

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

October 5, 2020
6:33 p.m. - 8:32 p.m.

MEMBERS

C. Thammavongsa, Association for Bright Children
B. Mai, Association for Bright Children
S. Moore, Autism Ontario London
B. Furac, Community Living London
A. Morse, Easter Seals Ontario
N. Davison, VOICE for the Hearing Impaired
P. Cook, Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario
D. Shore-Reid, Learning Disabilities Association London
M. Cvetkovich, Children's Aid Society of London and Middlesex(+6:42)
S. Grabstas, Vanier Children's Services
J. Wright, Community Services Coordination Network (CSCN)(+7:30)
T. Grant, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Network
S. Young, London Autism Developmental Disabilities
J. Gritzan, Thames Valley Children's Centre
T. Lopez, Thames Valley Council Home and School Associations
J. Bennett, Trustee
L. Pizzolato, Trustee
B. Yeoman, Trustee

Regrets: B. Harvey

ADMINISTRATION AND OTHERS

A. Canham, Superintendent of Special Education
A. Leatham, Learning Supervisor
R. Ferrara, Learning Supervisor
H. Mahabir, Elementary Principal
T. Birtch, Secondary Principal
M. Chevalier, Elementary Principal
M. Phillips, Secondary Principal
S. Smith, Corporate Services
J. Capaldi, Communication Specialist
K. Snake, Munsee-Delaware Nation
V. Fernandez, Manager of Professional Services
N. McLister, Psychological Associate

1. Call to Order

Chair Cook called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. in the London Room at the Education Centre.

2. Welcome

A. Canham welcomed everyone and reviewed the virtual meeting norms.

3. Confirmation of Agenda

The agenda was approved on motion.

4. Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

5. Report of the Previous Meeting

The report of the 2020 September 14 Special Education Advisory Committee meeting was provided for information.

6. Business Arising from the Minutes

a. Letter to Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health (item #14.0)

A. Canham presented for information a copy of the letter written by the Chair of the SEAC to the Minister of Education and Chair of the Board resulting from the motion carried at

the 2020 September 14 SEAC Meeting (SEAC-1). The recipients of the letter were clarified.

In response to a question, Chair Cook noted staff, SEAC and community members were consulted for input regarding the contents of the letter.

A. Canham noted input was provided by the Communications Department and staff that specialize in speech and language, and deaf and hard of hearing.

7. Phonological Awareness Plans and Support for Grade 1

A. Canham introduced V. Fernandez and provided a brief professional background.

V. Fernandez outlined the Phonological Awareness plans and support for grade 1.

A sample of the resource was outlined. The link to family resources will be sent to SEAC members.

Questions of clarification were addressed regarding tracking student progress, sub testing, programming and identifying systems trends.

Phonological awareness testing is planned to resume during the 2021-2022 academic year.

8. Professional Assessments

A. Canham introduced N. McLister and provided a brief professional background.

V. Fernandez advised Professional Assessments will proceed this academic year. It was noted all District protocols will be followed and parent/guardian consent is required.

N. McLister provided an update on the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT).

Questions of clarification were addressed regarding the waitlist, screening for at home learners and increasing testing capacity.

9. Return to Learn Update

A. Canham provided a Return to Learn update specific to Special Education.

Questions regarding training for Learning Support Teachers (LST) were addressed by Administration.

10. Special Education Supports for Remote Learners

A. Canham provided an update on the redistribution of learning support staff, professional services staff and school level staff.

Discussion occurred regarding the lack of support/respite for families that opted for at home learning and the need to provide students sensory/body breaks.

11. Personal Protective Equipment Update

A. Canham provided an update on PPE noting sneeze guards and goggles have been added to the list of PPE being used in schools. It was noted that masks and gowns have been torn off staff by students. Solutions including modified gowns were outlined.

A. Canham advised on a recent update from the Ministry noting clear face masks will be provided to designated staff and students diagnosed as deaf or heard of hearing.

Questions of clarification were addressed regarding staff safety and staff requests for masks.

12. Special Education Plan (Standing Item)

A. Canham advised on the status of the 2020-2021 Special Education Plan. It was noted the review and planning for the 2021-2022 Special Education Plan will start in 2021.

It was noted feedback may be submitted regarding the current Special Education Plan at anytime.

Discussion occurred regarding the return to in person SEAC and subcommittee meetings.

13. SEAC/Departmental Priorities (Standing Item)

Chair Cook advised information will be pulled from the previous year to prepare the 2020 November 3 meeting.

14. Students on Modified Day (Standing Item)

An update will be provided at the 2020 November 3 meeting.

15. Correspondence (Standing Item)

a. Durham DSB Letter September 2020

Chair Cook presented for information a copy of a letter from the Durham District School Board (DDSB) to Minister Thompson requesting that the Ministry of Education provide an exemption to the submission requirements for all Boards of Education specific to the Special Incidence Portion (SIP) for Fall 2020.

It was determined this item will be added to the 2020 November 3 agenda for further discussion.

16. Forum: Association Updates (Round Table)

Round table updates were completed. Committee members highlighted some of the events and activities planned by their various organizations in the coming weeks. As a follow up to the meeting, event flyers will be emailed out to the committee members as they are received by Corporate Services.

17. 2020-2021 Meeting Dates

The 2020-2021 meeting dates were provided in the agenda package. The next meeting is scheduled for 2020 November 3, 6:30 p.m.

18. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m. by motion.

Recommendations: None.

Paul Cook
Chairperson



Mark Fisher, Director of Education and Secretary

September 28, 2020

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
438 University Avenue, 5th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2A5

Arlene Morell, Chair
Thames Valley District School Board
250 Dundas Street
London, ON N5W 5P2

Dear Minister and Chair of the Board,

Now that schools across Thames Valley have re-opened, teachers of students with special needs have begun to report several concerns regarding the mandatory use of face masks in the classroom.

Although staff have been supplied with clear face masks to allow visual cues like facial expressions, lip movement and emotions, concerns have been expressed about mask fit (staying in place), protection (full coverage of the mouth/nose) and masks degrading as the day progresses.

Perhaps the greatest concern is the impact that a face covering has on the ability to provide students with quality auditory information that is critical for speech perception and learning.

While recognizing the importance of ensuring the health and safety of students and staff, the Board and the Ministry of Education must take immediate action to address this critical issue for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Therefore, the Special Education Advisory Committee passed the following important motion at its September 14, 2020 meeting:

THAT the Chair of SEAC write a letter to the Board of Trustees and the Ministry of Education identifying the need for visually accessible PPE for all students and staff in classes that support any students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

A recent study (Moog Centre for Deaf Education – August 2020) found that the use of a remote microphone by teachers wearing face masks can significantly improve communication with students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Thames Valley District School Board - Learning Support Services

1250 Dundas Street, London, Ontario, Canada N5W 5P2 Tel. (519) 452-2000 Website: www.tvdsb.ca

We build each student's tomorrow, every day.

On behalf of the Committee, I urge you to support the purchase and use of microphone systems for teachers of our students with special hearing needs. Furthermore, and in support of the teaching and learning opportunities of students with a formally identified deaf or hard of hearing exceptionality, face mask / coverings for all students and staff in these student's class(es) should be visually accessible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Cook".

Paul Cook, Chair
Special Education Advisory Committee
Thames Valley District School Board

Cc: Chairs, Special Education Advisory Committees
Mark Fisher, Director of Education, TVDSB
Andrew Canham, Superintendent of Student Achievement, Special Education, TVDSB