Recommendations to Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) 2016 - 2017
Includes items carried forward from 2014 - 2016
SEAC
ONTARIO REGULATION 464/97

Under the provisions of the Education Act

• “Mandated as an advisory committee to the Board.”
• “Made up of representatives of associations or organizations to further the interests and well-being of one or more groups of exceptional children; members at large, trustees, and one or two persons to represent the interests of Aboriginal pupils.”
SEAC
ONTARIO REGULATION 464/97

Under the provisions of the Education Act

- “May make recommendations to the Board in respect of any matter affecting the establishment, development and delivery of special education programs and services for exceptional pupils of the board.”
Committee Members

North Shore Tribal Council
Marnie Yourchuk

Autism Ontario SSM Chapter
Irma DiRenzo

Algoma Family Services
Theresa Coccimiglio

SSM Down Syndrome Society
Suzanne Pleau

Algoma Public Health
Cathy Mansfield

Children’s Rehabilitation Centre Algoma
Ann Waddell-Maske

Community Living Algoma
Marty Young

Learning Disabilities Association (SSM)
Matt Trainor

Member-at-Large
Paula Valois

Member-at-Large
Lorna Connolly Beattie

Trustees
Laurie Aceti

Staff Support provided by:
Elaine McDonagh

Director of Education
Gary Trembinski

Curriculum Coordinator Special Education

Mental Health Leader
John Stadnyk

Rosanne Zagordo

Kerri Dool
HSCDSB supports approximately 1146 students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs). 617 students are identified with “Exceptional IEPs” and 529 students have “Non-Exceptional IEPs”. This reflects an increase from the 581 students with “Exceptional IEPs” in 2014-2015.

District Total IEPs = 327
District Exceptional IEPs = 155
District Non-exceptional IEPs = 172

City Total IEPs = 819
City Exceptional IEPs = 462
City Non-exceptional IEPs = 357

(May 2016)
Recommendations

The following recommendations were identified after careful review of the following:

• SEAC recommendations from 2014-2015 and 2015-2016
• Other relevant educational documents including Ministry of Education Special Education Update (MACSE), February 2016

An analytical process was used to examine successes and barriers.
SEAC thanks the Board of Trustees and Administrative Council

- SEAC recognizes the Board’s positive reception of SEAC recommendations
- SEAC recognizes the Board’s ongoing support of SEAC in their thoughtful appointment of trustees
- SEAC recognizes the expertise and capacity within our Board and community partners to provide our children with special needs access to rich learning experiences that enhance physical, social-emotional, language, cognitive and spiritual health and development
Strategic Direction:
**Governance** “committed to developing effective policy governance in alignment with Board’s mission and strategic plan”

**Recommendations**

- SEAC recognizes that the recommendation to develop a common, daily, tracking record (log) to be utilized among school and family counsellors (special assignment teachers, in-house and agency professionals/para-professionals) has been established.

- The recommendation is to communicate progress on this initiative yearly to SEAC through a written report (October 2016) that outlines a brief summary of the data from the previous year of the number of students served by the social workers, trends noticed and suggestions regarding how this data is being utilized to maintain and/or enhance services.

- A Clinical Tracking Sheet will be developed and implemented in October 2016/2017 and a written report will be shared in October 2017 and thereafter.
Strategic Direction:

**Governance** “committed to developing effective policy governance in alignment with Board’s mission and strategic plan”

**Recommendations**

- That the Board (Superintendent of Finance) continue to issue a twice yearly status report of the special education budget (Dec. 2016 and Feb. 2017) to determine positive or negative impact of changes to the Special Education Funding Formula.
- **Will be implemented.**
Strategic Direction:

Governance “committed to developing effective policy governance in alignment with Board’s mission and strategic plan”

Recommendations

- That the Board continue to monitor progress of Ontario’s Special Needs Strategy for direction in working with representative agencies, with the purpose of further integrating services and supports for our students with special needs.
- To continue to have periodic reports to SEAC regarding the Ontario’s Special Needs Strategy
- Invite the chair of SNS to update SEAC twice yearly (October and March) or as needed.
Strategic Direction:

**Governance** “committed to developing effective policy governance in alignment with Board’s mission and strategic plan”

**Recommendations**

- That SEAC seeks commitment from its members yearly (September 2016) to develop working sessions related to the work of SEAC and for SEAC members to commit and report back at the SEAC monthly meetings on an on-going basis.

- That SEAC with the support of the Board to engage in capacity building projects to support SEAC members and improve communication and access to up-to-date information, resources, access to training and a mechanism for sharing effective strategies (MACSE Feb. 2016, p. 15).

- We will continue to update regularly through email and will support working sessions as deemed appropriate by SEAC.
With the strategic direction:

**Relationships:** "committed to strengthening relationships with parents, CSCs, parishes, staff, agencies and F.N.M.I communities to better serve our students"

**Recommendations:**

To hold all SEAC meetings in schools or educational centres.

- For 2016-2017, the focus will be on the schools involved in the Conscious Classrooms pilot, Batchewana and Garden River Educational Centres, St. Kateri Outdoor Education Centre, schools that have self-contained special education programs, and continued contact and input from our schools in the east and north district.

- Principals will be approached to host a SEAC meeting beginning Fall 2016 with a focus on CC and arrange meetings at BFN and GRFN.
Strategic Direction:

**Relationships:** "committed to strengthening relationships with parents, CSCs, parishes, staff, agencies and F.N.M.I communities to better serve our students”

**Recommendations:**

- By conducting meetings in the educational settings of the Board, we will be able to seek out, prior to the meeting, for inclusion in the agenda at each monthly SEAC meeting:
  - Student voice
  - Family voice
  - Staff voice

related to comments and input regarding the education of children with special needs and to build awareness of the role of SEAC and set in place transition planning for recruiting future SEAC representatives
Strategic Direction:
Relationships: “committed to strengthening relationships with parents, CSCs, parishes, staff, agencies and F.N.M.I communities to better serve our students”

Recommendations

- That committee meetings, such as Parent Involvement, Focus on Faith, Well-Being committees, etc. be placed on the school calendar and subsequently posted on the website.

- That the Board provide a report on the 2014-2015 SEAC recommendation to revisit engagement strategies outlined in the Parent Tool Kit Teen Edition and adopt into the Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP), a comprehensive engagement strategy for families of students in the secondary panel.

- We will refer this recommendation to the Parent Involvement Committee to make parents aware of this resource on the board website and the MYSP will be updated to reflect parent resources.
Strategic Direction:
**Relationships:** "committed to strengthening relationships with parents, CSCs, parishes, staff, agencies and F.N.M.I communities to better serve our students”

**Recommendations:**

- Consider developing a Board-wide initiative to develop peer-to-peer support systems that are inclusive of children with special needs both during and beyond the school day.
- Explore with other community agencies, the development of collaborative family support groups, where the schools are the local hubs because they are welcoming and familiar places for families to gather and to include activities for children while the family support groups occur, so that child care is not a barrier for participation.

This recommendation will be brought to the Algoma Leadership Table to explore partnerships as suggested in this recommendation.
Strategic Direction:
**Supportive Environments and Well-being** “committed to being people of hope and celebration, ensuring environments are positive and supportive in educating the whole child”

**Recommendations**
That the Board report on the progress of the SEAC 2014-2015 recommendations:

- That the Board engage in consultative process with SEAC, Special Education Team, Mental Health Lead, Nurse, Autism Specialist, Behavioural Consultant to plan physical space, equipment and protocols for a ‘calming room’ at St. Mary’s College.

- That the Board consider provision of a physical space within the new facility whereby families of children with special needs are welcome to access information on student life activities (clubs, teams), Mental Health initiatives, and student support services.

- We will take this recommendation into consideration for all our schools.
Strategic Direction:
Supportive Environments and Well-being “committed to being people of hope and celebration, ensuring environments are positive and supportive in educating the whole child”

Recommendations

- That the Board continue to champion a culture that supports school staff:

  That there is acceptance and safety for educators and other providers to access additional support/information/training where indicated. That teachers feel empowered to reach out to supports within the system to collaboratively problem solve challenges they are experiencing. For example, accessing:

  - Mental Health Leader
  - Speech & Language Services
  - Behavioural Consultant
  - Student Family Counsellors
  - Autism Support

  We will continue to support this recommendation.
SEAC recognizes the investment that the Province and the Board are making in the “Conscious Classrooms” (CC) initiative and that HSCDSB is a pilot in CC, which will support the well-being of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Developmental Disability and children with other disabilities, including the prevention and de-escalation of challenging student behaviours.

Educators will also benefit, from training in mindfulness, which is the intentional cultivation of moment-by-moment non-judgmental focused attention and awareness (MACSE, Feb. 2016, p. 13).
Strategic Direction:

Supportive Environments and Well-being “committed to being people of hope and celebration, ensuring environments are positive and supportive in educating the whole child”

Recommendations

• That the Board report to SEAC in September 2016, the Lead for the CC pilot, the training and implementation plan and the feedback and evaluation process.

• We have dedicated funds in our budget to continue the training and we will arrange a CC presentation for Fall 2016.
Strategic Direction:
Supportive Environments and Well-being “committed to being people of hope and celebration, ensuring environments are positive and supportive in educating the whole child”

Recommendations

- Report to SEAC yearly, (September 2016), the procedural guidelines related to violent incidents, safety and behaviour plans and re-entry / transition plans to support children, families and staff.

- We will share information that was shared to our staffs at the June 10 PA day and will be shared with staffs on Sept. 6/16

- That the Director/Mental Health Leader report to SEAC twice yearly, (November 2016 and March 2017) a list of the Supportive Environment and Well-Being Initiatives. The person(s) leading each initiative will be identified, the frequency of use of each initiative and the results from the evaluation or feedback loop. Will continue to support this recommendation.
Develop an anonymous survey monkey (or similar tool) where staff can report on:
- Perception of safety and well-being within their educational settings
- Frequency of use and satisfaction with each of the Supportive Environment and Well-being Initiatives.

For example:
- Conscious Classrooms
- Ross Greene’s Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) model
- Sensory Regulation spaces
- Al’s Pals
- Building Bridges
- Rebound North
- Restorative Practice
- Safe Talk / ASSIST
- Roots of Empathy
- Christian Meditation
- Alternatives for Youth

We will continue to monitor effectiveness of programs as we monitor out MYSP.
Strategic Direction:

**Student Achievement** “called and committed to ensuring high levels of student achievement for all students”

**Recommendations:**

- SEAC supports the views on student achievement outlined in the document:

  *Learning for All - A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12 (2013)*

- SEAC requests yearly feedback on the Board’s implementation of Learning for All, in particular Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Learning (DI) and the impact “Learning for All” is having on the education of children with special needs in inclusive environments.
SEAC recognizes the support of the local Learning Disabilities Association Ontario (LDAO) to our Board.

- That the Board report to SEAC (October 2016) the implementation of the new Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM 8) Identification and Program Planning for Students with Learning Disabilities.
- That the Board provide support for Board staff/other educational stakeholders to attend the LDAO’s Summer Educators’ Institute in August 2016.
- We are in compliance with the PPM 8 and work collaboratively with our diagnosticians and contracted Psychologist. The board has limited budgets for the Summer Institute and cannot support this request.
Strategic Direction:
Student Achievement “called and committed to ensuring high levels of student achievement for all students”

Recommendations:

SEAC recognizes the on-going need to provide educator training in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

- That the Board explore promoting the Geneva Centre for Autism’s online e-Learning modules:
  - Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Certificate course for Educators
  - Charting a Path to Success in Your Classroom: An Introductory Autism Certificate Course for Educators

This will ensure the implementation of the Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum 140 requiring use of ABA methods with students with ASD, where appropriate, and in accordance with the student’s IEP (MACSE, Feb. 2016, p. 14)

This learning opportunity will continue to be made available through email to all board employees.
SEAC recognizes there are students for which access to educational programming is limited due to “voluntary withdrawal”.

That this is a problem that is pervasive in school boards across Ontario, as outlined in People for Education 2014 Report on Special Education with “41% of secondary principals reporting they have recommended students with special needs not attend the full day”.

Strategic Direction:

Student Achievement: “called and committed to ensuring high levels of student achievement for all students”

Recommendations:

- SEAC recognizes there are students for which access to educational programming is limited due to “voluntary withdrawal”.

That this is a problem that is pervasive in school boards across Ontario, as outlined in People for Education 2014 Report on Special Education with “41% of secondary principals reporting they have recommended students with special needs not attend the full day”.

Strategic Direction:
**Student Achievement** “called and committed to ensuring high levels of student achievement for all students”

Recommendations:

- SEAC acknowledges the responsiveness of our Board in that we now have a consistent and formal means of tracking this important information.
- That the Board continues to track data on a longitudinal basis for the purpose of identifying duration of withdrawal and barriers to school attendance and report this yearly to SEAC.
- We will continue to track the data.
Strategic Direction:
Student Achievement “called and committed to ensuring high levels of student achievement for all students”

Recommendations:

- Report to SEAC yearly (November 2016), the number of children that cannot take traditional transportation to and from school and what plan the Board has in place to ensure consistent student attendance.

- In keeping with transportation, to review the ability for all children to participate in school-related, inclusive extra-curricular activities.

- Report will be provided as requested. Our field trip policy requires universal access.
Strategic Direction:

**Student Achievement** “called and committed to ensuring high levels of student achievement for all students”

Recommendations:

- That inclusive Professional Development (PD) and Catholic Professional Learning Communities be provided to Aboriginal Support Workers (ABWs), Ontario College Teachers (OCTs), Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs), Educational Assistants (EAs) and other classroom support workers, so that consistent professional skills are developed to support children’s learning in all developmental areas, and to further develop the capacity of each classroom team.

- This will be done where applicable.
Re: Student Achievement Recommendations

- That yearly (June 2017), a written report is provided to SEAC identifying the applicable PD and Catholic Professional Learning Communities and the numbers for each (ASWs, OCTs, ECEs, EAs, others) group that have participated in these opportunities.

- We will report on what is available.
Strategic Direction:

Catholicity “called and committed to make our schools places where our Catholic faith is nurtured, celebrated and shared...where our students are supported in achieving Graduate Expectations”

Recommendations

With faith-based learning central to the values and mission of the HSCDSB, SEAC recognizes the positive influence of a school environment which nurtures these values can have on the life-long health and well-being of our children with special needs.

Further, SEAC acknowledges the invaluable role of our secondary school chaplaincy leaders and all educators and families as models of spiritual health and faith.
Strategic Direction:

**Catholicity** “called and committed to make our schools places where our Catholic faith is nurtured, celebrated and shared...where our students are supported in achieving Graduate Expectations”

**Recommendations**

That the Board, in consultation with secondary school principals, chaplaincy leaders and the Focus on Faith Committee continue to actively pursue outreach opportunities that will engage and support our families with children with special needs.

That our chaplaincy leaders, in consultation with parish teams, will increase the visibility of secondary school faith-based activities and communicate this to families and stakeholders in Catholic Education. For example:

- As is done with elementary school masses, to publish secondary school masses in church bulletins
- To post all school masses on the HSCDSB website
Strategic Direction:

**Catholicity** “called and committed to make our schools places where our Catholic faith is nurtured, celebrated and shared...where our students are supported in achieving Graduate Expectations”

**Recommendations**

- That our educational leaders continue to actively explore opportunities that exist within our schools and parish communities to assist our students with special needs in fulfilling their Graduate expectations and to receive their Catholic Sacraments.
- That the progress of these endeavours related to Catholicity be reported to SEAC on a yearly basis (May 2017).
SEAC is asking:

that these recommendations be reviewed within the context of the Multi-Year Strategic Plan and objectives be included in current activities where appropriate, and the development of additional implementation strategies, where appropriate.

This will be referred to our Focus on Faith Committee.
Conclusion

Thank you for your continued support of SEAC in its efforts to enhance services for our students of HSCDSB