



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

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Meeting

Dec 5, 2023, from 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM

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

Members Present:

Valerie Adamo, Chair, VOICE for the Hearing Impaired (In-Person)
Walter Heeney, Vice Chair, Durham Down Syndrome Association (In-Person)
Donna Callaghan, Alternate, Durham Down Syndrome Association (In-Person)
Claudia Nosseir, Grandview Kids (Virtual)
Julie Sorhaitz, Learning Disabilities Ontario (In-Person)
Alex Massis, Community Representative (Virtual)

Trustees Present:

Jim McCafferty (Virtual)
Robert De Souza (In-Person)

Staff Present:

Shelley Phoenix, Senior Manager, Social Work and Child Youth Counsellors/Chief
Attendance Officer (In-Person)
Francesca Mosier, Student Services Coordinator (In-Person)
Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education (In-Person)

SEAC Representatives:

Lo Davis, OECTA Representative (Virtual)
Narmilee Dhayanandhan, APSSP Representative (Virtual)
Jennifer Harvey, CPCO Representative (Virtual)

Regrets:

Shona Casola, Autism Ontario
Candace Julien, Community Representative
Maureen Cope, CUPE Representative

Minutes

1. Opening

Valerie Adamo called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m., offered the opening prayer and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.1. Land Acknowledgements

1.2. Memorials and Prayers

1.3. Roll Call and Apologies

1.4. Call to Order



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1.5. Approval of the Agenda

Motion: SS-2023-12-05-01

Approval of the Agenda

Motion moved by Walter Heeney and seconded by Julie Sorhaitz

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the agenda of the Tuesday, December 5, 2023, meeting, as presented.” (CARRIED)

1.6. Approval of the Minutes of November 7, 2023, SEAC Meeting

Motion: SS-2023-12-05-02

Approval of Minutes

Motion moved by Walter Heeney and seconded by Claudia Nosseir

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the Minutes of the Tuesday, November 7, 2023, meeting, as printed.” (CARRIED)

1.7. Declarations of Interest

None

2. Items for Information/Decision

2.1. Announcements

2.2. Presentations

2.2.1. Numeracy

2.2.2. EQAO Results

Dan Allen, Assistant to the Superintendent and Math Lead, alongside Concetta Siqueira, Numeracy Support Teacher, presented Supporting Students with Special Education Needs in Mathematics and covered the following:

- Understanding Special Education Needs in Mathematics
- Common Challenges Faced by Students
- EQAO Data
- Strategies for Inclusive Mathematics Instruction
- Implementation at DCDSB
- Resource & Support
- Q&A

As part of their introduction, Dan Allen shared that Math Lead is a new position this school year and his role oversees math instruction and professional development planning in DCDSB schools. Concetta Siqueira shared how she offers support to students on IEPs specially in math who are in Grade 6 – Grade 8. This is to support



closing any learning gaps before student move onto secondary schools.

Understanding Special Education Needs in Mathematics:

- All students can succeed.
- Each student has their own unique patterns of learning.
- The Classroom Teacher, Program Support Teacher, Educational Assistant, and family all play critical roles in student success in mathematics.
- The learning expectations outline developmentally appropriate key concepts and skills of mathematics across all of the strands that are interconnected and foundational.
- There is an important connection between procedural knowledge and conceptual understanding of mathematics.
- Zone of Proximal Development

Dan Allen and Concetta Siqueira emphasized the importance of IEPs and differentiated learning instruction and highlighted the diversity of learning needs and styles among students with special education needs.

Common Challenges Faced by Students:

- Remembering Math Facts and Formulas
- Processing Speed
- Difficulty Transferring Knowledge
- Visual/Spatial and Perceptual Issues
- Language Demands in Mathematics
- Self-Regulation/Anxiety

* These needs vary from student to student and can change over time. It's important for the student, the family, and the school team to work together to meet student learning needs.

Dan Allen and Concetta Siqueira shared EQAO Assessment Data for 2022-2023 for students with an IEP and students without an IEP, both within the Board and within the province for Grade 3 Math, Grade 6 Math, and Grade 9 Math. In DCDSB, students with an IEP achieve above province in Grade 3 Math, below in Grade 6 Math and within 1% in Grade 9 Math. Based on the 2022-2023 data, the decision was made to have Concetta Siquiera prioritize Grade 6-8 students.

They also presented a comparison between 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 EQAO data for students with an IEP in Grade 3 Math, Grade 6 Math, and Grade 9 Math. There was a slight increase in Grade 3 and Grade 7 results, and a slight decrease in Grade 9 results. As data is only available for 2 years it is difficult to identify trends. Additionally, between those years, the medium in which EQAO testing is provided has changed. It is now a timed assessment on a computer with only one opportunity, compared to previously a pencil to paper test. Typically, it takes 3 years to identify a trend.

DCDSB has been doing a lot of work around Growth Mindset and improving student's attitudes towards mathematics. The attitudinal data correlates with achievement data.

Strategies for Inclusive Mathematics Instruction:

- The teacher plays a critical role in student success in mathematics – using



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diagnostics to tailor programming, explicit teaching, monitoring, and adjusting to student's needs accordingly, while helping to foster a growth mindset.

- The use of concrete representations and tools is fundamental to learning mathematics in all grades and provides a way of representing both concepts and student understanding.
- Various opportunities to demonstrate learning and thinking in multiple ways.
- Multisensory learning approaches.
- Differentiated instruction strategies: tiered assignments and flexible grouping.
- Use of visual aids, manipulatives, and real-world examples.

Implementation at DCDSB:

- Math Manipulatives purchased for every school from K-12
- MathUP Resource purchased for all Grades 1 – 9
- Numeracy Resource Intervention Teachers, Numeracy Consultants, Numeracy Support Teacher for Students with Special Needs from Grades 6-8, Board Math Lead
- PST Math Manipulatives Elementary Inventory (24 items). Secondary has their own inventory.

Professional Development and Training:

- Mathematics Content Knowledge sessions provided to all administrators and to teachers; EQAO Data in Action Symposiums
- Math Manipulatives Learning Series for Program Support Teachers, focusing on concrete learning tools.
- Professional learning opportunities for Educators (Lunch & Learns, Staff Meetings, PA Days, Divisional Meetings, Summer Institute)

Dan Allen and Concetta Siqueira shared how in their roles they advocate for ongoing professional development for teachers to enhance their understanding of special education needs in mathematics and the importance of staying updated on evidence-based practices. At PST Monthly Meetings, they have been hosting a math manipulative learning series. Additionally, EQAO hosts monthly sessions.

Resources and Support:

- Your School Team!
- DCDSB Mathematics Webpage
 - Tutoring Supports for Families
 - Encouraging Positive Attitudes Toward Math
 - Math Games
 - Parent Curriculum Guides
 - Suggested Websites for Families
 - Problem of the Week @DCDSBMath on Twitter
- LD @ School website: www.ldatschool.ca

Dan Allen and Concetta Siqueira continue to provide information on available resources and support networks for teachers, including online communities, workshops, and educational organizations focused on special education in mathematics.



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2.3. Discussion Items

2.3.1. Ministry Updates

- 2.3.3.1. Summer Funding

Superintendent Paula Sorhaitz provided a brief update confirming DCDSB will have summer funding and having this knowledge earlier will allow us more time to plan.

2.4. Business arising from the Minutes

2.4.1. SEAC Letter re: Special Education Support (Superintendent's Report)

Motion: SS-2023-12-05-03

Approval of Business arising from previous minutes

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Robert De Souza

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the letter to the Ministry regarding Special Education Support.” (CARRIED)

2.5. Staff Reports

2.5.1. Student Services Report –Francesca Mosier Yulan Fisher-Brown, and Paula Sorhaitz

Francesca Mosier presented the **December Coordinator Report:**

- New PST Mentoring Program – November Session - new PSTs job shadowed their mentors.
- Sharing of Excellence in November – Boom Cards - Boom is a platform educators can use to create interactive, digital activities for students.
- November 24-25, 2023 – Council for Exceptional Children Special Education Conference – Christine Congrady led a 2-hour interactive workshop on honouring and meeting the needs of diverse learners through Universal Design for Learning
- November 28-29, 2023
 - Student Services Coordinators attended the Chiefs of Ontario Special Education Forum along with the Assistant Superintendent of Indigenous Education, Daniel Stargratt
 - Presentations and Breakout Sessions included information on Land-based Programs and Special Education, building capacity in First Nations School Education Programs, Jordan’s Principle, Culturally Relevant Oneida Sign Language and Training on Development Disabilities from an Indigenous Perspective

Project SEARCH Update:

- Focus during November: Maintaining Employment
 - Prioritizing, planning, and completing assigned tasks.
 - Self-monitoring professional behaviour.



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- Adjusting and managing change at work.
- Managing work tasks and a schedule.
- Understanding Performance Reviews
- this week: interns are completing their first round of internships.
- next week: Employment Planning Meetings led by the intern with parents/guardians, teacher, skills trainers, mentors, and job developers in attendance.
- week before Christmas holidays: Transition Week – in-class all day, reveal of second internships and preparation begin for the second internships that begin January 8th.

Shelley Phoenix presented the **Mental Health Report:**

- On November 29th the Talking about Mental Illness (TAMI) Coalition held their first secondary summit "Attitude of Gratitude" at Ontario Shores. This was the first summit to be held since 2019.
- Five DCDSB Secondary Schools attended, where they gained a deeper understanding about the connection between mental health and mental illness and how to gain support when they need it.
- All Saints students shared with summit attendees some of the work that their SOS group has been doing.
- 2 keynote speakers shared their stories:
 - Paul Ranger- Retired NHL player and former DCDSB student
 - Zoe- Jack.org speaker
- Participants engaged in small group sessions that encouraged discussions around stigma as well as the impact of gratitude.

Professional Development (PD):

- All staff partook in a keynote session recorded for DCDSB by Kevin Cameron, Executive Director for the Centre for Trauma Informed Practices
- Violent Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) Level 2 took place on November 28th and 29th.
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) Tune Up took place on November 21st.
- Mental Health First Aid is taking place December 5th and 6th.

Paula Sorhaitz presented the **Superintendent's Report:**

- Wednesday, November 29th was EA Appreciation Day

PST Learning – November:

The two new BCBA's, Nikki Hinan and Paige Pascoe, presented to PSTs on:

- Behaviour Escalation Continuum
- Safety Plans
- Continued collaboration with PSTs re: desired learning:
 - Alternative goals and report cards



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PST Learning – Looking Ahead:

- Next PST meeting is on December 12th.
- AODA training – connected to Student Services goal of leading inclusion efforts in DCDSB (Student Services Staff already received this training).
- Supporting students with executive functioning needs (Presentation by Dr. Susana Correia)

In an effort to continue to build capacity in the system, PSTs are receiving in servicing on Orbit Note (for secondary) and Read and Write (for elementary).

Lexia Training:

Additionally, DCDSB is offering Lexia Training to individuals outside of the role of PST on January 15. Collaborating with Academic Services, we are offering a full day pull out for primary teachers (voluntary). After receiving the training, additional licenses will be provided.

Motion: SS-2023-12-05-04

Approval of the December 5, 2023, verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader, and Superintendent Reports

Motion moved by Walter Heeney and seconded by Robert De Souza

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept the verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports of the December 5, 2023, meeting.”
(CARRIED)

2.6. Association Reports

Julie Sorhaitz noted that at the end of January, Learning Disabilities Ontario is partnering with the Whitby Public Library for Family Literacy Day.

Trustee Jim McCafferty provided a brief update on results of the DCDSB elections which took place at the Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees on Monday, November 27, 2023. Trustee Monique Forster has been re-elected to the position of Chair of the Board and Trustee Richard Damianopoulos has been elected as Vice-Chair of the Board.

Walter Heeney noted that the Knights of Columbus donated to St. Catherine of Siena C.S. thanks to their Coats for Kids fundraiser.

Valerie Adamo noted that VOICE for the Hearing Impaired is working hard to put camp back on for kids this summer.

2.7. Correspondence

3. Other Business

3.1. Board Communications



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3.2. Motion to Adjourn

Motion: SS-2023-12-05-05

Motion to Adjourn

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Robert De Souza

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of December 5, 2023, adjourn.” (CARRIED)

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

3.3. Closing Prayer

Closing prayer was offered by Lo Davis. The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

Valerie Adamo
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee

Paula Sorhaitz
Superintendent of Education, Resource

Recording Secretary: Paige Wiggans