



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

Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
Durham Catholic District School Board  
May 9, 2023 at 7:30 PM  
Virtual and at CEC – North & South Board Rooms

**Members Present:**

V. Adamo (VOICE for the Hearing Impaired) virtually; W. Heeney (Durham Down Syndrome Association); J. Sorhaitz (Learning Disabilities Ontario) virtually; C. Nosseir (Grandview Kids) virtually; A. Massis (Community Representative)

**Trustees Present:**

J. McCafferty, virtually

**Staff Present:**

P. Sorhaitz (Superintendent of Education); Teresa Ezquerra (Student Services Consultant); S. Phoenix (Senior Manager, of Social Work and Child and Youth Counsellors, Lead Attendance Officer); E. McCall (Communications) virtually

**SEAC Representatives:**

D. Assenza (CPCO Representative) virtually, B. Larson (APSSP Representative) virtually, L. Jemmott (OECTA Representative), M. Cope (CUPE Representative) virtually

**Regrets:**

Robert De Souza (Trustee); S. Casola (Autism Ontario); C. Julien (Community Representative)

1. Opening

1.1. Memorials and Prayer

Chair Adamo called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m., offered the opening prayer and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.2. Land Acknowledgements

1.3. Roll Call and Apologies

1.4. Call to Order

1.5. Approval of the Agenda

**Motion:**

SS-2023-05-09-01

Approval of Agenda

Motion moved by Jim McCafferty and motion seconded by Walter Heeney.

"That the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the agenda of the Tuesday, May 9, 2023 meeting, as printed." CARRIED

1.6. Approval of the minutes of the April 11, 2023 SEAC Meeting

**Motion:**

SS-2023-05-09-02

Approval of Minutes

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and motion seconded by Jim McCafferty.

"That the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the Minutes of the Tuesday, April 11, 2023 meeting, as printed." CARRIED

1.7. Declarations of Interest

2. Items for Information/Decision

2.1. Announcements

None

2.2. Presentations

2.2.1. 2022-2023 Special Education Plan - Teresa Ezquerra

Teresa Ezquerra, Student Services Consultant, shared that in accordance with the Education Act, every school board is required to maintain a Special Education Plan following the guidelines outlined in the Ministry of Education document, "Standards for School Boards' Special Education Plans."

There are five standards to the plan which support the goal of ensuring that students with exceptional needs receive the best quality education possible. Guidelines require that boards ensure its SEAC is involved in the annual review of the plan.

Teresa provided an overview of the changes to the 2022-2023 Special Education Plan.

The committee was invited to review the [Special Education Plan](#) on the DCDSB website and provide input/feedback to the June SEAC meeting. Recommendations will be considered/included in the final plan. All revisions will be updated by July 2023.

2.3. Discussion Items

2.3.1. Special Education Funding – 2023-2024

Superintendent Sorhaitz provided a brief overview of the Special Education Funding for 2023-2024 and the concerns the board has surrounding funding for special education.

Superintendent Sorhaitz expressed concern about the shortage of Educational Assistants (EA) and how this funding will not provide additional personnel.

After discussion, the committee agreed that a letter be drafted to the Ministry of Education requesting additional funding for more EAs and brought back to the June SEAC meeting.

2.4. Business arising from the previous meeting

2.4.1. Draft letter - Requesting the option to extend the time students with differing abilities have to remain or continue in Secondary School beyond year 7 and beyond age 21

**Motion:**

SS-2023-05-09-04

Approval of letter as drafted

Motion moved by Jim McCafferty and motion seconded by Claudia Nosseir.

“That the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the drafted letter to the Minister of Education requesting the Ministry consider providing the option to extend the time students with differing abilities have to remain or continue in Secondary School beyond year 7 and beyond age 21.

2.5. Staff Reports

**Coordinator's Report provided by Teresa Ezquerra**

The Sharing of Excellence for May included the following professional development sessions:

- Sensory Programming Make and Take
- Structured Work Task Folder Make and Take
- How to Use Behavioural Contracts

**Project SEARCH Update**

The Skills Assessment and Interview Day were held on April 26th. Eighteen applicants went through a two-hour session with six 15-minute stations. One station had applicants engage in an interview with three people (one from each partner, DCDSB, Abilities Centre and The Region of Durham). Five other stations mimicked skills needed in various internships during the Project SEARCH year.

On May 1st, letters were sent to the ten successful applicants. Priority was given to applicants going into their final year of high school for 2023-24 who otherwise would not have an opportunity to apply to Project SEARCH again.

May 8th was Signing Day. The ten applicants (interns) came to the Catholic Education Centre to sign the Project SEARCH contract. An information package and a Project SEARCH hoodie were provided to each intern to start their journey. Intern parents/guardians/caregivers were also invited to share in the Signing Day. Photographs were taken with the intern, family, and all partners to mark the occasion.

All unsuccessful applicants were invited to register with the Abilities Centre to explore skill development programs. Information Night is on Thursday, June 8, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. for all unsuccessful applicants and their families.

### **Mental Health Report provided by Shelley Phoenix on behalf of Dr. Michaela Evans**

On May 1st, the Suicide Prevention/Life Promotion Workshop was run for two groups of educators. This training was designed for boards by School Mental Health Ontario, and the DCDSB was the first board in the province to offer this training and will provide feedback to SMHO.

May 1-5 was Catholic Education and Mental Health Week. Schools participated in daily announcements and in-class activities. Various schools hosted larger events (i.e. Therapy dog visits at DO'C), and some schools chose to focus on Catholic Education Week last week and focus on Mental Health on an alternative week.

The Mental Health and Well-Being Parent, Guardian and Caregiver Mental Health Series will continue as follows:

- April 18th- Youth Engagement - Youth and Substance Use, presented by Pinewood of Lakeridge of Health
- April 25th: Life Promotion/Suicide Prevention - Prepare, Prevent and Respond, presented by DCDSB Student Services Staff
- May 2nd: Understanding Mood and Anxiety Difficulties, presented by Ontario Shores
- May 9th: Game-bling - When Gaming meets Gambling, presented by the YMCA's Youth Gambling Awareness Program
- May 16th: The Intersection of Equity and Mental Health, presented by the Black Health Alliance.

### **Superintendent's Report**

Program Support Teacher (PST) Meetings were held today with a focus on Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and best practices, Early Intervention Classrooms (EIC) updates, and the referral process. The meeting also included a presentation from a team of Literacy Consultants from Academic Services and a Student Services Speech-Language Pathologist who focused on Reading screeners and the importance of using reading screeners in elementary and secondary.

In April, Student Services provided an in-depth presentation to Trustees about the vast support that the Department provides students with special education needs.

The PPM 149 – Community Partnerships Meeting was held on April 25th to review the community partnerships.

The Student Services Staff Meeting focused on Restorative Practices. Special Education Team Meeting, which included the Durham Catholic Autism Resource Team (DCART) and the Durham Catholic Behaviour Resource Team (DCBRT), was centered on Best practices and future planning.

2.5.1. Student Services Report - Michaela Evans, Teresa Ezquerra, Paula Sorhaitz

**Motion:**

SS-2023-05-09-03

Approval of the May 9, 2023, verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports

Motion moved by Walter Heeney and motion seconded by Alex Massis.

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept the verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports of the May 9, 2023 meeting.”

2.6. Association Reports

**Grandview Kids- Claudia Nosseir**

On March 29, 2022, the Ontario government announced the creation of 22 SmartStart Hubs across the province to connect families with child development services in their local communities. SmartStart Hubs act as a clear point of entry to child development services for parents and caregivers who have concerns about their child’s development.

Grandview Kids was selected as the SmartStart Hub in Durham Region.

SmartStart Hubs are to be considered the “front door” to child development services. Families will be warmly greeted and will have a conversation with a professional about their concerns, their child’s development and strengths, and any support that might be needed.

In some cases, the agency that is the SmartStart Hub will be able to offer services and programs; depending on what is recommended, the SmartStart Hub might also provide a supportive connection to families with our partners in the area that can provide services.

Families won’t need to tell their story twice because the SmartStart Hubs works directly with agencies in your community, potentially improving the timeliness of service initiation with our community partner.

Who can access the SmartStart Hub?

- Anyone with a concern about their child’s development can contact the SmartStart Hub to start the process of assessment.
- Children living in Ontario aged zero (birth) to 19, or up to age 21 if they are in school, may be eligible for SmartStart Hubs.
- No diagnosis or referral is required for SmartStart Hubs.
- There is no cost to clients or caregivers for SmartStart Hub referrals or assessments.

How do I access the Grandview Kids SmartStart Hub?

- Families who have general concerns about their child’s development can access our SmartStart Hub and fill out the self-referral form.

For more information and FAQs, check out our <https://grandviewkids.ca/smartstarhub/>

## 2.7. Correspondence

### 2.7.1. Letter from Bruce-Grey CDSB re: SIP Funding

The letter addressed to the Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education from Lisa Stader, Trustee, Bruce-Grey CDSB requests that the Minister evaluates the true costs associated with SIP claims and that the funding model be reviewed and changed to reflect the increasing and more complex needs of students with special needs.

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

### 2.7.2. Letter from KPRDSB re: Special Incidence Portion (SIP) Claim Funding

The letter addressed to the Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education, from Angela Lloyd, Chair of SEAC, Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB requests that the Minister review the data used to determine Special Education grants in order to assess the true costs of supporting students with special education needs.

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

## 3. Other Business

### 3.1. Board Communications

None

### 3.2. Motion to Adjourn

### 3.3. **Motion:**

SS-2023-05-09-05

Motion to Adjourn

Motion moved by Jim McCafferty and motion seconded by Julie Sorhaitz.

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of May 9, 2023, adjourn.”

3.3.1. The next meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee will be held on Tuesday, June 6, 2023 @ 7:30 pm

3.4. Closing Prayer

Closing prayer was offered by J. McCafferty.

The meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

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Valerie Adamo  
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee

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Paula Sorhaitz  
Superintendent of Education

Recording Secretary: Delfina Pinto