and the public.

The following students with special needs are eligible for transportation:

- students with exceptionalities who would be unable to travel independently, due to a variety of reasons, to special class placement at their home school;
- students placed in a self-contained class which is not located in their home school;
- students with exceptionalities who would be unable to travel independently due to a variety of reasons to regular class placement will be determined on a case by case basis
- The provision of transportation for students with special education needs requiring a modified day or fresh start will be determined on a case by case basis
- Transportation services are currently being provided for students with the exceptionalities as noted below:
  - Behaviour;
  - Communication: *Autism, Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, Speech & Language Impairment, Learning Disability;*
  - Intellectual: *Giftedness, Mild Intellectual Disability, and Developmental Disability;*
  - Physical: *Physical Disability, Blind and Low Vision;*
  - Multiple: *Multiple Exceptionalities;*
- A student's transportation is usually decided in discussions which follow the IPRC meeting. The Teacher Consultants-Special Education, in conjunction with the IPRC members and the parent(s), discuss the transportation needs. This is then noted on the IPRC Minutes Sheet;
- Transportation may be provided to a child/youth who is attending a care or treatment program if it is on an existing bus route. Transportation is not provided to/from a correctional facility or locations outside of the Board's district boundary;
- Transportation is provided to students who have been placed in a Provincial or Demonstration School through a system IPRC. Students may be transported on a daily, weekly or other basis to and from the school;
- Limited transportation is available for summer school. Currently students are required to congregate at specific locations.

Policy and Procedures were reviewed with respect to special transportation arrangements. The procedures are as follows:

- The School Principal will contact the Teacher Consultant-Special Education.
- The Teacher Consultant-Special Education will complete an "Individual Transportation Plan (ITP)" form in the LITE software system.
- The Principal Leader of Special Education receives an email notice that an Individual Transportation Plan has been submitted for approval.
- Once approved, by the Principal Leader of Special Education, the request is automatically emailed to Transportation Services.
- Transportation Services will contact the School Principal or designated Teacher Consultant for Special Education regarding the transportation arrangements to be implemented if additional information is required that is not listed on the ITP.

Safety criteria that are used by the Board in the tendering and selection of transportation providers for exceptional students are as follows:

- drivers must have emergency first aid certification and be able to meet the need(s) of the student they are providing service to, as per the ITP and any support plans which may accompany them.
- wheelchairs must be secured during transit.
- all buses require two-way communication
- Rider Aides will be assigned when required on a case by case basis



## Transportation recommendations

60. The obligations under this part of the standards should be binding, both on school boards and transportation consortia. Both parties have the duty to adhere to the standards and to work together to ensure that the rights of students with disabilities are honoured.

**Timeline:** six months

**Rationale:** up to three organizations may be involved in the transportation of students: A School Board, a consortium of school boards that jointly arrange for student transportation, and private bus companies that are contracted to provide bussing in that area. Students with disabilities and their parents should not have to try to figure out who is responsible for their child's transportation needs. The following should be required of all three organizations.

61. To ensure that students with disabilities get the transportation services they need to attend school this recommendation will set criteria for creating monitoring and accountability. The Education Accessibility Standards should require that where a school board provides bussing or other transportation services to students with disabilities in order to enable them to attend school, the school board/bus company's/transportation consortia shall review and develop policies and procedures that include:

- 61.1. individual consultation with each family to identify accessibility and accommodation needs of the student with disabilities in relation to transportation.
- 61.2. ensure the Transportation Consortia/bus companies and drivers have been properly trained to accommodate students with disabilities and their individual needs.
- 61.3. with any bus driver that is changed, they are given the same information and training prior to driving the student, or, in the case of an emergency replacement, as soon as possible.
- 61.4. clearly reflect the responsibilities and duties of the school board/bus companies/transportation consortia and acknowledge that they have the shared responsibility to make sure the duties are fulfilled.
- 61.5. retention of training records, including when it was provided and report to their respective boards on training twice per year.
- 61.6. designate and provide a reachable official at the school board and the transportation, especially during the working hours when students are being transported, to receive and address phone calls, emails and text messages from a family about problems regarding the student's transportation.
- 61.7. documentation of all complaints reported on student transportation services, and the company to which it applies. A summary report including number of complaints, types of complaints and status, be provided to the school board, transportation consortia, Special Education Advisory Committees and accessibility committee on a quarterly basis. These reports shall be made public on the school board's and transportation consortium's website.

- 61.8. the Education Accessibility Standards should make it clear that the fact that the policies and procedures created does not remove or reduce the school board/bus companies/transportation consortia's duties under these accessibility standards or otherwise under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code* or the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to ensure that the student has been provided with barrier-free participation in the school board's educational programs and opportunities. In any contract for bussing, the school boards/bus company's/transportation consortia should be required to monitor compliance with all obligations regarding bussing, such as the duty to properly train each bus driver on the specific disability-related needs of each passenger, and to document this training. School Boards/bus company's/transportation consortia should periodically audit consumer satisfaction and compliance with all applicable education accessibility standards and publicly report on the audit's results. A bus company's failure to consistently and reliably meet its obligations should trigger penalties and termination of the contract.
- 61.9. a valuation process for past performance and provision of transportation services for students with disabilities should be included in the Request for Proposal for bussing. A valuation of any company's past performance on accessibility for students with disabilities should be given a major consideration in deciding the continued use of service.



# POLICY

# P01

## Service Provision for Students with Special Education Needs

**Board Received:** March 27, 2017

**Review Date:** April, 2022

### Policy Statement:

Grand Erie District School Board programs and services are delivered in safe and enabling environments that promote success for students with special education needs. An enabling environment is positive, inclusive, provides for full participation of all students, and fosters student independence, belonging, and well-being. Schools and special education support staff work collaboratively and respectfully with students, parents/guardians and other involved agencies. Using all available information to understand each child's unique strengths and needs, responsive instructional and assessment practices are implemented. Policies and programs in Grand Erie serve students with disabilities within the context outlined in the Ontario Human Rights Code, Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and/or the AODA, 2005 and the Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession.

### Accountability:

Criteria for Success

Full participation in educational opportunities for all students is evident throughout the school.

Students receive program in most enabling environment, where the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and responsive instruction and assessment are implemented

When appropriate, partnerships to support student needs are developed and promoted, within the board and in the community (ProcedureSO108 – Community Service Providers and Schools Working Together)

Professional Learning opportunities and support for classroom teacher, early childhood educator, and other school support staff are provided, accessed and implemented.

Resources are allocated to meet the most urgent student safety and learning needs.

Reference: Grand Erie's Special Education Plan, Standard 2, The Board's General Model for Special Education

## **Standard 2: THE BOARD'S GENERAL MODEL FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**The purpose of this standard is to provide the ministry and the public with information on the Board's philosophy and service delivery model for the provision of special education programs and services.**

Grand Erie's model for Special Education service provision has been designed to comply with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Education Act and Regulations made under the Act, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), and any other relevant legislation.

### **Vision for Special Education**

Services and programs supporting students with special education needs are provided in a manner that is consistent with the Board's mission "Together, we build a culture of learning, well-being and belonging to inspire each learner". Special Education Programs are delivered in the most enabling environments for learning so that students can participate fully in their educational program. School board staff and families and caregivers work collaboratively.

Special education programs and services within Grand Erie are guided by the following principles:

1. All students can succeed. Success looks different for different students.
2. All students have a right to dignity, respect, equality, choice, voice and full-participation in barrier-free schools and classrooms.
3. Students are educated in their community schools if this is the most enabling environment for their learning.
4. Diversity in ability is welcomed and positively impacts educational outcomes.
5. The principles of accessible education, equity, equality and human rights are provided in stand-alone, and are embedded into all, learning opportunities.
6. Universal design for learning supports accessible curriculum, instruction and assessment.
7. There are high expectations for all learners, facilitated through responsive teaching pedagogies, learning and assessment opportunities.
8. Resources are provided to support students to become as independent as possible in reaching their educational goals.
9. The classroom educators are the primary support for all students in school. Additional human resource supports work as partners with the classroom educators by coaching, co-teaching and co-learning in order to address the strengths and needs of the students.
10. All work together to create and maintain inclusive and equitable school communities and eliminate barriers to full participation.
11. Intentional collection, analysis and use of relevant data to fully understand learners' strengths and needs removes barriers and supports appropriate interventions.
12. Fairness is not sameness. Students are provided with resources and supports that will assist them to become independent in reaching their educational

goals.

### **Classroom Placements**

Classroom placements are provided on a continuum based upon the strengths and needs of the student. The continuum includes:

- Regular classroom with Universal Design for Learning , responsive instruction and assessment and accommodations.
- Self-contained special education classrooms, partially integrated.
- Self-contained special education classrooms, fully contained.
- Wrap-around supports and services.

### **Accessing Special Services**

When a diverse learning strength or need is identified after Universal Design for Learning and responsive instruction and assessment have been implemented in the classroom, it can be addressed at a school team or resource team meeting.

### **School Team**

School team plays a significant role in helping classroom educators address difficulties that a student may be experiencing in the classroom prior to, and following, formal assessment and identification. (Appendix B)

When a student demonstrates a diverse learning strength or need the teacher works with the parent/guardian and tries a variety of strategies and approaches with the student. The teacher uses available diagnostic tools to assess the student and may discuss the situation with School Team. Membership on the School Team includes the Principal (or designate), the classroom educator(s) and may include the Learning Resource Teacher (LRT) and or other school or system program staff staff. The school-based Child and Youth Worker and the school Social Worker may also be asked to participate in the School Team. Ongoing contact with the parent/guardian is important to develop an understanding of the child's strengths and needs.

At the School Team meeting, a review of strategies already implemented and suggestions of further Tier 1 strategies and supports will be discussed.

A record of strategies and supports discussed at the School Team is kept in the Student Profile. Referral to the Resource Team occurs when the School Team wishes to discuss additional strategies and options that move beyond Tier 1 strategies and supports

### **Resource Team**

#### **Membership:**

- the School Team (other than the classroom educator unless required)
- the area Teacher Consultant-Special Education
- the dedicated multi-disciplinary system support team

The multi-disciplinary system team may include psychology staff, social workers, child and youth workers, behaviour counsellors, board certified behaviour analysts, speech-language pathologists, communicative disorders assistants, and/or attendance counsellors.

The Resource Team will consider additional Tier 1, 2 or 3 strategies and may recommend further assessment or other interventions. The Resource Team may recommend to the Principal referral of the student to an Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC).

Parents/guardians:

- will be informed if their child is being discussed at Resource Team
- will be invited to provide input and/or attend the meeting
- will be informed of the date, time, purpose and staff invited prior to the meeting
- may attend the meeting
- will be provided information about the outcome of the meeting and next steps

If a formal assessment is recommended, the Principal will make the referral to the appropriate student support staff through the Learner Intervention Tracking for Excellence (LITE) system. Student Support Services staff will proceed with the informed consent steps with the parent/guardian before they proceed with the case. The exception to this is referral to Attendance Counsellors, which takes place based on Ministry requirements and does not require parent/guardian consent.

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### **Resource Team**

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- the area Teacher Consultant-Special Education
- the dedicated multi-disciplinary system support team

The multi-disciplinary system team may include psychology staff, social workers, child



and youth workers, behaviour counsellors, board certified behaviour analysts, speech-language pathologists, communicative disorders assistants, and/or attendance counsellors.

The Resource Team will consider additional Tier 1, 2 or 3 strategies and may recommend further assessment or other interventions. The Resource Team may recommend to the Principal referral of the student to an Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC).

Parents/guardians:

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- will be invited to provide input and/or attend the meeting
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- will be provided information about the outcome of the meeting and next steps

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# School and Resource Team Process

## The Classroom Educator Notices a Concern

- Observations
- Ontario Student Record Data
- Checklists
- Assessments
- Input from previous teachers, other educators, including LRT
- Parent/guardian Information and Input
- Check re vision and hearing, other medical if appropriate

## Referral to Student Support Services

Once the **RT** has determined that all the recommended in-school strategies and approaches have been exhausted, and the concern still remains, the **RT** may recommend a referral to Student Support Services Personnel, with parent/guardian consent.

**Referrals to access Grand Erie Student Support Services through LITE require consultation with and approval by the Teacher Consultant-Special Education.**

Classroom Educator implements Universal Design for Learning and responsive instruction and assessment to promote learning. Educator evaluates effectiveness of Tier 1 strategies.

New strategies are implemented and evaluated. Action plans are documented in the **Student Profile**. If concerns continue, the teacher seeks assistance from the **School Team (ST)**.

**Resource Team (RT)** reviews relevant data, provides input on efficacy of current strategies, and recommends differentiation, Tier 2 or 3 interventions and/or instructional and assessment strategies.

**Out-of-Board** supports may be recommended to parents/guardians, (i.e. medical follow-up, community agency involvement). Parent/guardian is consulted and consents. The **RT** may also recommend that an **Individual Education Plan** be developed.

**School Team (ST) – includes Principal, Classroom Educator (s), and may include LRT, Guidance/Student Success staff, System Program Staff, CYW, SW**

- Sharing of concerns, data and observations
- Strategizing / problem-solving
- Further Tier 1 suggestions and planning
- Individualized assessments (i.e. AAB)

**Resource Team (RT) – includes Principal, LRT, Teacher Consultant-Special Education, Classroom Educator if required and Grand Erie Multi-Disciplinary System Support Staff (as appropriate)**

**School Team (ST)** provides more detailed assessment information and recommends individualized in-school interventions. Information sharing occurs with parents/guardians and other relevant staff if necessary.

A **Student Profile** is initiated to track and document strategies. **ST** may seek further information from the **Resource Team (RT)**, when the **ST** believes that all accommodations and in-school support have been exhausted and wishes to discuss additional Tier 1 strategies and options for Tier 2 or 3 supports.

**Parent/guardian is consulted/updated throughout.**

# The Pre-Referral Process

## The Classroom Educator Notices a Concern

- Observations
- Ontario Student Record Data
- Checklists
- Assessments
- Input from previous teachers, other educators, including LRT
- Parent Information and Input
- Check re vision and hearing, other medical.

## Referral to Student Support Services

Once the **RT** has determined that all the recommended in-school strategies and approaches have been exhausted, and the concern still remains, the **RT** may recommend a referral to Student Support Services Personnel, with parent/guardian consent.

**Referrals to access Grand Erie Student Support Services through LITE require consultation with and approval by the Teacher Consultant-Special Education.**

Classroom Educator implements differentiated instruction and assessment to promote learning. Educator evaluates effectiveness of Tier 1 strategies.

New strategies are implemented and evaluated. Action plans are documented in the **Student Profile (LITE)**. If concerns continue, the teacher seeks assistance from the **School Team (ST)**. Parent is consulted and consents. Parent may also be invited to attend the **ST** meeting.

**Resource Team (RT)** reviews relevant data, provides input on efficacy of current strategies, and recommends differentiation, Tier 2 or 3 interventions and/or instructional strategies.

**Out-of-Board** supports may be recommended to parents, (i.e. medical follow-up, community agency involvement). Parent is consulted and consents. The **RT** may also recommend that an **Individual Education Plan** be developed.

## School Team (ST) – includes Principal, LRT, Classroom Educator(s), CYW

- Sharing of concerns, data and observations
- Strategizing / problem-solving
- Further Tier 1 suggestions and planning
- Individualized assessments (i.e. AAB)
- Consultation with System LRT/Lead EA.

## Resource Team (RT) – includes Principal, LRT, Teacher Consultant-Special Education, Classroom Educator if required and Grand Erie Multi-Disciplinary System Support Staff (as appropriate)

**School Team (ST)** provides more detailed assessment information and recommends individualized in-school interventions. A case conference with parents and other relevant staff is held if necessary.

A **Student Profile (LITE)** is initiated to track and document strategies. **ST** may seek further information from the **Resource Team (RT)**, when the **ST** believes that all accommodations and in-school support have been exhausted and wishes to discuss additional Tier 1 strategies and options for Tier 2 or 3 supports.

**Parent is consulted and consents throughout.**



# Grand Erie District School Board

**Education Centre:** 349 Erie Avenue, Brantford, Ontario N3T 5V3

519-756-6301 | [www.granderie.ca](http://www.granderie.ca) | [info@granderie.ca](mailto:info@granderie.ca)

## Special Education Advisory Committee

December 10, 2021

The Honourable Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education  
Mowat Block  
22nd Floor 900 Bay Street  
Toronto, ON  
M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Lecce:

### **Re: Summer Programs That Help Students with Special Needs**

I am writing as Chair of Grand Erie District School Board's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC). Grand Erie District School Board's Special Education Management Team (SMET) reported to our SEAC about three in-person summer programs facilitated by the Board in August of 2021. As a committee, we were so impressed with these programs that we felt compelled to write to you to express our gratitude for the funding that allowed them to run. Given the programs' success, we urge you to continue funding for all three.

All three programs were designed to help students transition to school, either as a returning or kindergarten student. While these programs were particularly useful for students who were returning to in-person school after a summer break that was preceded by a lengthy period of online learning, we know that they will be equally useful for students who will return to school after a regular summer break.

I will briefly describe each of the three programs so that you can see what a vital role they play in helping students with special needs successfully transition back to school.

The first program is the "Summer School Transition Program" (SSTP). 24 separate SSTP programs were held across the Board, with 203 senior kindergarten to grade 3 students registered. The program is focused on self-regulation and social and friendship skills.

Skills and strategies learned during the program are set out on an information sheet and provided to classroom teachers in September. Students also create a transition card with individualized self-regulation strategies to share with their classroom teacher and to use as a visual prompt during the school year. Data collected during the program is shared with child and youth workers who, in turn, are able to share the information at In-School Team meetings at the beginning of the school year.

Learn

Lead

Inspire

Ltr Summer Programs

December 10, 2021

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# Grand Erie District School Board

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519-756-6301 | [www.granderie.ca](http://www.granderie.ca) | [info@granderie.ca](mailto:info@granderie.ca)

## Special Education Advisory Committee

This program was very successful. 97% of families who completed the post-program survey believe that SSTP helped prepare their child to return to school. 89% of students reported that they enjoyed coming to SSTP. Every student was able to set a goal for how they would use their self-regulation strategy when they returned to school. One staff member reported that the program was “a small, safe, fun, and welcoming environment” that “created excitement about returning to school and set kids up for success”.

The second program is the “Hello Classroom Program”. 30 elementary and secondary students who are enrolled in alternative programs in self-contained Life Skills and Intensive-Support Autism classrooms participated in this program. The program allows students and teaching staff to develop or re-establish relationships, re-learn routines and become comfortable with the classroom setting and school building prior to the start of a new school year. Students who attended this program were better prepared to follow classroom routines in September. Data was collected before and after the program and follow-up information was collected from teachers after the first three weeks of school to evaluate the impact of the program on students’ transition back to school. Eighty one percent (81%) of students who completed the survey felt that the program was helpful. Parents reported that the program made the transition back to school in September easier for their child.

The third program is the “This is My New School Program”. This program ran at ten schools across the Board with 30 kindergarten students participating. The program is three days long. It was developed by Grand Erie District School Board and is rooted in the Ontario kindergarten framework. Participating students are introduced to the school environment and get to know their teachers. In turn, teachers build rapport with their students and make school a fun place to be. Teachers and education staff focus on opportunities to communicate and learn about the students’ strengths and needs in relation to communication and social-emotional skills. Year one and two kindergarten students are invited to participate, with a particular focus on students with an autism diagnosis or other pervasive needs, for whom direct support, teaching and access to the school environment in a small group is beneficial.

Data from the “This is My New School Program” was collected by staff as a resource for the classroom teacher in September, to plan specific and measurable goals for each student. Not only did staff feel the program allowed students to build familiarity with school routines they also reported that it strengthened the relationship between home and school.

All three programs received positive feedback from staff, students and families. One parent of a child in the SSTP program wrote that their child “has improved so much with self-regulation and big feelings throughout JK. This summer program is such a wonderful bonus to help him ease back into school. Thank you so much.”

A student who participated in the “Hello Classroom Program” reported that they “liked coming to see my friends!” and a parent of a child who participated wrote that because their child “was learning from home for a very long time, she was willing to go back to school. She was very excited and really enjoyed the two days back in her classroom”.

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# Grand Erie District School Board

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## Special Education Advisory Committee

One parent of a child in the “This is My New School Program” reported that “[t]his program was fantastic, I was so happy to see my son do so well, and the staff were great. They really seemed to make him comfortable with going to school.” Another parent wrote: “My child is non-verbal and diagnosed with Autism so having this program to help her adjust to a different surrounding and routine is essential. The teachers were great with my daughter and helped her understand what needed to happen and made her feel comfortable.”

We were very happy to learn that the “This is My New School Program” now has funding rolled into the Grants for Student Needs (GSN). However, each of these three programs provides transition supports to different groups of students with special education needs and, as a result, it is vitally important that funding is continued for all three. It behooves us to do all that we can to ensure that the transition back to the classroom is as successful as possible for all students.

To that end, we are writing to impress upon you the importance of these excellent programs and the need for their continued funding.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or if you require any further information.

Yours truly,

Wendy Rose, Chair

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