



Special Education Advisory Committee

Thursday, January 20, 2022

6:00 PM

MS Teams Virtual Meeting

MINUTES

Present: Chair W. Rose, P. Bagchee, L. Boswell, C. Brady, R. Collver, A. Csoff, L. DeJong, A. Detmar, M. Gatopoulos, J. Gemmill, K. Jones, F. Lainsou N. Marsh-Poremba, L. Nydam, T. Sault, L. Scott, L. Sheppard, L. Thompson, J. White, T. Wilson.

Regrets: P. Boutis, T. Buchanan, J. Trovato, T. Waldschmidt.

Recorder: P. Curran

A - 1 **Opening**

(a) **Welcome**

W. Rose called the meeting to order and read the Land Acknowledgment Statement.

(b) **Agenda Additions/Deletions/Approval**

Add I-1 (e) PAAC on SEAC Budget Documents

Add I-1 (f) LDAO Course for SEAC Members and Special Education Professionals

Add I-1 (g) Email from Nicole Vass of "Feel the Party"

Add J-1 (d) Suspensions and Expulsions for Students with Special Education Needs

Add J-1 (e) Wait List for Psycho Educational Tests

Moved by: C. Brady

Seconded by: A. Detmar

THAT the SEAC 21-05 Agenda for Thursday, January 20, 2022 be approved as amended.

Carried

B - 1 **Timed Items**

(a) **Election – Chair of SEAC 2022**

J. White informed members they were permitted to self-nominate.

She opened the floor by calling for nominations for the position of SEAC Chair.

W. Rose self-nominated.

J. White called for other nominations a second time and a third time.

Seeing no other candidates or nominations, J. White asked W. Rose to confirm she was willing to accept the position and asked for a vote on the Chair.

THAT W. Rose be acclaimed as the Chair of SEAC for the 2022 calendar year.

Moved by: C. Brady

Seconded by: L. Boswell

Carried

(b) **Election – Vice-Chair of SEAC 2022**

J. White reminded members they were permitted to self-nominate.

She opened the floor by calling for nominations for the position of SEAC Vice-Chair.

R. Collver nominated P. Boutis; W. Rose informed members she is absent tonight.

J. White asked W. Rose to provide an overview for the role of Vice-Chair.



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L. DeJong self-nominated.

J. White called for other nominations a second time and a third time.

Seeing no other candidates or nominations, J. White asked L. DeJong to confirm she was willing to accept the position and asked for a vote on the Vice-Chair.

THAT L. DeJong be acclaimed as the Vice-Chair of SEAC for the 2022 calendar year.

Moved by: C. Brady

Seconded by: L. Boswell

Carried

C - 1 **Business Arising from Minutes and/or Previous Meetings**

(a) **Ratification of Minutes from Thursday, December 9, 2021**

- i. Re: C-1 Business Arising from Minutes and/or Previous Meetings (c) SEAC Letter of Support for Summer Programs – Revise the letter by inserting the names of the MPP
- ii. Re: F-1 Standing Items (b) Trustee Updates – Revise the comment to the following “Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) are going home with students over the Christmas break.”

Moved by: K. Jones

Seconded by: L. Boswell

THAT the SEAC 21-04 minutes for Thursday, December 9, 2021 be approved as amended.

Carried

D - 1 **New Business**

(a) **Grade 3 C-CAT Data – Outcomes 2020-21 and Process 2021-22**

J. White introduced Ms. Backus-Kelly whose role is the Teacher Consultant for the Alternative Program for students who are gifted.

They shared 2021 Canadian-Cognitive Abilities Test results.

The C-CAT is a standardized screener measuring cognitive abilities across verbal, quantitative and non-verbal domains based on Canadian Norms.

It is group administered in paper and pencil format.

In Grade Erie there were 1,557 Grade 3 students in 58 schools that participated in the C-CAT, 727 female and 830 male. Students in 17 schools were tested between February and Mar 2021 and students in 35 schools were tested between September and November 2021. Students in the Virtual Learning Academy participated only if they moved back to in person learning. 99 of 1557 or 6.4% of the eligible grade 3 students did not participate.

Ms. Backus-Kelly cautioned that environmental and learning opportunities for students during the COVID pandemic are significantly different from the environmental and learning opportunities in place when C-CAT norms were established. She mentioned that while ability skills were less likely to be affected by



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the disruption of in class learning it is important to keep in mind when reviewing data year over year.

Ms. Backus-Kelly reminded members that the tests this year were administered in two different time periods so to get a true reading of this year's results, the numbers from the green column must be added to the numbers of the purple column to show the final data for 2021.

The charts for Verbal, Quantitative and Non-Verbal abilities all indicate some students are ahead of the curve.

W. Rose shared that she believed the age of these students may preclude their ability to sit through or complete the test in a way that will accurately demonstrate their cognitive ability or aptitude.

L. Thompson concurred with this statement and added that from an equity lens, it is important to consider these factors as well as the impact of the pandemic on the test results.

J. White noted students' abilities are also measured through classroom assessments and presented the composite chart which is consistent with the three previous slides. She explained the impact of the pandemic which indicates the lean toward the lower scores.

W. Backus-Kelly explained the not calculated data, which are culminated from staff review of the bubble sheets. The not calculated indicate those students who may have been overwhelmed and not completed the test or may have completed more than one answer to a question. As the board must submit only the correctly finished sheets for compilation any that were incomplete or completed incorrectly must be removed before they are submitted.

J. White explained individual reports will be distributed to schools and parents and CogAT.com (the scoring company) provides evidence-informed profile-based instructional strategies for the classroom teacher. The board's System Research Lead is currently working to display data in an application for principals to access during meetings to facilitate the work in differentiating instruction for all learners. Ms. Backus-Kelly continues to consult with schools to support their development and implementation of programs for cognitively advanced students. Staff is currently developing a Spring 2022 C-CAT-7 schedule for administration and considering home school and Virtual Learning Academy applications.

W. Rose expressed concern that statistically there is evidence that many gifted and talented students who would benefit from advanced programming are being missed through this evaluation and that potentially gifted programming may be underfunded.



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J. White reminded members the C-CAT is not the only screening tool used to identify student ability and needs but is one piece of data. It may not capture all the students, but staff are continually working to ensure all relevant information is gathered.

(b) **OnSIS data for Students with Special Education Needs**

L. Thompson informed members the data annually brought to SEAC is presented this year in a format similar to the Ministry of Education data.

In the 2020-21 school year 6,462 students or 24% of all Grand Erie students received special education programs and/or services. Of those students 25% had been identified through the Individual Placement Review Committee (IPRC) process.

Approximately 95% of all students receiving special education programs and/or services were placed in regular classrooms for more than half of the instructional day.

Over time, the number of students with special education needs has risen slightly from 24.2% in 2015 to 26.4% in 2020. Students without an IPRC but who received special education programs or services rose from 17.6% in 2015 to 19.8% in 2020. Students with special education needs and who had been through the IPRC process changed from 5.5% in 2015 to 6.6% in 2020.

W. Rose asked if there is any information from other boards as to changing the IPRC process.

L. Thompson noted Grand Erie data is comparable to provincial data showing more students with special education needs who have not been formally identified through the IPRC process. This information could be used to start the discussion at the Ministry level especially as the proposed revisions to the K-12 Education Standards have mentioned the IPRC process. She will ensure the information is passed on to a colleague for sharing with the Ministry Advisory Council on Special Education.

K. Jones asked if a change to the definition impacted the numbers for 2018 where this is an obvious spike.

J. White explained the increase can be explained by the infusion of new students with special education needs. She noted Grand Erie accepted many new students who came with their IPRC in place.

L. Boswell asked what year the Mental Health Lead was incorporated in Grand Erie. L. Thompson shared it was 2013 or 2014.



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L. Thompson discussed exceptionalities and noted in 2020-21 there were 1,605 Grand Erie students identified as exceptional. Types of exceptionalities were broken into categories with most students identified with more than one exceptionality resulting in 59.4% of students identified with a multiple exceptionality.

Provincially, 7.7% of Ontario students are identified as having multiple exceptionalities.

She noted there is discrepancy in the comparison from Grand Erie to the provincial totals.

W. Rose asked if the definition is different for exceptionality in Grand Erie from the province. Are these defined differently in our board?

J. White explained for multiple exceptionalities the predominant need is defined as their primary one. L. Thompson noted in Grand Erie if a student is identified with, e.g., Autism but also demonstrates behaviour difficulties, they would be considered as having multiple exceptionalities which may account for the difference in our numbers compared to provincial data.

L. DeJong asked how prescriptive or definitive are the categories and if funding affects the definition, for example Autism?

L. Thompson explained that if the student has a primary diagnosis, but a secondary exceptionality moves them into the multiple category, they will still be counted in their primary area and it will not affect the funding.

P. Bagchee noted DSM distinguishes between Autism with a developmental disability and Autism without a developmental disability so that may be one explanation of multiple exceptionalities.

L. Thompson presented suspension data for students with special needs compared to all other students.

Charts were provided indicating 71.5% of students without special needs compared to 64.9% of students with special needs had received one suspension. Students with special needs receiving two suspensions were 16.5% compared to all other students with two suspensions at 19.8%. There were 5.5% of all other students with three suspensions compared to 8.8% of students with special needs. For three or more suspensions there were 3.3% of students with special needs compared to 8.8% of all other students.

W. Rose noted that while 8.8% for students with special education needs be a small number, in comparison to the percentage for all other students it brings cause for concern.



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L. Thompson explained this data is shared with our Safe and Inclusive Schools Team but may not have been shared in this format.

L. DeJong noted that many suspensions may result from the child is having behaviour difficulties and reminded members it takes time for strategies to become effective. She suggested this may be the cause of the data for multiple suspensions.

L. Thompson thanked her for this perspective and reminded members that school administrators must balance the needs of the student with special needs and the safety of students and staff within their school. A suspension is often a last resort strategy.

K. Jones asked how successful the use of suspension is as a tool for students.

L. Thompson advised principals will often not suspend students because they know the exceptionality is impacting their behaviour and will wait until it reaches a point in which they have no other choice. Principals mitigate duration of suspensions based on student needs. Success of this strategy is dependent on the individual student and relies on support from the family and an understanding of the purpose of the suspension.

For one day suspensions there were 51.7% of students with special needs compared to 56.1% of all other students. Two-day suspensions were served by 28.6% of students with special needs compared to 25.3% of all other students. Four, five and more than five-day suspensions remained constant for all other students at 2.2% but for students with special education needs, there were 2.2% at four days, 3.3% at five days and 5.5% at more than five days. When suspensions exceed five days, are referred to safe schools and considered long term. Suspensions that reach 20 days are considered pending expulsion.

L. Thompson mentioned it is interesting to note the duration of suspension mimics the pattern of the number of suspensions both for students with special education needs and for all other students.

L. DeJong expressed her concern that students with special needs are getting more suspensions and suspensions of longer duration.

L. Thompson mentioned P. Bagchee's input on the tools available to schools that support staff learning in the area of self-regulation and co-regulation.

P. Bagchee stated that there are other risk factors and stressors on marginalized groups that people need to be aware of when trying to understand the suspension data.



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R. Collver appreciated the graphs and found the data on the extended suspensions very disturbing. She noted the Safe and Inclusive Schools Team is planning to look at the suspension data with respect to marginalized and special needs students. She would also like to know if the strategies mentioned by P. Bagchee have been effective in reducing the frequency and duration of suspensions. She would like the board to be very intentional about suspensions. She requested P. Bagchee's information on a Year over Year data to see how effective the strategies have been. L. Boswell would like to see the suspension slides data broken into elementary and secondary students.

P. Bagchee explained she is working toward a K-8 strategy plan. Five top reasons for suspensions were identified and primarily concern those actions / comments that negatively impact the moral tone of the school or the emotional / physical safety of students, staff or volunteers in the school.

Physical or verbal aggression saw 187 of all other students compared to 137 of student with special needs.

65 students with special needs received suspension for persistent opposition to authority compared to 82 for all other students.

The fourth reason for students with special needs was swearing at a teacher or another person in authority at 36 students.

The fourth reason for all other students was possession of alcohol, drug or drug paraphernalia, etc. at 35 students.

The fifth reason for students with special needs was any inappropriate behaviour motivated by bias, i.e., any protected human right at 30 students.

For all other students, the fifth reason was swearing at a teacher or another person in authority at 28 students.

(c) **Transitions to Post-Secondary, The World of Work and Community Living**

F. Lainson and L. Sheppard reviewed the current Grand Erie practices that support student transitions from secondary schools to post secondary education, the world of work or community living. Planning is coordinated between students, parents, school staff and community organizations. Learning Resource Teachers can access the Transitions Guide to monitor goals and next steps as students progress through transitions.

Supported transitions help increase the success for students with special education needs.



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Current practices include pathway discussions at annual reviews of IPRC, review of IEPs, and building skills to be self-advocates, supporting post-secondary applications and collaborating with community agencies to facilitate post-secondary supports. As well responsive training, support and access to resources is provided to educator teams.

The current community connections were demonstrated and an explanation of the Resource Guide for Students with Disabilities – transition to Post-Secondary Education. Students have autonomy as to disclosure of disabilities when applying to post-secondary organization but must comply with the processes of each organization when doing so. Links to the guides are included.

<https://www.transitionresourceguide.ca/>
<https://www.transitionresourceguide.ca/learn-about-accessibility>

In Grand Erie we are working to ensure a focus on employment skills and increasing independence; opportunities are available for students beyond school; student voice is related to pathways, assisting parents to connect with community agencies (starting at age 14); gathering data about graduates' pathways; Learning Resource Teacher Collaboration and Training; involving students in Project SEARCH; utilizing Learning Commons, Greenhouses, Breakfast programs within schools to learn and practice soft skills; experiential learning opportunities and using My Blueprint Portfolio. Also, Alternative Program Guide to incorporate including skills for employment.

The Board has also hired an Itinerant Teacher for Alternative Programming for Intellectual Disability whose focus is supporting the teachers in self-contained classrooms and works with community agencies to help facilitate the planning process.

Members were asked to provide input on the transition process directly or they may scan the QR code to access an anonymous survey.

- 1) Based on our existing transition processes, can you identify any gaps where we can continue to make improvements to that will support students, families and staff?
- 2) From the K-12 Education Standards how can we create opportunities, resources and accessible programs and make them available in purposeful and meaningful ways for students and families.

L. DeJong feels more conversation needs to occur between school and family to ensure family knows the student's capabilities.

L. Boswell asked how much of the future planning gets into the IEP.

L. Sheppard informed members some schools manage it differently, but many enter the information in short-, medium- and long-term goals.



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R. Collver is frequently asked when parents should start talking to their child about pathways. She believes most students have already started on a pathway at age 14.

F. Lainson noted the DSO application is submitted at age 14 and it is important to keep the pathways open.

R. Collver asked if we should talk to parent before that age, e.g., G6 or G7?

F. Lainson noted it is up to individual schools they but will take back to resource teams and bring back some guidance.

L. Boswell shared Contact Brant also reports to the Ministry at age 14.

E - 1 Other Business

(a) Standard 19 – Submission and Availability of the Plan

P. Curran explained the board is required to submit its Special Education Plan annually to the Ministry and to make it public following approval. The final copy is always posted to our website and two copies are mailed to the London District office of the Ministry of Education and include a letter signed by the Director confirming the special education plan is in compliance with Regulation 306. A copy of the board's approval of the plan is included and any related motions or recommendations from SEAC.

F - 1 Standing Items

(a) Policies/Procedures Out for Comment

Comments on currently reviewed policies or procedures may be submitted to policiesandprocedures@granderie.ca according to the timeline listed.

(b) Trustee Updates

i. R. Collver

- Informed committee T. Waldschmidt was absent tonight due to bereavement of family member. Our thoughts and prayers go out to him and his family.
- Welcomed everyone back to in person learning. Thanked everyone for their work.
- Thanked everyone for their patience while we implement the new guidelines for everyone to navigate and thanked those behind the scenes for getting the supplies and guidelines in place. Noted the inclement weather gave everyone a little extra time to prepare.
- Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) kits and N95 masks have been delivered to elementary schools and hoping secondary schools will receive theirs next week.
- 743 HEPA filters were installed in the fall and Grand Erie was provided with a substantial amount of funding to refit ventilation. Last year, we received \$5.1 M and this year Grand Erie was given \$6.5M.
- Information on HVAC upgrades and filter replacement can be found at: <https://granderie.ca/board/familysupports/covid-19-and-grand-erie-schools>
- This page also provides some very good resources, especially the one by the Brant County Health Unit.



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- Kindergarten registration is happening, and schools are busy welcoming our new Grand Erie students.
- The Board is seeking members for an Equity Advisory Group. Any community member with experience in Human Rights, Equity, Deserving Organizations aligned to network, parents, community leaders or anyone who represents diverse groups. The purpose of this committee is to inform the board on matters of equity, diversity and inclusiveness. Applications are due February 14, 2022. <https://granderie.ca/board/programsandlearning/safe-schools/eag>

G - 1 Information Items

(a) Ministry of Education – Remote Learning Supports for Students with Special Education Needs

There was a very large document provided for teachers and these documents were provided for families. Many of the recommendations were geared toward students who had a voice that could be heard and successfully participate with the appropriate accommodations.

H - 1 Community Updates

(a) Nil

I - 1 Correspondence

(a) Ltr Dec 3 2020 WRDSB re Bill 172

(b) Dec 6, 2021 Association of Chief Speech-Language Pathologists (ACSLP) of Ontario School Boards 2021 Position Statement

- L. DeJong noted there was a joint review in October of PP81 but there are no guidelines or other details yet. There was minimal revision in 1984 but no information from a high level at this time.

(c) Ltr Dec 16 2021 HDSB re ADHD as Exceptionality

- W. Rose encouraged everyone to read and think about this issue. The letter is requesting Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) be considered an exceptionality.

(d) Ltr Dec 20 2021 DSBN re School Nursing Shortage

- This is in response to Grand Erie's letter from October.

(e) PAAC on SEAC Budget Documents

- Please review when time permits.

(f) LDAO Course

- Please note the cost for members and for professionals.

(g) Email from Party On

- Please contact Chair Rose if you are interested in more information.

(h) Ltr – Dec 3 2020 WRDSB re FASD

- We have responded previously.



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J - 1 **Future Agenda Items and SEAC Committee Planning**

- (a) Memo re New Program for Students on Autism Spectrum (slated for Feb 17th Meeting)
- (b) Budget Financial Update – 2021-22 (slated for Feb 17th Meeting)
- (c) 2022-23 Budget Process (slated for Feb 17th Meeting)

K - 1 **Next Meeting**

Thursday, February 17, 2022 | 6:00 PM | MS Teams

L - 1 **Adjournment**

W. Rose called for adjournment.

Moved by: L. Boswell

Seconded by: M. Gatopoulos

THAT the SEAC 21-05 meeting held January 20, 2022 be adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Carried