

HALTON DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Special Education Advisory Committee – (Hybrid Meeting)

Tuesday, December 5, 2023 at 7:00 pm

MINUTES

Present: Carole Baxter (Trustee); Evelyn Bursey (Community Living North Halton); Alison Brindle (Centre for Diverse Learners-Halton); Kate Lambacher (Association for Bright Children); Amanda Winch (Autism Ontario); Xin Yi Zhang, (Trustee); Nadia Toric (Community Living Burlington); Melissa Dockeray (Easter Seals Society); Kathy Turner (VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children); Katie Schleifer (Member At Large); Kajsa Klassen (Member At Large)

Staff: Colette Ruddock (Superintendent, Special Education); Conan Spruin (Principal, Special Education); Marta Zammit (Office Supervisor, Special Education); Michelle Bates (Manager, Student Well-Being); Dean Barnes (Superintendent of Education); Marija Glisic (Research and Accountability)

Regrets: Naveed Ahmed (Trustee); Diane Vandenbossche (Centre for Diverse Learners-Halton); Joanna Oliver (Trustee), Erin Sproule (VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children); Sophia Siddiqi (Halton Down Syndrome Association); Melissa Somer (Member At Large); Sarah Lansley (Easter Seals Society); Surekha Kanithi (Association for Bright Children); Jennifer Legare (Autism Ontario);

1.0 Opening

1.1 Welcome and Call to Order

Chair Brindle called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

1.2 Honouring the Land and Territory

Chair Brindle read the Acknowledgement of Traditional Lands

1.3 Approval of Agenda

#218-23

Moved by: A. Winch

Seconded by: K. Klassen

Be it resolved that the December 5, 2023 agenda for the Special Education Advisory Committee be approved as presented.

Carried Unanimously

1.4 Minutes of November 7, 2023

#219-23

Moved by: K. Turner

Seconded by: M. Dockeray

Be it resolved that the meeting minutes for the November 7, 2023 Special Education Advisory Committee be approved as presented.

Carried Unanimously

2.0 Action

2.1 Mental Student Well Being Presentation

Michelle Bates along with Marija Glisic presented on Mental Student Well Being . There was an opportunity for questions after the presentation.

2.2 Centre for Diverse Learners Halton Presentation

Alison Brindle presented on Supporting and Changing the Narrative for Diverse Learners . More information can be found [here](#). There was an opportunity for questions after the presentation.

2.3 Nominations Open for Chair and Vice Chair Position (Jan. Meeting)

Chair Brindle discussed the annual January nominations for the positions of Chair and Vice Chair. A Google form will be sent to members to express their interest in these roles. An overview of the positions was given, and a vote will occur at the January meeting if there are multiple candidates; otherwise, a single candidate will be confirmed by acclamation.

3.0 SEAC Discussion/Question Period

The following question was submitted by the public:

“During the Oct. 3 meeting, there was a discussion about a SEAC vote for prioritized learning disability students for board psychological assessment. Which meeting did this vote take place?”

Chair Brindle noted that was part of the discussion not vote that took place approximately 3 years ago.

Superintendent Ruddock noted that the 2017/2018 special education review focused on the problem-solving pathway, not the elimination of gifted testing. Reports from the review can be

accessed on the board's website under the special education program service review section.

Concerns were raised regarding communication with parents about the absence of assessments before grade 4 and until CCAT. Superintendent Ruddock emphasized that information provided to schools is derived from the Special Education Plan and any inaccuracies will be addressed at the school level. It was noted that staff training sessions clearly outline the process.

Concerns were expressed about the financial burden on parents for psychoeducational assessments needed for high school students with certain exceptionalities. The query focused on whether highschool students undergo such assessment and how they can access this pathway. Superintendent Ruddock clarified that while the majority of assessments happen in elementary school due to early identification emphasis, the structure for school resource teams and problem-solving pathways exists in high school as well. Although psychoeducational assessments are rarer in high school, there are no policies preventing them.

The issue of SERTs advising parents to seek private evaluations was discussed. Superintendent Ruddock clarified that this is not a practice supported or recommended by the board. The feedback will be communicated to the SERT networking, emphasizing the board's stance on the matter.

4.0 Communication to SEAC

4.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Ruddock shared the following:

1. **Self-Contained LD class** - Principal Spruin shared the exploration of potential name changes to some of the self-contained classes, specifically learning disability and life skills classes at the elementary level. Input will be sought from stakeholders such as parents, students, educators, and SEAC. The renaming process is anticipated to start in the winter, with the goal of finalizing names by spring for implementation in the fall. Further details will be provided in the new year.
2. **Change in trustee representation on SEAC** - Trustee Brydon has moved to another board committee. We welcome Trustee Zhang to SEAC.

4.2 Association Reports

Amanda Winch from Autism Ontario provided the following update:

Journey to Adulthood Overview

Journey to Adulthood is a 90-minute virtual presentation that introduces key topics in the transition from youth to adult. It is open to parents and caregivers of youth ages 12–18 who are in the AccessOAP program.

This session is an introduction/overview of key topics in the transition from youth to adult. It will provide caregivers with a broad overview of adult services, funding, and supports along with key dates for applying for adult services.

Date: Tuesday, December 5, 2023
Time: 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm
Register: <https://www.autismontario.com/civicrm/event/info?id=9125>

Rad Dads

Join us each month to meet with other dads, male caregivers, and transgender/non-binary folks. This casual setting allows you to socialize, share your experiences, or simply sit back and listen.

Date: Monday, December 18, 2023
Time: 7:30 pm – 9:00 pm
Register*: <https://www.autismontario.com/civicrm/event/info?reset=1&id=8830>
**Note: Registration opens on December 4, 2023 @ 12:00 p.m.*

Ausome Moms

Join us each month to meet with other moms, female caregivers, and transgender/non-binary folks. This casual setting allows you to socialize, share your experiences, or simply sit back and listen.

Date: Thursday, December 21, 2023
Time: 7:30 pm – 9:00 pm
Register*: <https://www.autismontario.com/civicrm/event/info?reset=1&id=8821>
**Note: Registration opens December 7, 2023 @ 12:00 pm.*

World Autism Day 2024 Celebrate the Spectrum - <https://celebratethespectrum.com/>

What is Celebrate the Spectrum?

Celebrate the Spectrum is an opportunity for positive action to provide spaces of support and advocacy for our diverse communities while learning about autism and how we can all make our communities better and more inclusive places for autistic people.

How do I participate in this year's World Autism Day events?

There are so many fun ways to Celebrate The Spectrum with us on World Autism Day across Ontario. Find out [how to get involved](#) leading up to April 2, 2024, and throughout the month of April.

- School Giving. Students are some of our most active supporters. In honour of them, we are launching the [Celebrate the Spectrum School Giving Challenge](#) in April. The school that raises the most will be eligible to win special recognition! [Visit here](#) to learn more about the challenge and to register.
- Fly a Flag for Autism Awareness. Back by popular demand! Purchase a flag for \$25 to use as the centerpiece in an autism awareness gathering. Fly your flag for the month of April, or on World Autism Day, April 2, 2024. All proceeds go to support the programs and services of Autism Ontario.
- [Pre-purchase your flag today!](#) Flags will be mailed out starting in January 2024.

Chair Brindle provided the following update for Centre for Diverse Learners:

Early bird pricing for the 13th annual Solutions for Learning Conference will be until Jan. 15th. Speaker information can be found [here](#).

Commencing the recruitment process for three Youth-to-Youth Ambassadors for the volunteer program, offering an honorarium. We are specifically looking for individuals aged 15-29 with strong public speaking skills and a passion for sharing personal experiences. Interested candidates are encouraged to sign up on our website.

4.3 Trustee's Report

No formal report was presented.

Superintendent Ruddock shared the following message on behalf of Trustee Baxter:

On behalf of all Trustees, Trustee Baxter would like to sincerely thank all the committee members for their commitment to SEAC and wish everyone a happy restful holiday season.

4.4 Committee Reports

Accessibility Coordinating Committee - upcoming meeting next week.

Mental Health and Support Well-being Committee - wonderful to have student participation and perspective.

5.0 Next Agenda/Order Paper

January Meeting:

- Chair/Vice Chair nominations
- Superintendent Negoj will be present to initiate discussions with SEAC regarding budget pressures

Members are encouraged to communicate with the Chair if they have any specific items they would like to see included on the agenda for upcoming meetings.

6.0 Adjournment

6.1 Chair Brindle adjourned the meeting at 8:20 pm