



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

MINUTES OF MEETING
January 9, 2024
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), M. Barbeau (Community Living Algoma), Clinton Snider (Algoma Family Services)

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

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

Regrets: None

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 A. Gauthier. All in favour.
- Approval of Minutes (November 21, 2023). Moved by M. Barbeau, Seconded by S. Kitts, All in favour,

4. Correspondence:

Lambton-Kent DSB SEAC re: Education Resource Worker Staffing Issues: The need for qualified Education Resource Worker (similar to EA) candidates has become increasingly challenging. To address the shortage, the letter asks for the Ministry of Education to collaborate with the Ministry of Labour and training and skills to develop a strategy to recruit and retain qualified education professionals.

Thames Valley DSB re Community Mental Health Supports: Letter from Board of Trustees to the Minister expressing concerns regarding pressures to address the mental health challenges. Resources for community organizations have significantly decreased. Many students require

ongoing support beyond that the school can provide. The letter suggests various levels of the government work together to find a balance regarding funding for school-based and community-based mental health support services. S. Evans commented that this is another avenue that we can support.

Hastings & Prince Edward County DSB SEAC re: Special Incidence Portion (SIP) PE:

Concerns with SIP funding. The letter suggests a tiered system of funding. Many letters on this topic recently.

Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) Meeting Highlights: Highlights from the past few meetings of MACSE.

5. Presentation/Discussion: Overview of the 2024 Special Education Plan Development Process

- B. Vallee provided an overview of the six-month process of reviewing and revising the *Special Education Plan* and the *Parent's Guide to Accessing Programs and Services*.
- Current versions of these documents are available on the ADSB web site and an electronic copy is provided to SEAC members when the process begins.
- Organization and staffing generally goes to the Board at the end of March. This begins the staffing process which continues through the spring. We usually receive the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) information sometime during this period as well, which allows for the budget process to begin.
- The department usually brings proposed changes and revisions to the content of the Special Education Plan to SEAC for review and feedback at our spring (March, April, May) meetings.
- The "numbers" in the document are updated using May 1st as a count date. Having a consistent count date from year-to-year ensures we can make accurate comparisons.
- Final draft is presented to Trustees at the May or June meeting (usually June) and the final version must be posted to our website in July. A Ministry document must also be submitted to the regional office once the documents are finalized.

6. Member Organization Updates

S. Kitts (North Shore Tribal Council)

- December was a fast short month. Nothing to report.

A. Gauthier (Thrive Child Development Centre)

- Families attended a Christmas party at the Bushplane museum in December. Originally 300 people had RSVP'd, although turnout was not that high due to inclement weather. Still a very successful event.

M. Tuomi (Autism Ontario)

- Opportunity for families to take part in a random draw for the March Break Reimbursement Fund. This is now open for applications with a deadline of January 22, 2024.

- Celebrate the Spectrum- Celebration of World Autism Day takes place April 2, 2024. Materials are available to be sent to schools.

P. Mick (Member- At-Large)

- Nothing to report this month.

M. Barbeau (Community Living Algoma)

- Applications for Summer Employment program are now open. Opportunities are available for students with an intellectual or developmental disability to apply for summer employment. A 'job coach' (another summer student) is also provided to help support the employment. This program is available for students ages 15 and up. Students can apply for job placements of either 8 weeks or 16 weeks. Applications will close March 1, 2024.
- "*Together We're Better* contest" has opened for JK-12 students. Tell us or show us how your classroom and extracurricular program supports the inclusion of students with an intellectual or developmental disability. Contest closes February 29, 2024.

Clint Snider (Algoma Family Services)

- Youth Wellness Hub is now open. The Hub is located at 124 Dennis Street across from the bus terminal. The goal is to provide a one stop shop for youth ages 14 to 25, particular those that are vulnerable and at-risk. The hub will support:
 - Mental health
 - Substance use/Addictions
 - Health promotion
 - Employment counselling
 - Housing and income support
 - Showers, laundry services
 - Cultural and LGBTQ2SZ@ and support
 - Anti human trafficking

7. Report from the Board (Trustees)

- November 28th Regular Board Meeting including passing of audit statements and a presentation/update on capital projects underway.
- Approval for trustees to attend the Public Education Symposium in Toronto. This provides excellent professional learning for trustees and many of our board members attend.
- Presentation regarding the *Sparkling Secondary Success* reach-ahead credit piloted last year. This will provide an opportunity for any grade 8 student from across the district to develop skills to support their success in secondary school while gaining a grade nine credit.
- Organizational meeting took place on December 6th. Happy to announce that both Chair Jennifer Sarlo and Vice Chair Elaine Johnston will remain in their positions for 2024. Trustee Greg Bowman will be the OPSBA representative.

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

- **Transitions:** Now that 2024 has begun, the Kindergarten Transition process is underway. This is a year-long process that takes place each year. Various community agencies provide the board with a list of students with special needs that will be starting Kindergarten in the fall. The first step in the process is a meeting between K. Viita (System Administrator),

the agency team, and the parent/guardian/caregiver. Often the child is in attendance as well. This meeting is intended to develop a profile for our incoming students to be passed along to the school and used as a basis for discussion at a follow-up meeting at the school in the spring. Thus far, we have 46 students on the list to participate in the Transition process, which is definitely a bit lower than usual.

- **Professional Development Day (February 2nd):** We are in the process of planning for the February 2nd Professional Development Day. Elementary Teachers have the day set aside for the purposes of assessment and reporting, while secondary teachers will be participating in professional learning and semester turn-around activities. The special education department will be focused on professional learning for educational assistants as well as Behaviour Management Systems training for several employee groups.
- **Kindergarten Registration Begins.** Now that we have arrived in 2024, Kindergarten registration has begun for students born in 2020, as well as those born in 2019 that may not have attended school this year. Very helpful to have families register as early as possible as this certainly helps with preliminary planning for the 2024-2025 school year.
- **OCASE Virtual Symposium (Jan 12th):** B Vallee will be attending the January symposium put on by OCASE. OCASE is the Ontario Council for Administrators of Special Education, which is a subdivision of the Council for Exceptional Children. This workshop will be virtual and is focused on supporting mathematics learning for students with special education needs.
- **EQAO Mathematics Assessment (Grade 9) Window Opens:** The window to conduct EQAO testing for Grade 9 mathematics is open from Wednesday, January 10th through February 1st. This is for students currently enrolled in Grade 9 mathematics. Grade 9 math testing takes place each semester.
- **EA On-Boarding:** Our special education team continues to support the Human Resources department in providing training when “on-boarding” new EAs. We were fortunate to hire six EAs in December. These staff participate in the full-day Behaviour Management Systems (BMS) certification, as well as the half-day BMS Autism Awareness supplement. We continue to maintain an open posting for Educational Assistants due to some of the staffing pressures that were discussed at our last meeting.
- **Initial Shelley Moore Session (December 5th):** Staff had the opportunity to participate in the first of the five-part learning sessions provided by Shelley Moore. We extended an invite to staff at our 7-12 and 9-12 schools, however, based on the first session, the learning seems to be appropriate for any age group so we will be opening up the invite for the remaining four sessions to our elementary sites as well. Upcoming sessions are scheduled for February 13th, 28th, March 19th and May 30th.
- **Prospective “Member-at-Large”:** Having received an expression of interest from a prospective member-at-large to join our SEAC, B Vallee asked members for input about adding a second member-at-large position. Historically, we have only ever had one member-at-large at a time. This is permitted by legislation. Members agreed that this would be a good thing for our committee.

9. Next Meeting: February 13, 2024

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

Meeting adjourned at 1:06