



**ALGOMA DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (S.E.A.C.)**

MINUTES OF MEETING
February 8, 2022
Via MS Teams
12:00 Start Time

Present: H. Cutler (Algoma Public Health - Infant Child Development Program), S. Kitts (North Shore Tribal Council), P. Mick (Member-At-Large), Amanda Gauthier (Thrive Child Development Centre), M. Barbeau (Community Living Algoma),

Trustees: S. Evans, R. Reid

Staff: B. Vallee (Superintendent), C. Phillips (Recording Secretary), K. Viita (System Administrator),

Regrets:

Guests: Shaun Labine (Special Education Assignment Teacher)
Amanda Naccarato (SERT/Learning Support Teacher)

Meeting called to order at 12:00 p.m. With the approval of Chair Mick, Superintendent Vallee to facilitate the remainder of the Teams meeting.

1 Round Table - Introduction of members, staff, and guests.

2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes (November 30, 2021)

- Agenda approval. Moved by. S. Kitts. Seconded by S. Evans. All in favour.
- Approval of Minutes. Moved by S. Kitts. Seconded by S. Evans. All in favour.

3. Correspondence:

- **District School Board of Niagara SEAC re: Nursing Shortage:** Letter outlining challenges caused by nursing shortages that leave students awaiting nursing care required for them to attend school safely. B. Vallee commented that at present we have not really seen service changes for Algoma District School Board students.
- **Renfrew Catholic DSB SEAC re: Online Learning/UDL:** Letter re: concerns with online learning supports and Universal Design for learning in provincial learning resources and the platforms used to access these resources. Our SEAC has already written a letter on this topic.
- **Lakehead DSB SEAC re: EAs and PSW pay:** Letter regarding pandemic increase in PSW pay. As EAs perform many similar tasks, request for the Minister to investigate a similar pay increase for them as well.

- **Ministry of Education Special Education Updates:** Although it has been several years since this has been sent out, the Ministry has provided an update on matters related to Special Education..
- **Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) June Minutes-** Minutes from the June MACSE meeting were provided.

4. **Presentation/Discussion: Grade 6-8 Empower Reading**

- **Shaun Labine, Special Education Assignment Teacher**
- **Amanda Naccarato, SERT/Learning Support Teacher**

- **What is Empower?**
 - EmpowerTM Reading is a series of evidence-based reading intervention programs that were developed by Dr. Maureen W. Lovett and her team at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids). Each reading intervention program requires training specific to the program.
- **Why Empower?**
 - EmpowerTM Reading includes daily lessons on decoding, spelling and comprehension that support children and adolescents with significant reading and spelling difficulties to become strategic, independent, and flexible learners.
- **Who is suitable for the program?**
 - Looking for students in grade 6-8
 - Often students with a learning disability, or a similar profile
 - Strong attendance
 - Appropriate behaviour
 - Decoding is an area of weakness
- **Not suitable for the program?**
 - Students in SK – Gr. 5 (Gr. 2-5 program also in place in most ADSB schools)
 - Students that may require a different pace (e.g. students with cognitive delays should not be grouped with students with a learning disability for Empower as they will learn at a different pace)
 - Significant Behaviour issues (group time is very focused so interruptions need to be avoided)
 - English language learners (ELL) who have received less than 2 years of Canadian schooling

Empower Locations

- Currently the grade 6-8 program has been implemented at the following school sites:
 - Superior Heights Intermediate (2nd year)
 - Boreal FI
 - Korah Intermediate
 - Central Algoma Intermediate
 - Two Virtual Groups (students from FH Clergue, HM Robbins, RM Moore, East View, Grandview, Queen Elizabeth, Mountainview, Tarentorus)

Sample Plan

-  60 minutes uninterrupted time
-  Lessons build upon each other –daily review of previous lessons
-  Review and practice of the Sounding Out Strategy, Rhyming Strategy, Peeling Off Strategy, Vowel Alert Strategy, SPY Strategy, Story reading
-  Print work sheet to support each strategy
-  Opportunities for hands-on practice and games

Presentation also included feedback from parents and students about how the program improved reading skills and helped build confidence!

Comments/Questions:

- Are students able to take the program more than once? Empower is really designed to develop the skills the first time taking the program. We have had a few students who had started the Gr. 2-5 program and were unable to finish (e.g. moved schools) that are participating in the Gr. 6-8 program.
- Would this be something that would help our students who English is not first language? It is recommended that the ELL student should be in the Canadian schooling system for at least 2 years

5. Member Organization Updates

P. Mick (Member at large)

- Nothing to report.

L. Lambert (APH Infant Child Development Program)

- Autism clinic first 2 weeks of February.
- Still a large focus on COVID-19 at APH
- Busy with the transition meetings and process for students entering school next year.

S. Kitts (North Shore Tribal Council)

- Nothing to report

A Gauthier (Thrive)

- *Entry to School* will be a component of the revised Ontario Autism Program. This program will run for six months prior to school entry. There are two parts to the program. The first is a 6-month half-day preschool program to prepare for school entry and the next 6 months consists of additional support with the transition into school. The pre-school component will be a play based, half day program. It is a collaborative model meaning that there will be both early childhood educators and behavioral therapists in the room as well as regular consultation from a multi-disciplinary team that

can include occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech-language pathology, social work, etc.

- Effective February 15, 2022, Thrive will no longer be accepting outside referrals for our Self-Regulation Clinic. This clinic will continue to be available to clients and families who are receiving other THRIVE services. The website has a section on self-regulation and will guide families to some very helpful resources, and if they are receiving services at THRIVE their therapy team can provide them with education and refer them for some consultation if needed.
- The self-regulation community of practice has developed a power point which has been widely shared so that each agency can provide self-regulation education to the families that they support. If you or your agency are interested in learning more/joining the Self-Regulation Community of Practice, please contact Sarah Bates 705-759-1131 ext. 209.

M. Barbeau (Community Living Algoma)

- Nothing to report

6. Report from the Board (Trustees)

- Ongoing policy review continues
- Consultation regarding the 2022 / 2023 School Year Calendar
- Presentation of the Math-Up Resource
- Updates on students attending in person/ remote

7. Report from Administration (B. Vallee & K. Viita)

- **Kindergarten Transitions:** Our first round of meetings took place in January. Looking forward to welcoming a number of students with special education needs to our schools. We also had the opportunity to make a presentation to the trustees in January with updates on our transition process. Profiles of incoming students have been provided to schools. School-based follow-up meetings will take place during the spring months.
- **Remote/In-Person Learning:** Most of our students returned to on-site learning on January 17th. We have noted a small uptick in the number of students that are learning remotely. ADSB has decided to hold off until March to ask families to formally commit to remote vs. on-site learning.
- **Insight/CAT4 Results:** Results of the Canadian Achievement Test (4th Edition) and Insight testing conducted in October with our Grade 3 and 4 students have now arrived. We have historically tested our Gr. 3 students; however, due to COVID-19 uncertainty, we postponed the testing scheduled for fall 2020, so our Grade 4 students also completed the testing this year. The special education department is currently in the process of sharing the results with each school. The results provide a pre-screening tool for future assessments, but the “snapshot” of the school’s achievement profile is also helpful when looking at programming and supports. We have decided that, moving forward, we are going to be conducting this assessment with Grade two students during the spring months (as opposed to Grade 3s during the fall) so our Gr. 2s are also slated to participate in CAT4/Insight in May 2022.
- **Ongoing SERT Professional Development:** Much of the scheduled SERT professional development during the past month focused on training in how to interpret CAT4/Insight tests. As we will begin to develop IEPs for the second semester/reporting period, we have also focused some of our discussion on alternative programming pages. Secondary SERTs focused on the transition processes for Gr. 8 students that will be shifting panels with sharing of transition profiles quickly approaching at the beginning of March.

- **OCASE Presentation “Science of Reading”:** The Ontario Council for Administrators of Special Education provided a presentation on *The Science of Reading*, conducted by Maria DePalma from SickKids. The presentation was focused on how the science of reading impacts upon the use of appropriate intervention programs for students presenting with reading disability. We actually work with Maria on a regular basis, as she is one of our contacts regarding the Empower Reading program. B. Vallee participated in this webinar on January 28th.
- **Formal Assessments:** Our assessment schedule has picked back up again, with psychological-educational assessments beginning again in February. Our Speech-Language Pathologists will also be conducting an assessment blitz for February and early March to clear all of the referrals received in December.
- **February 4th PD Day:** The Special Education Department provided a series of five workshops, presented virtually, on the following topics: *Executive Functioning*, *Supporting Students during Unstructured Times*, *Tier One Strategies to Support Students with Social Language*, *Visual Supports*, and the *EA Role in Supporting Mental Health*. Our team also provided *Behaviour Management Systems* training for Noon Hour Assistants on the PD Day.
- **CDAs hit the ground running:** Our new Communication Disorders Assistants have hit the ground running with language development groups taking place in twelve schools. Language development groups are going to be occurring on a block schedule, so students will be participating in groups until the end of February, at which point services will shift to twelve different schools.

8. Next meeting: March 8, 2022

9. Motion to adjourn: Moved by. S. Evans. Seconded by S. Kitts.

Meeting adjourned at 1:15p.m.