

Special Education Advisory Minutes (SEAC)

Thursday, October 17, 2024 | 1:00pm
Zoom Online Meeting & North Bay Board Office

Present:

Tim Graves, Superintendent of Education
Alison Clarke, Principal of Special Education
Heidi McMillan, Executive Assistant
Kim Gignac, Special Education Coordinator – North Region
Lisa Paradis, Special Education Coordinator – East/West Regions
Carol Couillard, Nipissing Secondary
Chris Guillemette (Vice Chair), Community Living North Bay
Louise Sargent, Trustee
Chantal Phillips, Trustee
Jeanie Fuscaldo, Trustee
Candy St. Onge, Almaguin Highlands Community Living
Leigh Armstrong, Community Living Parry Sound
Laura Hansman, OPIC
Jeanie Fuscaldo, Trustee

Regrets:

Caroline Lebreque, Nipissing FN
Ashley St. Pierre, Trustee
Krista Holmes, Executive Assistant

Guests:

Chris Walkling, K-12 Student Achievement and Well-being Principal
Seija Van Haesendonck, Superintendent of Business

Land Acknowledgement by Superintendent Graves

Meeting called to order at 1:05 pm.

Agenda Approval:

Motioned by Candy St. Onge, seconded by Leigh Armstrong. *Carried*

Approval of the Minutes of the September 19, 2024, meeting: action item - Get minutes up on website

Motioned by Louise Sargent, seconded by Laura Hansman. *Carried.*

Trustee Sargent requested amendment to the minutes under board reports it states we now have two new student trustees; Trustee Sargent requests the removal of the comma and an indigenous student representative.

Business Arising from the Minutes

Student Achievement Plan Presentation by Principal Chris Walkling

Principal Chris Walkling shared a presentation related to Bill 98, Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023, including newly introduced provincial priorities for student achievement:

- **Achievement of Learning Outcomes in Core Academic Skills**
- **Preparation of Students for Future Success**
- **Student Engagement and Well-Being**

As part of the Ministry of Education's commitment to promote student achievement and transparency for parents and families, the ministry is pleased to share the new **Student Achievement Plan** (formerly known as the Board Improvement Plan). This will support boards in adopting the provincial priorities into their multi-year plans, with goals and indicators to focus their improvement planning processes.

Under the Act, school boards are required to **publicly report on progress** toward the provincial priorities and **meet with parents and partners in education** to discuss the priorities and progress towards them.

During the Spring and Fall of 2024, the Near North District School Board engaged with a broad range of parent and community organizations. The focus of these engagements has included the school board's action plan to support and improve student achievement and well-being and measures for success. Engagements included the NNDSB Parent Involvement Committee, Indigenous Education Council, Special Education Advisory Committee, Equity Advisory Circle, MYSP Committee, as well as Indigenous Youth Circle.

This presentation provided SEAC with an update related to community engagement, responsive planning, and measures of success.

- Key piece is through consultation – all through lens of how we ensure the voice of staff, students are represented in this plan and stakeholders help interpret the plan.
Had Opportunity to work with IYC and opportunity to lift out the priorities and live them and help us access how we meet these objectives.
- Engagement and wellbeing were key for student success.
- Revisions to our school effectiveness framework- evaluative component.
- Listening campaign – asked staff to think about what they feel good about and want to celebrate – Literacy, numeracy was highlighted regularly, digital math tools were well received.
- Student well-being – positive relationships and inclusive environment and efforts of staff
- Professional learning – LIFT for teachers – opportunity for teachers to put forth a proposal and engage in teaching guided learning monitored by admin.
- Student Transitions – significant focus on transition points from grades 6 into 7 and 8 into 9.
- Positive Culture – generalization around youth – conscious effort to practice kindness
- Engaged in listening campaign – what are the emerging challenges: Staff absences, student attendance, professional learning, resource availability, data utilization, student well-being.
- Launch Parent and family feedback form – invitation for them to share their feedback
- Key message – how to understand what we are talking about – acronyms – how are we communicating to families in ways that they can understand.
- De-streamed programs – saw no real impact in a negative way on credit accumulation. 92% were successful 2023-24
- Graduation Rates – required to use 2021-22 ONSIS data because of COVID. 2022-23 – our graduation rates went up 4%.
- Attendance – hot topic particularly in northeast region. 2021-22, 21% were not attending 2022-23, our district continues to lag in this area. Hard for a district to fix this. What are the factors that contribute to this?

- Attendance benchmark – what did it look like before covid. Decline started before covid, but we are working to better understand – using reason codes.
- Trustee Sargent asked with regards to attendance for K-8 section, are problems more noticeable in higher grades or where families are involved are they seen in all siblings.
- Principal Walkling explained that gr 8 dips to 15.5 – however there is a decline in the early years as well. We need to better understand the factors that cause students to miss school – bussing, illness.
- Trustee Phillips noted that de-streaming of math will take time to see a positive impact – It's not seen as a positive thing so the stories we tell are important and how they impact learners.
- Principal Walkling noted there are a lot of conversations and part of the challenge sits in cultural shift – we have university bias; many teachers have gone to university and that is the pathway taken. If we see the pathways as a hierarchy – we are the last district to de-stream grade 9 in Ontario. Allow students to make informed choices of what they want to do for post-secondary.
- Trustee Phillips asked do we know if attendance around special ed students is more represented in these numbers.
- Principal Walkling indicated the data set, is report card data – indicators challenge the IEP flagged only if there are modifications. We won't know until we have RISE to integrate the data.
- Trustee Phillips asked if there are plans to look at other strategies.
- Principal Walkling indicated yes through SAC and parent information nights.

Financial Report Presentation by Superintendent of Business - Seija Van Haesendonck

- SBO gave a summary of the 2024-25 restructured version of the former Grants for Student Needs (GSN) now called the Core Education Funding (Core Ed)
- As per the information released by the Ministry in memo 2024:B05:
- Simplifies the number of grants from 18 in the previous framework to six funds and from 77 allocations in the previous framework to 28 allocations within the new Core Ed model to make it easier to understand.
- Removed funding elements that are not permanent and ongoing to provide more certainty for school board planning purposes.
- The school board must reserve any unspent special education finding each year and spend it on special education in the future.
- 2024-2025 special education budget is a deficit budget in the amount of (\$608,570).
- This was a purposeful increase in the special education deficit in order to use projected deferred revenue from an increase in Special Incidence Portion (SIB) funding received in 2023-24.
- Total expenditures of \$25,899,887, and revenues of \$25,291,317
- Projected enrolment to increase by 0.4%
- Slight increase in special education staffing from the 2023-2024 budget of 9.5 FTE, which includes the conversion of temporary EA positions into 9.0 permanent FTE EA positions.
- 2023-24 Safe and Clean Schools Supplement was introduced, and was directed towards several part-time positions, but this funding was eliminated in 2024-25 as the Ministry has indicated normal operations in school boards have resumed.
- Ministry will begin a five-year phase-in for 2021 Statistics Canada census updates, as well as other data updates and adjustments to formulas to more closely align the relevant data with the policy intent. The phase-in is designed to allow boards time to adjust cost structures.
- The special incidence portion (SIP) component within the Special Education Fund is intended to support students with extraordinarily high needs who require more than two full-time staff to address their health and/or safety needs, and those of others at their school. In the 2024-25 school year, the Ministry continues to base the SIP funding on an interim formula while it

continues to work towards a new approach for future years.

- Funding we received in 2023-24 we did continue at that higher level but anticipate changes coming when updated. SIP has always been application based, and we certainly hope any new process will not bring back that application process.
- Positive impact to Spec Ed changes the professional assessments funding, intended to support school boards to conduct professional assessments (e.g., speech and language, psycho-educational) to help reduce wait times, was moved from previous PPF funding into the Core Ed. The funding will be provided through the Differentiated Needs Allocation of the Special Education fund.
- Positive impact to Spec Ed changes – REP money, minimum moved to core funding formula – roughly \$120,000 so intended to support professional assessments and reduce wait times.
- Challenging to fill positions for EA's so turned temp positions into permanent positions for 2024-25 year.
- CHARTS – typically on overall board budget usually 72-73% but Spec Ed staff costs float around 90%. The majority of that funding is directed at staffing for students.
- 2% supplies and services, 8% education and community partnerships, 38% classroom teachers, 14% professional/para-professionals
- Slide show has projected staffing – see slight drop on teaching line – that would reflect DLRT position elimination (virtual DLRT).
- Final slide – to MOE funding site – they provide all relevant information – historical info and links to take you to main site and break everything down to less technical version.
- Lastly – talk about SEAC's role in the budget process – committee recommendations that at the July finance committee, the full set of recommendations was received and discussed.
- Trustee Fuscaldo commented on how great it is to have 9 more FTE EA's.
- Trustee Phillips asked does the money for the 90 include professional fees.
- Interested in area of supporting people once we recruit and retain them. How do we support those?
- Trustee Phillips asked what PD is taking place for EA's with the rise in aggression and providing effective inclusion for special ed students.
- Principal Clarke noted that regional PD days support EAs with professional development by engaging in focused training – the behavior team does BMS training, proactive behavior supports for EAs, Mental Health Team partnering with emotional coaching. We are in the midst of refining those roles and the referral process. The PD we budget relies heavily on central staff and most is done internally.

Standing Items

Community Partner updates

- Candy St. Onge – getting started with transition program eligibility ages 14-21
Recreation and leisure planning – community connecting activities and social clubs. Starting social club the first PD day in November.
- Chris -Guillemette – October is employment disability month. Community Living North Bay is – lighting up purple and blue to celebrate the incredible contributions that people with disabilities make to our workforce – see Community Living Facebook page for more information.
- Oct 31 Community Living North Bay collaborates with the North Bay Fire Department for Halloween. Oct 26th is get a free coffee day at the homestyle café. All proceeds go back to supporting Community Living North Bay.
- Trustee Fuscaldo mentioned a website called “treatability” where you can access a poster on

how to make your home accessible for Halloween and you can tag Sensory friendly Halloween homes in the North Bay area.

Correspondence received: Letter of Interest from Nipissing Down Syndrome Society dated September 20, 2024. (SO Graves)

- Letter from Sean Byers was received requesting inclusive representative for Nipissing and membership in our committee.
- SO Graves had a conversation with Sean Byers and received more information. Our bylaws for terms of reference – reminder to SEAC that it's the board of trustees to appoint
- SO Graves noted that a letter will need to go to the board for agenda setting to put NDSS on SEAC committee.
 - Trustee Fuscaldo asked if there is a limit to how many organizations we can have in our membership?
 - SO Graves clarified regulations say up to 12 local associations. Trustees are appointed through the board – community reps have been appointed. There are ratios – but there is a cap of 12.
 - Trustee Sargent queried whether members could be considered community members at large and noted that, as a committee, we always welcome new members.

Reports

Board report (oral) – (Board Trustee)

- Trustee Sargent - Trustees are continuing the process to update our Governance Manual. It has now gone back to the bylaws committee for further review.
- At our upcoming November Board Meeting, we will be electing our Chair, Vice Chair, and committee membership for the 2024-2025 year. At our next SEAC meeting in November, Trustees serving on the SEAC committee for the upcoming year will be known.

Special Education Report - Alison Clarke

- Summer Learning for Students with Special Education Needs:
- NNDSB was able to provide summer learning supports through Ministry funds for summer learning programming offered in coordination with the board's program team, Virtual Summer learning camps (7 camps) and in-person August transition supports to support successful transitions for students with spec ed needs.
- With regard to the summer camps, LearnStyle was able to provide us with more detailed information. 3 Virtual Social Coding Clubs and 4 Virtual Assistive Technology camps took place. A total of 26 students participated in the 7 camps. Camps were offered from July 15 to 19th and from July 29 to August 2nd. Each camp has a different intention, but most camps offer students opportunities to engage in social interactions, build friendships, increase independence and overall confidence within a technology/virtual context. LearnStyle offers NNDSB end of program reports that details student success metrics (self-advocacy and self-determination gains), parent feedback (generally very positive and noted that their children demonstrated skills/abilities that weren't as developed previously) and have noted for us that attendance rates were 90% for all camps offered,
- With regard to August Transition Supports, 183 elementary and 210 secondary students participated in transition activities. 20 transition programs were offered across our board and of the 20 participating schools, 74 teachers and 12 other staff facilitated transition activities. 167

students, 129 parents and 120 students indicated that transition supports positively impacted student preparedness for the upcoming school year.

- We facilitated a successful EA PD day on September 27th. EAs will engage in regional sessions, including BMS re-certification training, Emotion Coaching offered by the Mental Health Lead, an equity presentation by EGALE, and a workshop on mental health presented by OSSTF. From feedback gathered so far, facilitators reported good levels of engagement and have received some positive feedback regarding session content. EAs seem to enjoy getting together, in person, and engaging in collaborative learning components that are facilitated.
- Items that we continue to work on are:
- We continue to work with LearnStyle with regard to RISE implementation, are still navigating changes to Specialized Equipment Amount (SEA) funding and are still working to impose changes to our central behaviour team as we work to make role title name changes as well as comply with CPBAO standards.
- Grade 7/8 Student Transition supports for students with learning disabilities will be offered by the special education central psych team in the upcoming months and is a pilot project underway. This open invitation to intermediate students will allow them the option to attend sessions with members of our psych team, led by the lead psychologist, to understand their unique learning profiles and be empowered to understand themselves as learners so that they are better able to determine their interests, abilities and select programming and pathways that will get them where they would like to be during secondary school and beyond.
- Trustee Fuscaldo welcomed the idea of having the pilot project run across all schools. There is a lot of shame with students with special needs and gathering them flags them as opposed to addressing it in their classroom.
- Principal Clarke explained we have put measures in place to ensure confidentiality and we work to honour their journey in a respectful way and recognize confidentiality – these students have profiles with many strengths. Strengths are the focus of these student-centered activities.
- Trustee Phillips commented pilot sessions are wonderful and celebrating diverse students and not stigmatizing students that might have labels. When we welcome these students with open arms – there are so many examples of students that look up to students with labels. Love the scenario-based PD format.

SEAC chair report Chantal Phillips

- Coordinator for children's mental health, noticing aggression towards care givers – aggression towards family AFCA – interested in this with families and caregivers. Research if teachers feel they can be effective in creating an inclusive environment that is where we really see the notes of success. We have teachers that feel they are very capable and build that culture of learning success and spreading those skills and would love to see a reduction of aggression and violence in the classroom.

Next meeting: Thursday, November 21st at 1pm

Motion to adjourn at 3:03 pm by Chris Guillemette and seconded by Louise Sargent. *Carried*