

Upper Grand District School Board
Special Education Advisory Committee

Minutes

Wednesday, April 10, 2024

The Special Education Advisory Committee of the Upper Grand District School Board met on Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at 7:02 p.m. in a hybrid meeting in the Boardroom at the Guelph Board Office.

The following Association Members were in attendance: Andrea Wyshniowsky, Dufferin Child & Family Services; Dianna Landry, Easter Seals Ontario; Jennifer Tremaine, Easter Seals Ontario (Alternate); John McNamara, Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County; Mandi McCreary, Kerry's Place Autism Services; Shelley Marks, OPVIC/IEWS (Ontario Parents for Visually Impaired Children); Melody Dekorte, Inclusion Action in Ontario (IAO); Maren Vsetula, FASD Ontario; Melissa Williamson, Community Member-at-Large; Amber Barens, Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society; Laurie Whyte, Trustee

Present from staff: Wendy Donaldson, Superintendent of Education; Peggy Blair, Superintendent of Education; Jennifer Meeker, Principal of Special Education; April King, Principal of Special Education 12-K; Jenny Marino, Mental Health and Addictions Lead; MaryAnn Schouten, Manager, Communication, Language and Speech; Alicia Ralph, Human Rights, Equity Advisor & Accessibility Commissioner; Rochelle Murray-Cako, Elementary Principal; Special Education Consultant, Angela Catcher

Regrets: Denise Helm, Canadian Mental Health Association

Absent: Aletha O'Hare-Stephenson

Laurie Whyte, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting. She noted that today is International Day of Pink where communities across the globe will unite to celebrate diversity and raise awareness to stop homophobia, transphobia, transmisogyny, discrimination and all forms of bullying. She added that even though progress has been made towards removing social barriers from our society, discrimination still persists. Ever year on the second Wednesday of April, people around the world are urged to put on a pink shirt to stand in solidarity with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to fight for equality and acceptance.

It is also Autism Awareness month.

April King, Principal of Special Education 12-K, read the land acknowledgment statement and Jennifer Meeker, Principal of Special Education read the anti-racism statement.

Upper Grand District School Board
Special Education Advisory Committee

Laurie Whyte welcomed two new SEAC members who introduced themselves to the committee: John McNamara, Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County and Jennifer Tremaine, Easter Seals Ontario (Alternate).

Approval of Agenda of April 10, 2024

Dianna Landry moved that the agenda of April 10, 2024, be approved.

The motion carried.

Approval of the Minutes of March 6, 2024

Andrea Wyshniowsky moved that the minutes of March 6, 2024, be approved.

The motion carried.

Action Items

Wendy Donaldson provided the following update:

- Human Trafficking presentation – presentation tonight. Wendy Donaldson noted that the focus is on the work that is being done within our Board around healthy relationships for some of our students within the LRC10 program and the considerations for how it could be implemented for other students who are integrated. SEAC will have an opportunity to provide input for next steps. This will be a recurring piece as the work will probably continue into next year.

Correspondence

No correspondence this month.

Open Forum – Best Practice and Good News

Maren Vsetula, FASD Ontario – A reminder that the 5th Annual Conference will be held on Wednesday May 29th at the Grandway Event Centre in Elora. An event for caregivers will be held on Tuesday evening.

<https://dufferinwellingtonfasd.com/event/fasdconference/>

John McNamara – Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County

(LDAWC) - offering their Reading Rocks Literacy program in May. This is an abridged 6-week program for children 6-12 years of age who work with tutors from the university in a one-to-one setting. There are approximately 20 spots available and it's free for participating families. Registration is open. <https://ldawc.ca/>

Angela Catcher, Special Education Consultant – Two out of the three elementary sports festivals were held this week. The third event is Thursday, April 11th. Pictures from events will be sent to the Communication Officer to share with UGDSB.

Upper Grand District School Board
Special Education Advisory Committee

Policy Review Update

Wendy Donaldson noted that there are no specific policies related to SEAC but listed for SEAC's information. There was a Policy Development Plan approved for a new Admissions and Registration policy and an updated Policy 204 - External Research Projects was received and released for consultation among the research community.

Special Education Plan - Updates

Jennifer Meeker, Principal of Special Education directed SEAC to the Special Education Plan for 2024-2025 and asked the committee to review the highlighted revisions in the document. She added that any suggestions/feedback are to be sent to her by May 3, 2024. The final draft will be presented at the May SEAC meeting for final approval by SEAC.

Draft Special Education Plan 2024-2025 uploaded to SEAC folder on UGCloud.

Mental Health & Education Week

Jenny Marino, Manager of Mental Health and Addictions and Amy Villeneuve, Manager, Corporate Services shared a PowerPoint presentation showing the work that the planning committee put together for Mental Health & Education Week that occurs May 6-10. Students submitted designs for a logo for this week and the committee selected one that included all the colours of UGDSB. There are 5 Days of Wellness with themes for each day. An interactable PDF was created with links in each box for each day plus a resources button that includes links for the Director's Message, Staff Wellness, Announcement Ideas and Slides for TV screens. This year educators are invited to participate in a classroom challenge to showcase their classrooms, work projects for the week and upload them for a chance to win a prize.

PowerPoint Presentation uploaded to the SEAC folder on UGCloud.

Human Trafficking – Preventative Measures

Jenny Marino, Manager of Mental Health and Addictions, April King, Principal of Special Education 12-K, MaryAnn Schouten, Manager, Communication, Language & Speech Services, Angela Catcher, Special Education Consultant and Jennifer Meeker, Principal of Special Education provided information related to the work that has been done to date with regard to Anti Human Sex Trafficking as well as the Healthy Relationship curriculum developed for students with unique special education needs. SEAC was divided into groups to further discuss additional resources/programs/services that organizations were providing to support this work in our community. SEAC will continue this work into the fall of 2024.

PowerPoint Presentation uploaded to the SEAC folder on UGCloud.

Upper Grand District School Board
Special Education Advisory Committee

Trustee Report

Laurie Whyte –

- No report

Updates from Superintendent of Education

Wendy Donaldson highlighted the following updates:

1. What are you grateful for? This April Wellness Works explores gratitude

This month, the Wellness Works committee is focusing on gratitude. Gratitude plays a significant role in our overall well-being and more than just “good manners.”

Taking just a bit of time to identify gratitude can have an impact. At the Upper Grand, we are grateful to all parents, guardians, elders, and caregivers who support our communities’ children and youth. <https://www.ugdsb.ca/blog/what-are-you-grateful-for-this-april-wellness-works-explores-gratitude/>

2. Over 1,000 UG students participate in 2024 Regional Elementary Skills Competition

On April 2, 2024, Upper Grand District School Board elementary students came together at the University of Guelph for the UGDSB’s Regional Skills Competition.

This year, the Regional Skills competition saw more than 1,000 students in grades 4-8 from 59 elementary schools compete, making 2024 one of the highest participated in Skills events in UG history, almost filling the University of Guelph’s Athletic Centre to capacity.

Congratulations to all students who participated in the Regional Skills Competition, to our winners and to those advancing to the Provincial Skills Competition in Toronto, Ontario this May. <https://www.ugdsb.ca/blog/over-1000-ug-students-participate-in-2024-regional-elementary-skills-competition/>

3. March 31 was National Indigenous Languages Day

March 31 was National Indigenous Languages Day. This day was dedicated to recognizing, encouraging and celebrating the richness and diversity of Indigenous languages, while also raising awareness for the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous languages throughout the world.

<https://www.ugdsb.ca/blog/march-31-is-national-indigenous-languages-day-2/>

4. Every Day Counts! Why regular student attendance at school really matters

In the UGDSB, we know how important school attendance and established routines are for students to build knowledge, skills and confidence. Regular attendance is more than just a requirement; it’s a critical building block for academic success, social development, and future opportunities. While we may

Upper Grand District School Board
Special Education Advisory Committee

face challenges that can make school attendance difficult, it's important to understand the impact of frequent absenteeism and how we can work together to support regular attendance.

For more resources and support around student attendance, please visit the UGDSB website. <https://www.ugdsb.ca/blog/every-day-counts-why-regular-student-attendance-at-school-really-matters/>

5. Students across the globe celebrate the International Day of Pink

April 10 is the International Day of Pink where communities across globe will unite to celebrate diversity and raise awareness to stop homophobia, transphobia, transmisogyny, discrimination and all forms of bullying. The theme of the 2024 International Day of Pink is "Visibility."

For more information about the International Day of Pink, please visit: www.dayofpink.org. <https://www.ugdsb.ca/blog/students-across-the-globe-celebrate-the-international-day-of-pink/>

6. New Manager, Social Work and Specialized Teams

Becky Mantynen, Manager, Social Work and Specialized Teams has been seconded to the Ministry for the next three years to work as a member on their Mental Health branch. Her position was posted quickly and we were successful in hiring Catherine Borland-Kerr. Catherine is a clinical manager at the Guelph FCS and comes to us with many years of clinical expertise and leadership within the organization. Her official start date is Wednesday, April 24th, 2024.

Meeting Summary, Recommendation(s), Motion(s) and Action(s)

- Collaboration will continue on proactive and responsive approaches that can be taken between the school board and members of SEAC to support students with intellectual disabilities and their safety in relation to concerns of Human Sex Trafficking.
- Tier 3 reading intervention data will be gathered at the beginning of June and shared with SEAC at the end of the term.
- Consider length of time of the LRC 8 or 16 class. Move from half day to full day?
- Special Education Plan feedback by May 3, 2024

Other

Laurie Whyte encouraged everyone to attend the Special Olympics being held at St. James Catholic School in Guelph on May 15th. She added it's a wonderful day and a great thing to be a part of.

She also encouraged SEAC members to attend the June 12th SEAC meeting in person to celebrate the end of the year.

Upper Grand District School Board
Special Education Advisory Committee

Adjournment

Melody Dekorte motioned for adjournment of the meeting at 8:02 p.m.