

Halton District School Board

HALTON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Special Education Advisory Committee - (Virtual Meeting)

Tuesday, October 6, 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); Melissa Dockeray (Easter Seals Society); Mike Brown (Halton Down Syndrome Association); Sophia Siddiqi (Halton Down Syndrome Association); Diane Miller (Member at Large); Diane Vandenbossche (Learning Disabilities Association of Halton/Hamilton)

Staff: Mark Zonneveld (Superintendent); Sean Marks (Principal of Special Education); Lorna Goodrow (Administrator, Student Services)

Regrets: James Baldwin (Member at Large); Hetal Shah (Association for Bright Children); Lisa Cameron (Autism Ontario); Judy Shiels (Voice)

1.0 Opening

1.1 Welcome and Call to Order

L. Morris called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm

1.2 Honouring the Land and Territory

J. Oliver read the Acknowledgement of Traditional Lands

1.3 Approval of Agenda

#156-21 A. Brindle and M. Dockeray

Be it resolved that the Special Education Advisory Committee approved the agenda for October 6, 2020.

Carried Unanimously

1.4 Minutes of September 15, 2020

#157-21 D. Woo and D. Miller

Be it resolved that the minutes for the meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee for September 15, 2020 be approved.

Carried Unanimously

2.0 Action

2.1 Project Search Presentation

R. Garcia, Instructional Program Leader - Secondary presented a very interesting and informative slideshow on the above project. M. Zonneveld asked members if they had any questions about the presentation. Several members thanked R. Garcia for his presentation. M. Zonneveld wanted to thank R. Garcia for helping to make this project so successful. It has given our students positive workplace opportunities/experiences. R. Garcia commented that other school boards have reached out to our Board, including Hamilton and Toronto for further information.

2.2 Mental Health Supports and Summer Learning Presentations

R. Mantynen, Manager, Student Services, presented a slideshow on the HDSBs mental health supports. Several SEAC members had questions after the presentation. M. Zonneveld thanked R. Mantynen and her team for all of their hard work as it ensured that all of our staff and students had the support and information that they required.

S. Marks, Principal of Special Education of Student Services presented a slideshow on the Board's Summer Learning initiatives. There was a Q&A after the presentation. M. Zonneveld expressed his thanks to S. Marks and his team for all of their work in pulling together and delivering the Summer Learning opportunities for our students.

3.0 SEAC Discussion/Question Period

No questions were asked.

4.0 Communication to SEAC

4.1 Superintendent's Report – October 6, 2020

1. **Virtual Schools Start Up** - The start up of our virtual schools has proven to be quite challenging. Staff are working extremely hard to engage their students and provide virtual learning opportunities. Students with special needs are being supported in a variety of ways including revisions to IEPs as necessary, virtual resources and accommodations, and partnering with parents as appropriate. We appreciate the patience of students and parents as we implement this new learning model.

2. **Consolidation of Self-Contained Classes** - Each spring and fall we look at the enrollment in our self-contained classes and make decisions regarding opening, closing, consolidating and moving classes. This fall more classes were impacted due to the number of families choosing the virtual school model. Once the enrollment was confirmed in all SC classes the decision was made to consolidate the following classes:

School Moving From	Comm	ELPHA	LD	Life Skills	Grand Total	Explanation
Alexander's				3	3	3 students from Alexander's LS class to Florence Meares
JM Denyes (Same School)	2				2	2 SK students to Bruce Trail where there are other SK students, 2 students join other Denyes class
JM Denyes: Receiving Class	6				6	6 students will remain at Denyes and become one class with 2 students from George Kennedy
Ethel Gardiner			3		3	1 student will join Silver Creek and the other 2 have declined transfer - will return to home school
George Kennedy	2				2	2 students will join JM Denyes
Heritage Glen				4	4	2 students will join Falgarwood and the other 2 will join West Oak
Joseph Gibbons			3		3	All 3 students will join Silver Creek
Maplehurst		4			4	All 4 students will join JW Boich
Martin Street			4		4	Jr. LD: 2 Students will join Sam Sherratt and 2 students will join Irma Coulson
Martin Street (Same School)	3				3	The 8 students will join one another to make a class of 8
Martin Street: Receiving Class	5					
Montclair			3		3	All 3 students will be joining Abbey Lane
Pineland			2		2	Both students will be joining Frontenac
Silver Creek (Same School)				6	6	SC has 19 students for 3 classes. Each of the 2 classes will receive 3 students from the other class
Silver Creek: Receiving Class 1				7		
Silver Creek: Receiving Class 2				6		
Grand Total	7	4	15	13	39	

Transition plans have been developed with parent input, and transition actions have already begun.

All students will be in their new classes on Oct 13.

3. CCAT7 Administration - The process for the administration of the Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test begins in October. Families of Gr. 4 students attending in-person schools have been notified of the process and students will participate in the assessment in the coming weeks. Families of Gr. 4 students attending virtual schools have been notified that we are considering options for the administration of this assessment, which may include in-person in a large setting such as a gymnasium on a weekend, an online US version that can't be proctored and we would have to confirm that the norms are acceptable, or deferral until a later grade.

4. Psychoeducational Assessments Update - Staff have been compiling psych assessment waitlist data, showing numbers for this year and for years past. We hope to have this available in time for the SEAC meeting. Thanks for your patience.

Several members had questions during M. Zonneveld's SO Report.

4.2 Association Reports

D. Woo reported on the following: Re: Virtual Learning Self Contained gifted Covid-19

Quite often gifted learners have heightened sensitivity and intense emotionality along with an array of other traits and needs. At their IPRCs they are placed in self contained classroom settings to be amongst accepting peers and to receive a more individualized education with like-minded classmates who understand their different approaches and ideas. The lockdown and alienation of Covid-19 can cause fear, depression and anxiety in most any child, but it can be debilitating for a young person with extreme emotional needs. We have spoken to families who had to seek out therapy for their young gifted children during this time due deep depression and severe anxiety.

Families received communications for a month leading up to the start of school at HDSB regarding virtual learning for students. This communication stated that students with IEPs would be supported by Special Education Resource Teachers within the virtual classroom but did not provide clarification for learners who were previously placed in self contained environments.

Families reached out for more information on how virtual learning would be provided for self contained gifted learners and were originally told that there was no virtual self contained option but that decision makers were open to the idea of possible grouping identified gifted learners depending on how many decided to sign up for virtual learning. Otherwise, families could guarantee a self contained placement if they chose in person learning for their child. This situation had families struggling to make the difficult decision on whether they chose to place their learner back with peers in the classroom (which also came with potential health risks) or virtual learning possibly away from peer interactions (needed more now than ever). Many felt at a loss and although they preferred the distance learning option, they chose the in-class environment because being in a self-contained class with their peers was the most important factor.

On September 15, 2020, the day before virtual learning was to begin, families of virtual learners were informed that there was now a self contained gifted class available for their child. Only those who had chosen virtual learning weeks before could attend. Many families who had decided on in class placement feel like they weren't given a fair choice.

One family who we were in touch with us had decided to place their gifted son with autism in the classroom because of a special social bond that he has with his classmates. This same child has also had two bouts of pneumonia and lives with family members over the age of 55 years. Perhaps if the option of self contained virtual learning was available to him and his classmates he would have his close cohort of peers to connect with online rather than in person. Being as a 'self contained classroom placement' was a decision made by an IPRC ruling for all of these learners based on need, the delay in communication and this situation has put the health and well-being of our learners and their families at risk.

A. Brindle reported the following: October is LD Awareness Month. LDAHH will be holding multiple events, including an IEP and IPRC Workshop on October 7, 2020. For further details, please visit www.ldahh.ca

4.3 Trustee Reports

M. Shuttleworth reported that on behalf of all the trustees, I would like to give a great big shout out to all the staff who have made the return to school, be it virtual or face to face, successful for our students and families. This includes all of our principals, teachers, educational assistants, custodians, superintendents and Director Miller to name but a few. Our heartfelt thanks go out to you all. Secondly, we continue to work on our Multi Year Plan and have organized two 'coffee chats' to solicit feedback from our key stakeholders.

The dates of these "chats" are Thursday, October 8th from 5-6pm and Friday, October 9th from noon till 1pm. We would love for members of SEAC to come out and add your voice to what is included in our upcoming Multi Year Plan.

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 – none
- Central/Robert Bateman HS IB Program Integration Steering Committee – none

5.0 Next Agenda/Order Paper

None

6.0 Adjournment

6.1 L. Morris adjourned the meeting at 9:47 pm.

