



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

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Meeting

February 11, 2025, from 7:30 PM to 9:30 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)
Claudia Nosseir, Vice Chair, Grandview Kids (In-Person)
Donna Callaghan, Durham Down Syndrome Association (In-Person)
Mariam Maskell, Participation House (Virtual)
Julie Sorhaitz, Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region (In-Person)
Edward Secnik, Autism Ontario of Durham Region (In-Person)
Caroline Andrews, Autism Ontario of Durham Region (Virtual)
Alex Massis, Community Representative (Virtual)

Trustees Present:

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

Staff Present:

Francesca Mosier, Student Services Coordinator (In-Person)
Dr, Diane Lood, Senior Manager, Psychological & Speech Language Services/Lead Psychologist
(In Person)
Dan Allen, Board Math Lead, Secondary Principal (In Person)
Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education (In-Person)
Jim Wilson, Superintendent of Education (In-Person)

SEAC Representatives Present:

Anita Condon, CUPE Representative (Virtual)
Frank Porco, CPCO Representative (Virtual)
Lo Davis, OECTA Representative (In-Person)
Ashley Toohey, APSSP Representative (In-Person)

Regrets:

Candace Julien, Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support

Minutes

1. Opening

1.1. Call to Order

Vice-Chair Nosseir called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. Superintendent Sorhaitz offered the opening prayer and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.2. Memorials and Prayers



1.3. Land Acknowledgements

1.4. Roll Call and Apologies

1.5. Approval of the Agenda

Motion: SS-2025-02-11-01

Approval of the Agenda

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Edward Secnik.

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the agenda of the Tuesday, February 11, 2025, meeting, as presented.” (CARRIED)

1.6. Approval of the Minutes of January 7, 2025, SEAC Meeting

Motion: SS-2025-02-11-02

Approval of Minutes

Motion moved by Donna Callaghan and seconded by Robert De Souza

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the Minutes of the Tuesday, January 7, 2025, meeting, as presented.” (CARRIED)

1.7. Declarations of Interest

None

2. Items for Information/Decision

2.1. Announcements

2.2. Presentations

2.2.1. EQAO Data in the Board – Dan Allen, Board Math Lead

Student Achievement: Math Action Plan Updates 2024-2025

How Does EQAO Data Impact Practice?

- Fidelity of the curriculum
- Trends within cohorts
- Strand and skill data
- Student attitudes toward literacy and math

Reviewed overall achievement, and attitudinal data for the 2023-2024 School Year:

Greatest Areas of Need:

- **Grade 3:** Data Management, Spatial Sense, Application Problems
- **Grade 6:** Algebra, Spatial Sense, Thinking Problems
- **Grade 9:** Algebra, Geometry & Measurement, Thinking Problems



DURHAM CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Learning and Living in Faith

2024-2025 Math Achievement Action Plan:

- 12 Math Priority Schools
 - Support of Numeracy Intervention Teacher on a biweekly schedule
 - Participation in Math Hubs Professional Learning Series in November, February and April
- Early Intervention Numeracy Support Teacher
 - Supporting 9 other non-priority schools
 - Working directly with students with special education needs to identify and address numeracy gaps.
- MathUP Classroom Usage:
 - September 2023 – January 2024: 57,626
 - September 2024 – January 2025: 131,769
- MathUP Student
 - Digital math practice platform for grades 1-9
 - Provides data to educators about successes & areas of need
 - Roll-out to teachers in February 2025
- Reviewed EQAO Math achievements from 2021 to 2024.
- Data comparison of students with and without an IEP

What's New?

- DCPIC Mathematics Learning Series for Families
 - First session held November 21
 - Financial Literacy
 - 170 Families Registered, session recorded and posted along with resources
 - February: Math Made Accessible: Tools and Strategies for Families of Students with Special Education Needs
 - Thursday February 20, 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm at Archbishop Denis O'Connor CHS.
- Math Learning Series for Educators
 - Monthly virtual learning series, recorded and posted for educators, beginning in February 2025



2.3. Discussion Items

2.3.1. Review of Director's Annual Report – [Click here for 2023-2024 Director's Annual Report](#)

Superintendent Sorhaitz reviewed key highlights from 2023-2024 Director's Annual Report

Report is divided into 5 main sections:

- Support Faith and Well-Being
 - Advance Human Rights and Equity
 - Improve Student Learning
 - Indigenous Education
 - Corporate Services/Our Awards and Recognition
- The first 3 sections are very much connected to our 3 strategic priorities, so Supporting Faith and Well-Being, Advance Human Rights and Equity, and also Improve Student Learning.
 - Lots of great stories highlighted on website for mental health and well-being:
 - Black Mental Health Day
 - New Mental Health Literacy modules were released to support mental health awareness along with parent and caregiver Mental Health video resources
 - Started a secondary group called Be Well. This is very much a student voice driven group, and they continue into this year
 - Celebrating a lot of the efforts that are going on in schools.
 - Faith awareness – several great initiatives last year, to highlight a couple:
 - We had Parishes and Schools come together by inviting Parish Priests and had a school and parish symposium at the Pope Francis Centre. Schools were able to get table time with their Priest that was associated to their school to talk about their goals in terms of pastoral care for students
 - Catholic Education week pairing it also as Children's Mental Health week. One school activity was to have children draw what they thought God looked like and then it was shared widely. It was wonderful seeing their minds and their hearts, putting the faith in action in terms of a drawing.
 - Indigenous Education highlights:
 - Salmon Hatcheries in some of our schools. Students learned hands on about salmon hatcheries and then releasing them into their natural environment
 - Very active Indigenous Student Circle visiting schools and doing on the land learning. Ask elders from Scugog Island to join share their information with students,
 - Orange shirt day – Nation Day for Truth and Reconciliation
 - Human Rights and Equity:
 - Social Justice Day. Students across the board were brought together to talk about social justice issues.
 - Student Demographic Survey. Questions to students based on how they identify and what their experiences have been.



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

- Ubuntu. A community building organization that came in and did some work around human rights, equity and faith-based approach in some of our schools. Created in the Image of God: I Am Because We Are.
- Coach Advocate for Black Students (CABS). One of the key highlights was a summer camp that focused on STEM
- Focus on academic excellence and post-secondary pathways. Partnered with McMaster, University of Toronto and Queens
- Improve Student Learning:
 - Refer to tonight's Math presentation by Dan Allen
 - New Literacy curriculum being rolled out in grades 1 through 8; grade 9 destreamed language curriculum; and Right to Read
 - Expand Pathways:
 - Project Search new program last year, with 10 interns
 - Ontario Youth Apprenticeship programs
 - Specialized High School Major program (SHSM)
- Corporate Services/Our Awards and Recognition:
 - Balanced budget
 - New builds. St. Anne addition completed, approval for addition to St. Kateri Tekawitha CS. Plans and build continue to be scheduled for Dwyer's new high school.
 - Made Forbes List as best Employer – number 116 on the list

2.3.2. Review IEP Process – Reviewed by Student Services Consultant, Francesca Mosier

- IEPs are developed for a student who has been deemed to require a special education program or services in order to achieve curriculum expectations and/or to demonstrate learning.
- Planning the IEP is accomplished through the combined efforts and in communication with the student, student's parents, staff, and other professionals involved with the student.
- The classroom teacher in consultation with the program support teacher make decisions regarding the program planning of the IEP. (Level of Achievement, Program Goals, Learning Expectations, Teaching Strategies, and Assessment methods.)
- A team approach underlies the IEP process and focuses on how the student is expected to progress through the Ontario Curriculum with or without accommodations, modified expectations, and or alternative programs, as well as how the student will make key transitions from grade to grade, elementary to secondary and secondary to postsecondary destination.



Overview of IEP Process

1. Gathering Information:
 - Review OSR and IPRC if applicable
 - Consult with parents, student, staff, professionals
 - Gather information through observation of student
 - Conduct further assessments if necessary
 - Consolidate and record information
2. Setting the Direction
 - Establish a collaborative approach
 - Establish roles and responsibilities
 - Listing relevant assessment data
 - Indicating student's strengths and needs on IEP
3. Developing the IEP as it Relates to the Student's Special Education Program and Services
 - Determine for every subject of course whether student requires accommodations, modifications or alternative programming
 - Record teaching strategies and assessment methods
 - Record human resources, equipment, provincial assessments
 - Develop a transition plan
 - Record details of parent/student consultations
 - Secure Principals approval
4. Implementing the IEP
 - Share the completed IEP with student, parents, staff and professionals involved, provide a copy to parent and student if 16 or older
 - Put IEP into practice (teacher and support personnel)
 - Continuously assess student's progress
 - Adjust IEP as necessary
 - Evaluate learning and report results to parents
5. Review and Update the IEP
 - Update learning expectations at the beginning of each reporting period based on results of assessments and evaluation
 - Review IEP regularly, including the transition plan
 - Store the IEP in the OSR

2.4. Business arising from previous meeting

2.4.1. Review SEAC Terms of Reference

No revisions.

2.5. Staff Reports

2.5.1. Student Services Report – Francesca Mosier, Diane Lood, Paula Sorhaitz



Francesa Mosier presented the Coordinator's Report:

- New PST Mentoring Program – supporting students with Autism
- Project SEARCH Update – On January 25th, interns were treated to an exhibition game between the Maple Leafs Alumni and the Boston Bruins Alumni at the Tribute Communities Centre by the Legal Services Department of the Municipality of Durham Region
- At the end of this month, Students with Assistive Technology Transition Trips (SWATTT) will be hosted by our secondary schools
- Approximately 150 students with SEA (Special Equipment Allocation) assigned AT from DCDSB's elementary schools, will attend the sessions at their feeder schools
- The trips will be supported by Assistive Technology Specialists (ATs), elementary and secondary Program Support Teachers (PSTs), Intermediate Guidance Teachers (IGTs) and Student Services Consultant
- Over 50 educators have signed up to participate in Geneva Centre Sonderly courses for Applied Behaviour Analysis approaches. There is still funding available for those who wish to take a course.
- PEERS, Friendship Lab and Secret Agent Society have begun for the Winter session.

Dr. Diane Lood presented the Mental Health (MH) Report:

- Black Mental Health Day
 - Upcoming on March 3rd
 - Based on feedback, rather than an evening event, information to be shared with students
 - Consultations were completed with the CABS' student groups to determine platform and topics to be discussed
 - Video highlighting Black Mental Health Day and the impact of racism and microaggressions on mental health is being created to be shown in classes for gr. 7-12
- Mental Health Champions Community of Practice
 - Mental Health Champions met on February 6th
 - Champions continue to share MH information at monthly staff meetings
 - Information about board wide initiatives were shared with the group
 - Collaboration around mental health promotion at the school level took place as champions shared ideas and problems solved around challenges they face
- Supporting Students Through Grief
 - January 24th
 - Offered to chaplains
- Applied Suicide Interventions Skills Training
 - January 28th and 29th
 - 16 gatekeeper staff were training in suicide intervention



- Community partners were invited and staff from the Women's Multicultural Resource Counselling Centre and the MH and Addictions Nurse team attended.

Paula Sorhaitz presented the Superintendent's Report:

Program Support Teacher Learning – last meeting January 14, 2025

- Functions of a Readiness Room
 - A readiness room is a space in the school where student can gather with an educator, for skill building
 - Students can be grouped with other students who are also working on that skill
 - The space considers:
 - Independent work
 - Instructional work
 - Sensory opportunities and movement breaks
 - Reinforcement systems and preferred activities
- EA scheduling identified as key concern of PSTs at October meeting
 - Carousel format used to leverage the expertise of the PST group - guiding questions provided by Student Services Team
 - Feedback extremely positive!
- EA Scheduling – General
 - EAs are assigned to schools and then to classrooms – best practice to use student initials vs. full names
 - EAs take direction from team consisting of teacher, PST, admin
 - EAs support the implementation of program, but do not create the program (teacher has ownership but EA is resource to teacher)
 - Teacher engagement with ALL students in class is key
 - Flexibility -Triage needs and allocate support accordingly
 - Supervision -Supply EAs are assigned before and after school duties provided the duties don't fall outside of their regular work hours
 - Link to shared document – also copied into today's meeting folder (brainstorming scheduling ideas)
- EA Scheduling – Carousels: Table lead with process/exemplars – 10 minutes per table
 - Bundling
 - Absences
 - Lunches/Breaks
 - Communication methods (e.g. re: changes, programming)
 - Non – school hour scheduling (before and after school – PD, EA meetings)
 - EAs and bus schedules



Motion: SS-2025-02-11-03

Approval of the February 11, 2025, Student Services Coordinator, Mental Health Leader, and Superintendent Reports

Motion moved by Valerie Adamo and seconded by Robert De Souza

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept the verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports of February 11, 2025, meeting.” (CARRIED)

2.6. Association Reports

Learning Disabilities Ontario – Julie Sorhaitz

- Power to Achieve Scholarship Award. Application and layout will be sent out shortly to school principals and assistants.
- This is a scholarship for students that have a learning disability who are going to be moving on to a post-secondary program in the fall. They have to be a full time high school student currently and then moving to post-secondary.
- Usually application submissions are due end of April to their guidance curriculum chair or program support team, and then it goes through a process with representatives to select.

Autism Ontario of Durham Region – Edward Secnik

- World Autism Day starting on April 2nd
- School participation challenges/fundraising for the month of April
- Schools can join a challenge/fundraiser to sell certain items and raise funds for Autism Ontario. There is a pizza lunch award at the top fundraising school and up to \$200 gift card

VOICE for the Hearing Impaired – Valerie Adamo

- VOICE Camp taking place the first weekend in September at City Ridge Camp.
- Further information to follow. Tickets went fast last year and was sold out.

2.7. Correspondence

2.7.1. Letter received from Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA). The Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) is looking to obtain targeted feedback using the template provided by February 17, 2025.

SEAC Committee members collaborative to obtain feedback on four current issues:

- Current/Emerging Issues Affecting Student with Special Education Needs
- Successful Practices to Support Students with Special Education Needs
- Challenges and Possible Solutions
- Possible Solutions/Future Directions



3. Other Business

3.1. Board Communications

3.1.1. School Year Calendar Consultations – Superintendent Jim Wilson

- On November 14, 2024, the Director of Education for the DCDSB received a Memorandum from the Ministry of Education providing information to support the planning of the 2025-2026 school year calendar.
- The Ministry's expectations for the new School Year Calendar are as follows:
 - The regular school year calendar shall provide for a school year that commences on or after September 1 and ends on or before June 30.
 - The minimum number of school days required in a school year calendar is 194.
 - Of those, school boards must dedicate three (3) Professional Activity (PA) days to provincial education priorities.
 - Boards may designate up to four (4) additional PA Days per school year. Any school days not designated as professional activity days are to be designated as instructional days.
 - Each school year calendar must be accompanied by a general outline of the activities to be conducted on PA Days.
 - A board may designate up to ten instructional days as examination days.
- Timelines:
 - Consult with DDSB
 - Consult with Sr. Admin
 - Parent/Staff Survey went out – January 24 – January 31, 2025
 - Employee Groups – February 5, 2025
 - SEAC – February 11, 2025
 - DCPIC – February 13, 2025
 - Student Senate – February 24
 - Trustees – February 24, 2025
 - Ministry Submission – March 1, 2025
- Staff – 95% in favour of proposed school year calendars
- Families – 90% in favour of calendar
- Parent Feedback:
 - Shorten summer break and have a fall break
 - Christmas break to be longer
 - Start school second week of September
 - Christmas Break – December 22 – January 7



3.2. Motion to Adjourn

3.2.1. The next meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee will be held on Tuesday, March 4, 2025 @ 7:30 pm

Motion: SS-2025-02-11-04

Motion to Adjourn

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Valerie Adamo

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of February 11, 2025, adjourn.”
(CARRIED)

3.3. Closing Prayer

Closing prayer was offered by Donna Callaghan. The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Valerie Adamo
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee

Paula Sorhaitz
Superintendent of Education, Resource

Recording Secretary: Karen Lutz