



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

## **Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

Durham Catholic District School Board

December 7, 2021 at 7:30 PM

### **Virtual Meeting**

#### **Present:**

V. Adamo (Chair, VOICE for the Hearing Impaired), J. Sorhaitz (Learning Disabilities Ontario), J. McCafferty (Trustee), J. Oldman (Trustee), S. Casola (Autism Ontario), W. Heeney (Durham Down Syndrome Association), A. Massis, and A. Dressekie (Community Representatives)

#### **Staff Present:**

S. Lee-Fernandes (Superintendent of Education), D. Mullane (Mental Health Leader), C. Congrady (Student Services Coordinator), A. Roffey (Communications)

#### **SEAC Representatives:**

L. Wardle (Principal/Vice Principal Representative), T. Robertson (APSSP Representative), M. Cope (CUPE Representative), L. Jemmott (OECTA Representative)

1. Opening
  - 1.1. Land Acknowledgements
  - 1.2. Memorials and Prayer - V. Adamo

Chair Adamo called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m., offered the opening prayer, and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

- 1.3. Roll Call and Apologies
- 1.4. Call to Order
- 1.5. Approval of the Agenda

Motion:

SS-2021-12-07-01

Approval of Agenda

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Motion moved by Janice Oldman and motion seconded by Shona Casola.  
"That the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the agenda of  
the Tuesday, December 7, 2021 meeting, as printed."

CARRIED

1.6. Approval of the Minutes of the October 5, 2021 SEAC Meeting

Motion:

SS-2021-12-07-02

Approval of the Minutes

Motion moved by Jim McCafferty and motion seconded by Walter Heeney.  
"That the special Education Advisory Committee approve the Minutes of  
the October 5, 2021 meeting as submitted."

CARRIED

1.7. Approval of the Minutes of the November 2, 2021 SEAC Meeting

Motion:

Motion:

SS-2021-12-07-03

Approval of the Minutes

Motion moved by Janice Oldman and motion seconded by Alex Massis.  
"That the special Education Advisory Committee approve the Minutes of  
the November 2, 2021 meeting as submitted."

CARRIED

1.8. Declarations of Interest

None

2. Items for Information/Decision

2.1. Announcements

None

2.2. Finalize Goals for SEAC

The Committee agreed to add the following goals to the SEAC calendar:

- Building greater capacity around the connection between students with Special Education Needs and Mental Health
- Support return to learning
- Evidence-based strategies specific to reading instruction

- Include Special Education Review as a discussion item going forward.

## 2.3. Presentations

### 2.3.1. Project Search - Christine Congrady

Christine Congrady, Student Services Coordinator, introduced "Project Search" a unique transition-to-work program for high school students in their final year who have a diagnosed intellectual or developmental disability and are hoping to gain paid employment upon graduation.

Christine provided an in-depth description of the program and has taken the lead ensuring that this initiative is brought to the DCDSB and implemented in the upcoming school year.

Christine answered questions as they arose.

### 2.3.2. Special Education Review - Susie Lee-Fernandes

Superintendent Lee-Fernandes presented the Special Education Plan and informed that the purpose of the review is to ensure all members within the board have a shared vision and understanding of DCDSB's Special Education Plan while recognizing and removing systemic barriers. The review will also ensure transparent oversights and accountability for the timely and effective accommodations and modifications to programming and services.

Superintendent Lee-Fernandes emphasized the importance of compliance with legislation, policy, and Ministry of Education directives related to special education. The Board's goal is to provide the best possible learning environment, opportunities, and supports to ensure that every student is successful, regardless of background or personal circumstance.

Superintendent Lee-Fernandes cited the 7 guiding principles for program planning:

- All students can succeed
- Each student has his or her own unique patterns of learning
- Successful instructional practices are founded on evidence-based research, tempered by experience

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- Universal design and differentiated instruction are effective and interconnected means of meeting the learning or productivity needs of any group of students
- Classroom teachers are the key educators for a student's literacy and numeracy development
- Classroom teachers need the support of the larger community to create a learning environment that supports all students
- Fairness is not sameness

Superintendent Lee-Fernandes shared the committees that are part of the Special Education Review:

- Working Committees
- Partners in Education Committee
- Special Education Leadership Team

The Special Education Review areas of focus:

- Standard 2.1 -The Board's General Model for Special Education
- Standard 2.8 -Special Education Placements Provided by the Board
- Standard 2.3 - Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies
- Allocation of resources and support personnel
- Standard 2.5 - Educational and Other Assessments
- Standard 2.9 - Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

Superintendent Lee-Fernandes provided a breakdown of approximate timelines and goals of the sub-committee meetings throughout the school year.

Superintendent Lee-Fernandes answered questions as they arose.

2.4. Business arising from previous meeting

2.4.1. Review of Draft Letter to Ministry of Education in support of Bill 172

Motion:

SS-2021-12-07-04

Approval of letter as drafted

Motion moved by Jim McCafferty and motion seconded by Janice Oldman. "That the special Education Advisory Committee approve the letter to the Minister of Education in support of Bill 172 as drafted." CARRIED

## 2.5. Staff Reports

### 2.5.1. Coordinator's Report - Helen Killoran

Christine Congrady reported on behalf of Helen Killoran.

- Monthly virtual Program Support Teacher meetings continue
- Monthly mentoring sessions for new Program Support Teachers continue to explore skill development and sharing of best practices
- Elementary Progress Reports were sent home on November 8, 2021
- Quadmester 2 began November 12, 2021
- Quadmester 1 report cards were sent home on November 19, 2021
- Quadmester 2 Secondary IEPs went home December 2, 2021
- Upcoming December Sharing of Excellence Series

Teaching New Skills – participants will learn about selecting life skills, developing comprehensive strategies, and monitoring skill development.

Christine provided a breakdown of the number of DCDSB Students with IEPs, the percentage of students with Educational Assistant Support, the number of Assistive Technology devices and the number of students and schools receiving DCART support.

### 2.5.2. Mental Health Leader's Report - Diane Mullane

A number of capacity-building opportunities were offered for staff in November:

- On November 16, we held an after-school SafeTALK session, which was full at 30 participants, with a waitlist.
- The Supporting Minds 3-part Mental Health Literacy series was also offered virtually over three Thursdays in November and was well-attended with between 20-25 participants in each session. These sessions help educators recognize signs and symptoms of a developing mental health problem and provide support for students who struggle with anxiety problems, mood problems, and attention/ hyperactivity/ impulsivity problems.
- On December 1 and 2, DCDSB hosted Violence Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) level 1 training. As part of our community's collaborative approach to assessing and responding to potential violence in schools, the session was attended by 41 participants, including school board staff and community partners.

In November, the Talking About Mental Illness (TAMI) virtual classroom program was finally launched in three DCDSB Elementary schools and at the Father Don alternative education site. In this adapted version of the program, the lessons are taught by the teacher as always, but the speaker sessions are done virtually with a TAMI facilitator bringing video-taped personal stories of people with lived experience. So far, the virtual program has been well-received. Intermediate classrooms in eight additional DCDSB schools will be participating in the virtual classroom program over the school year.

The Staff Wellness Committee conducted a "Meet and Greet" with school-level staff wellness reps to share planned initiatives. As the COVID pandemic drags on and the disproportionate impacts become even more apparent, staff well-being is an ongoing concern. Our Staff Wellness Committee has been providing weekly communications to staff through the "Weekly Buzz," (internal staff newsletter) and beginning in January, monthly events centered around a "mind, body, spirit" theme will be hosted.

Student leadership in the area of mental health is alive and well. Some schools have continued to run active student wellness groups, throughout the pandemic. Over the past month, I've had the

privilege of working with two secondary student groups on two different initiatives. A Paul Dwyer teacher has mobilized a peer-to-peer education program on substance use, using resources and program materials that they had previously received at a Durham Youth Drug Awareness Committee (DYDAC) conference and a Fr. Leo J Austin teacher has been working with a group of four leadership students to deliver mental health literacy lessons in grade 9 Health and Phys-Ed and Religion classes.

Finally, on November 30, several of Student Services regulated mental health professionals (Social Workers and Psychological Services staff) participated in part three of an expertise-level training: Suicide Risk Assessment and Management with Youth with a psychologist from McMaster Children's Hospital.

#### 2.5.3. Superintendent's Report - Susie Lee-Fernandes

Superintendent Lee-Fernandes welcomed Erin Troost and Teresa Varrasso, Speech-Language Pathologists, and Morlan Washington, Coach/Advocate for Black students to the Student Services Team.

Superintendent Lee-Fernandes informed the Committee that the voluntary student census is well underway and the administration will take place in April of 2022.

She also shared that the Equity Leads, one representative from each school, will reengage in 2 full days of training during the months of February and April.

The Resource and Framework Document: Handling Incidents of Racism and Discrimination has been shared with all staff. The board is currently working on developing a companion document that will be specific for students and families.

Superintendent Lee-Fernandes reported that a memo from the Ministry of Education was received on November 15, 2021. The memo stated that the Ministry has once again suspended the requirement to submit Special Incidence Portion (SIP) claims. The SIP allocation for the current school year will be based on the greater of the 2019-2020 allocation or the average of the previous three years. An additional 5% increase will be applied to this number.

Superintendent Lee-Fernandes shared that in regard to the Right to Read Inquiry, Academic and Student Services departments will be working together on a committee to review current board practices in reading instruction, resources, and assessments. They will be sharing and collaborating around initiatives and intentional learning and supports across the system to provide guidance to educators and in turn, better support the students.

Motion:

2021-12-07-04

Approval of the Approval of the December 7, 2021 verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports

Motion moved by Jim McCafferty and motion seconded by Janice Oldman. "THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept the verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports of the December 7, 2021 meeting."

CARRIED

## 2.6. Association Reports

Learning Disabilities Association of the Region of Durham - J. Sorhaitz

Events:

December 2021

While there are minimal events scheduled before the holiday season, please see the open date events and large variety of on-demand recordings below while we keep an eye on the upcoming events in 2022.

Open date:

- ONBIDA Project Read Online Webinar Courses "Framing Your Thoughts"

The Framing Your Thoughts program is centered on a sequential and systematic method of instruction designed to help students write and arrange accurate and creative sentences and paragraphs. This sequential and multisensory program is part of the Project Read® curriculum, a research-based language arts program. ONBIDA is pleased to offer these programs at a special discount for Canadian educators.

- CADDAC 2020 PREP (Parent Readiness Education Program) Recordings CADDAC Webinars

PREP, CADDAC's Parent Readiness Education Program, is a comprehensive 10-part series of filmed, online presentations.

Each presentation is approximately 1.25 hours in length and presented by Heidi Bernhardt. Fee applies.

- CADDAC Spring 2020 ADHD Workshops Livestream Recordings  
CADDAC Webinars

Recorded in April 2020, the recording includes access to 7 workshops geared to parents of children with ADHD, adults with ADHD and their families.

Resources:

- LDAO LD@Home <https://www.ldathome.ca>
- LDAO LD@School <https://www.ldatschool.ca>

YouTube channel:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHEA\\_To2NoyMMKitLII-JQw/about](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHEA_To2NoyMMKitLII-JQw/about)

- Ontario Branch of International Dyslexia Association (ONBIDA)  
YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/user/DyslexiaAssociation>

A variety of videos from ONBIDA's webinars

- International Dyslexia Association (IDA) YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/c/InternationalDyslexiaAssociation>

A variety of videos from IDA's various webinars and conferences

- Bytesized PD - DDSB YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeh8CGhc-2zSY-mC61dMT3g/videos>

Short videos on many aspects of education technology, including assistive technology how-to videos

- Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada (CADDAC) YouTube channel  
<https://www.youtube.com/c/adhdvid/about>

This youtube channel features video and audio that deals with an often misunderstood disorder... ADHD.

The channel is a presentation of CADDAC (Centre For ADHD Awareness, Canada) [www.caddac.ca](http://www.caddac.ca)

- Sagonaska School YouTube channel

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0\\_Hza9fH6-UtxV7ooxaRnA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0_Hza9fH6-UtxV7ooxaRnA)

Videos about various aspects of learning disabilities

### **Grandview Kids - Claudia Nossier**

The Grandview Kids School-Based Rehabilitation (SBR) Services clinicians are happy to be back providing regular services to eligible students. Beginning in January 2022, A Communicative Disorders Assistant will join the team, working under the supervision of our Speech-Language Pathologists.

Over the next several months, the SBR clinical managers will conduct a comprehensive review of service pathways, looking for opportunities for improved efficiencies and client experience. We look forward to working with our School Board partners and families during this evaluation.

Website: [GrandviewKids.ca](http://GrandviewKids.ca)

### **Autism Ontario – Durham Chapter - S. Casola**

We have a number of excellent webinars available “on-demand” on our website:

<https://www.autismontario.com/programs-services/webinars/recent-and-upcoming-webinars>

New Programs or Services:

We have a number of distance program offerings – primarily virtual workshops being and programing for children and youth offered in Durham Region – all can be found here:

[https://www.autismontario.com/events?custom325=Durham&eventtype\\_id=All](https://www.autismontario.com/events?custom325=Durham&eventtype_id=All)

Updates and Information:

On Dec. 3, the provincial government announced their selection of the Independent Intake Organization (IIO), which will help families navigate the program from intake to funding. Autism Ontario was one of 3 organizations announced to collaboratively deliver this service cross-province along with Accerta Services Inc., McMaster University and HealthCare 365. The IIO

partners bring together significant experience in administering public programs, supporting children and youth on the autism spectrum and their caregivers, care coordination, service navigation, research, and healthcare education.

The IIO will begin supporting families in spring 2022. For the full announcement you can view it here:

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1001279/ontario-increasing-access-to-services-for-children-with-autism>

Website: [www.autismontario.com](http://www.autismontario.com)

## 2.7. Correspondence

### 2.7.1. Letter from Trillium Lakelands DSB - dated October 5, 2021

The letter addressed to the Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education from Janice Balfour, Chair of SEAC, Trillium Lakelands District School Board writing in support of Bill 172, An Act in Relation to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. They asked the Minister to acknowledge their support for Bill 172 to ensure that educators have the knowledge and skills they need to support children and youth impacted by FASD to reach their full potential.

The Committee agreed that no further action was needed as the letter in support of Bill 172 had been drafted.

### 2.7.2. Letter from Waterloo Region DSB - dated October 19, 2021

The letter addressed to the Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education from Sara Penny, Chair of SEAC, Waterloo Region District School Board writing in support of online Learning Supports and Universal Design for Learning in provincial online learning resources and the platforms used to access these resources. They request that the Ministry commit to ensuring that all online and/or learning courses be consistently maintained with enabled links and resources that meet accessibility standards.

Although the DCDSB has had the privilege to be able to provide students with the necessary technology and a well-supported online learning environment, the Committee agreed to draft a letter to Minister Lecce in support of this action so that all students in all areas have the same access and resources.

## 3. Other Business

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3.1. Board Communications

None

3.2. Motion to Adjourn

Motion:

SS-2021-12-07-05

The meeting adjourned at 9:18 pm

Motion moved by Janice Oldman and motion seconded by S. Casola.

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of December 7, 2021 adjourn.”

3.2.1. The next meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee will be held on Tuesday, January 4, 2022 @ 7:30 pm

3.3. Closing Prayer