



**DURHAM CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**
Learning and Living in Faith

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Meeting

Mar 05, 2024, from 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM

Catholic Education Centre, 650 Rossland Road West, Oshawa
North and South Board Rooms

Members Present:

Donna Callaghan, Alternate, Durham Down Syndrome Association (Virtual)

Julie Sorhaitz, Learning Disabilities Ontario (In-Person)

Claudia Nosseir, Grandview Kids (In-Person)

Edward Secnik, Alternate, Autism Ontario – Durham Region (In-Person)

Shona Casola, Autism Ontario – Durham Region (Virtual)

Candace Julien, Community Representative (Virtual)

Alex Massis, Community Representative (In-Person)

Yma Frison, Presenter, Durham Down Syndrome Association (In-Person)

Trustees Present:

Robert De Souza (Virtual)

Staff Present:

Yulan Fisher-Brown, Senior Manager, Mental Health Initiatives / Mental Health Leader (In-Person)

Christine Congrady, Student Services Coordinator (In-Person)

Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education (In-Person)

Marie Hammond, Chief Financial Officer (In-Person)

Kayode Akomolafe, Human Rights and Equity Advisor (In-Person)

SEAC Representatives:

Lo Davis, OECTA Representative (In-Person)

Patricia Bosley, CUPE Representative (Virtual)

John Di Vizio, CPCO Representative (Virtual)

Kyla Edgecombe, APSSP Representative (Virtual)

Regrets:

Walter Heeney, Vice Chair, Durham Down Syndrome Association

Jim McCafferty, Trustee

Valerie Adamo, Chair, VOICE for the Hearing Impaired

Minutes

1. Opening

1.1. Call to Order

If at a meeting neither the Chair nor Vice Chair are present, the voting members present may elect a Chair for that meeting from amongst themselves.

Claudia Nosseir nominated Julie Sorhaitz. Julie Sorhaitz accepted.



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Motion: SS-2024-03-05-01

Elect a Chair for the Meeting

Motion moved by Robert De Souza, and seconded by Shona Casola

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee elect Julie Sorhaitz as Chair for the March 5, 2024, meeting.” (CARRIED)

Julie Sorhaitz called the meeting to order at 7:35pm, offered the opening prayer and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.2. Memorials and Prayers

1.3. Land Acknowledgements

1.4. Roll Call and Apologies

1.5. Approval of the Agenda

Motion: SS-2024-03-05-02

Approval of the Agenda

Motion moved by Claudia Nosseir, and seconded by Donna Callaghan

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the agenda of the Tuesday, March 5, 2024, meeting, as presented.” (CARRIED)

1.6. Approval of the Minutes of February 13, 2024, SEAC Meeting

Motion: SS-2024-03-05-03

Approval of Minutes

Motion moved by Robert De Souza and seconded by Shona Casola

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the Minutes of the Tuesday, February 13, 2024, meeting, as presented.” (CARRIED)

1.7. Declarations of Interest

None

2. Items for Information/Decision

2.1. Announcements



None

2.2. Presentations

2.2.1. Kayode Akomolafe – Student Demographic Survey

Kayode Akomolafe, Human Rights and Equity Advisor, presented the Board's plan for conducting the 2023-2024 Student Demographic Survey:

- Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Board has a responsibility to promote a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment.
- The *Anti-Racism Act* provides a framework to identify and eliminate systemic racism and advance racial equity.
- *The Act* requires the Education sector to collect demographic data and response rates.
- The Board conducted a student census in 2021-2022. The 2023-2024 survey builds on the 2021-2022 consultation and has implemented lessons learned from the first census.

Student Demographic Survey:

- A voluntary survey offering students the opportunity to share their identities, culture, race, ethnicities, genders, abilities, and countries of origin. Resulting data will be further disaggregated to better understand the student experience (i.e. graduation rates, enrolment, suspension/expulsion rates, etc.)
- Survey will take place between April 22-26, 2024.
- Parents will complete the survey for students in Grades K-8. Students in Grades 9-12 will complete the survey in class.
- K-8 Parents/guardians/caregivers and 9-12 students will receive a unique, confidential link to their email on file.

Informed by the Ministry of Education's Equity Action Plan and the Anti-Racism Act, the goals are to:

- Understand and support the diversity of students and families.
- Identify and eliminate barriers to student success, engagement and well-being.
- Improve student achievement.
- Enrich students' learning by providing the right supports at the right time.
- Ensure our schools are safe, welcoming and accepting spaces.
- Know and understand our students, so we can better respond and support them.

Important Matters:

- [Survey webpage](#): Information about the survey, preview the questions, FAQs, and 2021-2022 student census results.
- Action Requested: Administrators to ensure compliance with the process of completing the survey.



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- Initial communication regarding the survey will include a link for families to opt out of the survey entirely. Within the survey, there will also be the option to opt out of questions.

Completion rate for the 2021-2022 student census was 39 per cent. The Ministry shared that the Board had one of the highest completions rates in the province. Additionally, the data from the census showed that completion rates reduced as the Grade of the student increased. For the 2023-2024 survey, the Board is ensuring more time for students to complete the survey.

Next Steps:

- Public report on data obtained through the Student Demographic Survey to be available on Board website.
- Disaggregated data from survey to be used to inform evidence-based decisions to support students at every level (i.e. pedagogy, programs, policies, services, etc.)
- Ongoing additions to be made to the public report to illustrate how data obtained from the survey is being used to inform plans, programs, resources/supports, etc.

2.2.2. Marie Hammond – Budget Consultation

Marie Hammond, Chief Financial Officer, presented the 2024-2025 Budget Consultation through ThoughtExchange:

- The Board is seeking input on their school goals and budget planning.
- The consultations will ask about what the Board is currently doing well and how they can improve.
- Consultation will help the Board to set goals for our schools in the 2024-2025 school year.
- The Board has 3 strategic priorities that they would like to get input from the public on: Supporting Faith and Well-Being, Advancing Human Rights and Equity, and Improving Student Learning.
- The consultation will use the same question as the previous year to compare results.
- ThoughtExchange is currently open and available until Friday, March 22, 2024.

2024-2025 Budget Consultation:

- Letters sent to families via Schoolmessenger on March 4.
- Posted on school and board websites on March 4.
- Principals have been asked to post to Edsby.
- Schools will send a reminder email to families on March 18th.
- Social media posts.
- Advisory committee meetings.



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- Communications with parishes; and
- Results for the Board and their respective school will be shared with Principals on March 22, 2024.

Participate in the Budget Consultation: tejoin.com Join an Exchange via 9-digit code: 710-440-690

Marie Hammond will join the Committee in May to review grant announcements and discuss any impact on Special Education.

2.2.3. Yma Frison – Durham Down Syndrome Association

Yma Frison, a member of Durham Down Syndrome Association (DDSA), presented the following:

- DDSA has been around for a little over 40 years, since 1982
- DDSA is about building a supportive community.
- Mission is to continue building a supportive, inclusive community by providing social and active events for people with Down syndrome and their families.

Events Overview:

- DDSA has partnered with the Boys and Girls Club of Oshawa to provide youth group hangouts (Grades 7-12). Event upcoming on March 21 at the Putting Edge in Whitby. This event is for members only, for ages 13-21 years.
- DDSA received a Caregivers of Ontario grant to provide 3 Caregivers' Wellness Sessions for members (January, February and upcoming on March 24).
- Free and open to everyone: World Down Syndrome Day event on Saturday, March 23rd from 1:00pm-3:00pm at the Abilities Centre in Whitby.

2.3. Discussion Items

None

2.4. Business arising from the Minutes

2.4.1. Letter for Approval – Support for Adult Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Motion: SS-2024-03-05-04

Approval of Business arising from the minutes

Motion moved by Claudia Nosseir and seconded by Shona Casola

“That the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the business arising from the minutes.” (CARRIED)



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2.5. Staff Reports

2.5.1. Student Services Report – Christine Congrady, Yulan Fisher-Brown, Paula Sorhaitz

Christine Congrady presented the Coordinator's Report:

Behaviour Management Systems (BMS) Training:

- On Feb. 8, 15 and 23, BMS training was offered through a Sharing of Excellence by Tammy Fleming, from the Behaviour Resource Team (BRT).
- The first two sessions were presented online via Teams and focused on theory. The final session was a review of theory, physicals and final assessment and offered in person at Paul Dwyer Learning Commons. Five participants successfully completed the certification.

Students with Assistive Technology Transition Trips (SWATTT):

- SWATTT hosted by the 7 secondary schools were completed as of March 4.
- 150 students from DCDSB's elementary schools attended the trips at their feeder schools.
- The trips were supported by Assistive Technology Specialists (ATs) and AT Technician, elementary and secondary Program Support Teachers (PSTs), Intermediate Guidance Teachers (IGTs) and Student Services Consultants.

Project SEARCH:

- February 28, 2024 – Project SEARCH Parent/Guardian Information Session.
- It was a hybrid event with approximately 50 people in attendance.
- Highlight of the evening occurred when current interns shared their experiences with the program and parents gave testimonials.
- [New Project SEARCH video](#)
- March 21 is World Down Syndrome Awareness Day
- A numbered memo with information and resources for educators was sent out to the system on March 5

Yulan Fisher-Brown presented the Mental Health Report:

DCDSB Let's Talk Day:

- March 19, 2024 - This day will be dedicated to ensuring that all students know where to go at school in order to access help with their mental health.
- Lessons/activities have been curated for all grades and secondary for educators to share with students.
- All secondary students will receive a locker magnet, and Grades 6-8 will receive a whiteboard.



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Black Mental Health Day:

- Event happened on March 4, 2024, at Notre Dame C.S.S.
- Keynote Speaker: Roxanne Francis and a panel discussion.
- Student work was highlighted with a prayer, visual art, and a performance from the ABLE (Aspiring Black Students Led by Excellence) team from Archbishop Denis O'Connor C.H.S.

Professional Development:

- Mental Health First Aid ran on February 20th and 21st.
- Prepare, Prevent Respond; Suicide Prevention, Life Promotion training ran on March 1 for the staff of Archbishop Anthony Meagher.
- Upcoming:
 - Mental Health First Aid - April 2nd & 3rd
 - Sharing of Excellence- Creating a Mentally Healthy Classroom Part 5 of 5 - March 27th

Superintendent Sorhaitz presented the Superintendent's Report:

- Chair Adamo did receive a response from the Ministry of Education's Special Education / Success for All Branch. Defer discussion regarding a response to the April 9th meeting.
- Social Worker Appreciation Day: A special acknowledgement to the social workers in our board for their contributions.

PST Learning this Month (March):

- Wellness for PSTs
- EQAO Preparation – Supporting students with assistive technology, and support students best practices
- EA allocation

Student Services is currently planning for the 2024-2025 school year. Meetings are taking place with PSTs and Principals to talk about current and projected needs in order to better prepare and serve students with special needs.

Looking ahead: Psych Services staff will be coming to the April PST meeting to discuss supporting students with ADHD and learning disabilities.

Motion: SS-2024-03-05-05

Approval of the March 5, 2024, verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader, and Superintendent Reports

Motion moved by Claudia Nosseir and seconded by Robert De Souza



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“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept the verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports of the March 5, 2024, meeting.”
(CARRIED)

2.6. Association Reports

Claudia Nosseir, Grandview Kids February Report:

New Programs or Services

1. The School Based Rehab team will be creating a newsletter for all school SERTS every 6 months. The next edition is scheduled for distribution in March.
2. Ability Acceptance Program: The goal of this program is to enhance the understanding and acceptance of all abilities and promote inclusive practices. Presentations for schools/classrooms (grade 6 and up) can be requested by contacting our presenter Mitchell at Mitchell.Daniels@grandviewkids.ca.

Website: GrandviewKids.ca

Shona Casola, Autism Ontario – Durham Region March Report:

Upcoming Meetings or Conferences

[Celebrate the Spectrum](#) - Get ready to join us in celebration of World Autism Day!

Autism Ontario is committed to raising awareness of autism so all Ontarians can make their communities a better and more inclusive place for people on the spectrum and their families. Toolkits provide activities, videos, classroom discussions, and other resources to engage your students on World Autism Day on April 2, 2024, and throughout the month of April.

Join us in making your school and community a more inclusive place for autistic students and download your toolkit today! <https://celebratethespectrum.com/10408-2/toolkits/>

[Help Autism Ontario celebrate World Autism Day!](#) By holding your own school initiative in support of Autism Ontario, you will teach your students valuable lessons about community, giving, and inclusion by breaking down stigma about autism.

There are 3 ways to show your support:

1. Join the Celebrate the Spectrum School Giving Challenge
2. Fly our flag during the month of April, or on April 2, 2024
3. Do both!

New Programs or Services



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“Paperwork Party”

Supporting Caregivers in Completing an Application for Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD)

- Date: March 6, 2024
- Time: 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM
- Link: <https://www.autismontario.com/civicrm/event/info?id=9187&reset=1>

Ausome Moms

Join us each month to meet with other moms, female caregivers, and transgender/non-binary folks. This casual setting allows you to socialize, share your experiences, or simply sit back and listen.

- Date: March 21, 2024
- Time: 7:30 PM – 9:00 PM
- Link: <https://www.autismontario.com/civicrm/event/info?id=9130&reset=1>

Webinar. Autism Ontario Presents: Exploring Autism

We will discuss autism and neurodiversity, the features of autism, and provide information on how autistic people may perceive and interact with their environment. We will also discuss how you can be an autistic ally, offering practical tips and strategies on how to create an inclusive environment and support autistic people in your home, school, or community.

- Date: March 25, 2024
- Time: 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM
- Link: <https://www.autismontario.com/civicrm/event/info?id=9192&reset=1>

Rad Dads

Join us monthly to meet with other dads, male caregivers, and transgender/non-binary folks. This casual setting allows you to socialize, share your experiences, or sit back and listen.

- Date: March 25, 2024
- Time: 7:30 PM – 9:00 PM
- Link: <https://www.autismontario.com/civicrm/event/info?id=9161>

Website: [AutismOntario.com](https://www.autismontario.com)

Julie Sorhaitz, Learning Disability Association – Durham Region March Report:

Power to Achieve Scholarship information will be distributed after March break, including details for the online brainstorming session for students.

2.7. Correspondence



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2.7.1. Response from Special Education / Success for All Branch, Ministry of Education

Deferred to next meeting.

2.7.2. Participation House, SEAC Seat

Deferred to next meeting.

3. Other Business

3.1. Board Communications

3.2. Motion to Adjourn

3.2.1. The next meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee will be held on Tuesday, April 9, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.

Motion: SS-2024-03-05-06

Motion to Adjourn

Motion moved by Shona Casola and seconded by Alex Massis

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of March 5, 2024, adjourn.”
(CARRIED)

3.3. Closing Prayer

Closing prayer was offered by Paula Sorhaitz. The meeting was adjourned at 8:47pm.

Julie Sorhaitz
Interim Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee

Paula Sorhaitz
Superintendent of Education, Resource

Recording Secretary: Paige Wiggans