

Upper Grand District School Board  
**Special Education Advisory Committee**

**Minutes**

**Wednesday, March 9, 2022**

The Special Education Advisory Committee of the Upper Grand District School Board met on Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. in the MS Teams virtual meeting platform.

**The following Association Members were in attendance:** Jason Offer, Association for Bright Children-ABC; Laurie Whyte, FASworld Canada; Stacey Stevens, VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children; Shelley Marks, OPVIC/IEWS (Ontario Parents for Visually Impaired Children); Don Richardson; Inclusion Action in Ontario; Danielle Richer, FASworld Canada (Alternate); Patricia Townson, Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County (LDAWC)

**Present from staff were:** Tracey Lindsay, Superintendent of Program; Wendy Donaldson, Assistant to the Superintendent of Program; Rochelle Murray-Cako, Elementary Principal; Brent Bloch, Secondary Principal; Special Education Consultant, Mark Howe

**Trustees present:** Jennifer Edwards

**Regrets:** Carrie Proudfoot, Autism Ontario-Wellington County

**Absent:** Mandi Naismith, Autism Ontario-Wellington County (Alternate); Michelle Barrett, OPVIC/IEWS (Ontario Parents for Visually Impaired Children) (Alternate); Kelsey Noseworthy, VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children (Alternate); Denise Helm, Canadian Mental Health Association Wellington Waterloo; Robin Ross, Trustee

Jason Offer, Vice-Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and read his land acknowledgement statement.

**Approval of Agenda of March 9, 2022**

Stacey Stevens moved that the agenda of March 9, 2022 be approved. Laurie Whyte seconded the motion.

**The motion carried.**

**Approval of the Minutes of February 9, 2022**

Laurie Whyte moved that the minutes of February 9, 2022 be approved. Stacey Stevens seconded the motion.

**The motion carried.**

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### Action Items

Tracey Lindsay addressed SEAC and provided the following updates:

- Parent Guide and SEAC Brochure – drafts of brochure and Parent Guide will come to SEAC in April
- CLEVR sandbox – presented at February meeting and now complete
- Template letter and list of organizations for SEAC recruitment – Jason Offer will connect with Carrie Proudfoot for update
- Letter to Minister – Jason Offer to confer with Carrie Proudfoot as to when letter will be sent out
- Equity Plan – Gerry Walker presented Plan to SEAC earlier this year and will be invited back with update when completed

### Correspondence

1. Letter dated February 11, 2022, addressed to the Honourable Christine Elliot, Minister of Health and to the Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education, from Pat O’Grady, Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee, of Renfrew County Catholic District School Board expressing their awareness that the province is currently challenged by a shortage of nurses. They acknowledge that school staff cannot perform the duties of a nurse/registered health care professional, but stress that it is also imperative that every reasonable step is taken to ensure that all students have access to education.

They also acknowledge that there are ongoing provincial level discussions occurring across various ministries regarding the nursing shortage, they stand with other boards and request that this government makes it a top priority to develop a solution that allows all children access to the learning they require and deserve.

2. Letter dated January 11, 2022, addressed to Ms. Nancy Naylor, Deputy Minister of Education, Dr. Catherine Zahn, Deputy Minister of Health, and Ms. Denise Cole, Deputy Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, from Sonia Nadon-Campbell, Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee of Ottawa-Carleton DSB, requesting consideration of the following recommendations in regards to the joint review of PPM81:
  - Include SEAC representatives during the consultation process both provincially and during the development of local solutions required;
  - Consolidate funding for the delivery of speech-language pathology services to school-age children under the direction of the Ministry of Education. A single funder will promote more equitable and inclusive services, with greater access for all children with diverse needs. It will reduce service fragmentation, eliminate gaps and duplications, and create seamless transition points. It will

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also permit more coherent goal setting for participation at school, home and in the community. Moreover, a single funder will facilitate more transparent and accountable processes and service efficiencies;

- Maintain the current investment by DSBs in the delivery of speech-language pathology services. Encourage DSBs to continue to use Grants for Student Needs and Special Education Grants to fund existing services with flexibility to respond to local student, community and system needs;
  - Flow additional funding directly to the DSBs to enhance SLP services, unifying delivery of speech and language interventions. Within the funding transfer, acknowledge the gap created when Preschool Speech and Language Services for kindergarten-age children were discontinued and school boards absorbed the abandoned speech and language caseload; and
  - Create an accountability tool to capture detailed data about the delivery of services to children and families, stratified by tier, using frameworks that are appropriate to the education context. Use the accountability tool to refine service delivery targets and amend funding and infrastructure processes as necessary.
3. Position Paper by the Association of Chief Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario District School Boards (ACSLP) December 2021 and template letter sent by email by Maya Rattray, Acting President ACSLP

SEAC reviewed the correspondence and no action is required.

#### **Open Forum – Best Practice and Good News**

**Laurie Whyte, FASworld Canada** – the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual FASD conference is scheduled for May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Two speakers featured are Dan Dubovsky and Dr. Jacqueline Pie. FASD is hosting virtual paint nights for parents/caregivers supporting child/youth with suspected or confirmed FASD and also for children with suspected or confirmed FASD. More information regarding the conference and other events can be found on the website: <https://www.dufferinwellingtonfasd.com/>

**Shelley Marks, OPVIC/VIEWS (Ontario Parents for Visually Impaired Children)** - OPVIC's David Lepofsky announced that on March 1, 2022, the Ontario Government made public the final report of the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee. We posted it as a downloadable MS Word file on the AODA Alliance website's [education page](https://www.aodaalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/K-12-Education-SDC-Final-Recommendations-Report.docx) at [https://www.aodaalliance.org/wp-c](https://www.aodaalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/K-12-Education-SDC-Final-Recommendations-Report.docx)  
[Wednesday, April 20th: CNIB/OPVIC Parent Resource Zoom Meeting 7:30 pm-](https://www.aodaalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/K-12-Education-SDC-Final-Recommendations-Report.docx)  
[CNIB and APH Products by Andrea Voss](https://www.aodaalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/K-12-Education-SDC-Final-Recommendations-Report.docx)  
[ontent/uploads/2022/03/K-12-Education-SDC-Final-Recommendations-Report.docx](https://www.aodaalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/K-12-Education-SDC-Final-Recommendations-Report.docx)

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#### Policy Review Update

Tracey Lindsay commented that there are no policies out for public consultation.

#### FNMI – Update

Gerard Walker, Principal of Equity thanked SEAC for the invitation and began his presentation by sharing a document that detailed updates to Indigenous education in the UGDSB and links for additional information.

He explained the importance of the land acknowledgement statement and added that one of the most important factors was understanding and knowing who the treaty partners are and those who are not.

He presented the territorial map and indicated the Treaty partners for UGDSB schools. He provided the reasoning to the acknowledgement statement and noted that this is a way that people can talk about awareness of the Indigenous presence, land rights and every day life. It's not just a connection to the past but a recognition of the history of colonialism and the need for change in colonial societies.

He shared an article by Chelsea Vowels for SEAC to read to deepen their learning and understanding of writing an acknowledgement statement.

He directed SEAC to Policy 519, Indigenous Education (First Nations, Métis, Inuit) which was completed last year. This policy states that UGDSB acknowledges that Indigenous Peoples are distinct from other equity seeking groups in that they are self-determining nations with inherent rights, laws, and institutions. Indigenous rights are distinct.

Gerard Walker reviewed the sections of the policy with SEAC.

<https://www.ugdsb.ca/board/policy/policy-519-indigenous-education-first-nations-metis-inuit/>

The First Nation, Metis and Inuit Education Council (FNMIEC) is the advisory council for UGDSB as mandated by the Ministry of Education. All matters involving Indigenous education is vetted through FNMIEC, through the UGDSB Indigenous Lead Colinda Clyne. The Council reviews all materials and carefully considers and makes decisions based on what is best for the Indigenous students in the Upper Grand District School Board. The Council is also involved in the board plan for funding and what roles need to be created to provide support for students and teachers.

Jason Offer commented that he appreciated all the comments about the land acknowledgement statement and based on the discussion he understands the importance of knowing who the treaty partners are and what's behind it.

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Laurie Whyte thanked Gerard Walker for the information and commented that she has brought this to the committee before. She added that when she is reading her acknowledgement statement, she speaks to where she is and asks others to look into where they are and whose land they are on and add a personal piece to it. For her it is her direct connection through her children and her connection to the land. It's more meaningful than just reading a written statement.

Gerard Walker replied that having a statement will help as people grow and learn, they may be more comfortable using it. He added that the educational system has done a tremendous job of suppressing information and any racism information so it's not making it easy for people. He noted that he had not learned anything about residential schools, or colonialism and colonizing when he moved to Canada. He learned this all on his own. He commented that as a system we are responsible historically for that erasure and for the suppression of that information. The truth aspect of reconciliation is firmly our responsibility.

Jason Offer thanked Gerard Walker for his presentation.

*FNMI documents were uploaded to the SEAC folder on UGCloud.*

#### **Roles – Communication, Language and Speech Services**

MaryAnn Schouten, Supervisor, Communication, Language and Speech Services began her presentation by naming the four components of Communication: Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing. She then explained how strategies and accommodations are necessary for the successful communication by students with communication disorders. She provided details of the communication staff and their responsibilities. This staff includes: Deaf and Hard of Hearing Teacher; Educational Audiologist; Communicative Disorder Assistant and the Speech Language Pathologist.

Stacey Stevens thanked MaryAnn Schouten for the overview and asked how many students were using ASL as their first language; and whether any students from our board were still going to E.C. Drury or if they were at their home school with this support.

MaryAnn Schouten replied that currently there are four students who require American Sign Language (ASL) as their first language and they are being supported by the itinerant teacher with this special qualification. She added that students from our board attend E.C. Drury but did not have the exact number.

Jason Offer thanked MaryAnn Schouten for her presentation.

*PowerPoint presentation was uploaded to the SEAC folder on UGCloud.*

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#### COVID-19 Update

Tracey Lindsay commented that there were some recent Ministry of Education announcements regarding COVID measures and we're still unpacking it. The COVID report in the folder was done two weeks ago and it's already out-of-date. She provided a brief overview of:

Ventilation – report in folder

Staff and student absences – board is monitoring absences as people are still being required to isolate. Most of the staff absences are being filled as principals have been working hard to rearrange schedules to make sure there is staff for students every day.

Temporary remote program – this is ending and had been put in place for parents who were worried about their children returning back to school after Christmas break. This is different than the remote schools which will continue until the end of the year.

Mental Health – report in folder

Transportation – experiencing some issues with transportation in rural areas due to bus driver shortages

She added that the Province announced changes to the COVID requirements. March 14<sup>th</sup> is the revoking of the vaccination disclosure requirements. Non-vaccinated staff will no longer be required to test regularly and anyone entering schools will not be asked to disclose their vaccination status. On March 21<sup>st</sup> the masking requirement will be revoked for students, staff and visitors in schools, buses, and board buildings. The wearing of masks will be a personal choice. The UGDSB COVID policy will be reviewed and a decision made before students return after the March break.

Some of the changes include:

- Cohorting – not required for all grades indoor and outdoor
- Gathering limits – are lifted so assembly ceremonies, like graduations and proms will be a goal this year
- Daily screener – this will be for personal use for parents to do with their children.
- Continued hand hygiene and enhanced cleaning and ventilation
- Tracey Lindsay noted that there will be more communication coming out through the UGDSB website and schools regarding the upcoming changes.

Jennifer Edwards asked if the data about proms was a certainty or a probable.

Tracey Lindsay replied that the Ministry of Education's wording is that assembly ceremonies, proms and graduations may proceed.

*COVID Updates uploaded to the SEAC folder on UGCloud.*

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### SEISSC Monthly Update

No meeting and no update.

### Trustee Report

#### Jennifer Edwards –

- Trustees were receiving emails from parents who felt very strongly about the masks, from both sides of the issue (for and against)
- She deferred to Tracey Lindsay for the Ministry of Education announcement regarding masking requirements and other COVID protocols

### Updates from the Superintendent of Program

Tracey Lindsay directed SEAC to the updates in the folder and selected some to highlight:

#### 1. Wellness Works – Self Compassion

This month we collectively focus on reminding ourselves that we, too, deserve the same kindness, compassion and care that we give to so many others. This is especially true as we all work individually and collectively to make our way through the pandemic.

#### 2. EDHS alumni participate in 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics

We're in the midst of the Olympic and Paralympic season and Erin District High School (EDHS) has a lot to boast about, with **three of their former students participating in the 2022 Winter Olympics or Paralympics in Beijing.**

Rachael Karker, 24, won a bronze medal in the Women's Freeski Halfpipe this year; Zoe Bergermann participated in the Women's Snowboard Cross and Rob Armstrong, 25, is returning to this year's Paralympics Ice Hockey – already a Paralympics silver medalist.

Despite all three being incredible athletes today, only Bergermann competed in school athletics, she played rugby and was described as “a very good wrestler.” Karker was an elite athlete outside school settings as well as a dancer, and Armstrong – the only Paralympic medalist on this list – did not play on any school teams, but instead played para ice hockey.

Staff at EDHS remember the three athletes as tenacious, persevering, and positive.

<https://www.ugdsb.ca/blog/edhs-alumni-participate-in-2022-winter-olympics-and-paralympics/>

#### 3. Ministry announces new Science and Technology curriculum

On March 8, 2022, the Ministry of Education announced a new school science and technology curriculum that will be implemented in September 2022. The

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Ministry also announced it is de-streaming the Grade 9 science course for the upcoming school year.

The UGDSB welcomes this announcement and looks forward to reviewing the new curriculum documents and working on implementing this in our board.

The UGDSB has been a long-time supporter and advocate of STEM education and welcome opportunities to expand this education further for our students.

We are also pleased to see the focus on connecting STEM learning to real-world issues, sustainability, the skilled trades and more. Educators and program leaders will also expand on our current work in de-streaming to include the Grade 9 science course.

Once received, staff will review the curriculum documents from the Ministry and begin planning to implement the curriculum for September 2022.

<https://www.ugdsb.ca/blog/ministry-announces-new-science-and-technology-curriculum/>

#### **4. Empowerment Day returns virtually for a week**

Empowerment Day was initiated and developed by two very passionate students from the Drayton Heights Student Council in 2015. Elora Public School's "Students Create Change" group is continuing this annual event, and invites students from all across the UGDSB to participate.

Empowerment Week is running from March 7 to Mar 11, 2022, right in students' own classrooms. Classes in grades 4 to 12 are invited to take part all week.

Classes can pick from a wide selection of speakers this year including: Canadian figure-skating icon, Tessa Virtue, water advocate, Autumn Peltier, human rights activists and authors, Amanda Jette-Knox and Alexis Knox, Humboldt Broncos accident survivor, Ryan Straschnitzki and many more.

Empowerment Week covers a wide range of topics including self-worth, human rights, mental health, and girls in sports.

<https://www.ugdsb.ca/blog/empowerment-day-returns-virtually-for-a-week/>

#### **5. Parents/caregivers with child/ren attending an Upper Grand District School Board school located in North Wellington are invited to join the North Wellington Hub.**

The Hub is an opportunity for parents/caregivers in North Wellington to meet on a regular basis to discuss topics related to their child/ren's schools and education, and to receive information from the board related to schools.

The purpose of the Hub is to facilitate communication and collaboration about North Wellington schools in a positive and respectful environment, where information is exchanged, learning and understanding is provided, and more.



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The North Wellington Hub will be facilitated by Trustee Robin Ross and will invite members of School Councils and parents/caregivers in North Wellington to participate.

Meetings will be held three times per year, with opportunities for both in-person and virtual attendance.

The first meeting will be held at 7pm on March 29, 2022, at Wellington Heights Secondary School located at 405 Sligo Road East in Mount Forest and virtually.

Please RSVP by completing this form by March 22: [North Wellington Hub](#)

If you have questions about the North Wellington Hub, please contact Robin Ross at [robin.ross@ugdsb.on.ca](mailto:robin.ross@ugdsb.on.ca). <https://www.ugdsb.ca/blog/parents-caregivers-are-invited-to-join-the-north-wellington-hub/>

Wendy Donaldson was pleased to announced that Jennifer Meeker, currently the Principal at Centre Wellington District High School has accepted the position of Principal of Special Education. Jennifer Meeker has a large background in special education working in both panels – elementary and secondary. She has also worked at the board level and has been in roles of the head of special education with some of our departments. She's been very involved in many different ways. She joins on March 21<sup>st</sup> and will work with Tracey Lindsay and Wendy Donaldson to transition into her new role. Wendy Donaldson expressed congratulations and a big welcome to Jennifer Meeker and added that she will continue the work that we've been doing.

#### **Meeting Summary, Recommendations(s), Motion(s) and Action(s)**

Tracey Lindsay addressed SEAC and noted that is her last SEAC meeting. She took the opportunity to acknowledge all of the members of SEAC, past and present since her time of working with them for nine years. She also acknowledged their time volunteering, their energy, wisdom, and most importantly their advocacy. She thanked them on behalf of all the parents whose children have special needs, and added that she really valued all of their participation and feedback to help her do her job better. She continued by saying that most parents don't know that SEAC and their organizations help the school board set direction and support students and families. She believes that as a staff and as SEAC, a lot of really great work was done over the last nine years and beyond. She thanked the staff who work with SEAC and bring that perspective back to their work to advocate for the students with special needs. She added that it has been an honour and pleasure to be part of this committee over the last nine years.

Jason Offer thanked Tracey Lindsay and remarked that he really appreciated all of her great work. He added that she's the one that's fixed things and made this committee

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function better. He conveyed Carrie Proudfoot's many thanks for all the work accomplished.

Laurie Whyte commented that on a personal level, Tracey Lindsay has changed many, many things from the day she stepped in. She acknowledged that from her perspective, and mostly from her son's, that unfortunately Tracey hadn't come soon enough. She added that the change has continued and she looks forward to working with Wendy Donaldson to continue that trajectory.

Brent Bloch, Secondary Principal, expressed his thanks to Tracey Lindsay for her many years of service to the board. He thanked her for her dedicated support of the special education students and for her tireless efforts over the years that have ensured the success of the students.

Don Richardson thanked her for her dedication, professionalism and service, especially the students.

Other SEAC members conveyed their thanks in the chat.

Tracey Lindsay thanked everyone for their comments.

#### **Other**

#### **Adjournment**

Laurie Whyte motioned for adjournment of the meeting at 8:25 p.m. Don Richardson seconded the motion.