

Halton District School Board



HALTON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Special Education Advisory Committee - (Virtual Meeting)

Tuesday, December 1, 2020, 7pm

MINUTES

- Present: Joanna Oliver (Trustee); Alison Brindle (Learning Disabilities Association of Halton/Hamilton); Margo Shuttleworth (Trustee); Heather Gerrits (Trustee); Lucille Morris (Member at Large); Tracey Ehl Harrison (Trustee); Deirdre Woo (Association for Bright Children); James Baldwin (Member at Large); Lisa Cameron (Autism Ontario);
- Staff: Mark Zonneveld (Superintendent); Sean Marks (Principal of Special Education); Lorna Goodrow (Administrator, Student Services)
- Regrets: Diane Miller (Member at Large); Mike Brown (Halton Down Syndrome Association); Melissa Dockeray (Easter Seals Society); Sophia Siddiqi (Halton Down Syndrome Association); Diane Vandenbossche (Learning Disabilities Association of Halton/Hamilton); Hetal Shah (Association for Bright Children); Judy Shiels (Voice)
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1.0 Opening

1.1 Welcome and Call to Order

L. Morris called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

J. Oliver announced that LDAHH has changed their Representatives to reflect A. Brindle as LDAHH Rep and D. Vandenbossche as the Alternate for LDAHH. J. Oliver welcomed Sarah Lansley as our new member of SEAC as the alternate for Easter Seals Society.

1.2 Honouring the Land and Territory

J. Oliver read the Acknowledgement of Traditional Lands

1.3 Approval of Agenda

#162-21 M. Shuttleworth and J. Baldwin

Be it resolved that the Special Education Advisory Committee approved the agenda for December 1, 2020.

Carried Unanimously

1.4 Minutes of November 3, 2020

#163-21 J. Baldwin and M. Shuttleworth

Be it resolved that the minutes for the meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee for November 3, 2020 be approved.

Carried Unanimously

2.0 Action

2.1 Early Years Assessments and Supports

Members of School Programs and Student Services presented a slideshow. Members included:

School Programs

Cristina Salmini - Superintendent of Education

Laurie Reid - Principal, Elementary Program

Jennifer Chamberland - Instructional Program Leader

Student Services

Sean Marks - Principal, Special Education

Christine Howard - Manager, Speech Language Pathology

After the presentation, break-out sessions were held to obtain feedback from SEAC members. This feedback will be consolidated and shared with SEAC at a later date.

M. Zonneveld thanked all of the members who presented this evening.

3.0 SEAC Discussion/Question Period

none

4.0 Communication to SEAC

4.1 Superintendent's Report

1. CCAT Administration for Gr 4 Virtual Students - The CCAT7 was administered to approximately 1400 Gr 4 virtual students on Fri Nov 27 during the PA Day. Students wrote the test in-person at their home schools. Results will be shared as per our normal process, with appropriate follow up based on student results. Students/families that chose not to write the test will be contacted regarding other options for assessment.

2. Model Change Update - Students/families were given the opportunity to change their model of school attendance from in-person to virtual, or vice versa, as per Ministry direction.

Secondary:

Students changing to virtual = 1425, total = 4998 = 25%

Students changing to in-person = 96, total = 14699 = 75%

Elementary:

Students changing to virtual = 1800, total = 14375 = 31%

Students changing to in-person = 600, total = 31614 = 69%

These changes took effect on Nov 16 for secondary, and Dec 1 for elementary.

3. Virtual Programming and Supports

There are over 2400 students with IEPs attending our virtual schools, with a wide variety of profiles and needs. Staff are working hard to provide great programming and support for these students. This is an area of ongoing learning for staff, with students continuing to benefit from our growing skills and expertise. During the meeting I will share a video created by one parent that highlights her daughter's virtual learning experiences.

A. Brindle asked if the Board is analysing what has worked well with our “new normal” in terms of teaching. M. Zonneveld responded that this is thought of often. This is an ongoing process and we look forward to keep learning in our new normal. We are very proud of our staff.

4.2 Association Reports

D. Woo of ABC Halton reported the following:

ABC Halton sent a letter to Director Miller on November 16th which included concerns about the primary gifted program, as well as requests for data and the formation of a working group.

ABC’s concerns have been building as we have seen inappropriate changes to parent information sessions and early identification processes. These changes have resulted in children with gifted special education needs being missed or being denied access to identification. The result of these outcomes is inequity in how children in the HDSB are being supported. We are already seeing families with greater financial means accessing private testing. When this happens, children from disadvantaged and racialized families will be left out. In addition, we are observing fewer girls being identified which is consistent with gender bias when a formal process is absent.

Children who are gifted are part of a population that is considered “neurodiverse.” The Neurodiverse population is considered to be outside of the norm, or atypical. This population includes people with autism, ADHD, giftedness, among others. It simply means that their brains work differently. In addition to cognitive differences, children who are gifted also experience asynchronous development socially, emotionally, and physically. This asynchrony increases with higher cognitive capacity. What this means for children is that while they try to fit into a regular classroom, they often struggle to function, to learn, and to relate to their classmates. We often see higher rates of disengaged students and mental health challenges with these children.

ABC is alarmed at the most recent reported results that only 9 children were tested in 2020 and only 1 was identified as gifted. We know this population is much higher and we are concerned for the students who are being missed. We are asking that data, communication, and training information be provided for review. We are asking that a working group be formed as soon as possible so that we can jointly identify improvements to the nomination and testing processes, and make those changes in order to better support children, train teachers and SERTs, and educate our Board and Administrators across Halton.

At this time, the request is with Director Miller and ABC is awaiting his response.

A. Brindle reported the following: The Learning Disabilities Association of Halton-Hamilton is proud to offer continuing support to students with learning disabilities and/or ADHD during this pandemic. We have a number of programs that will be starting new sessions in January including Reading Rocks (a literacy program), Social Skills, Self-Advocacy and a brand new Math intervention program to help students fill in the gaps they have in their learning.

Program registration can be found on www.ldahh.ca and subsidies are available for those in need.

4.3 Trustee Reports

J. Oliver reported on the Trustees update below: Two facilities-related reports were presented to the Board of Trustees in November. The first report, the [Indoor Air Quality Report](#), includes information about how the board is approaching ventilation and filtration. There is a list of schools, where additional filtration devices were or are currently being installed. The second report, the [annual water quality testing report](#), provides a list of schools where there were lead exceedances over the regulated limit. All of these exceedances have been addressed in an appropriate manner.

Trustees also received a [financial update report](#) which provides information about revenues and expenses to date. As a Board, we have had to reallocate funds from surplus to address mounting Covid-19 costs. This is a very real and shared situation around the province. Recently, the Minister has announced that the Ministry will not be "clawing back" funds originally allocated through the Grants for Student Needs. There was great concern that Boards would be penalized for the discrepancy between projections and the number of students that showed up. For example, some families have chosen home schooling, or for kindergarten students, to delay entry.

The Student Senate has been meeting on a monthly basis by videoconference. There is always a great turn-out with great representation from both elementary and secondary schools. And for those interested in hearing about HDSB's pandemic response as it relates to our schools, Dr. Meghani, the Medical Officer of Health for Halton Region, presented at the Nov. 4h Board meeting. Anyone interested in this presentation will find it in the [meeting video](#) of the Nov. 4th meeting (at the 38 minute mark).

Tomorrow, at the Board meeting, Trustees will receive a presentation about the new [Human Rights Equity Action and Accountability Plan: The Way Forward](#) . This is the presentation that Superintendent Eatough made to SEAC at our Nov 3rd meeting.

Other items of interest coming up at this Wednesday's Board meeting include: the Director's Goals for the coming year (they can be found [here](#)), as well as a number of new policies and procedures that will require approval. These include: [Director's Annual Performance Review](#), School [Naming and Renaming](#), and [Safe Schools Policy](#).

4.4 Committee Reports

- PIC – none
- Accessibility Coordinating Committee - none
- Equity and Inclusive Education Advisory Steering Committee – none
- Nelson/Robert Bateman HS Integration Steering Committee – M. Shuttleworth reported the following: The final meeting for this Committee was held November 24, 2020. The students expressed how difficult it has been with Covid, however, they realize that this is regardless of whether they were having an amalgamation of the schools or not. Covid has made everything hard, but they've also tried to find some positives in it as well. They are very excited about the new sign that has been installed outside of the entrance at Nelson. Students from the CPP program are attending Nelson every day. There was a question regarding representatives of students by the CPP program on student council and although currently there is none, they are going to continue to try to recruit. We are currently looking for opportunities to honour the Bateman name within the building and are looking for suggestions.
- Central/Robert Bateman HS IB Program Integration Steering Committee – A. Brindle reported that the final meeting took place November 23, 2020. Process has gone as well as possible and students are excited.

5.0 SEAC Chair and Vice-Chair Election

M. Zonneveld as scrutineer began the SEAC election for our Chair and Vice-Chair. These new roles will commence in January, 2021. M. Zonneveld asked if any members were interested in SEAC Chair. A. Brindle was the only member that showed interest for SEAC Chair. A. Brindle was appointed SEAC Chair. A. Brindle as Chair, then asked if any members were interested in becoming SEAC Vice-Chair. L. Morris was the only member that showed interest for SEAC Vice-Chair. L. Morris was appointed as SEAC Vice-Chair.

6.0 Next Agenda/Order Paper

none

7.0 Adjournment

7.1 A. Brindle adjourned the meeting at 9:07 p.m.