



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

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Meeting

May 6, 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 (Virtual)
Mariam Maskell, Participation House (Virtual)
Julie Sorhaitz, Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region (In-Person)
Edward Secnik, Autism Ontario of Durham Region (In-Person)
Alex Massis, Community Representative (Virtual)

Trustees Present:

Robert De Souza, Trustee (In-Person)

Staff Present:

Teresa Ezquerra, Student Services Coordinator (In-Person)
Dr. Diane Lood, Senior Manager, Senior Manager, Psychological & Speech Language
Services/Lead Psychologist (In Person)
Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education (In-Person)

SEAC Representatives Present:

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

Regrets:

Jim McCafferty, Trustee

Absent:

Candace Julien, Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support

Minutes

1. Opening

1.1. Call to Order

Chair Adamo called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. 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-2025-05-06-01

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, May 6, 2025, meeting, as presented.” (CARRIED)

1.6. Approval of the Minutes of April 8, 2025, SEAC Meeting

Motion: SS-2025-05-06-02

Approval of Minutes

Motion moved by Claudia Nosseir and seconded by Alex Massis.

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the Minutes of the Tuesday, April 8, 2025, meeting, as amended.” (CARRIED)

1.7. Declarations of Interest

None

2. Items for Information/Decision

2.1. Announcements

None

2.2. Presentations

2.2.1. Lexia Presentation – Jenny Graham, Education Consultant at Greenfield Learning

- Former Special Education Teacher
- Joined Greenfield Learning in 2021
- 3rd – generation educator
- We are a team of **educational consultants** that provide personalized learning experiences to help all (educators and students) **strive for grit and excellence**. We do that by providing **learning experiences, consulting**, and tools to support educators to **ensure equity and access for all students, including those in marginalized populations and the neurodiverse**.
- We are a team of professionals dedicated to improving **academic success** and impact for all learners.
- We love what we do, and what we do helps educators and learners to succeed.



Supporting Literacy with Core5

- Adaptive Blended Learning Model
 - Teacher-Led Instruction
 - Independent Student-Driven Learning
 - Ongoing Data to Monitor Progress
- 95% of students can learn to read (when instruction is based in the science of reading)
- **The Principles of Structured Literacy and Core 5**
 - **Explicit** means that concepts and skills are directly taught and practiced.
 - **Systematic** refers to a logically ordered presentation of concepts and skills that progresses from simple to complex
 - **Cumulative** indicates that new learning is built on prior learning
 - **Diagnostic and Responsive** signify that students' instructional needs are identified and instruction is designed accordingly.
- **Why Core5 Works for Intervention:**
 - **Personalized Pathways** – students progress at their own pace, from foundational phonics to advanced comprehension
 - **Real-Time Data** – teachers get instant insights to identify struggling students and provide targeted support.
 - **Embedded Support** – scaffolds and guided practice help students stay on track when challenges arise.
 - **Offline Resources** – printable lessons enable small-group or 1:1 instruction tailored to student needs.
- **myLexia for Administrators**
 - Track student engagement with Core5 via the Usage Tile
 - Analyze progress relative to goals via the Progress by Usage Tile.
 - Monitor staff access to myLexia to inform and support engagement via the Staff Tile.
 - Review student progress and engagement data through myLexia.
 - Empower educators with actionable insights.
 - Celebrate successes and identify areas for additional support.
 - Student who met usage outperformed their peers by 157%.
 - To meet their goal, Student typically need 15-20 additional minutes per week of usage

2.2.2. Review of Special Education Plan – Teresa Ezquerra, Student Services Consultant

- Changes/revisions to 2024-2025 Special Education Plan highlighted below
- Approved plan will be submitted to the Ministry by July 30, 2025
- Please provide any feedback prior to or at the June SEAC meeting



Review/Approval of 2025-2026 Special Education Plan

- The following presentations were provided to SEAC in the 2024-2025 school year:
 - Spiritual Theme for the 2024- 2025 school year: Living in Hope
 - Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region - OHRC Right to Read Update
 - Strategic Plan for Durham Catholic District School Board: Inspire 2026
 - Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO)
 - The Participation House Project
 - Durham Down Syndrome Association
 - Individual Education Plan (IEP) Process
 - Numeracy and EQAO Results
 - Autism Update
 - Special Education Budget Update
 - Special Education Plan Review
 - Greenfield Learning – Lexia Presentation
 - Climate Survey Results
 - Review of Presentations for next year
- **Standard 2.3: Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies**
- **Educator's Role in Early Identification**

Classroom Based Assessment Tools & The Kindergarten Assessment Tool Kit links have been disabled while Academic Services updates the information. Updated links will be provided once available and will be included with final plan submitted to the Ministry.
- **Standard 2.4: The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) Process and Appeals**
- **IPRC Statistics (2024-2025)**
 - Initial IPRCs – 12
 - IPRC Reviews – 21
 - IPRC Appeals – 0
- **Standard 2.6: Specialized Health Support Services In School Settings**
 - Specialized Health Support Services chart updated to reflect name change from Home and Community Care Support Services (HCCSS) to Ontario Health at Home
- **Students Currently Attending Provincial and Demonstration Schools**
 - 2 at Sagonaska Demonstration School
 - 1 at Sir James Whitney School of the Deaf
- **Special Education Staff updated-** refer to 2.11 for staffing information



- **Professional Development Activities Offered by the Board Include:**
 - Sharing of Excellence; Celebrating Inclusion - Workshop Series is offered after school on a regular basis. These workshops provide information, strategies, and resources to staff in all employee groups supporting students with special education needs.
 - Monthly Program Support Teacher meetings with professional learning around IEPs, alternative programming and alternative report cards, transition supports, learning disabilities, sensory needs, etc.
 - Behaviour Management Systems (BMS)
 - Traumatic Events Systems Training
 - Assessment of Risk to Others Training (formerly VTRA)
 - Mental Health First Aid Training and Certification
 - Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)
 - Suicide Prevention/Life Promotion Literacy
 - SafeTALK
 - Assistive technology target training for staff, students, and parents/guardians
 - School specific staff training (DCART, DCBRT)
 - Lexia and literacy-focused training
 - A variety of workshops and training on Professional Activity Days including Principles of Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction and Assessment Strategies
- **2024-2025 SEAC Members reviewed**

2.3. Discussion Items

None

2.4. Business arising from previous meeting

2.4.1. Julie Sorhaitz, Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region

- A discussion on reading interventions, screeners and if any progress updates from the Ministry. More detail requested regarding how literacy gaps are being addressed.
 - Tonight's Lexia presentation covered most questions/concerns
 - Superintendent Sorhaitz also spoke advising that Academic Services have trained staff on screeners in schools to identify student needs. Primary educators also use UFLI as Tier 1 Intervention. "Lexia" is a literacy intervention tool and efforts will be made to further equip staff to use as such for students across all grades. If one student in the school is using Lexia, then every Educator has access to Lexia materials such as decodable texts and targeted interventions as well.



2.5. Staff Reports

2.5.1. Student Services Report – Teresa Ezquerra, Dr. Diane Lood, Paula Sorhaitz

Teresa Ezquerra presented the Coordinator's Report:

- Two students applied to attend Sagonaska Demonstration School in September 2025. Interviews with the Provincial Committee on Learning Disabilities were held in April. Candidates will be notified whether they will be selected to attend one of the Provincial Demonstration Schools by the end of May. Two students that attended Sagonaska this school year, will be returning to DCDSB in September.
- 1215 Lexia licenses have been renewed for another school year. All licenses are in use for the current school year.

Assistive Technology-

- Our board-wide Read & Write with Orbit Note licenses have also been renewed for another school year. Every staff and student at DCDSB has access to the assistive features. According to Everway's (formerly Texthelp) data, to date, DCDSB has 873,000+ total interactions (every time a tool is clicked and actively used, it counts as one interaction). The Assistive Technology (AT) team will be meeting with the Customer Success Manager from Everway to brainstorm ways to continue to increase exposure, knowledge and use of Read & Write throughout DCDSB for all users.
- The AT team received 70 referral packages for assistive technology devices in time for the end of April deadline. The estimated total of devices assigned for the 2024-2025 school year will be 300. This number is similar to last year's final numbers.

Project SEARCH Update:

- April 22, 2025 - Skills Assessment and Interview Day
- In a two-hour period, applicants rotated through six stations to assess their engagement, enthusiasm for learning, ability to follow directions, and need for accommodations.
- Successful applicants will sign their contract during the Project SEARCH graduation on June 25, 2025

Unity Hub – Connecting Communities

- Date: Thursday, May 8, 2025
- Time: 4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
- Location: Notre Dame CSS
- Booths showcasing various community organizations and agencies
- Presentations by: Participation House; Durham College Accessibility Services and Resources for Exceptional Children and Youth



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

Catholic Education and Mental Health Week

- The first week of May is Catholic Education and Mental Health Week (May 5-9).
- The Catholic Education Week theme this year is Pilgrims of Hope and aligns with the Tier 1 mental health/well-being work that we are doing to Welcome, Include, Understand, Promote and Partner.
- The theme of Mental Health Week this year is Unmasking Mental Health, as living with mental health challenges often forces people to hide behind a “mask” to protect themselves from stigma and judgement.
- Together, Catholic Education Week and Mental Health Week asks us to honour all human dignity and embrace all members of our community.
- Lesson plans and activities are shared with educators to incorporate in all classrooms.

BWell MH/Well-being Promotion Materials

The BWell Secondary Student MH Leadership group has created the following for MH Week:

- Videos highlighting help-seeking and available supports
- Social Media posts outlining help-seeking and strategies
- Posters focused on substance use (particularly for the washrooms)

Catholic Education and Mental Health Week

- All of BWell’s work has been shared with all staff for Catholic Education and Mental Health Week
- As well, it can be found right on our DCDSB site under Mental Health and Well-Being

Mental Health Report: PD

- MH LIT for Guidance and Student Success Educators
 - April 10th and May 1st

Upcoming

- Prepare, Prevent Respond: Suicide Prevention and Life Promotion
 - May 7th
- Director's Meeting: Leading Mentally Health Schools, Noticing and Supporting Students with Mental Health Difficulties
 - May 21st with all administrators



Psychological and Speech Language Services

- Members of the Psychology Department and the Speech Language Department each presented a session at the Professional Learning Series “Math Made Easy” for All Educators
- Members of the Psychology Department and the Speech Language Department also supported at the DCDSB Welcome to Kindergarten night at All Saints CSS on April 26
- May is Speech and Hearing month – a month to shine a spotlight on communication health and the life-changing work of speech and hearing professionals

Paula Sorhaitz presented the Superintendent’s Report:

PST Learning last meeting April 15, 2025:

- Continue to use Carousels at PST Meetings. Topics discussed (with a focus on supporting student transitions) include: OSR Regulation, Entry to School, Transportation, AT Transfers, About Me Profiles/IGT role, Course Selection
- Document shared with Principal and Vice Principal group, PSTs, and EAs - *Supporting Educational Assistants – An Administrators’ Guide to Respectful and Inclusive Teams*
 - **Reflective Practice**

Supporting Educational Assistants includes a series of **reflective** questions for Principals and Vice Principals: Intentionality, Collaboration, Culture of Support

“Reflective questions for administrators to use in co-reflection and planning with in-school team members are provided to guide collaboration on establishing commitments, strategies and structure to supporting one another within working together for students,” (p. 2).

- **Key Themes – Supporting EAs is structured into four themes:**
 1. **Foundations** – Understanding the role of EAs and ensuring inclusive practices
 2. **Relationships** – Building trust, respect, and mutual understanding.
 3. **Collaboration and Inclusion** – Seeking input from EAs in decision-making
 4. **Connections** – Creating a culture of collegiality and professional growth
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL) - Keynote address to PSTs by Student Services staff outlining:**
 - **The Three Principles of UDL**
 - **Engagement** - providing different ways to motivate and engage learners
- ensuring everyone feels involved and connected to the learning process
 - **Representation** - offering information in multiple formats allowing all learners access to the content, regardless of abilities or background
 - **Action and Expression** - honouring student voice and choice by allowing learners to demonstrate their understanding in various ways that work best for them



- **Supporting Transitions through UDL**

PSTs watched a video segment on UDL and were asked to reflect:

- What UDL principles did you observe in the video?
- How did the educators in the video address potential barriers for their students?
- How can UDL principles be applied to the transition of students in your Family of Schools?
- Universal Design for Learning in Action: 100 Ways to Teach All Learners available digitally to all OCT members – see link below for access instructions
[OCT Library - UDL Whitney Rapp.docx](#) Maximum 100-page download

Motion: SS-2025-05-06-03

Approval of the May 6, 2025, Student Services Coordinator, Mental Health Leader, and Superintendent Reports

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Mariam Maskell.

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept the verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports of May 6, 2025, meeting.” (CARRIED)

2.6. Association Reports

Participation House – Mariam Maskell

- Participating in Unity Hub at Notre Dame on May 8, 2025
- Gearing up for summer planning; Life Readiness program for July
- May 28 – Virtual family night

Learning Disabilities Ontario – Julie Sorhaitz

- May 28, 2025 Annual Parent Conference that is held virtually from 6:00 to 8:00 pm
- Another Scholarship, the Roy Cooper Memorial Scholarship Award, to be released for students with a learning disability pursuing a Bachelor of Engineering or a Bachelor of Physical Science discipline. Further information to follow.

VOICE for the Hearing Impaired – Valerie Adamo

- Dress Loud to support May Hearing Awareness Month. May 9 is the actual day.
- Camp has now been booked and registration will open soon. Held at Cedar Ridge Camp in McArthurs Mills, ON, from September 5-7, this camp brings together children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families for a fun, supportive, and enriching experience.
- A new Parent (and other supporters) meet up is now being held monthly via Zoom.



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 May 30, 2025.

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

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

3. Other Business

3.1. Board Communications

None

3.2. Motion to Adjourn

- 3.2.1.** The next meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee will be held on Tuesday, June 3, 2025 @ 7:30 pm

Motion: SS-2025-04-08-04

Motion to Adjourn

Motion moved by Claudia Nosseir and seconded by Robert De Souza.

"THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of May 6, 2025, adjourn."
(CARRIED)

3.3. Closing Prayer

Closing prayer was offered by Robert De Souza. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Valerie Adamo
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee

Paula Sorhaitz
Superintendent of Education, Resource

Recording Secretary: Karen Lutz