



MINUTES
Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting
Held on Wednesday 09 March 2022
at 6:00 p.m.



Virtual Meeting

PRESENT:	Pat O'Grady	Chair, Trustee
	Jackie England	Member at Large
	Jodi Cotnam	Learning Disabilities of Ontario
	Kayla Bouret	Member at Large
	Mike Ellis	Member at Large
RESOURCE:	Clint Young	Superintendent of Education
REGRETS:	France Guillemette	Member at Large
	Sandra Dee Lapierre	Member at Large
	Gen Leonard	Member at Large
	Joanne Lesk	Member at Large
ABSENT:	Daniella Santos	Member at Large
	Cory Lee MacMunn	Member at Large
	Jennifer Debenham	Member at Large
	Kristianna Guzman	Member at Large

1. Prayer

The SEAC Chair opened the meeting with a prayer and land acknowledgement at 6:00 p.m.

2. Approval of Agenda

MOTION 1: 09 MAR 2022

Moved By: Jackie England

Seconded By: Jodi Cotnam

That the agenda for the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of 9 March 2022 be approved.

Carried/...

3. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest was declared.

4. Presentation – Multi-Year Accessibility Plan by Katherine McLaughlin

Katherine McLaughlin, Special Education Coordinator was welcomed to the meeting to provide an annual update on the Board Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, developed by the Accessibility Planning Committee. The Accessibility Planning Committee is made up of

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representatives from members of many sectors of the board, including Human Resources, IT and Plant departments, as well as school principals. A student representative, suggested by previous SEAC members, recently left the committee, and a search is currently underway to include a student voice on the team. As part of the annual review, the SEAC Committee is welcome to provide input on the Accessibility Plan.

Katherine explained that all public and private sectors operating in Ontario are under mandate to put in place measures to remove and prevent barriers to enable people with disabilities full access to services and facilities within organizations. The Board must submit a three-year report, 2020 – 2023, according to the guidelines of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), as a step to reach full compliance on the “Path to 2025”. Currently, five AODA standards must be met for:

- Information and Communication
- Employment
- Transportation
- Design of Public Spaces
- Customer Service

Katherine provided details of innovative language augmentative programs, such as Everyday Speech and Touch Chat, that aim to remove barriers to communication for students. There is also a drive to increase access to digital format of print materials through e-books and audio book libraries. To comply with requirements of the AODA, all board employees were given mandatory accessibility training in the fall. Katherine mentioned that a challenge on the “Path to 2025” is the aging infrastructure of some school and administration buildings that may make compliance a lengthy process. Principals are asked to forward think to suggest improvements that are required now to enable work to be completed prior to the 2025 target.

Katherine was told the board is blessed to have passionate coordinators who provide exemplary services and supports for special education. Katherine was thanked for her dedication to ensuring accessibility compliance on the “Path to 2025”.

5. Approval of Minutes from 09 February 2022

MOTION 2: 09 MAR 2022

Moved By: Jodi Cotnam
Seconded By: Jackie England

That the minutes from the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of 09 February 2022 be approved.

Carried/...

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6. **Board Reports**

a. **Durham District School Board Letter**

The Durham District School Board sent a letter to the Minister of Education to request an amendment to the Education Act definition of “disability” pertaining to Bill 172 (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder). In past conversations at the SEAC table, similar concerns have been raised concerning the outdated language that exists in the Education Act, specifically about disabilities. The Committee agreed global changes to the Act need to be made. SEAC will draft a letter in support of the initiative.

b. **Special Education Report**

The Committee was asked to review Section C of the Special Education Report prior to the meeting. Suggested changes will be incorporated to the draft plan. Sections C7 and C8 will be reviewed at the next meeting.

c. **Right to Read**

The Right to Read Inquiry was initiated in 2019 by the Human Rights Commission, with a report released on February 28, 2022. The huge report contained a total of 157 recommendations made for all education levels from the Ministry of Education to School Boards and to Teacher’s Colleges. The general conclusion was that current systems are failing students, especially those with special education needs. Recommendations advised that a shift be implemented away from traditional whole-language reading strategies to phonemic awareness and decoding methods. Improvements to curriculum, early screening, instruction, and assessment are anticipated.

d. **Ontario Autism Program**

A new entry to school program for children on the autism spectrum is being developed. Students starting school in September will enter the program for six months prior to school entry to prepare for a good start to school and successful outcome. The board liaison for the program, Josh Nokes, will be invited to a future meeting to discuss the initiative.

7. **Association Reports**

There are no association reports for this month. A comment was made that on a recent social media post from the board the content was close-captioned, which is an excellent step towards the “Path to 2025” accessibility initiative.

8. Next Meeting

The next SEAC meeting will take place on **Wednesday, 13 April 2022.** The meeting format will be hybrid, with members choosing to attend in person, or attend virtually.

9. Adjournment

The SEAC meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.