

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, December 1, 2021

6:00 pm Teams Meeting

WCDSB Mission Statement

*As disciples of Christ,
we educate and nurture hope
in all learners
to realize their full potential
to transform God's world.*

CHAIR: Irene Holdbrook

MEMBERS

WCDSB Trustee – **Jeanne Gravelle**

WCDSB Trustee – **Tracey Weiler**

Waterloo Regional Down Syndrome Society – **Kim Murphy**

Waterloo Regional Police - **John Gilbert**

CNIB – **Irene Holdbrook, Chair**

Family and Children's Services of Waterloo Region – **Cindy Benedetti**

Waterloo Region Family Network – **Sue Simpson**

Members at Large – **Sarah Van Dyke**



**Waterloo Catholic
District School Board**
Quality, Inclusive, Faith Based Education

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SEAC Committee Meeting Agenda

Date& Time:	December 1, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.
Location:	Teams Meeting
Next Meeting:	January 5, 2022
Committee Members: Kim Murphy, John Gilbert, Tracey Weiler, Jeanne Gravelle, Irene Holdbrook, Sue Simpson, Sarah Van Dyke, Cindy Benedetti	
Administrative Officials: Gerald Foran, Erin Lemak	

1. Opening Prayer Welcome	G. Foran
2. Approval of Agenda Motion by: Seconded:	
3. Declared Pecuniary Interest	
4. Approval of the November 3rd Minutes Motion by: Seconded	
5. School System Operational Business 5.1. Summer Programs at WCDSB	G. Foran E. Lemak
6. Ministry Updates (10 min) 6.1. WRDSB Letter to the Minister of Education	G. Foran
7. SEAC Committee Functions 7.1. Review of the Sections 9-13 of the Special Education Plan 7.2. PRO Grant opportunity for the SEAC Committee (\$2500)	All
8. Policy Advice to the Board	
9. Updates (20 minutes) 9.1. Association Updates 9.2. Trustee Updates	

10. Pending Items	
11. Adjournment Motion by: Seconded:	
12. Action Items Place Holder	



SEAC Committee Meeting Minutes

Date& Time:	November 3, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.
Location:	Teams Meeting
Next Meeting:	December 1, 2021
Committee Members: Kim Murphy, John Gilbert, Tracey Weiler, Jeanne Gravelle, Irene Holdbrook, Sue Simpson, Sarah Van Dyke, Cindy Benedetti Administrative Officials: Gerald Foran, Erin Lemak Regrets: Tracey Weiler, Sue Simpson	

1. Opening Prayer & Territorial Acknowledgment Welcome	E. Lemak
2. Approval of Agenda Motion by: Kim Murphy Seconded: Cindy Benedetti	
3. Declared Pecuniary Interest N/A	
4. Approval of the October 6th Minutes Motion by: Karen Kovats Seconded: Cindy Benedetti	
5. School System Operational Business 5.1. Accessibility – Facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction project 2020-21 – Funded by the Ministry of Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Optimizing air quality and ventilation projects ➤ Other COVID-19 Resilience Infrastructure Stream (CVRIS) accessibilities projects & Special education projects ➤ Other Projects (new schools or additions) Q&A	T. Pickett
6. Ministry Updates (10 min) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for Bill 172 An Act in Relation to Fetal alcohol Spectrum Disorder – Letter to the Minister of Education from the Trillium Lakelands District School Board Trustees will be writing the letter of resolution to be taken to the general meeting with the Trustees Association of Ontario to advocate for the Transition funds to be available every year and to continue into new school year until at least October 1st. Committee members requested presentation on the Summer programs. - Transition program will be part of the Summer programs presentation on the December 1st .(G. Foran and E. Lemak) 	G. Foran & Trustees

Question brought up to SEAC committee to inquire if committee would like to write a letter to support this resolution.					
7. SEAC Committee Functions					All
• Review of the Sections 9-12 of the Special Education Plan					
QUESTION	SECTION 9	SECTION 10	SECTION 11	SECTION 12	
Please highlight any information you feel is unclear or needs to be clarified in this section.	<p>Feel it is clear that in class placement is in line with our inclusive philosophy</p> <p>Should we highlight what are possible placements from an IPRC? –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reg classroom with indirect support- Reg classroom with withdrawal assistance- Reg class with partial integration- Full time special education class/program <p>Group of schools – clarify FOS?</p> <p>Should we explain what the batteries are? Verbal/Quantitative/Non-Verbal</p> <p>-are College Cooperative Education Program courses current?</p> <p>-clarify admissions to ECPP programs? Not up to WCDSB</p>	<p>2nd paragraph: The IEP provides accountability for the student, their parents and school staff. It outlines the</p> <p>Last section: If after discussion with school level staff, the parent and/or the student if they are 16 years of age or older disagrees with significant aspects of the IEP the issues are referred to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school Superintendent to negotiate a mediated settlement, and• The Associate Director of Education should the school Superintendent not be successful.	<p>Pg. 94: 2nd bullet says, “<i>Provides education for students who are deaf, blind, or who have severe learning disabilities.</i>” For anyone who may be on the cusp, who determines the severity of the disability or is there a certain assessment required first?</p> <p>Pg. 94 2nd bullet under W. Ross Macdonald School it says “<i>...the provision of special learning materials, such as Braille materials, audiotapes, and large-print textbooks.</i>” Perhaps an edit is required remove audiotapes and add CDs and MP3s.</p>	<p>Could FTE be spelled out in full? Full-Time Equivalent at the top of the column</p>	

	-AO – do we put age range of program?				
Please highlight any information you feel has been left out or should be added in this section.	- CCAT – is now new version CCAT7 -should we move the link for APC026 to the Acceleration section on pg. 72 -SAL has new SW dedicated to program -Does SAL belong here?	N/A	NA	Some roles do not have qualifications listed. Could these be added? E.g. Principal – Special Education; OT & PT along others. Parents often ask about the qualifications of different staff roles, so this information is very helpful.	
Overall General Comments for this section.	Does a good job explaining different placements and programs?	Well written, easy to comprehend, liked that it provided an example of IEP pages	Very interesting, it is an area I am not at all familiar with and I think it would be a good idea for a future presentation.	Overall, very good; Intro is helpful and clear; chart format is easy to read	
Does this section adequately address the section topic (Yes/No)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, would still like to see missing qualifications added	
8. Policy Advice to the Board N/A					
9. Updates (20 minutes) 9.1. Association Updates WWDSS Updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Down Syndrome Resource Foundation (DSRF) is offering a Webinar Series for Educators of Students with Down Syndrome and the enclosed flyer was distributed to the WCDSB staff. This series is for classroom teachers, resource teachers, education assistants and other professionals who work in the school setting and is designed to maximize successful classroom participation for learners with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities. Registration can either be for individual sessions or the entire 8-part series. Canadian Down Syndrome Association (CDSS) has developed 2 new resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Educator's Guide: https://cdss.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ed-resource_full.pdf ➤ 9 Quick Resource Guides targeted to specific Roles in the School Community: https://cdss.ca/resources/education/ WRFN Updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making It Work panel discussion November 4th 					

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event with Al Etmanski on November 2nd was well attended (60 parents) and well received. 	
9.2. Trustee Update Board of Trustees	
10. Pending Items N/A	
11. Adjournment Motion by: Jeanne Gravelle Seconded: Kim Murphy	
12. Action Items Place Holder	



Date: December 1, 2021
To: SEAC
From: Director of Education, Superintendent of Learning: Special Education
Subject: Summer Programs at WCDSB

Type of Report:

- ☐ Decision-Making
- ☐ Monitoring
- ☒ Incidental Information concerning day-to-day operations

Type of Information:

- ☐ Information for Board of Trustees Decision-Making
- ☐ Monitoring Information of Board Policy **XX XXX**
- ☒ Information only of day-to-day operational matters delegated to the CEO

Origin: (cite Education Act and/or Board Policy or other legislation)

Regulation 306 Special Education Programs and Services

Alignment to the MYSP:

Nurturing Our Catholic Community:

Faith is lived and witnessed in community: To strengthen and cultivate school, parish and home relationships.

Students and Staff are healthy in mind body and spirit: To strengthen system commitment to school, student and staff spiritual health.

Everyone is included, respected, and welcomed: To increase improved awareness respect of differences within our school communities.

Special Education Plan:

N/A

Background/Comments:

Summer Boost

Similar to last year, the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) provided school boards with funding to deliver 2021 Summer Learning Programs (SLP) with the intent to meet the needs of our most vulnerable students, parents, and communities. Key focus areas included Numeracy, Literacy and preparing students for Gr. 9 Math De-streaming. The funding directly supported the WCDSB Summer Boost Program that has run each summer for the past several years. Due to the Covid pandemic, as well as to ensure the safety of staff and students, the Summer Boost program was held virtually for all students and staff.

The Summer Boost program initiatives addressed the following MYSP Key Performance Indicators (KPI) regarding student achievement, staff professional development and parent engagement:

- Increase in achievement for “marker students”
- Decrease the gap in achievement between those students on an IEP and those who are not
- Increase in affirmative responses by staff-to-Staff PD



- Increased diversity in the materials being used in schools

The 2021 Summer Boost program consisted of 9 classes and ran from July 5th – July 23rd inclusively for 3 hrs/day for a total of 45 hours serving 180 students.

Breakdown of Classes:

Grade/Division	Program Focus (e.g., Literacy, Numeracy, Blended)	Total Number of Classes	Total Number of Students	Total Number of Hours of Student Instruction Per Day
Kindergarten-Grade 3	Literacy/Numeracy	4	80	45 hours
Grades 4, 5, 6	Literacy/Numeracy	3	60	45 hours
Grade 7 and 8 Mathematics (support for the Grade 9 de- streamed program)	Literacy/Numeracy	2	40	45 hours

The program consisted of daily synchronous instruction with a blend of large group, small group break outs and individualized instruction. Time allotted to each was flexible and varied from class to class based on students' needs and learning profiles. Time was allotted for parent-student teacher-meetings for a half hour at the beginning of the day and an additional half hour at the end of the day was scheduled for staff professional development.

The team-teaching model was quite successful allowing for a ratio of 10:1 students which created more opportunities for individual and small group support. This also allowed the ability to grow class size to 20 from 15 while still allowing for precision programming with the added bonus of serving more students.

Virtual parent sessions were also a part of the Summer Boost program and focused on the following areas:

- Assistive Technology – Focus of the Read/Write application
- Literacy – Tools/Resources/Strategies for parents to support child(ren) in literacy

Mental Health/Wellness - Tools/Resources/Strategies for parents to support child(ren) in their social-emotional development

Planning and Preparation

In preparation for synchronous learning a variety of professional development sessions were provided for staff. Tools, resources and strategies, and a program focus were identified in consultation with resource teachers in the areas of Numeracy, Literacy, Special Education, assistive technology, e-learning technology support and mental health. Specialized teachers were hired for the duration of the program to support a variety of program offerings (e.g., Reading Intervention, Summer Boost) and provide professional development for staff and parents as needed.

To ensure access for all in the area of technology, families had an opportunity to reserve a chromebook and/or internet access. Designated Drop off/Pick up days were created to facilitate the process of deploying chromebooks, consumable learning kits, Math Mats and STEM kits. To ensure the program was serving the appropriate target audience student selection was based on learning profile (e.g., is the student on an IEP), date/time of registration and siblings.

Due to short timeline of the program, it was important to establish a narrow curriculum focus in the areas of Literacy and Numeracy. In consultation with resource teachers leads it was determined that the Literacy focus for Kindergarten – Grade 2 would be phonemic awareness and the building of Tier 2 vocabulary from Grade 3 – 8.



This focus was based on research showing that vocabulary size and richness, and the speed of accessing word meanings from memory are strong predictors of reading comprehension and overall academic success. The following areas were identified as gaps as we transition from the 2005 to 2020 numeracy curriculum and therefore became our focus:

- Kindergarten = early number & counting, introduce a fair share / equal parts
- Grades 1-3: Fractions (fair sharing)
- Grades 4-6: Fractions / Decimals /Percent (gr. 6), Operations with Partial Number, Integers (gr. 6), Equalities & Inequalities
- Grades 7 & 8: Fractions / Decimals / Percent, Operations with Partial Number, Equalities & Inequalities

Overall Academic Outcomes

All programs were fully staffed offering a blend of literacy, numeracy and technology focused programs. Staff survey feedback indicated the professional development series was well-received and teacher testimonials highlighted a number of strategies and resources that will be integrated into teacher's classrooms in September.

Every child had access to the necessary technology and the common drop-off and pick up times served 90% of your community well. A number of families participating did not have transportation which in turn required home deliveries. Filtering by IEP student initially helped ensure the student learning profiles matched our intended program goals. Demand exceeded the number of seats available and clarity in the student selection process helped when debriefing with parents who were unsuccessful registering their child(ren).

- 30% of our Early Learners and Grade 1-2 students progressed to the next stage of phonemic awareness. and 28% showed an increase in the same stage. In Grade 2 a greater percentage increased in the same stage 40%) while 10% advanced to the next stage
- In Grade 3 to 8 we observed an increase in the number of students at the "Got It" (60%) and "Getter There" (30%) which is considerably higher than pretest levels of 33% percent in the "Got It" and "Getting There" stages
- In Numeracy we witnessed an increase to "Got It" from PRE to POST in most questions across all grades. Student fair share, fraction, decimal. percent and equalities & inequalities capacity grew considerably across the 3 weeks.

Student Engagement Strategies

As students had been participating in online learning for most of the school year and engagement is a challenge during summer months, a plan was developed to maximize student engagement, motivation, interest and attendance. The following are some key points that were implemented to increase student engagement:

- **Virtual Tours** to support learning focus and mentor texts selected (e.g. library)
- Each student received a **School Supply Kit** containing consumables to support learning
- **Prayer/ Christian Meditation/Reflection** helped students develop mindfulness and self-regulation skills
- **Daily Phys. Ed. at Home Challenges** ... with what you have, where you are, with whom is around you! (e.g. Fitness Challenges, Nature Walks, obstacle course, scavenger hunts)
- Weekly **STEM challenges** using **Scratch Coding, Microbits, Minecraft** through our Experiential Learning and Innovation lead
- Classes had the Opportunity to enrol in the **Invention Convention** through the Learning Partnership
- **Whole class google meets** allowed for student virtual face-to-face connection at the beginning and end of every day to support **wellness** and **connection**
- **Virtual guided reading/math break out rooms** allowed for precision programming based on learning need or interest
- **One-to-one google meets** to complete diagnostics and offered precision programming to address learning gaps and needs



- Access to **UDL tools including Read/Write** (e.g. reading text, recording voice notes)
- **'What makes you smile'** – prompt used weekly to promote sharing, wellness and guide responsive instruction
- Collaborative learning platforms including **Padlets, Jamboards and Flipgrid**.
- **Virtual tools** and resources including **Knowledgehook**, that integrated missions and gameshows and **Mathies.org** that housed virtual math manipulatives
- Engaging online **mentor texts** from Scholastic and Nelson containing thought-provoking big ideas
- **Integration of the arts** – drama/music/art where appropriate

Student Engagement Outcomes

- Guided access through the web to places and experiences that might otherwise be impossible or unattainable ensured lessons came to life
- Mini-whiteboards and math mats (whiteboard templates like a number line) were the consumable tools of choice for representing thinking and supporting numeracy
- Merging Summer Learning Special Education monies with Summer Learning allowed us to hire special education and assistive technology teachers providing the human resources necessary to serve those most vulnerable with precision and one-to-one support
- Activities that allowed for STEAM integration generated excitement in students and supported literacy and numeracy development. Sneaking in learning when the students are not looking has become our mantra. Michael Leonard (Experiential Learning and Innovation Lead) and Dan Nobles (Computer Technician) offered professional development in the areas of Microbits and Minecraft both of which were leveraged extensively in the junior intermediate grades
- Timely daily phys-ed challenges and meditation/prayer/yoga helped students remain focused and provided purposeful mindfulness moments and breaks. Posting 'in-action' pictures/videos served as a natural reinforcer
- STEM kits including Microbits promoted parent engagement and allowed tactile/kinesthetic learners to flourish
- Technology (collaborative learning platforms, STEM, virtual guided reading, Read/Write) served as an engagement tool and supported collaboration. More importantly, it served as an accelerator for student/teacher learning and connecting allowing all to go deeper faster
- 'What Makes you Smile' wellness check-in using virtual tools and google meets and the human connection that it assumes were essential to student well-being. Many students cited this as their favourite part of Summer Boost
- Sharon Porty (Mental Health Lead) created a series of Wellness lessons for each division that were used daily. Socioemotional skills including recognizing and labelling feelings in self and others, stress in our brains/ bodies, exploring a wide range of calming strategies and resiliency skills, and understanding where and how to ask for help were all introduced.
- Mental Health lead also provided professional development and community resources to staff in an effort to support our students at risk
- Social work support was offered to students/families in the form of counselling and community outreach programs when the need presented itself

Parent Engagement Strategies

Additionally, a key focus area for both CODE and WCDSB is the engagement of parents in the Summer Learning Programs and Summer Boost. The more informed and engaged parents are, the more successful students will be in the program. The following strategies were implemented to foster and increase parent engagement:

- **Individual parent/teacher discussions** with parents highlighting celebrations, learning gaps and virtual strategies being employed to address the need.
- **Principal Welcome letter to parents** highlighting the importance of their role as partners in the child(ren)'s education and WCDSB's Learn@Home links and resources.
- **Assistive technology, Literacy and Wellness parent workshops** offered in the afternoon and evening.



- **Newsletters, notes posted on Google classroom and learning logs/journals** shared with parents daily
- Use of **social media** (e.g., **twitter #SummerBoost** to celebrate successes
- **Virtual Celebration of Learning** to take place in each grade at completion of Program. Parents were invited to a google meet to share in the learning of their child. Student testimonials, certificate of achievement and a slideshow.
- **E-Portfolios** – students created E-portfolios throughout the course of the program which will be shared at the Celebration of Learning to offer documentation of student growth and learning
- Parents of younger students were invited to participate on **virtual tours** (e.g., Ripley's Aquarium) and **guest authors/speakers** (e.g., Public Library)
- Parents were asked for **testimonials** to validate connectedness to the Program and the anticipated outcomes.

Parent Engagement Outcomes

- The first half hour of each day was used to reach out to parents to clarify learning strengths/needs, support with technology and share strategies, resources and tools with parents
- Google Classroom was used extensively to celebrate successes and student growth with students/parents
- A Celebration of Learning occurred for all grades which included students showcasing learning, certificate presentation and a video.
- A program completion letter was distributed celebrating parental partnerships and sharing WCDSB's Learn@Home links and resources.
- Multiple Read/Write parent sessions offered in the evening and during the day both of which were well-attended
- Parent Literacy Sessions entitled, "The Joy of Reading at Home, at Any Age, and in Any Language!" were offered twice and highlighted the following:
 - Benefits of Reading for Pleasure
 - Strategies to Get Started
 - Cuddle Up and Read Initiative
 - Connection is Key
 - Book is the Tool
 - The Importance of Reading in Your Home Language
 - Library Partnership
- Parents joined children on virtual field trips and author visits (e.g., Wonderland, Toronto Zoo, Ripley's)

Connecting Summer Learning to Regular School Programs

A summer learning progress report was generated for the first time in consultation with specialized teachers and shared with home school classroom and special education teachers and principal. Numeracy, Literacy, integrated learning (STEAM) and student well-being comments were included. Furthermore, a video highlighting classroom teachers sharing how the summer learning experience will impact their practice in September (resources, strategies, tools) will be made available to educators through their principals.

The following plans are in place to support students in Summer Boost when returning to school:

- Community and/or board social worker support for students and parents
- Mental Health Lesson
- I.T support creating a marker/flag within Aspen that will highlight student participation in Summer Boost or have it added as an intervention strategy
- Upload samples of student work/Summer Boost certificates in Numeracy/Literacy using Twitter, D2L.
- Student testimonials gathered using Flipgrid highlighting most significant accomplishment as a learner shared on twitter #SummerBoost2021, #wcdsbinnovates

- Principal of the program will recommend that Summer Learning program be included as a Literacy and Numeracy intervention strategy in our Board Plan
- A brief student report highlighting Literacy/Numeracy accomplishments will be shared with home schoolteacher and Principal. Results of pre-post diagnostic and in-class assessments will be included

Summer Transition Programs

This summer WCDSB provided a variety of programs to support the needs of students across the system. In July, a Summer Reading Intervention Program was provided for targeted Gr. 1&2 students for three weeks to support phonological awareness, phonics instruction and to support student wellbeing. During the last two weeks of August, in collaboration with Special Education Teachers at each school site, we implemented a Student Transition to Fall Program to meet the needs of a variety of students who were identified by each school team. Furthermore, during the summer months the Mental Health Lead and Social Workers were on call to support students in respect to their mental health and well-being.

The Summer Transition Program initiatives addressed the following MYSP Key Performance Indicators (KPI) regarding student achievement, student attendance, student well-being and parent engagement:

- Increase in achievement for “marker students”
- Decrease the gap in achievement between those students on an IEP and those who are not
- Improved student attendance

Summer Reading Intervention Program

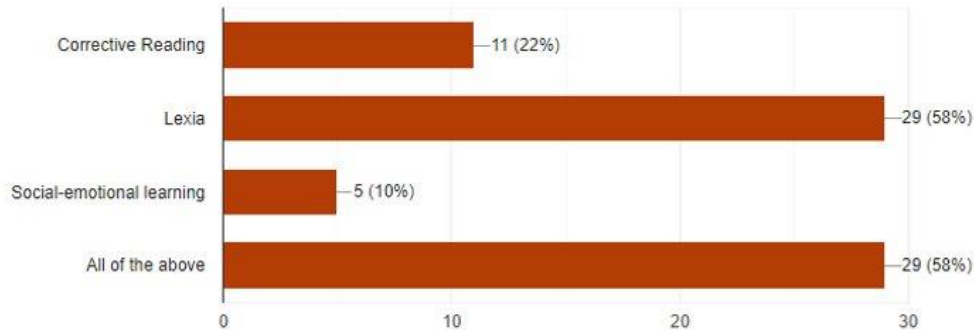
During the first three weeks of July 2021, 180 students participated in the Summer Reading Intervention Program that was facilitated by 20 teachers across the system. The funding for this program was based on a Ministry directive to support students in reading intervention due to the covid pandemic. Criteria was developed to determine a learning profile of the student that would benefit most from the program. All elementary schools were consulted, with each school recommending a group of Gr. 1&2 students who met the criteria. Each parent of the recommended students received an invitation to the program to allow for prioritized registration.

The program was delivered virtually, for two hours each morning. Students were provided with direct, explicit instruction that focused on phonemic awareness activities using the Corrective Reading Program. Each student also received a Lexia license that was closely monitored and supported with mini-lessons and skill building activities. Lexia provided targeted support for phonics, phonological awareness, vocabulary building, fluency, and comprehension. Students also participated in daily wellbeing activities that were provided by our Mental Health Lead, Sharon Porty.

A parent survey was completed at the end of the program. The results of the survey show that parents felt that their children made gains in learning letter-sounds, blending sounds together and 90% of responders felt that their child made progress using the Lexia program.

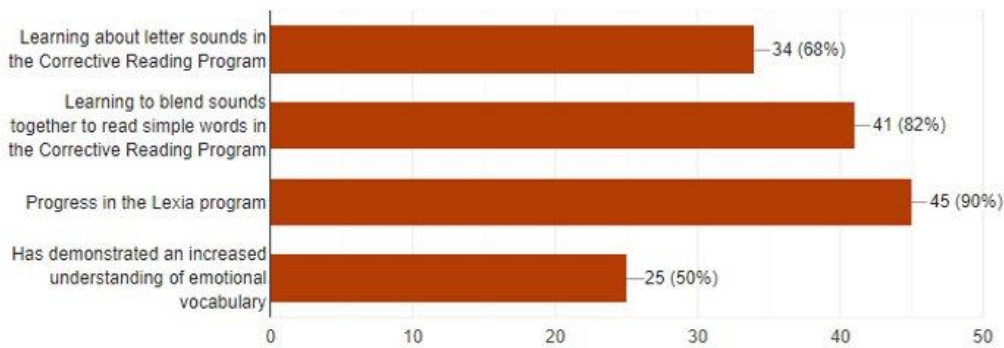
My child was engaged and enjoyed the following learning opportunities offered during the summer reading program:

50 responses



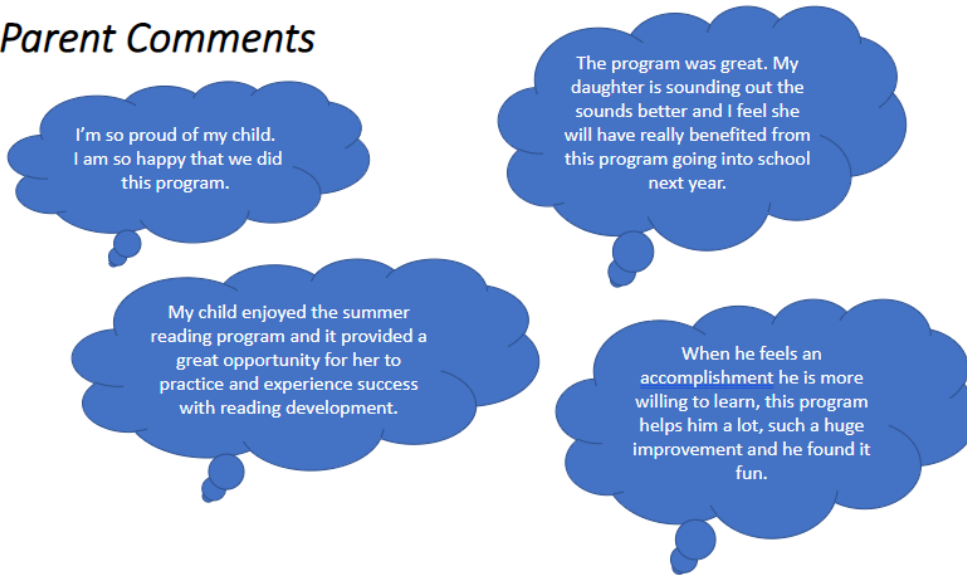
I feel that my child made gains in the following areas:

50 responses

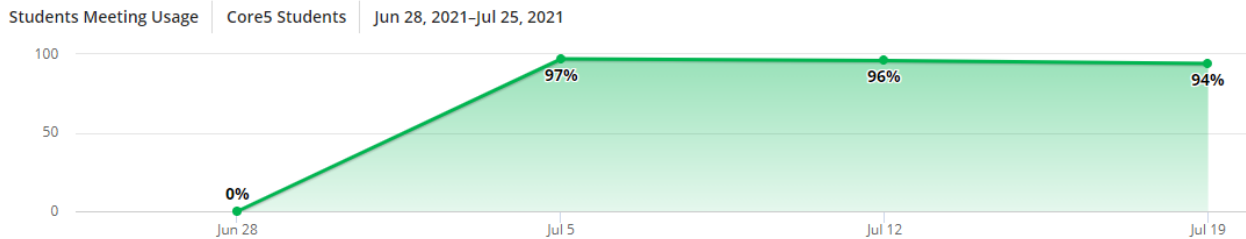


Parents also anecdotally reported positive outcomes for their children. Several parents commented to teachers that they now had a better understanding of where their child required more support in terms of reading development. Many parents also commented on how surprised they were that their child was engaged and feeling more confident in their skills by the end of the three weeks.

Parent Comments



Students demonstrated a high degree of engagement with the Lexia Core 5 Reading Program. They were highly motivated by the certificates that they received for achieving levels.

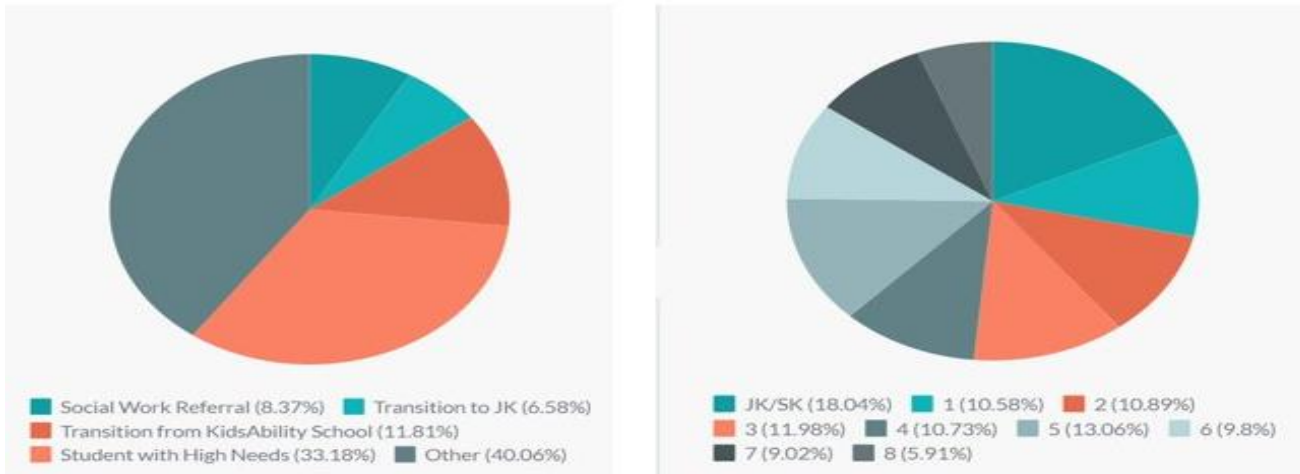


As a follow up to the Summer Reading Intervention Program, progress was shared with the home school so that current classroom teachers can continue to support these students in building their reading skills.

Student Transition to Fall Program

The Student Transition to Fall Program occurred on the 30th and the 31st of August. This program provided an opportunity for the students and families to re-connect with the school community, to reduce distress about the return to school process, and to provide resources to the student and the family. It consisted of 30-minute visits, including a tour and an opportunity to access additional resources (basic school-based information, parent resources, handouts from the school board and community partners supporting Mental Health). The Special Education Liaisons developed and provided resources to all elementary schools. A OneDrive portal was created in order to allow coordination with the Social Work team. Social Workers accessed the OneDrive to add additional students throughout the summer as appropriate. School based staff contacted the families to invite them to participate. In total, there were 595 students from Kindergarten to Gr. 8 who attended this program, and it was a great success!

595 students from grades JK-gr. 8 attended Transition to School meetings at their school



Mental Health & Social Work Support

The concentration on Mental Health and Wellbeing is an extension of WCDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan and is guided by a comprehensive 3-year Mental Health Strategy (2019-2020), as well as the Mental Health and Wellness Annual Plan (2021-2022).

Throughout summer 2021, through the work of the Mental Health Lead, a strong focus on socioemotional learning was imbedded across the Reading Intervention and Summer Programs. This included providing daily activities to promote wellbeing skills, as well as both recorded and live presentations to engage our students in conversations about how to promote wellbeing during the pandemic. The “No Problem Too Big or Too Small” help seeking resource from School Mental Health Ontario was issued for the Grade 9 HeadStart program. The Mental Health Lead also chose and provided specific mental health and wellbeing resources from School Mental Health Ontario to support the Transition programming at both Elementary and Secondary. In August, WCDSB launched a new webpage for parents/caregivers, providing tools and resources to support wellbeing in their families, their own self-care, and tools to support a mentally healthy return-to-school in the fall. The page also includes several recorded videos including a Podcast from Board Collaborative Team members to support parents in preparing students to transition back to school, and several well-being videos designed by our Mental Health Lead.

With the support of funding for school mental health professionals provided by the Ministry of Education, 4.0 FTE School Social Workers were employed, each for a four-week period between July and August. They provided short-term mental health and wellbeing support to 60 students and/or their parents at Tier 2 and for some Tier 3. This included students who were receiving school social work support during the 2019/2020 school year and would benefit from summer check-ins, those attending summer school, support for students with mental health needs, crisis and/or compassionate care response and service for any newly referred students. At Secondary, 31 students received summer support, with the top three reasons for service as depression or low mood, suicidal thoughts and behaviour, and anxiety, panic and worry. At Elementary, 29 students received summer support, with parenting support, anxiety, panic and worry, and trauma related stress & maladjustment as the top three reasons for service.

To effectively reach the Summer Social Work Team, a WCDSB school social work email account was created and shared with our school community, summer school Administrators and partnering community agencies supporting receipt of referral to service. This was not a crisis line, nor intended to replace pre-existing crisis response services in our region, but rather during a time when schools were closed, a means to obtain support or refer students for

school social work service. The account was monitored by our trained mental health professionals throughout the summer between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., excluding weekends, during July and August, with commitment to a 48-hour response time.

WCDSB school mental health professionals partnered with WRDSB school mental health professionals to deliver service to students in our community including the Stress and Anxiety Boot Camp Groups and Community Hubs.

The Community Hub model, designed to support school re-engagement, brought both school boards and community agencies together to deliver a pop-up style, fun and interactive event at local community centres for students and parents to feel warmly welcomed, ask school related questions, receive information on student mental health and wellbeing, and be connected in the moment to community-based support. Our partnering agencies included Parents for Children's Mental Health, the LHIN, Carizon, as well as three community centres. Locations and dates/times, chosen by our partnering agencies, aligned with pre-existing gatherings, such as summer camp pick-up, or food distribution. In Cambridge this was offered in partnership with Greenway Chaplain Community Centre, where 37 people attended; in Kitchener, 72 people attended Victoria Hills Community Centre, while 27 joined in Waterloo at Erb West. Community centers provided outdoor space, adhering to public health guidelines. In addition to school social workers present throughout the event, both Boards provided student mental health and wellbeing resources including the newly redesigned BeWell Bookmark, which includes information about how to access local children's mental health and crisis agencies. Additional shared resources included those from School Mental Health Ontario including "Reaching Out", "Self-Care 101", "No Problem is Too Big or Too Small" booklet, and a Tip Sheet for caregivers about "How to know if You Should be Concerned" regarding your child's mental health and wellbeing.

In partnership with WRDSB, social work staff from both Boards and psychology staff from WRDSB co-delivered an online Stress and Anxiety Bootcamp in July and August. This one hour, two-week interactive and fun psychoeducational group for students between grades 4-12 supported the identification and management of stress and anxiety. Students were given several options for time of day and day of week, providing families with flexibility. There were 109 junior students that participated, 59 Intermediate and 101 secondary students for a total of 269 Participants. This was a region wide program, with students from both school boards accepted for referral. Families referred directly using a link that was provided on Board websites and social media sites. Groups filled quickly and spots were maintained for social work staff to refer students, on an as needed basis throughout the summer months. Upon referral, families received a parent handout complete with information and numerous links to support learning, strategy implementation, book references, what parents can do at home, and mechanisms for accessing children's mental health and crisis services in Waterloo Region.

School social workers both prior to the end of the school year and during the summer months referred students they served during the 2019/2020 school year. These students received school social work support for attendance related concerns with correlated mental health, parental mental health or were chronically non-attending to the Student Transition to Fall Program provided in August. Students who received school social work support for attendance related concerns with correlated student mental health, or at the discretion of the social worker were offered a referral to Secondary Transition Support provided in August. During the summer months, on an as needed basis, social workers continued to refer students to either the Elementary or Secondary Transition program.

Staff also had opportunity to participate in training. There were 18 staff, including 9 Social Workers, 6 BCBA's, the Senior Manager of Student Services, the Lead Social Worker and the Principal of Student Services, that received trauma informed training supporting a deeper connection between the work of BCBA and Social Work for Students. In August, social work staff, including the Lead Social Worker attended training offered by School Mental Health Ontario on topic such as: Supporting the Mental Health needs of Racialized Youth, Understanding Eating Related issues and Eating Disorders, Problematic Video Gaming, and Supportive Triage for Early Problems: STEP.

As we move into the 2021-22 school year, now, more than ever we see the importance of continued investment in well-being. Our guiding principles provided by School Mental Health Ontario that shape our work include:

1. We prioritize mental health and well-being as a key condition for students to learn and flourish.



2. We lead with compassion and empathy and take action to address equity within mental health and well-being.
3. We protect and promote student mental health with caring learning environments.
4. We have strong mental health foundations to recognize and build on the learning and experiences of the pandemic.
5. We make our way together; schools are part of a wider circle of support.

Recommendation:

Presented for your information.

Prepared/Reviewed By:

Loretta Notten
Director of Education

Gerald Foran
Superintendent of Learning: Special Education

*Bylaw 5.2 “where the Board of Trustees receives from the Director of Education a monitoring report that flows from a responsibility delegated to the Director under Board Policy – **except where approval is required by the Board of Trustees on a matter delegated by policy to the Board** – the minutes of the Meeting at which the Report is received shall expressly provide that the Board has received and approved of the Report as an action consistent with the authority delegated to the Director, subject in all instances to what otherwise actually occurred.”



October 19, 2021

Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
Mowat Block, 900 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1L2

Honourable Stephen Lecce,

We, the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), are writing to share our common concerns expressed by the Algoma District School Board (ADSB) SEAC and the Durham District School Board (DDSB) SEAC in regard to Online Learning Supports and Universal Design for Learning in provincial online learning resources and the platforms used to access these resources.

While we are privileged to live in the WRDSB and our students have convenient access to wireless connections, Chromebooks, and a well-supported online learning environment, we are deeply concerned about the students in the areas that do not have the same access and resources. As such, it is our request that you commit to ensuring that all online and/or learning courses must be consistently maintained with enabled links and resources that meet accessibility standards (such as closed captioning, etc.).

While schools are opening back up to in-school learning and virtual learning needs are diminishing the student population as a majority, we acknowledge that online learning is still the best choice for some students and that their learning experience is as worthy of proper resources that adhere to universal design for learning as their in-school peers. The pandemic has shown gaps in our province's online learning resources and an opportunity to invest in our students' educational access.

We appreciate your time and consideration of this request for action.

Sincerely,



Sara Penny
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee
Waterloo Region District School Board

cc. Chairs of all Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees



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PARENTS REACHING OUT (PRO) GRANTS

2021-22 SCHOOL YEAR

Supporting parent engagement by removing barriers at the local level so parents can engage fully in their children's learning

Who is Eligible?

School boards are funded to administer the PRO Grants program in collaboration with their Parent Involvement Committees (PICs) and are encouraged to work with their Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC), Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), board's Equity and Access body, school councils, and community organizations to identify projects.

What is Eligible?



Projects that demonstrate parent input on how schools can improve in at least one of the following areas are eligible for funding:

- Addressing social inclusion and racism specifically anti-Asian, anti-Black, and anti-Indigenous discrimination and bias and other prejudices toward racialized and marginalized groups as well as inequities and systemic barriers faced by these designated groups.
- Creating a safe and welcoming environment
- Demonstrating respect for parents as valued partners within the education system regarding decisions about their child's education
- Enhancing communication with teachers
- Informing parents about the expectations of the Ontario Curriculum and supporting resources

Projects must be initiated by parents through communication with their PIC, a school council or other parent groups in the community.

What is Ineligible?



- Activities that took place prior to September 1, 2021
- Payment to school board staff or volunteers including salaries, honoraria, gifts
- Refreshments exceeding 10% of approved funding
- Out-of-province travel
- Debts or financial losses that result from a project
- Fundraising events
- Central administration expenses exceeding 10% of the budget

When?



- Projects must be completed between September 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022

Questions?



PRO@Ontario.ca