



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

MINUTES OF MEETING
September 21, 2021
Via MS Teams
12:00 Start Time

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

Trustees: R. Reid, S. Evans

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

Regrets: N/A

Guests:

Chair Pat Mick called the meeting 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 (June 8, 2021)

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

1. Correspondence: Letter re: Guest Speaker Advertisement

- Flyer- Michael Jacques is a public speaker and activist who wrote a book in 2018 – “Can’t Read, Can’t Write, Here ‘s My Book”. At a young age he was diagnosed with autism and an intellectual disability that never slowed him down. Michael looks for opportunities to inspire and educate people on diversity and inclusion and enjoys sharing his story.
- S. Evans commented that he has an interesting story and wondered if it would be worthwhile to get more information about him presenting at schools or SEAC. Might be something that the PIC (Parent Involvement Committee) might want to sponsor.
- P. Mick agreed his story is interesting, but the flyer didn’t provide information on cost and wondered if schools could afford his services, either in-person or virtually.
- R. Reid – Wondering about any other school boards that have received presentations for us to obtain feedback.

2. Presentation: Special Education Programs & Services Overview (B.Vallee)

- B. Vallee provided an overview of programs and services in the ADSB, including principles guiding our approach to special education, our Board model, an overview of possible identifications, Individual Education Plans, our current specialized programs and classrooms, and a “who’s who” for our current special education and mental health teams.

Questions:

- S. Evans commented: Awesome presentation - full of great information. Wondering about balancing services for the district, including funding to ensure that services are available in the northern areas. B Vallee responded that we have been able to access additional sources of funding (e.g. Northern Support Initiative) for the past few years, and provided some additional information on the funding received and how we spend these dollars to ensure services (e.g. contracted positions) in the north and east.

5. Member Organization Updates

P. Mick– Member at large:

- Nothing to report.

H. Cutler -APH Infant Child Development Program

- Grateful to be back in the school buildings.
- Very busy with supporting JKs that still receive services.
- Most of the APH focus is on pandemic related issues– steep learning curve (e.g. provincial and local screening chart is not the same, which makes it difficult for everybody to figure out which guidelines to follow.

M. Barbeau -Community Living Algoma

- Staff are moving back into the office. We are now able to meet personally with clients instead of virtually or via the phone.
- September 29th is the annual meeting – will be attending by Zoom

S. Kitts North Shore Tribal Council

- Garden River has 3 cases of students with COVID
- Currently providing services to 60 students with special education needs (across all school boards)
- Still doing zoom meetings but many staff are back in the buildings.

A Gauthier -Thrive

- Thrive is growing and growing. A second satellite building is being used. Busy hiring new staff and working on establishing new program
- Many staff are still working from home
- Thrive has started providing services in schools again as of September 20.

6. Report from the Board (Trustees)

- Nothing to report at this point
- First Board meeting of the school year is scheduled for tonight

7. Report from Administration (B. Vallee)

- ***In-Person vs Remote Learning:*** The overwhelming majority of our students are back to in-person learning, with a significantly reduced number opting for remote learning this year. Our board continues to offer a hybrid learning model, with remote learners participating as part of their regular classroom. However, as we do have several remote learners with high special education needs, we are continuing to support these students with a virtual teacher and EA that provide individualized and small group programming.
- ***Summer Programming:*** The Ministry provided additional funding to support summer programming, including summer learning & summer school programs, back-to-school transitions, and mental health supports and services. We were able to offer special education supports (e.g. SERT and Specialized Team supports) for both summer school and the summer learning program, as well as providing transition programming to conduct transition activities for students with complex needs from August 30th through September 1st. Our summer wellness program also ran this year with three staff, who provided support through the summer wellness line, face-to-face, virtual or audio counseling, and conducted reach-outs to families that struggled with engagement last year.
- ***Transitions:*** With transition processes in place for 76 incoming kindergarten students, our special education team spent the first week of the school year on the ground supporting our school teams in transitioning new students into the school setting. Over the next few weeks, schools will be conducting their fall follow-up meetings.
- ***Empower Reading:*** We are pleased that this year will represent our largest increase yet in the number of schools participating in Empower Reading. Eleven new sites are joining our 15 existing sites. While most of our schools continue to implement the Gr. 2-5 decoding and spelling, we are expanding our Gr. 6-8 offerings to include Korah Intermediate, Central Algoma Intermediate, and Boreal French Immersion, in addition to Superior Heights Intermediate, which piloted the 6-8 programs last year. We are also hoping to pilot a remote group that includes students from several different schools.
- ***Ongoing SERT Professional Development:*** We have now begun our on-going SERT meetings/professional development sessions with a focus on the SERT monthly overview document. This document provides a list of priority and on-going tasks for completion each month.
- ***Formal Assessments:*** We continued our efforts to conduct psychological-educational assessments over the summer months. Approximately 30 assessments were conducted during the month of July and again in August. Report shares for summer testing will take place over the upcoming weeks. We have also begun our assessment process for the 2021-2022 school year, with assessments underway this week and next week. Our speech-language pathologists are also conducting an assessment 'blitz' over the next few weeks, and anticipate having all of our existing waitlist eliminated by November prior to our next referral intake in December.
- ***Parent Involvement Committee:*** PIC is still looking for a SEAC member to sit on the Parent Involvement Committee. The role of the PIC is to encourage parent involvement board-wide, so it would be great if a SEAC member was able to bring information from SEAC to the PIC, and vice-versa. Any volunteers?

8. Next Meeting: October 26, 2021

- Upcoming topics- let us know any specific you would like highlighted
- SEAC Members are in favour of continuing with virtual meetings for the time being.

9. Motion to adjourn: Moved by. R. Reid. Seconded by S. Kitts.

Meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.