



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

## **Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Meeting**

Nov 7, 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)

Julie Sorhaitz, Learning Disabilities Ontario – Durham Region (Virtual)

Claudia Nosseir, Grandview Kids (Virtual)

Edward Secnik, Autism Ontario Alternate Representative (In-Person)

Alex Massis, Community Representative (Virtual)

### **Trustees Present:**

Jim McCafferty (Virtual)

Robert De Souza (Virtual)

### **Staff Present:**

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

Teresa Ezquerra, Student Services Coordinator (In-Person)

Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education (In-Person)

### **SEAC Representatives:**

Lo Davis, OECTA Representative (In-Person)

Maureen Cope (Virtual)

### **Regrets:**

Jennifer Harvey, CPCO Representative

Shona Casola, Autism Ontario

## **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**

#### **1.5. Approval of the Agenda**

Motion: SS-2023-11-07-01

Approval of the Agenda

Motion moved by Walter Heeney and seconded by Jim McCafferty



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

**1.6. Approval of the Minutes of October 3, 2023, SEAC Meeting**

Motion: SS-2023-11-07-02

Approval of Minutes

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Robert De Souza

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the Minutes of the Tuesday, October 3, 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. Abilities Centre – Partnership Program**

Teresa Ezquerro introduced Adam Fitzpatrick from the Abilities Centre who shared details regarding Therapeutic Recreation in schools.

- Therapeutic Recreation (TR) utilizes functional intervention, education, and recreation participation to improve wellbeing, physical and mental health as well as functional capacity for individuals.
- This community and activity-based programming is provided by trained TR Specialists who use a goal-oriented, evidence-based approach to recreation and play.
- TR specialists also help individuals build, learn, and maintain life skills, increase independence and resilience, improve quality of life, and help participants find what they are passionate about.
- TR in Schools (TRIS): In partnership with school boards both locally and provincially, the Abilities Centre works closely with schools and educators to bring the benefit of TR into the classroom.
- The purpose of TRIS is to promote inclusion and resilience among young individuals to improve and sustain their well-being, development, and quality of life. TRIS focuses on creation, movement, and education to engage in meaningful participation in school and community settings.
- Program is currently in two secondary schools and one elementary school in DCDSB.
- Abilities Centre has been working with DCDSB for 5+ years on bringing TR into Special Education classes.
- Committing 3 years to our current schools with hopes of showcasing impact to then expand the program.
- TRIS was delivered to over 170 students, supporting over 60 educators. Over a single semester of programming, 80% of TRIS students increased their competence and developed important skills such as interpersonal communication, coping, and leadership skill.



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- All of this was done in collaboration with the school educators and principals to identify the specific needs of their classroom and was facilitated with recreation and activity-based learning and engagement.
- Strong Inclusive Communities Grant: The SIC grant will aim to educate South Oshawa Community Centre staff on accessibility and inclusion practices while co-facilitating with a TR team member.
- Working in collaboration with the local area schools, the education team will identify potential youth participants and peer leaders. These peer leaders will receive education, volunteer hours and an interview at Abilities Centre Summer Camp in 2024.

## **2.3. Discussion Items**

### **2.3.1. Ministry Updates**

Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education, shared a few updates from the Ministry:

- SIP Claims moving to a funding-based model. For next year's funding, the Ministry will take the higher of the past two SIP claims and add 5 percent.
- The Ministry is undertaking an audit of all schools in the province to have critical conversations about SIP and SEA. Ministry wants to ensure appropriate use of funds and human resources.
- They've identified 18 boards for this year. DCDSB are not one of the 18 identified, but that will be coming.
- Ministry has come out with three pre-approved screeners (Aimsweb Plus, Acadience, EasyCBM (Curriculum-based measures)).

Superintendent Sorhaitz answered questions related to the funding model for SIP claims and overall special education funding.

### **2.3.2. Review of statistics – Student Needs Across the System**

Superintendent Sorhaitz spoke to Student Needs Across the System:

- Data contained in the slides was collected during either the 2022-2023 or 2023-2024 school years by Coordinators from Program Support Teachers advocating for the complex needs of students in their schools (Student Needs Assessment Survey).
- Compared total student needs by grade level for 2022-2023 school year and to date for 2023-2024 (September and October). PSTs had indicated to date for complexities.
- May 2022: Data shows 728 students identified in the system with complex needs.
- May 2023: Data shows 867 students identified in the system with complex needs. 139 more students and only 16 students graduated.
- As of November 2023: 905 students identified in the system with complex needs. In 2022-23, total of 803 students identified in the system with complex needs. Currently, there are 102 more students with complex needs.
- Student Needs by Diagnosis comparison for 2022-23 and 2023-24
- Types of IEPs: IEPs have a combination of accommodated, modified, or alternative programming goals depending on the need of the student.
- Increased prevalence of ASD: The report from 2019 states 1 in 50 children diagnosed with ASD. In 2008, the prevalence of ASD diagnoses in children was 1 in 88.

## **2.4. Business arising from the Minutes**

### **2.4.1. Potential Letter re: Student Needs Across the System**

Chair Valerie Adamo following the review of Student Needs Across the System, confirmed with the Committee if they would like to put forth a letter to the Ministry.



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Superintendent Sorhaitz clarified that the Ministry has only some of the data presented in the Student Needs Across the System review.

Julie Sorhaitz, Representative from Learning Disabilities Ontario – Durham Region, commented how it would be beneficial to provide information from the Board to the Ministry. An opportunity to provide input into decision making that might be happening in this year's audit.

Motion: SS-2023-11-07-03

Request for Staff to Draft a Letter

Motion moved by Walter Heeney and seconded by Alex Massis

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee request for staff to draft a letter to the Ministry regarding student needs across the system.” (CARRIED)

**2.4.2.** Student Action Plan – review of data collection re: MH indicators

Covered in Superintendent's Report.

**2.5. Staff Reports**

**2.5.1.** Student Services Report – Yulan Fisher-Brown, Teresa Ezquerra, Paula Sorhaitz

Teresa Ezquerra presented the November Coordinator Report:

- Community Resources Symposium and Fair was a great success, allowing for networking and information sharing from 35 different community organizations/agencies.

New Program Support Mentoring Program:

- Susan McCaughey from the Durham Catholic Behaviour Resource Team led an engaging presentation on Understanding the Why: Proactive Self-Regulation Tips.

DCBRT Update:

- Training on the practical skills and knowledge of how to set up and use a Structured Work System (SWS).
- Behaviour Management Systems (BMS) training for all educators working directly with DCBRT and an additional session was offered on the Oct. 6 PA Day.
- Workshop focused on Adult Lead Peer Interactions for elementary and secondary Educational Assistants.
- Two Professional Learning Series (PLS) days- an interactive experience with an emphasis on understanding stress and the impact on self-regulation.
- Student Services purchased an additional 100 Lexia licenses for the 2023-2024 school year which brings our total to 600 Lexia licenses. All licenses have been assigned to our elementary and secondary schools.
- Student Services purchased 105 additional PST Chromebooks. Each school received an average of 2 additional Chromebooks to their complement. These Chromebooks are for students to use with Read & Write, Lexia and AT readiness.



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Project SEARCH Update:

- Interns have begun their first internships.
- Departments hosting interns are as follows:  
Durham Region Headquarters – Family Services, Facilities, Legal and Social Services  
Hillsdale Estate and Terraces – Laundry, Food Services, Maintenance, Housekeeping

Yulan Fisher-Brown presented the Mental Health Report:

- Violent Threat Risk Assessment (VTRA) 2-day training was offered to gatekeepers with a shift in focus to being from a trauma informed lens.
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) was also offered to gatekeepers as part of the board Suicide Prevention and Intervention Protocol.
- On October 17, the Durham Youth Drug Awareness Committee (DYDAC) hosted their annual student conference “The Leader in Me: Awareness in Action.”
- Five DCDSB Secondary Schools attended, where they learned and shared ideas about substance awareness.
- Participants engaged in various sessions that reviewed the impacts that drugs, alcohol, and gaming have on our youth, and began to develop a health action plan to bring back to their schools for administrative approval.

Upcoming Events:

- Sharing of Excellence- Supporting Minds Series for Educators: Anxiety, Mood, and Attention- November 6, 13, 20
- Mental Health Champions Meeting- November 8
- ASIST Tune Up- November 21
- VTRA Level 2 with Kevin Cameron- November 28 & 29
- Talking About Mental Illness Summit (TAMI)- November 29

Paula Sorhaitz presented the Superintendent’s Report:

PST Update:

- Meeting next week with PST where they will be learning AODA compliance, Culture and the Brain, and BRT presentation. Two new BCBA’s: Nicole Hinan (BRT) and Paige Pascoe (DCART). Paige and Nicole will be speaking with PSTS on Safety Plans.
- Discussing with the team a schedule of topics for Student Services to come and speak to PSTs.
- Sending out a PST form for agenda items / learning opportunities they would like.

PPM 169 – A Primer

- Outlines requirements for school boards and school authorities, to provide culturally responsive, evidence-informed student mental health promotion, prevention, and early intervention.
- Necessity for services that respect students as complex individuals and provide appropriate supports for their diverse needs.
- Memorandum outlines the importance of school boards working within the broader community of care to help provide clear pathways to and from more intensive community and hospital-based mental health services, when needed.



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Student Action Plan – review of data collection re: MH indicators – required data has been provided to Boards.

- DCDSB will be reporting the following in February and June:
  1. Has your school board implemented a joint local planning mechanism, as part of Requirement 2) *Joint Local Planning with Community-based Child and Youth Mental Health Providers*
  2. Has your board/schools in your board communicated with parents/caregivers regarding the Grade 7 and 8 mental health literacy learning modules?
  3. At this point, what percentage of classrooms have incorporated the new Grade 7 and 8 mental health literacy learning modules into the teaching of the health and physical education curriculum?
- DCDSB will be required to report on additional pieces with respect to PPM 169 at the end of June 2024.
- SMH-ON is providing boards with a toolkit of monitoring options with a focus on:
  - i. Professional development
  - ii. Educator experiences and perceptions of module impact
  - iii. Student perceptions of modules
  - iv. SMH-ON will also provide a tool to measure student MH literacy attitudes.

Motion: SS-2023-11-07-03

Approval of the November 7, 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 November 7, 2023, meeting.” (CARRIED)

## **2.6. Association Reports**

Walter Heeney, Representative from Durham Down Syndrome Association, shared information regarding the Delta Bingo partnership with Durham Down Syndrome. Delta Bingo looking for additional charities to support.

## **2.7. Correspondence**

### **3. Other Business**

#### **3.1. Board Communications**

#### **3.2. Motion to Adjourn**

Motion: SS-2023-10-03-04

Motion to Adjourn

Motion moved by Claudia Nosseir and seconded by Alex Massis

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of November 7, 2023, adjourn.” (CARRIED)



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**3.2.1.** The next meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee will be held on Tuesday, December 5, 2023, at 7:30 p.m.

**3.3. Closing Prayer**

Closing prayer was offered by Lo Davis. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

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Valerie Adamo  
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee

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Paula Sorhaitz  
Superintendent of Education, Resource

Recording Secretary: Paige Wiggans