



Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting held on May 12, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via Microsoft Teams Meeting.

Present:

Administration: Theresa Bitonti, Special Education Coordinator
Jennifer Palangio, Secondary – Curriculum Lead
Jody Weller, Superintendent of Education

Trustees: Barbara McCool
John Willemsen

Associations: Marie Derosier, LDAO, Member
Tracy Hanzlik, Nipissing First Nation
Mary Grise, Parent Representative, Member

Regrets:

Dan Lachance, Community Living, Member
Jeannie Boissonneault, NDSS, Member

1. PRAYER

Mrs. McCool led the committee in prayer.

2. ROLL CALL/TRUSTEE ATTENDANCE

Roll call was completed.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by John Willemsen and seconded by Tracy Hanzlik THAT the agenda of May 12, 2020 be approved as presented.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by Barbara McCool and seconded by John Willemsen THAT the minutes of April 14, 2020 be approved as presented.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- a) MACSE – Collaboration on Community
SEAC collaboratively completed the MACSE – Collaboration on Community template. Ms. Weller will compile responses and send out a draft to the committee. SEAC is being encouraged to review and forward any additional input.

6. UPDATES

- a) Carousel Evening Update
SEAC discussed the need to postpone the 20th Anniversary Carousel Evening celebration. SEAC agreed to keep the item on the monthly agenda. The tentative date of May 20, 2021 was discussed. Ms. Bitonti requested the use of SJSH and communicated with the keynote regarding the proposed date. Follow up will occur when school resumes.
- b) Parent Guide
SEAC supports having a comprehensive Guide for Parents and Students. Furthermore SEAC sees value in extrapolating key components of special education (i.e. IEP, IPRC processes) and providing supplemental information in a simple, parent friendly format (i.e. facts sheets or pamphlet). SEAC recognizes the value of digital presentation (PDF available as well) on line during this period of school closure, as well as, the need for an ongoing review process as the situation evolves.
- c) Letter to Minister of Education
Ms. Weller reviewed the response to the letter that was recommended by our SEAC regarding the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE). At this time the Minister is not considering any changes to the current MACSE process.

7. CORRESPONDANCE

NIL

8. INFORMATION ITEMS

- a) Board Report
 - i) Superintendent's Update
The current school closure order was extended to May 31. This order will allow schools to open for staff on Friday, May 29 and for students on Monday, June 1.

This closure period continues to be focused on teacher - led instruction facilitated with students in a virtual or distance learning environment.

Some areas to highlight include:

Report Cards

School boards will issue final report cards for both elementary and secondary students

NPSC Educators & Support Staff

"Using Digital Resources: Guidelines for Staff" – guiding document developed to support teachers in providing and enhancing learning opportunities for students through distance learning.

“Framework for Supporting Professional Development Opportunities for Educational Assistants During COVID19 School Closures” – framework document to guide and assist EAs in supporting students with special needs within the teacher-led learning model, as well as participating in skill building through professional development activities.

Professional Development - to date, various staff have facilitated several professional development sessions.

Technology

- Over the past several weeks, our staff have distributed over 400 devices to students to provide more access as more families continue to reach out.
- Fifty-one Internet-ready iPads through the Rogers/Apple partnership have been deployed to students this week to ensure that all our students have access to devices/internet.
- Deployed approximately 30 devices to EAs who did not previously have access to personal devices, allowing these vital members of the school and classroom communities to perform the duties of their role in light of the current context.
- Additionally, SJSH has deployed musical instruments so student may continue with credit accumulation in this area of study.

Indigenous Education

Our Indigenous Grad Coach has prepared medicine bundles and distributed these last week. She has connected with families and has offered support to a few of our students in their native language (Cree) while they have returned to their home communities along the James Bay coast.

Other activities include:

- Medicine wheel teachings and how sacred medicines are utilized to support student well-being.
- Posting regularly on EDSBY about sacred practices and engaging with students, parents and caregivers around the safe use of these practices while at home.
- Working with our Experiential Learning Lead to create a resource that supports story and reflection.
- Compiling a system needs assessment, supporting interventions, and monitoring the impact of these. Some themes that have been identified include: student identity; self-esteem; pathways; motivation and initiative; and self-advocacy.

Mental Health & Well-Being

- Mental Health Check-Ins via email for parents and students.
- Elementary well-being Edsby group for students and parents, which offers resources to students and parents daily.
- SJSH Wellness Hub for St. Joseph-Scollard Hall (SJSH) students. This Hub offers: information to support student mental health; a calendar of events with resources and daily activities and supports, wellness group drop-ins to keep students feeling connected to each other, links to online, private Wellness Check-Ins for SJSH students looking to speak with School Social Workers.

- Online group sessions for caregivers to talk about their successes and struggles in our current situation. Group sessions provide participants with the opportunity to talk about their situation and share strategies for how to manage the challenges facing caregivers during this time.
- SJSH R.I.S.E. Committee, Bears RISE Up! (Resources, Intervention, Safe-space, Education), is a secondary student-led group who works with our board's Mental Health Lead to organize school events and activities during the regular school year to promote positive mental health. While schools are closed, this group has been active both on the Edsby Hub and on Instagram, posting items including tips for their peers to help maintain wellness, planning online contests, sharing uplifting music, fostering ways to cultivate gratitude, maintaining relationships while maintaining physical (social) distancing, sharing information, etc.

Given the range of circumstances of students and their families, the continuity of learning has required a range of delivery options that are reasonable and practical. Teaching and learning at this time has not looked the same as the customary in-class experience, however, our teams have continued to provide support and programming in an accommodating way in order to meet the needs and abilities of all our learners in this different context.

Other

- GSN funding information is anticipated shortly.
- Voluntary redeployment of certain education staff is being encouraged by the Minister of Education.
- St. Gregory's childcare facility is open for the children of essential service workers.

ii) Coordinator's Update:

Continuity of Services:

The NPSC Speech and Language department remains active with work related tasks. The department has been able to communicate with families, initiate tele therapy with specific clients, share therapy materials on line, complete reports as applicable, consult with school level staff and participate in professional development opportunities.

The NPSC Behaviour Management Consultant remains active with work related tasks. Ongoing engagement in professional development include activities such as Stuart Shanker's 30 day self-regulation challenge as well as the Alberta Brain Story Certification. The BMC has been working closely with special education teachers on reviewing and developing resources in the area of 'friendship training' for example how to reinforce skills around good sportsmanship, turn taking and how to joining groups/games. The BMC continues to engage with community partners (i.e. daycares) and families to discuss strategies that have proven effective within the school environment. Additionally, active participation within School Mental Health, Special Education teams, the Community Hub and FASD North tables remains.

The SAT Learning Technologist has rolled out Lexia software licenses system wide as appropriate. Lexia supports educators in providing differentiated literacy instruction for students of all abilities. Lexia's research-proven program provides explicit, systematic, personalized learning in the six areas of reading instruction, targeting skill gaps as they emerge, and providing teachers with the data and student-specific resources they need for individual or small-group instruction. Highlights include the ability to: Engage and motivate students in a game-like environment, provide progress-monitoring student data without a test & the fact that it is accessible via iPad, Chromebook, or browser. Additionally the SAT LT is supporting teacher planning PD sessions from a special education perspective by identifying opportunities for differentiated instruction, integration of assistive technology, and learning activities (for teachers and parents) when/if possible through distance learning.

The SAT: Autism has been instrumental in developing a special education link that has been added to the NPSC Learn @ Home website. This link provides easy access for families to connect with different resources and engaging learning opportunities in many broad areas related to special education such as Autism, Learning Disabilities, Sensory, Gross Motor Skills, Fine Motor Skills, Daily Physical Activities etc. This resource is monitored and updated on an ongoing basis. Additionally, the SAT:ASD continues to respond to students with ASD on a case by case basis which can include sharing alternative curriculum resources to teachers and families to provide student specific individualized support. The SAT:ASD continues to engage with community partners as well as participate in ongoing professional development from the Autism Research Institute including: The New ASD "At Home" World - 10 Ways to Cope with Changes During COVID-19 and Beyond, Coronavirus Impact: Talking to Kids About Schedules, Change, and Disruption, Support for Individuals with ASD: Coping with Family and Virtual Interactions During COVID-19, & The Relationship among Gastrointestinal Symptoms, Problem Behaviors, and Internalizing Symptoms in Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Transition Planning:

As you are aware, successful transition planning is a collaborative process involving a multidisciplinary team to formulate goals and action plans which occur over time. Ongoing meetings are occurring throughout the system to ensure the exchange of learning profiles. Due to school closure, physical transitions have paused however staff are actively engaged in dialogue with community partners and families. Our entire special education team continues to work with students, families, community partners and all staff to assist meeting the learning needs of students with exceptionalities. Regular and ongoing meetings are occurring and responses are highly individualized reasonable and practical. Our team continues to prioritize health and mental well being while balancing education.

iii) Secondary Curriculum Lead Update:

- Teachers continue to engage the students in on line learning.
- Special Educations students have been assigned EAs to assist with their credit courses.
- Math and Science ARC students can access virtually.

- Mental Health – teachers are mindful of mental health concerns and regularly consult with the Mental Health Lead
- SJSH going ahead with Academic and Athletic awards and graduation virtually. Planning committees have started.
- Grade 8 transition meetings are taking place virtually.
- IPRC meetings are being planned.
- Technology is being loaned out when needed.
- Students are accessing Lexia as appropriate. Currently there are 9 licenses at SJSH.

b) Association Reports

- i) Nipissing First Nation – Tracy Hanzlik, Member
-NIL Report
- ii) LDAO – Marie Derosier, Member
-NIL Report
- iii) Parent Representative – Mary Grise, Member
-NIL Report

9. QUESTIONS & ANSWERS / OTHER
NIL

10. DATE OF NEXT SEAC MEETING
The next SEAC meeting will be on June 9, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

11. ADJOURNMENT
Moved by Mary Grise and seconded by Tracy Hanzlik the meeting of May 12, 2020 adjourned at 7:31 p.m.