

**MINUTES**

**SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**#09**

**Wednesday, November 11, 2020, 5:30 pm**

- |                   |   |   |
|-------------------|---|---|
| <b>Present:</b>   | Carol Corriveau-Truchon, Trustee<br>Colleen Guscott - Catulpa<br>Janice Hutchison, Trustee<br>Laurie Rawlek, CLH Developmental<br>Support Services<br>Angela Romano, Autism Ontario<br>Theresa Sanders - Easter Seals | Jackie Warwick-Mathieu, Integration<br>Action<br>Stephanie Saunders, Down Syndrome<br>Brenda White, Simcoe Muskoka Family<br>Connexions<br>Ava Melchiorre, Student Trustee<br>Catherine MacDonald, Trustee<br>(Alternate) |
| <b>Presenter:</b> | Chantelle Quesnelle, Mental Health<br>Lead  |   |
| <b>Resource:</b>  | Lonnie Bolton, Superintendent of<br>Student Achievement<br>Sandra Fujioka, Administrative<br>Assistant  | Steve Morrow, Assistant to the<br>Superintendent, Special Education   |
| <b>Regrets:</b>   | Jennifer Emmerson, Candlelighters   | Laura Bateman, Student Trustee-Elect  |
| <b>Guests:</b>    | Joe Zerdin, Trustee Chair   | Frances Bagley, Director of Education   |

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Theresa Sanders, SEAC Chair at 5:33pm.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Lonnie Bolton, Superintendent of Education, conducted the Roll Call of the Committee Members. While quorum was obtained for this meeting it is not required during the pandemic until further notice from the Ministry of Education.

Lonnie introduced our special guests, Frances Bagley our Director of Education, Joe Zerdin our Board Chair and Trustee Catherine MacDonald (SEAC Alternate).

**3. SPECIAL INTENTIONS & OPENING PRAYER**

*Remembrances:*

- for Alex Trebek, well known Jeopardy host and Sudbury native that passed.
- for Howie Meeker, hockey legend that passed.

- for Lonnie's father who would have had his 88th birthday on Monday, he was a veteran of the Korean war.
- for Trustee Peter Fracassi and the loss of his mother, Carmela Fracassi.
- for continued prayers for Bill Thompson and Lilie Ashby.
- for our veterans and thank you to our current serving military for their service.

Frances Bagley, Director of Education introduced herself and advised that she would be participating in the facilitated discussion portion of the meeting.

- Frances expressed her pleasure at having the opportunity to meet everyone virtually.
- She shared that she had attended SEAC meetings for 10 years with her former board, so she is familiar and supportive of the work that SEAC does.
- Frances shared that she had started her 30 year career as an EA and worked her way up to the Associate Director of Education: Strategic Leadership for York Catholic District School Board.
- She expressed interest in attending more SEAC meetings in the future and thanked the committee for their presence and association voice at the SEAC table.

#### **4. AGENDA APPROVAL**

Consensus of the Committee Members was obtained for approval of the agenda.

#### **5. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of conflict of interest were expressed.

#### **6. PRESENTATIONS**

##### **6.1 Mental Health**

Chantelle Quesnelle, Mental Health Lead

- Chantelle thanked the committee for giving her the opportunity to present and share information.
- She presented Overview of Mental Health Supports at SMCD SB (presentation provided with meeting package), questions were taken at the end of her presentation.
- A member asked, what is the process for a referral and if there was an average wait time for a student referral? Chantelle explained the process - referral in elementary and secondary are a little different. In elementary the classroom teacher makes a referral to a school team. Based on that they figure out what other board staff would be consulted and obtain the parent consent. In secondary the process goes through the guidance team. Process is the same for in school and our virtual school.

- As for wait times - consultations happen all the time, if there is a concerting need they are very responsive. Now with the ability to use the virtual platform professional staff can attend a team meeting while being physically in another school which has led to increased efficiency. In terms of counselling, it really depends on needs at the school and how the referral process goes. Sometimes they get a community partner to weigh in to support the families.
- Assessment wait times for the referral process - the psychology team both of elementary and secondary consult to decide on mental health/learning and other strategies in place immediately. Assessments are happening all the time. There is a new database in place that will provide accurate data on the wait times once referrals come to the psychology team.
- A member asked what trends they have been seeing since March and with returning to schools the mental health needs of students and parents.
- Chantelle responded - looking at supporting students with multiple needs - important to highlight our model – there are 6 mental health team members that care for our schools. Communication is key in understanding a student's needs - psychology team looks at the full profile of needs. Either direct support or strategies provided to staff that are dealing with the student. Build the skill set of the school team to deal with the students through training. The wrap around approach.
- Chantelle - what is next? That is part of inclusion and equity - how do we consider a board range of learning needs, this is still unfolding. School Mental Health Ontario are making this a priority.
- Trends? Students are thriving - spoke to a kindergarten teacher. Students love their little desks. Also hearing about the challenges of anxiety - uncertainty and changes. Key area for secondary students is the lack of sleep - impacted greatly. Mood and isolation - lonely and disconnected - losing that sense of community - sense of being overwhelmed. Adults are feeling this way as well. Mental health referrals have increased. All of these are being monitored.
- Leaning into our community partners as well. Flexible model of delivery.
- A member stated that the SMCDSB has been missed at a lot of committee tables around the county due to not having enough staff. Hoping that will change.
- Chantelle to be advised of any committees that members believe our Board needs to be represented at. A member mentioned the development of an FASD committee.

- Chantelle spoke about meeting the needs of high school and the hybrid model - lots of staff are offering after school support - trying to be flexible and rise to meet the needs of our students.
- A member asked about if a student is learning virtually with exceptionalities - if there are recommendations coming from your office - would you have that person return to face to face or is it more difficult to get a referral for a virtual student? How does this work virtually, for a student relying on audio and visual?
- Chantelle explained that as a system we continue to figure that out as we go. Referral process would look the same as an in person referral. Still conversation about - does there need to be something done in person so we remain very flexible. We are always talking about how things are going and how our resources can meet their needs.
- A question was asked on how to notice when a virtual student needs support but does not present it. Just as with an in school student this can be a challenge.
- A member asked if there is a regular check in on every virtual student. Chantelle explained that they are trying to - coming back to basics is an important part of the mental health strategy this year - exercise, diet etc. It is important for students and staff.
- There is the School Mental Health Ontario website [www.smho-smso.ca](http://www.smho-smso.ca) that has an entire section for students / parents / educators - provided by the ministry - great resource for us as a board and for families. Believe it is a ministry funded partnership.
- A member commented that their associations present a very vulnerable population of our Board. Due to the complexity of their education needs they are not fully engaged virtually. How important it would be to check in with those families – they feel there is a lack of valuable education, social action - check into see if they need mental health supports. The student voice in mental health and how important it is to access the special education voices - day to day existence in their school looks very different right now - not accessing their physical education – when you gather student feedback it's important that you get the special needs students input also.
- Chantelle responded that it's absolutely part of our plan - getting a diverse student voice specifically those with special education needs. We started with the student senate as a starting point for the student voice and helps bring a lens to how we will go forward. We also have an attendance counsellor that looks after the virtual school as well.
- If there are questions for Chantelle afterwards from members they were asked to send them via Sandy and Lonnie.

- Chantelle expressed interest in returning to SEAC.

## **7. MINUTES APPROVAL**

### **7.1 SEAC Preliminary Minutes #08 October 7, 2020**

Consensus of the Committee was obtained for approval of the minutes.

## **8. FACILITATED DISCUSSION**

- Theresa - ongoing conversations with the steering committee – while we have worked closely with the board - this year has been hard. There have been time constraints, logistical issues and we appreciate there are concerns for all of us - supporting all students and families. Beyond that, our SEAC has always been a collaborative committee - our voices have been valued and our recommendations have always been considered. There are challenges to make sure all needs are met.
- Lonnie referred to the two board reports that were shared with members recently. One from Kim Weishar and one from Chris Woodcroft.
- Secondary - not a smooth transition moving from virtual to face to face - in the hybrid model it is more sustainable - Ministry has said that we need to pivot - means a teacher would have in person students and virtual students. Nov 16-18 - Thursday all classes will be dual platform.
- Elementary virtual - is on pause. It was fully engaged, was to be November 23rd - senior staff heard from all stakeholders. The decision was made to pause it. As of right now we have face to face or virtual - works for some but not for others. Transitions are very difficult - the two teachers cannot make a good transition. We have 700 requests going either way - it is too difficult to manage these transitions. Multi modes - virtual is a combination of synchronous, and asynchronous blocks of time - other modes - paper and pencil mode. Tough to navigate. We need to rethink the whole model.
- French language and special education needs to be further considered.
- Hybrid - have seen that both elementary and secondary in remote learning it is not their choice because of family circumstances. Teachers are struggling to teach students with IEP's for which they have no previous knowledge of the students. We believe it's working but there is room for improvement. Trying to maintain the home school balance. Complicates the referral process as to which school virtual or home will make the referral. IPRC teams in virtual land don't have access to the student OSR – Ontario Student Record.

- A member asked what kind of mechanism should be in place during COVID 19 to keep members fully updated. What are your thoughts? Lonnie explained that when the pandemic first set in most other boards cancelled their SEAC meetings. Our board maintained all of our SEAC meetings. In the spring he did provide some updates periodically - he and Steve can re-implement that and provide updates periodically between meetings. We will continue with that.
- The member acknowledged that this will help to answer questions that may come from parents that she deals with. Recognizing that this is a challenging time and staff are being pulled in many different ways.
- A member asked how long the pause was for. Lonnie replied that it is indefinite right now.
- When will families be advised that we are moving to the hybrid model? How much lead time will families be given? Lonnie responded, we don't have a timeline right now - there is no desire for a quick timeline. A member stated that the biggest fear is about who will be connecting with those students virtually.
- A member asked about a scenario of one teacher not necessarily with any extra supports, what happens with behavioral challenges that come up - on both sides how is the teacher going to be supported?
- Lonnie - clear to understand the question - privacy or the double duality of virtual and in class students - the classroom teacher - live teaching doesn't mean the camera is on the entire time. - this isn't a perfect science - the camera will be mostly on the teacher - consent forms, may need to be considered - not all learning has the volume - behavior challenge in the classroom and all of a sudden the camera is rolling, in class behavior we have to work with the teachers around the understanding on what to do - lots of boards that are running hybrid have created protocols for teachers around addressing these types of scenarios. Code of conduct work to do for students and parents.
- A member stated that in a virtual environment special education parents without the education assistant in the home, then the parents have to become the facilitator. Lonnie - I will need to have a deeper think around this question.
- Janice mentioned that there is a Board meeting on Nov 25th, she suggested that Theresa put together an email of questions ahead of time to the Board Chair so that it can be considered at the next board meeting. Theresa agreed and stated that the concerns are for both elementary and secondary.
- Frances asked members to include all questions relating to both elementary and secondary as there will be a report brought to the Board on the 25th.
- A member asked about Wi-Fi issues at some schools? Frances answered that it is being investigated and looking at purchasing broadband width.

- Theresa asked members if they would like to have input on an email of questions. It was suggested that members send Theresa their questions via an email for collating.
- It was agreed that Theresa would provide the questions at least one week in advance so that responses could be prepared.
- Janice pointed out that Board meetings are livestreamed and you can ask questions and answers can be provided via Sandy.

## **9. GOOD NEWS STORIES**

- Angela shared that her daughter in grade 8 got an A and A+ in virtual school.

## **10. STANDING COMMITTEE UPDATES**

### **10.1 Steering Committee ~ Theresa Sanders**

- Talked about communication - admission that SEAC committee members were going to have access to communications going out to community as some were missed.
- Talked about next meeting - need to think about January elections and what it will look like in a virtual setting.
- Decision was made to not have a Christmas dinner this year.
- At the December 9th meeting - Suzanne will provide a budget update.
- Lonnie - FNMI - committee is 7 strong can have up to 12 members – within the education act there are two sets of rules one for trustees and SEAC / FNMI are appointed by the Board. We received confirmation that an FNMI member does not have to be a resident or rate payer or Catholic. We will work with our manager of FNMI to see if we can bring on a member. OCSTA memo came in just prior to the pandemic to highlight these points.

### **10.2 Accessibility Planning Committee ~ Lonnie Bolton**

- The first meeting is next week. An update will be provided at the next meeting.

## **11. ACTION ITEMS FROM MINUTES**

Refer to attached.

- Action item 1: Public to be welcomed into our meetings - we have a spot on our public website of our meetings and they need to give 24 hours notice. Sandy has a project going to update our public website with minutes and agenda etc. – ongoing.

## 12. ENQUIRY ITEMS FROM MINUTES

Refer to attached.

- Enquiry Item 2: Right to Read enquiry - no update at this time.
- Enquiry Item 3: What does quarantine and home supports - how does it look? Lonnie explained that if a child with spec needs presents symptoms at school they are brought to the isolation room - EA have been proactive on how that will look "training" - they hand over to parents as quickly as possible. If child goes home or positive case in schools and children are sent home for up to 14 days - virtual supports - EA included - supports continue. How does it compare? The best design is face to face. Distance learning is not something we imagined. It does not look the best - it does not look the same - it is hard for us to bridge the gap. Are we doing the best we can? Yes.
- Steve - school base rehab is offering virtual services - EA's coaching through rehab exercises and coaching parents through online - services are being provided virtually. Not the same as face to face.
- Theresa - the children that are unable to access virtually unless they have support from families. Their normal support is heavily human resourced, how do we improve that support? We need to continue those conversations.

## 13. ASSOCIATION/TRUSTEE REPORTS, ENQUIRIES AND PRESENTATION QUESTIONS

### 1. Trustee Report ~ Carol Corriveau-Truchon

The Board of Trustees was happy to welcome Frances Bagley as our new Director of Education effective November 1, 2020. She has extensive experience with York Catholic District School Board, including responsibility for special education.

At our last board meeting we discussed a move to the hybrid model of teaching at secondary. The calendar was adjusted to move the PA Day to this coming Friday so staff have a chance to be trained with the technology. Schedules for secondary students have been adjusted for this week and next week.

Superintendent Weishar presented a report on the plans for elementary schools. Sandy has a copy of the CTV news coverage which includes this report in full. A decision has been made to come back to the November 25th board meeting with a more detailed report on the plans for elementary. SMCD SB had announced the week before that elementary would also move to a hybrid model, but they have stepped back and are gathering more information before making a final decision. Trustees had many questions and are looking forward to reports on the 25th.



Each year Catholic School Boards are asked to bring forward resolutions to direct the work of our provincial association, Ontario Catholic School Trustee Association (OCSTA). SMCDSB has a subcommittee (Trustees Hutchison and MacDonald) to look at resolutions. They are proposing a resolution regarding the provision of special education services during a pandemic, particularly in the event of school shutdowns. Please forward any recommendations you might have to Janice and Catherine.

## 2. CLH Developmental Support Services ~ Laurie Rawlek

I empathize with you Lonnie as we are undergoing many of the same issues on a smaller scale of support, as many of us must be tired of hearing we are in a pandemic, we have found it very challenging as this pandemic did not come with a road map for supports for any of us – our association has started to provide a soft, slow start to supports for families that have been at home since March when we closed - it has been difficult as our reopening guidelines continue to change daily – we continue to have to keep at the forefront the health and safety of our staff and the people we support in mitigating the risk of the spread of COVID -19 which impacts how we have always done business. It most certainly is not business as usual. What we have found and are very surprised at how resilient the families and the people we support have been, they have embraced the virtual platform of supports and continue to be supportive of the uncertainty of how each day/week will look. We also have struggled and tripped over many of the same issues such as communication, getting the right support to the right person and have tried many different models just as you are doing.

We began a reopening plan the day we shut down in March. Our community families have not received any support for 7 months. Many other agencies are remaining closed at this time and are not offering their community supports. Our group living homes continue to move from our staff working in only 4 locations to 2 locations all to mitigate risks, this changes continuously as the guidelines change. Our supported individuals living in the group living have guidelines that change constantly. At this time I have no questions related to the hybrid model and I look forward to seeing the hybrid model that SMCDSB unfolds and will continue to share all information with and my organization who at this time has no questions or concerns with the boards plan.

Conversation took place around a coordinated letter by the trustees to OCSTA. Joe and Janice shared that they have asked OCSTA for a resolution of supports for students needs during the pandemic. The new Director, Francis will assist with the formation of the resolution as will Lonnie and Steve with their input. Items from the letter that will be sent to Joe by SEAC will also be included.

It was agreed that any outgoing letters via School Messenger to families will also be shared with SEAC members promptly since some of them no longer have children in our system and feel they are missing out on important information.

Carol asked Sandy to share with members the CTV link to Kim Weishar's recent interview.

## **14. ACADEMIC SERVICES UPDATES – Lonnie Bolton and Steve Morrow**

### **14.1 Budget ~ Lonnie Bolton**

- Suzanne Oliner and her team will be presenting to the Board on November 25<sup>th</sup>, after that presentation they can present to SEAC.

### **14.2 Special Needs Strategy ~ Steve Morrow**

- Provincial reports have been submitted.
- Board - complete a new special education resource teacher in-service - these new resource teachers are connecting with their consultant - limited servicing because of the pandemic. Transition to a new IPRC and alternative report card - holding drop in training for this - some bumps in the road, we are working hard but am finally getting our rhythm with this brand new system.
- Update from the ministry of SIP claims - this year we compile claims for students with high needs requiring more than 2 supports - we don't need to do it at this time - Ministry may have frozen the process for this year - but nothing confirmed yet. They are trying to reduce the administrative burden on the boards.
- A member asked if there was the same funding as last year. Steve replied that indications are that the amounts are frozen at the same levels as last year - we will see once the transfer of funds are made. I will keep SEAC up to date.
- Steve stated that there are concerns with the elementary math curriculum this year - last year math was reported on 5 streams - some students would have their math program modified in some strands and not others - the new reporting is only one mark - we asked the Ministry for clarification, awaiting a response. Wanted to flag this as a concern, some of your association parents may express this as a concern.
- Several of our elementary schools receiving Reading Mastery kits - schools will have another tool so that will inform the speech and language assessment - plan to be in all schools by the end of the year.
- Funding for mental health supports and some for additional staffing and programs - no problem spending those funds - hiring a psychometrist to handle the assessments to address the backlog. RFP for a partner of after school program for students with Autism has gone out.
- OSSLT grad requirement has been waived for this year as it was for last year. Trial option for on-line assessment, we will evaluate this. If it successful it will be very good.

### **14.3 Special Education Plans ~ Steve Morrow**

- Roles and Responsibilities in Special Education section provided for your review.
- Between this meeting and next please provide feedback.

### **14.4 General Updates ~ Lonnie Bolton**

- COVID-19 update - 21 cases in our schools - 2500 school cases province wide, of that we have less than 1% - we have about 1% of the students in Ontario.
- No school outbreaks only community transmission. 438 students excluded as well as 36 staff. Spread across the Board region - nothing in Orillia or Muskoka regions - trending about 2.25 cases per week. Only 2 in secondary. Public has had an outbreak - epidemiological transmission - traced back to the school from one to another at the school. We don't keep a profile breakdown on special education students.
- Theresa - IEP and IPRC #'s every fall - do we have the numbers of IEP and IPRC and the virtual versus face to face - Steve stated we have the numbers at about 470 elementary IEP's - 360 virtual in secondary IEP's. He can run the numbers in the new system.
- Theresa expressed that she likes the new IEP and finds them really easy to read.

## **15. ADDITIONAL ATTACHMENTS TO THE AGENDA**

### **15.1 SEAC 2020 Goal Setting Chart**

### **15.2 Information shared via email since the last SEAC meeting.**

### **15.3 SEAC Minutes 07 September 16-2020 – Final**

## **16. NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING**

- Wednesday, December 9 – 2020

## **17. ADJOURNMENT**

- Consensus of the Committee Members was obtained to adjourn the Meeting at 8:16pm.

## **18. CLOSING PRAYER**

The Our Father was read aloud by Lonnie Bolton as the committee read along.