



SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, September 4, 2024, 7:00 pm
Trustees' Committee Room
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario

- Members: Cathy Miedema (Association for Bright Children), Susan Cowin (Community Representative), Hoda Seens (Community Representative), Sonja Elliott (Autism Ontario), Lori-Ann Bradley (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Ontario Network of Expertise), Jess Whitley (Inclusion Action in Ontario), Mike Marta (Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton), Anthony Wong (Ottawa Carleton Assembly of School Councils), Lindsay Copland (VOICE for Children Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing), Donna Dickson (Trustee), Nili Kaplan-Myrth (Trustee), Lynn Scott (Trustee)
- Association Representatives (Non Voting): Nancy Dlouhy (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Operations Committee), Melcha Wolanski (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation)
- Staff and Guests: Donna Blackburn (Trustee), Suzanne Nash (Trustee) Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Kate Stoudt (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Deborah Lyon (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Nicole Guthrie (General Manager, Board Services), Tamara Persaud (Committee Coordinator, Board Services)

1. Call to Order

Chair Miedema called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. Acknowledgement of Territorial Lands

Chair Miedema acknowledged that this meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Homelands and thanked the Algonquin Nations for their stewardship of these lands since time immemorial.

3. Approval of the Agenda

**Moved by Trustee Kaplan-Myrth,
THAT the agenda be approved.**

Carried

4. Delegations

There were no delegations.

5. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

5.1 13 June 2024, SEAC Report

Moved by Trustee Dickson,

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee report, dated 13 June 2024, be received.

Lori-Anne Bradley requested that on page two of the 13 June 2024 SEAC Report “Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise” be corrected to “Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Ontario Network of Expertise.”

Moved by Trustee Dickson,

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee report, dated 13 June 2024, be received, as amended.

Carried

5.2 Forward Agenda

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Forward Agenda was provided for information.

Superintendent Symmonds requested that members consider agenda items for inclusion on the 2024-2025 Forward Agenda. He noted that Section J., Special Education Placements provided by the Board, will be presented to the SEAC in the fall of 2024.

Superintendent Symmonds reminded the Committee when requesting to add items to the agenda, that member’s provide adequate time for consideration, approval and preparation of supporting documents.

Superintendent Symmonds clarified that the Elementary Program Review Presentation to be held on 9 October 2024 will not be a decision report, but an opportunity for SEAC members to discuss the information brought forward by the Board to share feedback.

6. Presentations

There were no presentations.

7. Department Update

7.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Symmonds reported the following:

- Over the summer, transition programs were held prior to the 2024-2025 school year. He noted that 2,700 students with special needs received transition related support to ensure smooth adaptation to their new school;
- The summer transition program engaged students with special needs with activities to minimize the stress of returning to school, such as school tours, group work and meeting teachers;
- In conjunction with the summer transition program, Learning Support Services (LSS) staff have developed training to provide school staff with an understanding of individual needs in students and their families and to gauge the levels of need throughout the District for the upcoming school year;
- A survey was conducted following the summer transition program and data collected will be used to inform training and resources for future school years;
- The District was able to provide a continuity of mental health services throughout the summer through the transfer of funds from the Ministry outside of the overall budget;
- The District has partnered with various mental health supports and organizations, such as Strong Minds Strong Kids, Youth Speaks, Crossroads, Youthnet, Rideauwood Addiction Family Services, etc. to provide individualized support for all students;
- Ministry funding allowed for students in under-resourced neighbourhoods to attend camps and mental health programming. The flexibility in funding also allowed for mental health staff training for Early Childhood Educators (ECE) and Education Assistants (EA's) during professional development PD days;
- The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) has partnered with YouTurn Youth Support services to enhance support and education for students on the issue of human trafficking;
- A Program Manager has been added for Educational Assistants to maintain the provision of professional learning;
- Funding of \$69,000 has been allocated to Cooperative Education (Co-op) placements for students with disabilities to earn credits and skills in the workplace. An additional 10 EA's have been hired to assist these students during their placements;

- Learning Support Services (LSS) educators and professional support staff have reached out to students, families and caregivers to understand the need of the students as they enter the school year to ensure that proper supports are in place;
- As of 1 September 2024, transportation continues to be an issue as there is a shortage of approximately 24 School Bus Drivers, affecting 88 routes. Currently, many drivers have been recruited but are waiting on the Ministry of Transportation to receive training or updated credentials necessary for the role;
- Committee members were reminded to review the elementary program review (EPR) staff report and be prepared for discussion for the 9 October 2024 meeting, as SEAC member input is crucial in the development of the EPR;
- The Speaker Series will begin on 12 September with regular sessions held for the community; and
- Superintendent Symmonds shared that he has accepted a second position with mental health Ontario, in implementing mental health strategies. As this is only a 1 year secondment, an interim superintendent will be hired for that time.

7.2 Special Education Plan (Standards)

The Special Education Plan is an annual legislative responsibility that SEAC has to go through the standards and ensure that they align with Ministry definitions.

a. Draft Schedule

System Principal Kate Stoudt advised the committee that the draft Special Education Plan Schedule follows the Ministry model. She requested that SEAC members contact her with any additional input.

b. SEAC - The Role and Composition - Discussion

System Principal Stoudt presented the Special Education Plan and highlighted the roles and responsibilities of SEAC meetings.

c. Special Education Staff - Discussion

The Special Education Staff Standard was provided for information. It was noted that SEAC members should contact System Principal Stoudt with any questions.

8. Committee Reports

8.1 Board

There was no report from the Board.

8.2 Committee of the Whole

There was no report from the Committee of the Whole.

8.3 Committee of the Whole, Budget

Trustee Kaplan-Myrth shared that there was an additional budget allocation to hire 10 new Educational Assistants and an additional position allocated to Speech Language Pathologists.

9. New Business

Lori-Anne Bradley reminded the Committee that the Red Shoes Rock to raise awareness of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is being held at Britannia Beach on 8 October 2024 from 10:30am - 1:30am. OCDSB's occupational Therapists, Program Manager of Speech and Language Pathology will be in attendance.

Mike Marta shared that the Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa Carleton is opening a new office. An open house will be held on 3 October 2024, from 6:00pm – 8:00pm for families and community members to learn about programs offered.

10. Upcoming Meeting Dates

The upcoming meeting dates were provided for information.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Cathy Miedema, Chair, Special
Education Advisory Committee