



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

**MINUTES OF MEETING
March 18, 2025
Sugar Maple Room/Teams
12:00 Start Time**

Present: M. Tuomi, (Autism Ontario), A. Gauthier (Thrive CDC), V. Simon (Member-at- Large) S. Kitts (North Shore Tribal Council)

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

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

Regrets: C Snider (AFS), M. Barbeau (Community Living Algoma), P. Mick (Member-At-Large),

Guests: Amanda Naccarato (Special Education Assignment Teacher)

Meeting called to order. 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/or guests.

3. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

- Approval of Agenda. Moved by S. Kitts. Seconded by M. Tuomi. All in favour.
- Approval of Minutes (February 11, 2025). Moved by. H, Whitley. Seconded by M. Tuomi. All in favour.

4. Correspondence: No correspondence received.

5. Presentation: *Formal assessment in ADSB: An Overview of the Process (Amanda Naccarato, SEAT)*

- A. Naccarato provided SEAC with an overview of the formal assessment process that is currently in place in ADSB. Detailed information about this process is also to be found in the Special Education Plan and the Parent's Guide.

- Pre-Referral: Formal assessment is not the starting point for specialized programming; there is a great deal of work that should happen at the school before a referral is made. This includes discussion/review by the in-school team, a plan for intervention/remediation of learning needs, use of informal accommodations in the classroom, data collection, on-going discussion/consultation between school and caregivers, and in most cases, implementation of a “non-exceptional” IEP to outline programs and/or services that are in place.
- Referral: There are guidelines to be followed when a referral is made. These include ensuring that there has not already been a recent assessment conducted, implementing a non-exceptional IEP to ensure that the student is not waiting to receive supports and services, ensuring that the parent/guardian is supportive of having an assessment done, and checking that the student has consistent attendance as frequent absenteeism can skew achievement results.
- ADSB conducts assessments within two assessment “windows” of six months each. The first window to submit referrals is in June (sometimes late May). Assuming that the referral is appropriate, students referred during the June intake will be assessed between July through November, with reports being shared between September and February.
- The second referral window is for referrals to be submitted in December (or early January). Assuming the referral is appropriate, students referred during the December intake will be assessed between January and May, with reports being shared between March and September.
- A sample timeline was provided to illustrate the process.
- At present, ADSB is conducting approximately 160-180 formal assessments each year.

Questions arising from the presentation:

- S. Kitts asked what happens if parents are not on board with testing because they don’t want their child to be “labelled”? Does the school still move forward with testing? A. Naccarato responded that parent/guardian must give permission for a formal assessment. Assessments are expensive, and we want to ensure that the parent/guardian is on board with having an assessment done and sharing the results with the school for programming purposes.
- S. Kitts asked how many assessors the ADSB has? We currently contract three psychometrists/psychological associates to provide assessments. Two of these are based in our district and ADSB also has a long-standing relationship with a firm in southern Ontario for assessments. We do not have “in-house” assessment; we contract for these services.
- M. Tuomi asked if a parent feels that there concerns for their child and want an assessment done, but the school does not agree, is there a way to push testing? B. Vallee responded that we usually conduct assessments for the purposes of providing more specific and detailed information to inform programming for the student. That usually happens because the school sees evidence that the student is struggling even with programming and services provided. In practice, it has become very rare that a referral is declined due to the “pre-referral” work that is expected. If parent and school disagree, the parent would follow the ADSB process for dealing with unresolved issues outlined in the *Special Education Plan* and on the website.

- A, Gauthier asked if ADSB tests for ADHD. B. Vallee responded that school boards conduct psychological-educational assessments, generally to determine the presence of a learning disability (although we have picked up more assessments for students with potential MID recently as our community partners no longer conduct these assessments). In cases where the needs of the student are complex, or in cases where a differentiated diagnosis is required, (e.g. the learning difficulty is accompanied by behavioural, socio-emotional, or mental health concerns) a referral to an external agency for a more specialized diagnosis may be most appropriate. ADHD is a diagnosis that is generally made by the medical community rather than a school board, although we usually support the process through the completion of rating scales or checklists.

6. Member Organization Updates

North Shore Tribal Council (Sherri Kitts)

- Still working with parents and the schools trying to support students who are still struggling with behaviour issues,
- North Shore Tribal Council is hosting an emergency meeting about potential changes to Jordan's Principle funding. There are concerns about what the recent operational bulletin will mean for services currently provided. Meeting is scheduled for Friday March 22, 2024

Autism Ontario (M. Tuomi)

- For March the focus is still promoting "*Celebrate the Spectrum*". Requests for materials must be submitted by March 19, 2025, to ensure they arrive in time for April 2nd.
- Offering all caregivers a seven-week group program to target the social, emotional, and psychological challenges that can arise among caregivers of children with complex needs. We help caregivers care for themselves because the more they show up for themselves, the more they can show their loved ones the way.

Member-At-Large (Pat Mick)

- Nothing to report

Thrive (Amanda Gauthier)

- Nothing to report

Member-at-Large (Velma Simon)

- 4 weeks left until the end of the term. A celebration is planned for the end of April.
- Sault College will be having an Open House on Saturday, April 5, 2025, from 9:00-12:00 noon. Opportunity to see the college, participate in draws, prizes, etc.
- Awards ceremony taking place on March 18, 2025

7. Report from the Board (Trustees)

- Last Board Meeting was on February 25, 2025. Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday of next week (March 28th).

- We are adjusting our practices for structuring meetings and agendas. We are now holding Open sessions beginning at 5:30, to be followed by a closed session
- Excited to announce a new partnership and learning opportunity that White Pines will be offering. We have teamed up with a local chocolate company with chocolate-making on site and opportunities to sell the product through the community.
- Approval of the 2025-2026 school year calendar is complete.
- Updated information about the new ADSB Alliance Academy was provided at our last meeting.
- Student Trustees have been selected for the 2025-2026 school year.
- Policy review cycle continues.

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

- **Professional Development Day (February 27th):** Professional Development Day took place on February 27th. Originally scheduled for March 28th, the date was re-scheduled due to the Provincial Election being called for February 27th. We have expressed concerns about a number of safety/security considerations that need to be made if/when schools serve as polling stations which made a date change the most attractive option. Topics for the PD Day included an opportunity for school teams to reflect on their learning related to school improvement efforts through cycle 1 and 2 as they developed and refined their cycle 3 classroom and school improvement plans. Homeroom teachers of grades 3 & 6, grade 9 math and literacy teams worked with their principals to develop EQAO plans, while other teaching staff participated in virtual workshops of choice on a variety of topics (i.e. literacy, numeracy, equity, special education, MLL, Indigenous education, well-being) related to their improvement work. Educational Assistants engaged in Behaviour Management Systems (BMS) refresher training which focuses on preventative measures and safety when responding to student behaviours.
- **Kindergarten Registration Continues.** Kindergarten registration continues for children born in 2021, as well as those born in 2020 that may not have attended school during the current school year. Very helpful to have families register as early as possible as this certainly helps with preliminary planning for the 2025-2026 school year.
- **SERT Professional Learning:** Our February session was a deep dive into the “nitty-gritty” of the Individual Education Plan with a focus on the “front matter” that are part of the IEP standards. Our March learning session for elementary SERTs takes place on Friday, March 21st. Focus areas for this session will include an “Open Spaces discussion on two topics from a choice of *Building Intervention Groups*; *IEP Development/ IPRC Reviews*, *Modified Programming*, and *Facilitating ISEPT Meetings*. Other topics will include some professional learning around the SERT role in EQAO assessments, and an overview of specialized classrooms and programs. SERTs will also participate in a session on aligning the Knowledgehook and Math-up tools to support their intervention planning.
- **Upcoming Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) Workshop:** The next parent workshop sponsored by the ADSB PIC will take place on March 31st from 6:30-7:30. Topic for this session is Numeracy/Mathematics. Link will be available through the ADSB website.

9. Next Meeting: April 15, 2025

10. Motion to adjourn: Moved by S. Kitts. Seconded by M. Tuomi.

Meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.