



Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting held on January 12, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. via Microsoft Teams Meeting.

Present:

Administration: Theresa Bitonti, Special Education Coordinator
Jody Weller, Superintendent of Education

Trustees: John Willemsen
Barbara McCool

Associations: April Porter – Community Living, Member
Tracey Hanzlik – Nipissing First Nation, Member
Marie Derosier – LDAO, Member
Mary Grise – Parent Representative, Member

Regrets: Jeannie Boissonneault – NDSS, Member

1. PRAYER

Ms. Weller 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 Mary Grise THAT the agenda of January 12, 2021 be approved as presented.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved by April Porter and seconded by Barbara McCool THAT the minutes of December 8, 2020 be approved as presented.

5. NEW BUSINESS

Presentation: Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities

Ms. Susan Conklin (0.5 Teacher of Junior LSC and 0.5 Supporting Students with LD SAT) and Mr. Jason Michaud (Teacher of Intermediate LSC) facilitated the presentation, which highlighted NPSC's tiered approach to addressing the needs of students with learning disabilities. This approach allows a continuum of supports and interventions to be provided based on the intensity of a student's learning needs. The vast majority of Tier 1 supports are provided within the context of classroom instruction where Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction are used to support students with learning disabilities. Tier 2 supports are provided through the development of an

Individual Education Plan and may include accommodations, curriculum modifications, and/or targeted interventions to address academic, emotional, and/or behavioural needs. Direct instruction, small group or individualized instruction are used to address these specific needs and the use of technology is provided. Lastly, Tier 3 supports are offered to students with severe to profound learning disabilities who require highly individualized and intensive supports to access the curriculum in a specialized classroom environment.

NPSC has two, specialized, system Learning Skills Classrooms for students at the Junior and Intermediate levels. These classrooms focus on remedial approaches for language and math, as well as, building compensatory strategies and self-advocacy skills. Ms. Conklin and Mr. Michaud shared how precise, explicit, personalized instruction is provided to address significant challenges identified in the student's learning profile. Programs, such as "Empower", are used to develop the skills of struggling readers. Mr. Michaud shared the importance of a growth mindset and how pupils who possess a growth mindset can rise to challenges and learn from the challenges they face. Ms. Conklin shared the concept of shifting trajectories in reading development and the importance of making an immediate decision and taking action. With LSC Teacher support, students remain focused and determined along the pathway to become readers. Inspirational student success stories and celebrations of what is possible in the journey to becoming a proficient reader were shared with SEAC.

Within the tiered approach outlined in the above paragraph, the role of the Special Assignment Teacher for Students with Learning Disabilities (SAT:LD) enables us to create a circle of practice in support of learners in order to build capacity and provide enhanced supports to students in the regular classroom. Examples of how this is facilitated include: accessing and sharing resources (e.g. PM collection), supporting classroom and virtual teachers (e.g. IEP development, creation of student profiles that identify student interests, strengths, challenges & next steps, identification of effective and meaningful instructional and assessment strategies for whole class, small group or individual students), collaborating with Classroom Resource teachers (e.g. transition planning, identifying candidates for the Learning Skills Classroom) and supporting individual students with direct intervention programs.

Carousel

Ms. Derosier shared an update regarding the availability of keynote speaker Michael Jacques. Michael is a public speaker, author and well known advocate for people with special needs. At a young age, Michael was diagnosed with autism and an intellectual disability. He shares the experiences from his life to help others understand and accept. Michael's story demonstrates the empowerment that comes from being comfortable in your own skin, knowing your strengths, valuing relationships, and giving back to your community. Michael is available to provide a virtual keynote during the month of March. SEAC confirmed to move forward in planning a virtual event and discussed possible dates. Ms. Bitonti will correspond with Marcel Jacques to confirm the event date. A Carousel Evening subcommittee will be formed to further plan for the upcoming event.

6. UPDATES

a) Parent Guide Deferred

b) New Membership

Ms. Weller confirmed that all feedback received from SEAC members was positive and in support of sending the letters to applicable community partners

7. CORRESPONDENCE

NIL

8. INFORMATION ITEMS

a) Board Report

Superintendent's Update

Ms. Weller highlighted the comprehensive plan to support all students virtually between the period of January 4 – 8th, 2021, including the deployment of necessary learning devices and technology. Opportunities for students with complex special education needs to attend in-person were offered to all students and participation was based on family preferences and comfortability. St. Alex and SJSH welcomed a combined total of approximately 15 students throughout the week. In-person learning resumed on January 11, 2021 for elementary and secondary students.

Coordinator's Update:

NIL Report

b) Association Reports

1. Nipissing First Nation – Tracy Hanzlik, Member
NIL Report
2. LDAO – Marie Derosier, Member
Ms. Derosier has received the latest LDAO Circular and will forward it to Ms. Weller for electronic distribution to SEAC.
3. Community Living – April Porter, Alternate
NIL Report
4. Parent Representative – Mary Grise, Member
NIL Report
5. NDSS - Jeannie Boissonneault, Member
NIL Report

9. QUESTIONS & ANSWERS / OTHER

NIL

10. DATE OF NEXT SEAC MEETING

The next SEAC meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2021 at 5:30 pm via Teams.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by John Willemsen and seconded by Mary Grise THAT the meeting of January 12, 2021 adjourned at 7:18 p.m.