



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

MINUTES OF MEETING
January 11, 2022
Via MS Teams
12:00 Start Time

Present: L. Lambert (Algoma Public Health - Infant Child Development Program), S. Kitts (North Shore Tribal Council), P. Mick (Member-At-Large), Amanda Gauthier (Thrive Child Development Centre)

Trustees: S. Evans

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

Regrets: M. Barbeau (Community Living Algoma), R. Reid (Trustee)

Guests: Amy Lawson- Specialist Teacher of the Blind/Low-Vision
Sherri Appleton- Teacher of the Blind/Low-Vision

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 L. Lambert. All in favour.
- Approval of Minutes. Moved by L. Lambert. Seconded by S. Kitts. All in favour.

3. Correspondence:

Halton DSB SEAC: Letter in support of updates to the *Immunization of Pupils Act* to include vaccination against COVID-19

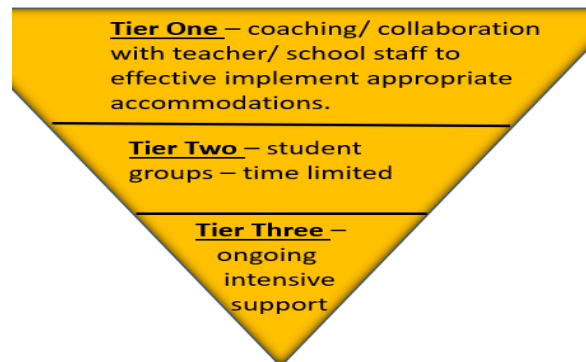
Halton DSB SEAC: Letter in support of including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) as a category of Identification.

Halton DSB SEAC, WRDSB SEAC: Letter in support of Bill 172 legislation regarding Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD).

ADSB SEAC Draft Letter of Support: A draft letter in support of Bill 172 has been prepared on behalf of our SEAC committee for review. The letter was approved and will be sent following the meeting.

4. Presentation/Discussion: Services for Students with Blind/Low-Vision Needs (A. Lawson/S. Appleton)

- Ministry of Education defines the Blind/Low Vision exceptionality as “a *condition of partial or total impairment of sight or vision that even with correction affects educational performance adversely*”.
- ADSB Teachers of the Blind / Low-Vision support students who may present with
 - Blindness
 - Deaf/Blindness
 - Multiple Exceptionalities
 - Low-Vision (acuties 20/70 or poorer in the better-seeing eye)
 - Cortical Vision Impairment
 - Binocular Vision Difficulties (using both eyes together)
- Programing is based on data collection including medical, psychological, and educational reports, and/or functional vision assessments
- Functional Vision Assessments provide an assessment of how the student can use vision in the school environment. This includes looking at near-vision, print size, distance, visual perception, colour vision, light sensitivity, and visual fields.
- Accommodations and programming are provided based on a tiered service model:



- We know that most children develop knowledge and understanding of concepts and skills incidentally (e.g. by watching peers, by watching parents). However, students with blind or low vision needs have fewer opportunities to develop knowledge and skills incidentally and must be explicitly taught these concepts. Programming generally focuses on nine categories:
 - *Assistive Technology*
 - High-tech options such as adapted tools or magnifiers for computer, switches, mobile devices.
 - Low-Tech options such as dome or bar magnifiers, specialized paper, brailers
 - *Career Education*
 - Providing opportunities for students to transition to adult life by developing employability skills

- *Compensatory Skills*
 - Developing the skills necessary for accessing the Ontario curriculum including concept development, communication, organization skills and audio materials
- *Independent Living Skills*
 - Increasing independence by teaching tasks and functions performed in daily life (e.g. personal hygiene, brushing hair, brushing teeth, food preparation, eating skills).
- *Orientation and Mobility*
 - Students learn about themselves and their environments, body awareness, and travel within the school and community to increase safety and independence.
- *Recreation and Leisure*
 - Providing opportunities to explore, experience, and choose physical and leisure activities focusing on the development of life-long skills.
- *Self-Determination*
 - Developing skills to promote choice-making, decision-making, problem-solving, and personal advocacy
- *Sensory efficiency*
 - Instruction in the efficient use of vision, hearing, touch, smell, and taste.
- *Social Interaction Skills*
 - Increasing awareness of body language, gestures, facial expressions, and personal space.
 - Learning about Interpersonal relationships, self-control, and human sexuality.

Comments/Questions:

- S. Kits inquired about when consultation visits from W. Ross MacDonald (Provincial School for the Blind) that have been on hold due to COVID-19 restrictions will resume. S. Appleton responded that W. Ross MacDonald is about 18 months behind, but we have not received any specific information about when they will resume visits. S. Kitts also queried the number of students in our Board that are totally blind. B. Vallee responded that we have twelve students identified in this category and provided a breakdown of the student profiles. A number of students that are formally identified with Multiple Exceptionalities also have vision needs that require supports and services from our team.

Development Process for 2022 Special Education Plan (B. Vallee)

- B. Vallee presented an overview of our annual process for reviewing and updating the ADSB Special Education Plan. A copy of the process has been provided to all SEAC members.
- We generally survey families between January and March. The special education department develops a draft plan with proposed changes in March and April, with review by SEAC in April and May. Following SEAC input, a final draft is presented for trustees at the June Board Meeting for final approval. Our process must be completed, with a copy of the plan uploaded to our website by July 30, 2022.

5. Member Organization Updates

P. Mick (Member at large)

- Nothing to report.

L. Lambert (APH Infant Child Development Program)

- At APH, the focus is very much on COVID-19.
- Autism clinic which will be taking place the first two weeks of February.
- The beginning of the transition process for our students entering school next year is quickly approaching. Information has been provided to K. Viita and meetings begin on January 17, 2022.

S. Kitts (North Shore Tribal Council)

- Most staff are working from home until January 26, 2022.

A Gauthier (Thrive)

- Many staff are now working from home and most therapy is taking place virtually.
- Excited that ABA, SLP, OT services will be starting on-site again soon.
- Approval has been received regarding Thrive's proposal for the Entry to School program, which will be a component of the Ontario Autism Program. This will be a half-day program of six months duration to help support the transition to school.

M. Barbeau (Community Living Algoma) – provided via email

- CLA staff is currently working from home
- *Together We're Better* Contest- Show us through a photo collage, story or even a poem why we are better together when students who have an intellectual/developmental disability are included in your classroom or virtual class. Deadline is February 4, 2022

6. Report from the Board (Trustees)

- Our November 30th Board meeting included an update on the Elliot Lake Intermediate School (Gr. 7&8) program, Blind River project for new school, and the proposal for the development of an updated tech wing, including the partnership with the Mike Holmes group, that is slated to take place at White Pines.
- Updated Audit statements and Capital Project review were completed.
- Policies continue to be reviewed as part of the regular cycle.
- Organizational meeting took place in early December. Jennifer Sarlo and Brent Rankin will continue to act as Chair and Vice-Chair for the upcoming year.

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

- **Remote/In-Person Learning:** After extending the holiday for students for two days from January 3rd to January 5th, the province has announced that from January 5th through the 14th, all schools across Ontario will be closed, with remote learning provided for students. However, all boards have also been directed by the Ministry to provide on-site programming options for students that presenting with complex special education needs that are unable to benefit from remote learning remotely. Accordingly, we continue to operate self-contained programs (e.g Community Education, Rockhaven, Structured Learning Classrooms and Practical Learning Classrooms). Individual school sites are also offering on-site programming for students that present with an appropriate

learning profile. Approximately 85 students are participating in in-person learning at this point.

- **Kindergarten Transitions:** Now that 2022 is upon us, our Kindergarten Transition process begins anew. Our initial round of meetings is scheduled for the week of January 17th. K Viita will be meeting with families and community partners over the course of the week. Thus far we have approximately 55 transition meetings scheduled.
- **Ongoing SERT Professional Development:** We continue to meet with our SERT group on a bi-weekly basis to discuss matters of interest and provide professional development in a timely manner. However, we have only had one SERT meeting since our last meeting in November, with a focus on referrals for psychological-educational assessments. We were also pleased to welcome some of our partners from Thrive to provide us with information on their new referral form and intake process. We will begin our cycle of bi-weekly meetings again on Friday, January 14th.
- **Formal Assessments:** Over the month of December, school teams completed and submitted new referrals for psychological-educational assessments, speech-language assessments. We are in the process of building our schedule, although this is a bit up in the air with the new stay-at-home order and the availability of our psychometrists.
- **February 4th PD Day (Educational Assistants):** Our next PD Day is quickly approaching. The Special Education Department will be providing professional learning for our Educational Assistants. EAs will rotate through five workshops, presented virtually, on the following topics: Executive Functioning, Supporting Students during Unstructured Times, Language Development, Visual Supports, and Mental Health.
- **New Special Education Team Members:** We are pleased to announce the addition of three new staff to our special education team. Jessica Nicholson, Jenna Carlucci, and Mikaela Caputo will be joining our team as Communicative Disorders Assistants.
- **Behaviour Management Systems (BMS) Training for Noon Hour Assistants.** Our Noon Hour Assistants are being provided with the opportunity to participate in BMS training during the week of January 11th to 14th. Two training sessions of six hours each are required for staff to get the BMS certificate.

Questions arising from Report from Admin:

S. Evans asked about the proposed return to in-person learning next week and information being shared with parents. B. Vallee responded that our past few days have been focused on having everything in place for remote learning/in-person for high needs students, so the senior Admin team will be working on some of those issues during the remainder of the week. Our plan is to communicate information to parents as soon as possible.

8. Next SEAC meeting is scheduled for February 8, 2022. An updated SEAC meeting schedule has been provided for members and will be uploaded to the website.

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

Meeting adjourned at 1:00p.m.