

Minutes of the WQSB **Special Education Advisory Committee** meeting held on Monday, November 15, 2021 held via virtual platform (Teams), at 6:30 pm.

**PRESENT:**

**Members:** Louise Belisle, Meaghan Dufour (Chair), Natalie Filiou, Jessica Fortier (Vice-Chair), Olivia Hazim, Iris Kiewlet, Kimberly Kourtsidis, Karenne Lachapelle, Scott Laporte, Kathy Needham (Parent Committee Rep), Sharon Pinkston, Bryan Poirier, Dana Scott, Andrea Smith, Letitia Taylor (EHDAA Parent Commissioner), Andrea Gage (Management Rep), Cindy Smith (Professional Rep), Kathlene Vibert (Teacher Rep)

**Observers:** Lisa Falasconi (DG Rep), Mike Dubeau (DG, attended till the end of item 5a)

**Regrets:** Amy Maye Taylor, Darlene Doucet (Support Staff Rep)

**21/22-01**

**Adoption of the Agenda**

IT WAS MOVED by Andrea Gage, seconded by Dana Scott that the Agenda be approved with the following additions: IEP presentation Complementary Services, Communications subcommittee report

**Carried unanimously**

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

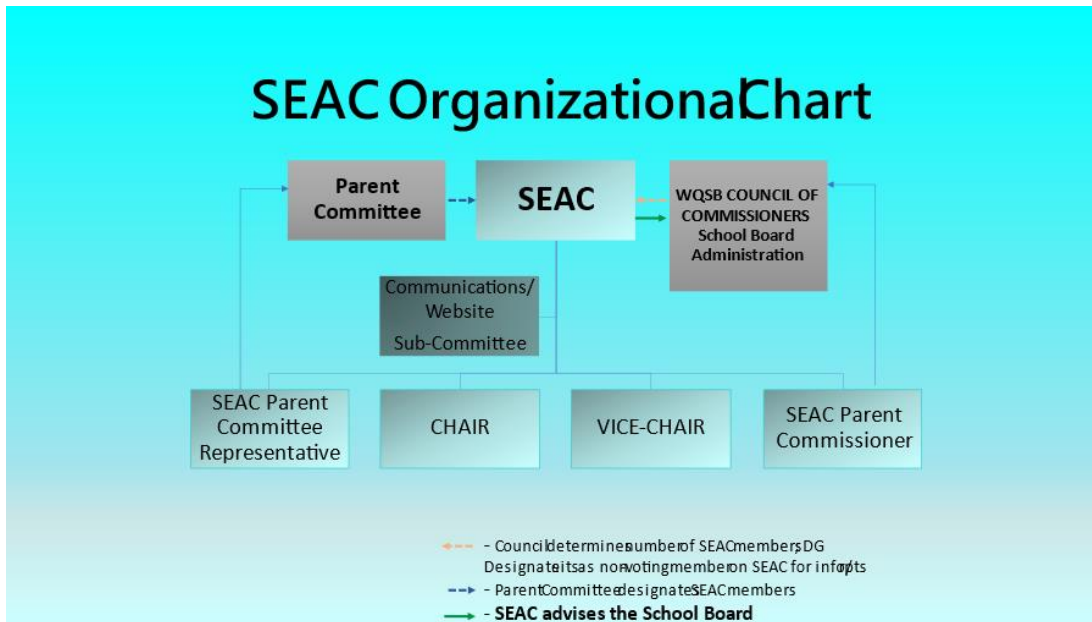
**2. Mandate of SEAC, Fundamental Principals and Rules of Internal Procedure**

Kim Kourtsidis acted in the role of Chair for the beginning of the meeting, until which time that a Chair was elected.

Kim outlined the mandate of the Special Education Advisory Committee as defined in the Education Act (s. 187)

*187. The functions of the advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities are (1) to advise the school board on a policy for the organization of educational services to handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities;(2) to advise the resource allocation committee and the school board on the allocation of financial resources to the services intended for those students. The committee may also advise the school board on the implementation of an individualized education plan for a handicapped student or a student with social maladjustments or learning disabilities.*

An organizational chart created by the Communications subcommittee was shared with members, as follows:



### 3. Elections

Lisa Falasconi conducted the elections through 365 Microsoft Form. Andrea Gage, principal rep was a scrutineer of the voting process, as she will not hold a voting eligibility in some of the election process. No objections were raised by members.

#### a) Chair (1-year mandate)

- Nominations:
  - Kim Kourtsidis nominated Letitia Taylor, Letitia declined nomination
  - Dana Scott nominated Andrea Smith, Andrea declined nomination
  - Kimberley Kourtsidis nominated Meaghan Dufour
- **Elected by acclamation: Meaghan Dufour**

**Meaghan Dufour continued the meeting in role of Chair from this point forward in the meeting.**

#### b) Vice-Chair (1-year mandate)

- Nominations:
  - Louise Belisle nominated herself
  - Dana Scott nominated Jessica Fortier
- Ballots counted via e-vote (Forms)
- **Elected by majority: Jessica Fortier**

#### c) Parent Committee Representative (1-year mandate)

- Nominations:
  - Meaghan Dufour nominated Louise Belisle
  - Kathy Needham nominated herself
- Ballots counted via e-vote (Forms)
- **Elected by majority: Kathy Needham**

- **Alternate: Louise Belisle**

- d) EHDAA Parent Commissioner (2-year term)
  - Letitia Taylor is in her second year for 21-22
- e) Secretary (1 year term)
  - Louise Belisle nominated Olivia Hazim, Olivia declined
  - Meaghan Dufour nominated Andrea Smith
  - **Elected by acclamation: Andrea Smith**

#### **4. SEAC and By-Law Number 18: By Law Establishing Procedures for the Examination of Complaints**

Mike Dubeau (Director General) spoke on Education Act (S. 220.2) whereby the school board must have a bylaw to examine complaints. Mike outlined the process for a complaint as defined in By-Law number 18. SEAC has a role within this By-Law, as per the SEAC mandate re. implementation of an IEP.

In June 2021, Council was asked to create a committee, to review this by-law for further review at Governance and Ethics. Representatives from various committees and the board will be included in the committee. Mike requests SEAC consider what would be needed within this by-law to ensure its mandate is applied within the by-law.

Lisa will send the current By-Law 18 to all members.

Questions and suggestions noted today:

- Will persons be able to make a complaint anonymously?
- The inclusion of a diagram or flow chart to visually outline the process
- Need to include the next step in the process

**21/22-02 SEAC Recommendation RE. By-Law Number 18**  
 IT WAS MOVED by Kathy Needham, seconded by Letitia Taylor that this item be added to future SEAC meeting agenda to develop a recommendation RE By-Law Number 18 in keeping with the mandate of SEAC.

**Carried Unanimously**

#### **5. SEAC Website and Communications Sub-committee**

- a) Website follow up (Mike Dubeau, DG): Mike Dubeau noted that the creation of a website was a good initiative and a valuable tool for parents. WQSB needs to ensure the school board is protected from misrepresentation. Legal counsel was consulted to provide recommendations for proceeding further. Two things need to be completed or added to continue:
  - A disclaimer needs to be added and no personal information can be shared on website; if a complaint was to be sought, the process for a parent needs to be clearly identified
  - Content needs to be vetted by professional at the school board

Alternatively:

- The website can be developed as a parent resource independently from WQSB and no link will be made to the website

## **6. Minutes May 31, 2021 – approval**

### **21/22-03 Approval of Minutes via e-vote**

IT WAS MOVED by Kathey Needham seconded by Dana Scott to ratify that the May 31, 2021 meeting minutes were approved by e-vote. As reported by Melinda Vallillee, Chair of SEAC (20-21) 14 members voted, all in favour.

**Carried**

## **7. Chair/EHDAA Report**

SEAC Parent Commissioner Report November 2021

This year will be my last as a member of SEAC. My older daughter is graduating from WQSB after 11 years in the system. It has been a journey. I can say with sincerity and gratitude that all's well that ends well. There were difficult days early on, though. I felt overwhelmed and lost in a system that seemed complicated, confusing, unresponsive, and unaccountable at times. But then, there were some very special and dedicated teachers along the way who simply would not give up on my girl and who did their very best to support and encourage her as she struggled to learn and to have confidence in herself. There were also precious members of the support staff, one of whom has joined our number on SEAC this year, Darlene Doucet. She created a safe and peaceful space for my child to gather her strength and courage to keep going when school felt hard and isolating to her. I will say it again, I am grateful. Grateful to fellow parents who guided, inspired and mentored me as I learned to navigate through the school system. I learned to have confidence in myself as an effective advocate for my daughter's educational needs. Most importantly, I learned not to be afraid, because I realized that I was not alone. Encouraging and supporting the development of these things in other parents coming through the system after me is what lights a fire in me and motivates me to be forward leaning and creative on this Committee.

As you all join SEAC this year, it is a time of transition. A time of locating strength and courage to use our collective voice, of casting and taking hold of a vision for a SEAC that is defining its leadership role and occupying its lane as it moves to serve the special education community. We hope to build on the momentum of last year's accomplishments, including meeting an unprecedented seven times last year, which gave us the time and space to create an IEP Parent Toolkit, to host an event for the first time ever, and to decide to build our own website. Anticipating the potential of this year, I'm looking forward to SEAC exploring the possibility of providing substantive advice to the board on the WQSB Complaints Procedure, on procedures related to confidential student file management and transition notes, on data driven, evidence-based resource allocation recommendations, on discipline related to our students, and after hearing about the progress the Board is making, then advising them on addressing the issue of students with special needs being subjected to bullying and violence. I hope SEAC will decide to host events again this year that help parents tool up with best practices related to IEP SMART goals, planning and procedures for transitions into

school at various levels, as well as transitioning out of the school system. These are just a few ideas among all the things people around this table and beyond it care about, and I am looking forward to discussing and pursuing them all with you.

My earnest and sincere ambition is to leave behind a lasting legacy of a SEAC that recognizes its own worth and dignity and power as an advocate for students with special education needs and their families. As well, I hope to have helped to convince the administration of the significant value added of partnering with SEAC as an institution within the system of education, as the board strives to fulfill its mission to instruct, socialize and qualify students. With so many talented and experienced members, SEAC has much to offer by carrying out its mandate of giving sound and informed advice to the school board that supports special needs students in realizing their full potential. It all rests on the investments we choose to make in building a collaborative, productive and mutually respectful relationship between SEAC and the WQSB. Let's have a great year!

Respectfully submitted,  
 Letitia Taylor  
 EHDAA Parent Commissioner (SEAC)  
 WQSB

## **8. SEAC Communications Subcommittee Report**

Letitia Taylor presented a report, which included the following:

- Informational webpage was added to WQSB website
- Intent to develop a SEAC webpage with link from WQSB website, which would become SEAC primary tool of communication with Special Education community
- Following a meeting with senior admin and Letitia Taylor, the subcommittee has developed some recommendations for solutions
- Subcommittee has begun reflection on protocol of how it will be updated, monitored and maintained
- Once developed, it will be brought to SEAC for discussion and ratification
- Additional members to subcommittee are welcome to join
- Concerns raised in re. to website:
  - Disclaimer that no personal information be shared through website
  - Need for link to process for questions related to school or board, complaints procedure
  - If WQSB name removed, it would become a parent resource page, without link to board website
  - Need for WQSB Communications Ad Hoc committee to develop protocol for future requests for links to website
- Letitia outlined some of the changes made to address the concerns which will be shared with the DG and others related
- Two aims were identified for the website by the communications subcommittee:

- provide additional support to parents and caregivers of students with special needs in their efforts to understand and navigate the school system as it relates to the special education regime, and
- provide parents and caregivers with tools and perspective, so that they can effectively advocate for their students.

**21/22-04 SEAC Website**

IT WAS MOVED by Letitia Taylor, seconded by Jessica Fortier that SEAC place a disclosure on its website under the About Us tab that includes a link to the WQSB website, in consideration of and in exchange for a reciprocal link to SEAC's website on the board's website.

And that SEAC offer to co-create a system of resource endorsement with the DCS to be deployed on SEAC's website on the lists of materials and community organizations.

14 present  
13 in favour, 1 abstention  
**Carried**

**9. Member Feedback 20-21**

Lisa Falasconi presented a Power Point presentation of the main highlights and findings of the 20-21 Feedback survey for 20-21. Presentation slides to be included in Teams folder for members to consult.

**10. Tabling of subsequent agenda items**

**21/22-05** IT WAS MOVED by Letitia Taylor seconded by Louise Belisle that the following items be tabled till next meeting:

- Designation process for SEAC members
- Selection of future meeting dates and topics
- Future public presentations/sessions for 21-22
- IEP presentation (Nov 8, 2021)

**Carried**

**11. Date of Next Meeting**

**21/22-06** IT WAS MOVED by Louise Belisle, seconded by Jessica Fortier that the next meeting be held **December 8, 2021, at 6:30pm**, at which time the meeting dates will be set for the year.

**Carried**

**12. Adjournment**

**21/22-07 Motion to Adjourn**

IT WAS MOVED by Louise Belisle, seconded by Letitia Taylor that the meeting be adjourned at 9:45pm.

**Carried**