

# Halton District School Board

## HALTON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

### Special Education Advisory Committee - (Virtual Meeting)

Tuesday, September 14, 2021, 7pm

#### MINUTES

Present: Alison Brindle (Learning Disabilities Association of Halton/Hamilton); Sophia Siddiqi (Halton Down Syndrome Association); Rebecca Hurren (Halton Down Syndrome Association); Lucille Morris (Member at Large); Tracey Ehl Harrison (Trustee); Joanna Oliver (Trustee); Yalin Gorica (Association for Bright Children); Diane Vandenbossche (Learning Disabilities Association of Halton/Hamilton); Candice Keem (Community Living Burlington); Melissa Dockeray (Easter Seals Society); James Baldwin (Member at Large); Jenn Heidstra (Association for Bright Children); Heather Gerrits (Trustee); Lisa Cameron (Autism Ontario); Diane Miller (Member at Large)

Staff: Colette Ruddock (Superintendent); Sean Marks (Principal); Lorna Goodrow (Administrator)

Regrets: Margo Shuttleworth (Trustee); Sarah Lansley (Easter Seals Society)

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#### **1.0 Opening**

##### 1.1 Welcome and Call to Order

A. Brindle called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

##### 1.2 Honouring the Land and Territory

A. Brindle read the Acknowledgement of Traditional Lands

##### 1.3 Approval of Agenda

#176-22 L. Morris and J. Baldwin

Be it resolved that the Special Education Advisory Committee approved the agenda for September 14, 2021.

**Carried Unanimously**

##### 1.4 Minutes of June 1, 2021

#177-22 D. Vandenbossche and A. Brindle

Be it resolved that the minutes for the meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee for June 1, 2021 be approved.

**Carried Unanimously**

## 2.1 Action

A presentation was made by the Board's Structured Reading Itinerant Teachers. There was an opportunity after this presentation for questions from SEAC. C. Ruddock commented that it is truly incredible how our Structured Reading Itinerant Teachers delivered this amazing program during the pandemic. For this group to learn a new approach to teach reading and then to deliver this program to some of our students with learning needs was a remarkable achievement. Deepest appreciation to our staff for running this very successful program.

## 2.2 Meeting Format: Hybrid or Virtual

There was a discussion with SEAC about how we wish to conduct our future SEAC meetings, either fully virtual or a hybrid model. C. Ruddock commented that Human Resources will need to be contacted first to confirm what is required from SEAC members before anyone wishes to attend in person. T. Ehl Harrison commented that Trustee meetings went to a hybrid model to represent that staff and students are now in buildings. The October SEAC meeting will be hybrid, pending the process for vaccination status attestation is complete.

## 2.3 Board Committees/SEAC representation

A. Brindle brought up the election for Chair and Vice-Chair. It was decided to use the yearly calendar as opposed to the school year calendar for this process. A. Brindle asked if there were any other Board staff committees that SEAC could sit on and if any SEAC member would like to change what committee they currently sit on.

## 3.0 SEAC Discussion/Question Period

none

## 4.0 Communication to SEAC

### 4.1 Superintendent's Report

1. **2021-22 School Year-** By all accounts, the school year is off to a great start. Both staff and students are excited and happy to be back to learning and in-person learning in particular. The usual start-up challenges around transportation (i.e., driver shortages), late registrations and school organizations remain, as well as new challenges related to COVID. However, staff are managing all those issues as they come and ensuring that students remain our first priority.

The usual September Reorganization (elementary) date for Ministry compliance with class size has been pushed to October 12th to allow for parents of elementary students to request a model switch date. With combining the "Reorg" date with "Model Switch" date, we hope to reduce the disruption to class placements for students and staff. For secondary school, families who require a model switch will be provided an opportunity in Semester Two, provided the student timetable works in the switched location.

I am pleased that our Special Education Services (SES) and Student Well-being (SWB) staff have returned with a strong presence in our schools to directly support students and staff. Classroom teachers and other support staff will conduct diagnostic assessments as they get to know their students to determine where each student is at in their reading, writing and mathematical skills, and determine appropriate strategies for support / intervention. SES and School Programs Department (SPD) are collaborating on a three tiered intervention for early literacy, focusing on Kindergarten to Grade 3. In addition, we have added an additional Structure Reading teacher (IRT) to the IRT team that now expands that support to students as early as Kindergarten, and a Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP) that will support our early literacy strategy. SES and SPD are also collaborating on an initiative to support

mathematics, with an initial focus on how to support all learners in a destreamed class. 3 Math IRTs in SPD have been added to support this work.

A significant focus for schools this year is the mental health and wellbeing of students. All staff participated in professional development on the first two PD Days on how to support students through these challenging times, as well as the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) emphasis in the curriculum. SWB will join us next month to provide an overview of their strategy and supports.

We know that a return to full school life is a measure to improve student well-being and achievement. We are pleased that we are able to return to co-curricular activities and athletics in both elementary and secondary schools.

2. **Summer Learning / Support** - We had a very successful summer learning program this year. In addition to the offerings from School Programs, SES hosted learning sessions for a wide range of special education needs and age/grade ranges. In all, we supported approximately 1200 students across our program offerings. We did experience some challenges with our communication of programs and will be looking at how to improve that process for next year, if the Ministry provides funding for special education / summer learning again. The Student Well-Being Department also provided virtual mental health supports throughout the summer, using our CYC and Social Workers. They ran support groups (i.e., Chill Club) as well as continued 1:1 support for students on the caseload. Finally, our SLPs and Psychoeducational Consultants conducted additional assessments over the summer.
3. **Entry to School - Transitions** - Again this year, the Ministry provided funding for staff to host in-person or virtual transition meetings for students with significant special education or mental health needs. These funds were used to support students visiting the school, as well as case conferences with parent/guardian and other key stakeholders to support students who are experiencing greater challenges in returning to school.
4. **New SEAC Member Training** - Tuesday, September 28 at 7pm - session will be recorded for any new member who is unable to attend and/or any new member who joins subsequent to the training session.
5. **Ministry Consultation:** Reminder: Initial recommendations for the development of proposed Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) education accessibility standards are posted and open for feedback until September 30th (extended).  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/consultation-initial-recommendations-development-proposed-kindergarten-grade-12-k-12-education>

#### 4.2 Association Reports

LDAH is running the following programs which have subsidies attached to them, if the student is referred by the school team:

1. Reading Rocks- a twice-weekly 1:1 literacy program running for 8 weeks for students aged 6-12years. This focuses on phonics, sight words and fluency, and was designed specifically for students with learning disabilities [Reading Rocks - Learning Disabilities Association of Hamilton \(ldahh.ca\)](#)
2. Mastering Mathematics- a twice-weekly small group multi-sensory math program for students in Gr1-10. [Mastering Mathematics - Learning Disabilities Association of Hamilton \(ldahh.ca\)](#)

3. Social Skills- an in-person social skills program for students with LDs and/or ADHD. Grouped by age

October is LD Awareness month and LDAHH will be hosting a Stress Management Parent Workshop from Strong Minds Strong Kids (a division of Psychology Canada) and a workshop on Parent Advocacy and IEPs. Dates to be announced shortly. Visit [www.ldahh.ca](http://www.ldahh.ca) for more details.

#### 4.3 Trustee Reports

We welcome Director Ennis, and Superintendents Dean Barnes, Claire Proteau, and Aiman Flahat.

- Launch of [Reimagine Forward Declaration](#) .
- September 1 meeting was focussed on Back to School Plans - A motion was unanimously supported to write a letter to the Minister regarding adding COVID vaccine to the list of required vaccinations.
- Ontario Public School Board Association (OPSBA) has launched an online survey to continue to inform advocacy to the provincial government throughout the 2021-22 school year and beyond. Community members throughout Ontario are invited to share some of their thoughts about learning online during the COVID-19 pandemic and the post-pandemic school and learning environment. The survey, with a deadline of November 30, 2021, can be accessed at:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/COVID19andSchoolOntario>
- Have you been inspired
- The [Inspire Award](#) is given to an individual or group that is formally or informally associated with the Halton District School Board, who support our students and their achievements through exemplary caring, initiative, innovation and creativity.

#### 4.4 Committee Reports

- PIC - none
- Accessibility Coordinating Committee - none
- Equity and Inclusive Education Advisory Steering Committee - none

#### **5.0 Next Agenda/Order Paper**

Student Well-Being Presentation

#### **6.0 Adjournment**

6.1 A. Brindle adjourned the meeting at 8:57 p.m.