



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

MINUTES OF MEETING
November 21, 2023
DT Walkom/Teams
12:00 Start Time

Present: S. Kitts (North Shore Tribal Council), P. Mick (Member-At-Large), M. Tuomi, (Autism Ontario), A. Gauthier (Thrive Child Development Centre),

Trustees: S. Evans, H. Whitley (Trustee)

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

Regrets: M. Barbeau (Community Living Algoma)

Meeting called to order following our reflection. With the approval of Chair Mick, Superintendent Vallee to facilitate the remainder of the hybrid meeting.

1. Welcome

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

3. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

- Approval of Agenda. Moved by S. Kitts. Seconded by H. Whitley. All in favour.
- Approval of Minutes (October 17, 2023). Moved by S. Evans. Seconded by A. Gauthier. All in favour.

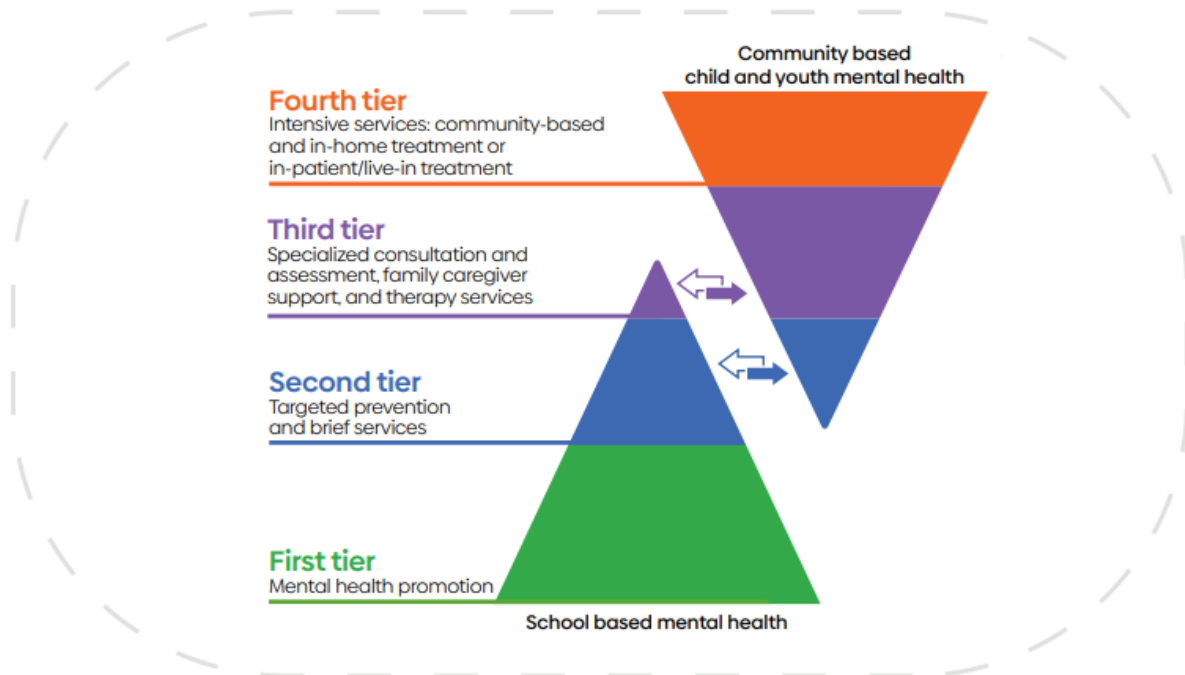
4. Correspondence:

Rainy River DSB to Minister Lecce re: Food Insecurity. The letter is not SEAC -specific but addresses the important issue of food insecurity and the strain it puts on families and schools. The number of students needing to access nutrition programs has dramatically increased. S. Evans commented that the letter addresses something that really impacts ADSB as well.

Resignation email from Eva Torresan (AFS). Eva Torresan has resigned her position as SEAC member as she has left Algoma Family Services. AFS has nominated a replacement member. This will go to the November 28th Board meeting for approval.

5. Presentation/Discussion: Update on Mental Health Supports and Services (D. Fillmore, Mental Health Lead)

- Darryl Fillmore provided an overview of mental health supports and services in the ADSB.
- Topics included in the presentation focused on the role of *School Mental Health Ontario*, the Mental Health Action Plan, Mental Health Literacy (e.g. Mental Health vs Mental Illness), tiered approaches to support (e.g. school focus on tier one - promotion and tier two - prevention supports) and some of the resources available for teaching mental health literacy and social-emotional learning in our schools.
- Currently, our ADSB Mental Health team consists of the Superintendent, Mental Health Lead, 14 counsellors, 2 Mental Health Workers and 2 Mental Health nurses seconded to schools.



- Educators are not mental health professionals, nor are they expected to be. The educator's role is to co-create an identify-affirming mental health learning environment with students, teach information about mental health that is developmentally appropriate for students, and weave opportunities to learn and practice positive mental health strategies into the classroom.
- Great projects are underway in our schools (e.g. Rebound North, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)) that promote mental health and offer opportunities for students to earn credits.

Questions and Answers

- H. Whitley asked if every school is given the opportunity to run DBT or Rebound North groups? D. Fillmore responded that DBT is a new program that started last year, and the hope is all

high schools will have it in place in the next couple of years, but it is not yet offered in some of our smaller secondary schools.

- H. Whitley also asked whether these courses are ever offered in the east. D Fillmore responded that yes, we were able to offer Rebound North online during the pandemic so it was available across the district; however the two AFS staff that run the program are housed in Sault Ste. Marie so the face-to-face programs are offered there.
- S. Kitts asked if a child sees a counsellor and the counsellor feels that the child is at risk, does the parent get a call to make them aware of risk? D. Fillmore responded that there are very specific protocols. If a student is at risk, then the parent will be notified immediately. Confidentiality and age of student does not matter. These limits on confidentiality are discussed prior to counselling.
- H. Whitley asked how our numbers compare to other school boards. D. Fillmore responded that provincially, numbers tend to be similar in terms of the percentage of students accessing services and the presenting problems. For example, anxiety tends to be the most frequent presenting problem across the system and this is consistent with provincial data.
- S. Evans commented that it was a great presentation; regarding the letter brought forward earlier, is food insecurity causing increase in mental health? D. Fillmore stated that it is very hard to determine a specific root cause for mental health difficulties. Struggles with food security is an ongoing issue in Algoma and we have certainly seen increases in access to nutrition programs.

6. Member Organization Updates

S. Kitts (North Shore Tribal Council)

- Heading to Toronto for a 2-day conference focused on what the future holds for special education. Various workshops will be offered (e.g. Jordan's Principle information).
- In the New Year, will likely be looking at changing the alternate member for SEAC

A. Gauthier (Thrive Child Development Centre)

- Excited for our annual Christmas party taking place this Friday at the Bush Plane Museum. Large group of approximately 300 attending at this point!

M. Tuomi (Autism Ontario)

- Nothing to report this month.

P. Mick (Member- At-Large)

- Nothing to report this month.

7. Report from the Board (Trustees)

- Both a Committee of the Whole and a Regular Board Meeting haven taken place since our last SEAC meeting.
- Steelworker's Local 2251 presented a cheque to the Board to fund nutrition programs. We are very appreciative of their ongoing support!
- Trustees received a presentation on Multi-Lingual Learners and the programming taking place in our schools.

- Update on Summer Capital Projects was provided– lots of great work took place in our schools.
- On-going policy review continues.

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

- **Transitions:** Community Transition to School Meeting has taken place. This is final step in the Kindergarten Transitions process. The process will begin again in January.
- **Professional Development Day (November 10th):** Due to an adjustment in the PD Day schedule, Mental Health PD was shifted to the November 10th instead of October 27th. The day consisted of a half-day on school Improvement work and a half-day on mental health learning. Staff learned about effective strategies to use in the classroom and across the school to support student mental health & well-being. Topics addressed included knowledge building (e.g. mental health vs mental illness), the educator's role in supporting mental health, as well as mental health supports available in the ADSB and how to access these. Exploration of resources such as the *School Mental Health Ontario Wayfinder* and a variety of other resources available will occur to support teacher planning. This session will also explore personal well-being and safe use of self in supporting others.
- **Behaviour Management Systems:** Behaviour Management Systems (BMS) is a training program for use by educators in school settings that emphasizes understanding behaviour patterns, building strong rapport, early awareness of potential problems, and early, non-physical interventions designed to calm and de-escalate student behaviour before violence occurs. The emphasis is on understanding and changing behaviour, rather than simply controlling it. ADSB began to provide BMS training approximately five-six years ago, however; due to pandemic-base restrictions on certification (e.g. virtual vs. in-person) and refresher training, we are now working on re-certifying all key staff and providing training as part of the on-boarding process for new employees. Employee groups re-certified to date include Specialized Program/ Classroom Teachers (Oct 27th, Educational Assistants (Oct 27th), Early Childhood Educators (Nov 10th), Secondary SERTs (November 17th) and Elementary SERTs (November 24th).

9. Next Meeting:

- **December 12, 2023.** An email will be sent to ensure that we are able to attain a quorum for the December meeting as that can be a problem at this time of year. If we are not, our next meeting will be **January 9th 2024.**

10. Motion to adjourn: Moved by A. Gauthier. Seconded by S. Evans

Meeting adjourned at 1:10