



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

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

Durham Catholic District School Board

September 13, 2022 at 7:30 PM

### **Virtual Meeting**

#### **Members Present:**

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

#### **Trustees Present:**

J. Oldman, J. McCafferty

#### **Staff Present:**

S. Lee-Fernandes (Superintendent of Education), S. Phoenix (Senior Manager, Social Work and Child Youth Counsellors/ Chief Attendance Officer

T. Ezquerro (Student Services Consultant), F. Pileggi (Communications)

#### **SEAC Representatives:**

D. Assenza (CPCO Representative), B. Larson (APSSP Representative), L. Jemmott (OECTA Representative)

1. Opening
  - 1.1. Land Acknowledgements
  - 1.2. Memorials and Prayer
  - 1.3. Roll Call and Apologies
  - 1.4. Call to Order

Chair Adamo called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m., offered the opening prayer, and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

- 1.5. Approval of the Agenda

#### **Motion:**

SS-2022-09-13-01

Approval of Agenda

"That the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the agenda of the Tuesday, September 13, 2022 meeting, as printed."

Motion moved by J. McCafferty and motion seconded by J. Oldman.

**CARRIED**

1.6. Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting

**Motion:**

SS-2022-09-13-02

Approval of the Minutes

"That the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the minutes of the Tuesday, June 7, 2022 meeting, as printed."

Motion moved by J. McCafferty and motion seconded by J. Oldman.

CARRIED

1.7. Declarations of Interest

None

2. Items for Information/Decision

2.1. Announcements

Chair Adamo announced that Akilah Dressekie will no longer be sitting on the committee. The group she represented previously, Black Parents Support Group is now known as Sawubona. The organization lead appointed Candace Julien as the new representative on SEAC. Candace will formally join SEAC at the next meeting.

Superintendent Lee-Fernandes also announced that Faeron Pellegi will be replacing Amanda Roffey in Communications. Faeron is the Manager of Communications and Strategic Initiatives. Welcome to SEAC, Faeron!

2.2. Presentations

2.2.1. Lead Process - Marta Swirydowicz, Kelsey Ford, Pinder DaSilva

Pinder DaSilva, Senior Director of Programs and Services, and Kelsey Ford, Manager of Skills Department of the Abilities Centre presented an in-depth overview of the LEAD Process.

The LEAD (Leading Equitable & Accessible Delivery) Process is a system-integrated methodology for achieving accessibility and inclusion within organizations and businesses. This initiative guides organizations through a facilitation process that results in an action-oriented work plan to assist organizations in embedding accessibility and inclusion within organizational frameworks and systems to create transformational change.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- Abilities Centre
- The Challenge
- Objectives
- LEAD Themes
- LEAD - Theme Examples
- Process
- Impact

Ms. Ford stated that under the nine LEAD themes, they look at continuous improvement through a self-assessment process based on indicators to help organizations to see where they are at and where they could be. Ms. Ford provided a LEAD theme example associated with the strategy theme under the organizational management category. She advised that the staff of the organization will do a self-assessment to identify the strengths and areas for improvement by using the indicators under the themes on a rating system to help point the way towards continuous improvement.

Ms. DaSilva provided an overview of the steps of the LEAD process and stated that it is not just one-time training; it is a process. She noted that following the evaluation of the organization, an improvement plan will be brought back to the organization to make adjustments and that three follow-up sessions are held to evaluate the impact that LEAD had on the organization.

Ms. DaSilva informed that LEAD will create greater confidence within the organization, the employment of persons with disabilities, leverage the spending power of persons with disabilities, and social and economic return on investment.

Ms. DaSilva and Ms. Ford answered questions from the Committee.

## 2.3. Discussion Items

### 2.3.1. Ministry of Education: Learning Recovery Action Plan

Superintendent Lee-Fernandes shared the Ministry's Plan to Catch up. The plan includes five pillars:

- Back to normal
- Expanded student support – tutoring, literacy, special education
- Preparing students for jobs of tomorrow

- More money to build schools and improve education
- Mental health: the foundation for student success

2.3.2. Goal Setting for SEAC

SEAC will continue to increase their level of engagement and participation in issues and initiatives connected to special education in the board.

2.3.3. Calendar Review

Superintendent Lee-Fernandes asked the committee for any suggestions of presentations that they would like to see.

The Special Education Review, LEAD Process, Project Search, Right to Read, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and Anti-Racism were some of the topics that were suggested.

Chair Adamo asked that committee members bring forward ideas that their organizations would like to share, so they could be added to the SEAC calendar.

2.4. Business arising from previous meeting

None

2.5. Staff Reports

2.5.1. Coordinator's Report - Teresa Ezquerra

Teresa Ezquerra, Consultant for Special Education, shared that Christine Congrady, Student Services Coordinator attended Project Search Conference in Baltimore, Maryland from July 25th to 29th which entailed the sharing of best practices around the Project Search in many organizations and school boards in the U.S. and Canada. The conference showcased Project Search in action and provided tips on how this initiative can be implemented at the DCDSB.

Autism After School Social Skills Development courses; Peers and Friendship Lab will run online and in person, depending on registrations. Parents will be offered both options.

The June BBQ for students with ASD, in the after-school programs, was a success. Over 40 families attended Windreach Farms to celebrate the year-end.

2.5.2. Mental Health Leader's Report - Shelley Phoenix

Shelley Phoenix, Sr. Mgr. Social Work and Child Youth Counsellors/ Chief Attendance Officer shared that this year, we will focus on 5

priorities as set out in our Together for Mental Health Action Plan: 2022-2023.

An over-arching priority for this year will be to centre the needs of students disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, social determinants of health, racism and/or oppression. As such, we have woven in key actions across the three tiers to support this throughout the priorities listed below:

- **Priority #1: Focus on Foundations for Sustainable School Mental Health**
- **Priority #2: Amplify the promotive and protective influence of home, school and community**
- **Priority #3: Elevate student participation and leadership in mental health promotion and stigma reduction**
- **Priority #4: Identify and address emerging and escalating mental health problems**
- **Priority #5: Focused support and strong safety nets for students with the most intensive mental health needs**

School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) has introduced new resources and tools to support these areas and has redesigned its website for easier access.

All Administrators were asked to share these resources with their staff and to continue to encourage their use throughout the school year.

On September 13 & 14 - Teacher information sessions for:  
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Novel Study for Intermediate Students

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

Superintendent Lee-Fernandes acknowledged and thanked Diane Mullane and Dr. Jessica Abrams for their dedication, commitment and support of the new staff who took over their positions.

Superintendent Lee-Fernandes introduced the following staff:

- Dr. Michaela Evans, the new Senior Manager of Psychological and Speech-Language Services and Lead Psychologists. Dr. Evans comes with a wealth of information experience and a fresh perspective and lens which is welcomed.

- Yulan Fisher-Brown has been with the board for several years as a Social Worker. Yulan is the new Senior Manager of Mental Health Initiatives / Mental Health Leader.
- Jennifer Doleweerd, Behaviour Support Specialist (temporary)
- Susan McCaughey, Resource Teacher for Behaviour
- Laura O'Connor, Behaviour Support Specialist
- Liz Valero, Speech-Language Pathologist (temporary position starting in November)

Superintendent Lee-Fernandes also announced the resignation of Jenna Canning, Child and Youth Counsellor and Stacey Carroll, Speech-Language Pathologist.

### **Special Education Review**

Superintendent Lee-Fernandes stated that the LEAD process will be used to structure the review and ensure that equity and inclusion is incorporated across the board as every department has a role to play. This would also support greater understanding and collaboration across departments to support all students. The original areas identified last year will continue to be priorities for review.

### **Motion:**

SS-2022-09-13-03

Approval of the September 13, 2022 verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept the verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports of the September 13, 2022 meeting.”

Motion moved by J. McCafferty and motion seconded by S. Casola.  
CARRIED

## 2.6. Association Reports

### **Autism Ontario - S. Casola**

Upcoming Meetings or Conferences:

Both programs and services and workshops are listed on this page that can be accessed virtually and are available in the Durham Region.

[https://www.autismontario.com/events?custom\\_325=Central+East&event\\_type\\_id=All&custom\\_356=All](https://www.autismontario.com/events?custom_325=Central+East&event_type_id=All&custom_356=All)

Updates and Information:

Please see below for information about the replacement campaign for “Raise the Flag” to occur in April 2023 which has been newly branded “Celebrate the Spectrum” for world autism day.

2.7. Correspondence

None

3. Other Business

3.1. Board Communications

3.2. Motion to Adjourn

**Motion:**

SS-2022-09-13-04

Motion to Adjourn

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of September 13, 2022 adjourn.”

Moved by J. Oldman and motion seconded by A. Massis.

CARRIED

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

3.3. Closing Prayer

Closing prayer was offered by Trustee McCafferty.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

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Valerie Adamo  
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee

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Susie Lee-Fernandes  
Superintendent of Education

Recording Secretary: Delfina Pinto