

Minutes of the WQSB **Special Education Advisory Committee** meeting held on Monday, April 25, 2022 held via virtual platform (Teams), at 6:35 pm.

PRESENT:

Members:

Louise Belisle, Sonya Driscoll, Meaghan Dufour (Chair), Jessica Fortier (Vice-Chair), Sarah Harris, Karenne Lachapelle, Kathy Needham (Parent Committee Rep), Sharon Pinkston, Bryan Poirier, Dana Scott, Andrea Smith (Secretary), Letitia Taylor (EHDA Parent Commissioner), Kathlene Vibert (Teacher Rep), Cathy Girard (Support Staff Rep), Amy Taylor, Andrea Gage (Management Rep), Olivia Hazim, Cindy Smith (Professional Rep), Sarah Harris, Iris Kiewlet

Observers: Lisa Falasconi (DG Rep)

Regrets: Natalie Filiou, Amy May, Sonya Driscoll

1. **Reading of Land Acknowledgement** - Read by Bryan Poirier

2. **Round-Robin Intros for New Members**

3. **Approval of Agenda**

21/22-40 Adoption of the Agenda

IT WAS MOVED by Bryan Poirier seconded by Jessica Fortier that the Agenda be approved with one amendment.

Carried

The following additional agenda item was proposed:

- Ratification of second e-vote to approve event proposal from the Events Subcommittee

4. **Approval of Minutes**

21/22-41 Approval of Minutes

IT WAS MOVED by Louise Belisle seconded by Sharon Pinkston that the March 28, 2022 meeting minutes be approved with no changes indicated.

Carried

5. **Ratification of E-votes**

21/22-42 The Motion: SEAC approves the attached event proposal and delegates authority to the Events Sub-committee to carry out the tasks necessary to successfully put on this event, within the delimitations approved by SEAC at its March 28 meeting.

Motions moved by Jessica Fortier, seconded by Bryan Poirier.

With 17 SEAC members voting in favour, 3 members not voting, the motion carried.

The motion related to adding Website Resources passed with 14 votes in favour, 1 opposed, and 5 not voting.

6. Chair report & EHDA Parent Commissioner report – Letitia Taylor (full report available in the Google Drive)

- 6.1. Letitia thanked SEAC Events Subcommittee members for their contributions in planning the May event, with special thanks to Jessica and Natalie who have made significant contributions to the project.
- 6.2. There were several e-votes this past month which is exceptional and going forward new resources will be submitted for approval once a month at most.
- 6.3. 899 web visits to SEAC website since the beginning of the year. 203 visits in April is the lowest in the last 3 months, spiking to 300 in February. The Chair encouraged members to go to the poster for the May event on the website and register for the event.
- 6.4. In response to an invitation from the EPCA to attend a Special Needs Advisory Coalition meeting in May the SEAC Chair signaled interest and requested permission for the SEAC Vice Chair to also attend to ensure continuity with the EPCA group.
- 6.5. At the monthly prep meeting with Lisa Falasconi, The Chair and Vice Chair discussed barriers to getting word out to the WQSB community about SEAC and its resources. The Vice Chair had the idea to launch an outreach campaign with postcards. Such campaigns have been successful with WQSB in the past. SEAC members will be presented with a motion to approve the cost of postcards later in the meeting.
- 6.6. Chair intends to follow up with Council about issues of bullying faced by special needs students. She intends to ask the WQSB ombudsmen to attend SEAC to hear the committee's concerns.
- 6.7. Tonight will mark the introduction of a formal mechanism of fulfilling SEAC's main mandate, which is to advise the school board on matters related to students with special needs. The seed of this idea was planted in a conversation that the Chair had with the Chair of the WQSB Council of Commissioners earlier this year and mentioned in a previous SEAC meeting. He strongly recommended that we adopt the habit of writing down the advice we give the Administration, along with our suggestions for solutions and approaches to issues that need change. Doing so in a more structured and accessible manner that can be more easily followed up, and also posting it on our website after communicating it to the Administration by way of the Director of Complementary Services, signals that we take seriously our advisory role. Moreover, it will highlight our intention to engage in constructive partnership with the WQSB Administration in ensuring that special needs students reach their full potential and benefit from a joyful and meaningful education. It's hoped that this new approach will have SEAC's full support and engagement this evening when the first formal Advice is submitted for Committee approval.
- 6.8. The Chair promised to bring advice regarding meeting efficiency. Improving technical connectivity thanks go out to Lisa and Jessica for improving Google document sharing. What has been and will be

implemented in this meeting. log in 5 minutes early, estimated agenda time allocations, updates to chair in advance, questions/discussion include, 'raise hand' to contribute to discussion. Repeatedly speaking out of turn will be discouraged.

7. Subcommittee reports (full subcommittee reports available in the Google Drive)

7.1. Communications

7.1.1. Website and budget for site hosting with GoDaddy - cost will now be closer to \$500 versus the approved \$600.

7.1.2. Postcard campaign: 9000 postcards, English with French on flip side, up to \$500 to purchase 9000 sent out by complimentary services and sent out in 2022.

21/22-43 Motion: SEAC approves an expenditure of up to \$ 550 to purchase 9,000 5x7 postcards providing information about SEAC to be distributed to elementary and secondary schools by Complementary Services and sent home with students in September 2022. Complementary Services will also forward an electronic copy to schools from other boards in the region.

IT WAS MOVED by Iris Kiewlet and seconded by Louise Belisle that the amended motion be approved.

1 Opposed, Carried

Discussion:

- Can this be done virtually? There were questions about the usefulness of putting this on paper (hard copy). There are issues with connectivity in some areas of our board so we have to think about modalities accessible to all. The cards are also effective for reaching students. Posters may also get the attention of parents and students if placed in school lobbies.
- Bryan Poirier flagged a typo on the card ("VIST")
- Amendment to the motion was suggested to include a virtual postcard
- Bryan Poirier suggested that some copies (virtual and hard copy) of the card could make it to the French board to accompany transition documents coming in for students transferring to WQSB. Lisa suggested that the best approach might be to include the documents with welcome packages for new students coming from other boards. Virtual postcards could be forwarded to principals from other Boards.

7.2. Events Subcommittee:

7.2.1. The Events sub-committee, consisting of Louise Belisle, Andrea Gage and Sharon Pinkston, have continued working on the virtual event for May 5th on Social Communication. Two speakers have been enlisted, Kristina Findlay, a Speech Pathologist from Quebec City, and Emma Hadeed, a special education teacher at Chelsea Elementary school. They are working together to cover the subject of how to help our children in the area of social communication.

- 7.2.2. With the help of Jessica Fortier, a poster has been made with the details of the event and a registration link. Once the participants register, a zoom link will be sent to their email for joining the event. With the help of Natalie Filiou, the poster is being publicized on the SEAC website and on various fb pages where parents of special needs students frequent. A short survey, created by Louise Belisle, has also been made for participants to fill out after the event and a link will be provided in the chat for that.
- 7.2.3. An agenda has also been made for the evening, and a PPT with introductory info is under construction. We need a volunteer to tally the results of the survey that attendees fill out after the event. We would also ask, as a way of supporting the event, if each SEAC member could ask their school Administration to print and post the poster at their school (entrances and daycare pickup points), as well as put the electronic version in the school newsletter and/or on the website. That would be a good way to get the word out.

7.3. Policies and Procedures Subcommittee:

- 7.3.1. The sub-committee was able to meet on Thursday, April 21. Drafts of changes to the SEAC Handbook were reviewed and revised; we reached consensus on the final draft to submit to SEAC for approval. As well, the new SEAC Advice template that Jessica put together was reviewed and draft advice was discussed and developed.
- 7.3.2. Concussion policy:
 - 1. Olivia Hazim flagged that the proposed policy seems like an overreach on a medical matter.
 - 2. Lisa asked for further context for the advice to better understand the gap that existing school policy does not address. Jessica indicated that in her family going through the process she has come to learn from many parents that they've encountered challenges. Olivia suggested we get a better grasp of how numbers of students impacted, so that a more informed decision can be made on the proposed policy
 - 3. Louise likes the advice template but requested that the name of Chair and Vice Chair be removed since the advice is meant to come collaboratively from the SEAC committee
 - 4. Louise expressed that this advice still aligns with the SEAC mandate and suggested that any Board protocol address reporting of possible concussions.
 - 5. SEAC advice also asks that SEAC be consulted in drafting of the protocol.
 - 6. Andrea Gage indicated that a concussion awareness protocol is important- and information comes out yearly from the Ministry- but is not sure if it is specific to SEAC's

mandate. There are many medical conditions that can impact learning.

21/22-44 Motion: That the proposed SEAC advice regarding a concussion protocol being given to the WQSB administration with the requested change made to the template.

IT WAS MOVED by Louise Belisle and was not seconded.

Motion not passed

21/22-45 Motion: Table discussion regarding the advice and the advice template for further discussion and possible motion at a future SEAC meeting.

IT WAS MOVED by Louise Belisle and seconded by Jessica Fortier to approve the motion.

1 opposed, Carried

8. Individualized Education Plans and Confidential (Red) Files

8.1. IEP Questions collected from SEAC members

8.2. Discussion:

8.2.1. Can an IEP be put in place in Cycle 1? Lisa explained that early intervention is the intent and the Ministry encourages a universal approach. It's possible to put an IEP in place at this stage but typical other approaches are attempted first.

8.3. The Chair suggested that members read through the remaining presentation prepared by Lisa and come back with follow-up questions at the next meeting. And also discuss specific areas that warrant further SEAC advice (e.g. Bill C-17). Lisa suggested that SEAC review one of the common questions that surfaces regarding teacher training for selecting IEP goals. Members are encouraged to specifically read through LF's response to this particular question

8.4. The item concerning Confidential (Red) Files was tabled to the next meeting to ensure the group can give its full attention - **Forward Agenda Item**. Letitia will forward the Powerpoint deck with this discussion and the response to IEP questions to all members to stimulate thoughts and discussion at the next meeting.

21/22-46 Motion: Extend meeting by 30 minutes

IT WAS MOVED by Kathy Needham and seconded by Jessica Fortier to approve the motion to extend the meeting.

Carried

9. Parent Committee Update - Kathy Needham

- 9.1. The monthly Parents Committee meeting started with a presentation from Allo Prof (<https://www.alloprof.qc.ca>), a website supporting French education that is now working to support English students, parents, and staff. Resources and peer support is available, along with a parent zone for homework assistance and exam support. There are French tools available in every subject with a 3 year plan to have old content translated to English with all new content available in both languages. Kathy suggested we add this site to our SEAC list of resources.
- 9.2. A rally against Bill 96 (all English students in CEGEP required to take 3 subjects in French) is planned for May 14th at 10am in front of the CAQ office in Montreal. Kathy will share additional info once available. Bill 96 does not appear to make any exclusions for students with special needs.
- 9.3. Budget discussions: residual funds from this year can't be rolled over so may be used to support the Bill 96 rally.
- 9.4. Kathy put forward a request to Parents Committee to explore options to support training for lunch support staff regarding bullying.
- 9.5. Discussion:
 - 9.5.1. Dana shared link to informative video on impact of Bill 96 on student success: <https://youtu.be/H-OXRiVJfS8>

10. Date of next meetings

- 10.1. May 18th, 6:30pm
- 10.2. Possible June special meeting in re: Discipline Policy and Practice toward Special Needs Students, June 6th or 13th proposed.

21/22-47 Motion: Schedule a special SEAC meeting on June 6th to discuss a Discipline Policy and Practice toward Special Needs Students

IT WAS MOVED by Karinne Lachappelle and seconded by Jessica Fortier to approve the motion.

Carried

- 10.3. Fall activities - item tabled

11. Adjournment

21/22-48 Motion to Adjourn

IT WAS MOVED by Louise Belisle, seconded by Dana Scott that the meeting be adjourned at 8:50pm.

Carried

SEAC CHAIRPERSON and PARENT COMMISSIONER REPORT FOR APRIL 25, 2022

This has been an eventful and productive month since our last meeting. I want to thank all of you who contribute your time and talents to making SEAC's efforts successful, meaningful and impactful. I hope that we will also experience joyfulness in our endeavors together.

As you all know, the motion to approve and set in motion preparations for a SEAC event in May was passed. I look forward to the Events Sub-committee report this evening to hear about what more progress they've made in planning for a successful event. Special thanks go out to Jessica and Natalie who are not on that sub-committee, but who have made significant contributions to the project.

For future reference, e-voting for the purpose of approving website resources will stick to just once a month at most. In other website news, I checked today and as of this afternoon there have been 899 visits to the SEAC website since the beginning of the year! The 203 in April so far is the lowest traffic number in the last three months. I expect the May event publicity to improve that number; there are 10 people registered to attend so far. And in the spirit of SEAC leading the way in this endeavor as in so many others, I would like to ask everyone here at tonight's meeting to go to the poster now or check the link in the chat and register. This should take less than 60 seconds, thanks to Natalie's tech savvy, so please try it now. Registering for the event, even if you aren't sure you can attend, has the added benefit of getting you subscribed to the website so that SEAC can keep current and former members up to date with what's happening in the special needs community.

Following up on the Parent Committee inquiry about SEAC's activities that Kathy, our PC Rep, mentioned last meeting, I can report that I was contacted today by an EPCA representative about attending a Special Needs Advisory Coalition meeting in May with other Chairpersons. We were not given an agenda, but it's advertised as "a great way for SEAC/SNAC groups to touch base and share ideas to increase the voice for our kids." I have signaled to the coordinator that this is my last year on SEAC and have obtained permission for our Vice-Chair to attend with me, if she's available, so that there can be some continuity if the EPCA group continues. We will let you know how it goes.

At our prep meeting with Lisa this month, Jessica and I talked with her about how to overcome persistent barriers to getting word out to the WQSB community about SEAC. One of the motivations for having a website and hosting events is to raise SEAC's profile, but we have only just begun to engage the thousands of parents and caregivers of special needs students in our Board. We need to do more to make them aware of SEAC and the resources we offer through the website. Lisa was very supportive with regard to Jessica's idea to launch an outreach initiative with postcards which would be handed out to students in the new school year. The WQSB has recently seen a 17% increase in users of its webapp since their postcard campaign earlier this year; the PC engaged in one some years ago to promote WQSB's English education option throughout our region and saw enrollment in WQSB schools increase. So, this kind of effort has paid off in the recent past, and we would like to try it, too. You will be presented later in the meeting with a motion to approve a purchase of 9,000 postcards for distribution in September, as well as the draft of the design that Jessica (who is a Graphic Designer by trade and donating her professional services to SEAC) created for us. Thank you for giving this idea your consideration and hopefully support.

With regard to Council matters, I wanted to alert you that I intend to follow up on the issue I raised at Council last year about bullying and violence involving students with special needs in our Board. While some progress has been made, and Lisa will be reporting on that tonight, it is an important issue that SEAC must keep in the forefront of the issues we advocate around. I intend to ask the WQSB Ombudsman to attend our May meeting to share his perspective and experience about this issue. As you may remember, the provincial government is proposing to change the structure and procedures for filing complaints, which could see our Ombudsman retire. Before that happens, I think it would be good for us to hear from him, as we contemplate how to move our concerns forward in future.

And speaking of how to move forward our concerns as a group, tonight will mark the introduction of a formal mechanism of fulfilling SEAC's main mandate, which is to advise the school board on matters related to students with special needs. The seed of this idea was planted in a conversation that I had with the Chair of the WQSB Council of Commissioners earlier this year and mentioned in a previous SEAC meeting. He strongly recommended that we adopt the habit of writing down the advice we give the Administration, along with our suggestions for solutions and approaches to issues that need change. Doing so in a more structured and accessible manner that can be more easily followed up, and also posting it on our website after communicating it to the Administration by way of the Director of Complementary Services, signals that we take seriously our advisory role. Moreover, it will highlight our intention to engage in constructive partnership with the WQSB Administration in ensuring that special needs students reach their full potential and benefit from a joyful and meaningful education. I hope that this new approach will have SEAC's full support and engagement this evening when the first formal Advice is submitted for your approval.

Finally, I promised to bring a focused list of additional suggestions about meeting efficiency from members to this SEAC meeting if there were any. I received positive feedback from several SEAC members about the list of procedures that have been instituted; where there are ongoing challenges, we will keep working on it. My door remains open if SEAC members want to put forward other ideas; feel free to phone or email me.

With regard to upping our technological connectivity as a group, thanks go out to Lisa and Jessica who set up the Google document platform and got almost everyone plugged in. I hope everyone finds it improves accessibility and efficiency. Please feel free to email me or Jessica if you have any feedback to give on it.

Just to review quickly what to expect, here's what has been and will be implemented in this meeting:

- i. Starting meetings on time. Please try to log on 5 minutes early so that we don't have to wait to achieve quorum.
- ii. Estimated times for discussion on items have been included on the agenda.
- iii. Standing sub-committee reports should be sent to the Chair for distribution ahead of time & included in the minutes.
- iv. Questions and discussion are welcome. In order to hear from the most people, I will ask that we use the "raise hand" function; the Vice-Chair will be on the lookout along with me, and she will speak up if I miss a hand. Repeatedly

speaking out of turn or in a disruptive way may result in one of us putting the microphone on mute.

v. I will intervene in discussions if they become repetitive, argumentative, or veer too far off topic. My goal will be to help clarify, summarize, and craft decision points, as well as keep the meeting moving forward.

vi. As a matter of consideration for all members, I would like us to limit ourselves to one intervention until everyone has had a chance to speak on an issue for the first round of discussion. Then the floor can be opened to further discussion, but please be attentive to the length of interventions and please refrain from just repeating what you've said in the first intervention.

Respectfully submitted,

Letitia Taylor
Chair SEAC
EHDA Parent Commissioner