



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

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Meeting

March 4, 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)
Yma Frison, 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 (Virtual)
Alex Massis, Community Representative (Virtual)

Trustees Present:

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

Staff Present:

Christine Congrady, Student Services Coordinator (In-Person)
Shelley Phoenix, Senior Manager of Social Work and Child and Youth Counsellors (In Person)
Marie Hammond, Chief Financial Officer (In Person)
Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education (In-Person)

SEAC Representatives Present:

Anita Condron, CUPE Representative (Virtual)
Lo Davis, OECTA Representative (In-Person)

Regrets:

Candace Julien, Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support
Jennifer Harvey, CPCO Representative
Ashley Toohey, APSSP Representative

Minutes

1. Opening

1.1. 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.

1.2. Memorials and Prayers



1.3. Land Acknowledgements

1.4. Roll Call and Apologies

1.5. Approval of the Agenda

Motion: SS-2025-03-04-01

Approval of the Agenda

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

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the agenda of the Tuesday, March 4, 2025, meeting, as presented.” (CARRIED)

1.6. Approval of the Minutes of February 11, 2025, SEAC Meeting

Motion: SS-2025-03-04-02

Approval of Minutes

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Donna Callaghan

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

1.7. Declarations of Interest

None

2. Items for Information/Decision

2.1. Announcements

None

2.2. Presentations

2.2.1. Budget 2025-2026 – Marie Hammond, CFO

- Marie will come back in May to share more details on 2025 – 2026 budget information.
- Discussed budget consultation information
 - Used a different platform previous years called Thought Exchange for budget consultation
 - This year, for budget consultation, using a Microsoft Forms Survey and response so far is higher than previous years. Launched on February 24 and will close on March 31, 2025.
 - Can be found on DCDSB website under Engage DCDSB and then click on 2025-2026 Budget Consultation button
 - Provides some background information. DCDSB has worked diligently to maintain a balanced budget that aligns with the board’s Inspire 2026 multi-year plan and Ministry of Education directives.
 - How DCDSB is funded and the challenges the Board faces in the following areas:



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- Inflationary pressures
- Statutory Benefit Increases
- Special Education
- Supply costs (sick leave)
- Temporary Accommodation
- Construction Benchmarks

2025-2026 Budget Development and Timelines

- **January/February 2025:** Senior Administration Budget and Data Review
- **February 10, 2025:** Finance Committee Meeting to Review Current Financials, Budget Process and Timelines
- **March/April 2025:**
 - Funding Release from Ministry of Education
 - Internal Budget Strategy Sessions
 - Budget Development
- **April 14, 2025:** Finance Committee Meeting to Review Budget Consultation Results, Review Grant Announcements and Priorities, and Delegation Opportunity at Meeting
- **May 20, 2025:** Finance Committee Meeting: Presentation of the Draft Budget and Priorities Report
- **June 9, 2025:** Finance Committee Meeting: Final Budget and Priorities Report for Recommendation to the Board of Trustees
- **June 16, 2025:** 2025-2026 Final Budget and Priorities Report to Board of Trustees for Approval at Regular Board Meeting
- **June 30, 2025:** Budget Filed with the Ministry of Education

2.2.2. Durham Down Syndrome Association – Donna Callaghan/Yma Frison

- Yma introduced herself
- She has been involved with the Board for 6 years and this will be her last year
- 6-8 events are held a year for children with down syndrome regardless of the age
 - in the last two years included some events for caregivers
 - have scholarships open to anybody who is graduating from high school to what's after
 - organized a youth hangout for those who are in grade 7 or the equivalent to the end of high school
- Hoping to build connections with Boards. Open invitation to joining their Board on Durham Down Syndrome Association. It is not made up explicitly of caregivers of children with Down Syndrome. Open to anybody who has a connection or willingness to connect with individuals and Down Syndrome
- "How Lucky Am I", children's illustrated book written by an educator living in Ontario and available for purchase.
 - It has a focus on reminding us not only to look at the spectrum of Down Syndrome, but also that individuals want to have friends, want to experience what it is to be loved, to be liked, to dream



- World Down Syndrome Day event on March 22, 2025, at the Abilities Centre from 2:00 to 4:00 pm.

2.3. Discussion Items

2.3.1. 2025 Bullying Prevention Intervention Plan

Superintendent Sorhaitz reviewed the Bullying Prevention Intervention Plan (BPIP) Highlights

- Reviewed once per year by the Safe Schools Committee to ensure alignment with current legislation, Board policy and Administrative Procedure
- Every second year, revisions occur following analysis of School Climate Survey results
- Considerable revisions this year to align with return to School and Board Improvement Plans and Climate Survey results
- Feedback solicited from the following Committees: (SEA, ABR/BE, Student Senate, IEC, 2SLGBTQ+, DCPIC)
- Key Changes documented on following slides

BPIP February 2025 – High level changes

- BPIP modified to provide *explicit information* to DCDSB staff regarding bullying prevention and intervention (e.g. signs that a student may be impacted by bullying, what to do when approached about incidents of bullying)
- Greater emphasis and detail provided regarding how to *operationalize* parent and guardian engagement at the school level (e.g. contests, announcements, social media, school councils)
- Explicit strategies provided to assist schools with curriculum integration, bringing BPI learning to the student desk.
- Resources provided to assist schools with curriculum integration, bringing BPI learning to the student desk (e.g. direct links to toolkits, activities)
- Appendices included to support schools with operationalizing bullying prevention and intervention programs (e.g. planning template)
- Reference list of DCDSB's community partner organizations (including partners that Ministry of Education has committed to providing funding to such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Egale, Victim Services of Durham Region etc.)
- Inclusion of an info-graphic related to the four principles of bullying prevention (relationship problem, requiring systems and developmental approach, leadership as basis for change) providing model to explain and operationalize in schools
- Addition of explicit guidelines to assist school-based Safe Schools Teams with goal setting and monitoring (e.g. establishing climate baseline, creating strategy/action plan to address concerns and measuring outcomes)
- Reference to professional development sessions for administrators – how to disaggregate and analyse school-based data



- Reference to guided practice session(s) for administrators – how to operationalize strategies and interventions based on survey findings
- Provided link to 2025 Draft BDIP and link for feedback. Feedback welcome at any time – consultation will continue until Board-level committees have opportunity to provide feedback

2.4. Business arising from previous meeting

2.4.1. Recording of February SEAC meeting

Committee members discussed the value from the recorded meeting if unable to attend

- Some difficulties each time when attempting to record
- People who watch the presentation subsequently get to see the slideshow and get to hear the conversation, but they don't experience the room, only the material and discussion
- Felt this recording was a good option and to continue to record and save them
- Update website with SEAC materials button to store a copy of the recorded meeting each month
- Revisit this in the Fall after monitoring views of recording

Motion: SS-2025-03-04-03

Approval of Recording

Motion moved by Robert De Souza and seconded by Julie Sorhaitz

"THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve monitoring recording requests as presented." (CARRIED)

2.5. Staff Reports

2.5.1. Student Services Report – Christine Congrady, Shelley Phoenix, Paula Sorhaitz

Christine Congrady presented the Coordinator's Report:

- February New PST Mentoring:
 - Psychological Assessments and Applying the Findings
- EA Allocation Process Update:
 - Student Service Coordinators have completed school visits
 - Meetings with the EA Allocation Committee will begin after Marck Break until May 2, 2025
- Project SEARCH Update:
 - Parent/Guardian Information Session – February 27, 2025
 - Application Opens – February 28, 2025



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- Application Closes – March 28, 2025
- Skills Assessment and Interview Day – April 22, 2025
- Signing Day during Graduation – June 22, 2025
- DCDSB celebrates World Down Syndrome Awareness Day on March 21. A numbered memo will go out to the system with information about how to acknowledge and celebrate people with Down Syndrome.

Shelley Phoenix presented the Mental Health (MH) Report:

- Black Mental Health Day
 - March 3rd marks the 6th Black Mental Health Day
 - A video including students from all our secondary schools along with a lesson was created for all intermediate and secondary students
 - The lesson focuses on microaggressions and how individuals can respond to a situation of racism from the standpoint of the bystander, the person receiving a microaggression and the person who has said the microaggression.
- Mental Health Champion Sharing
 - MH Champions have been sharing their tier 1 mental health promotion campaigns with one another through use of a central EDSBY group in order to lean into each other's ideas and expertise.
 - Champions are encouraged to look at how they can create mentally healthy schools through student engagement and leadership.
- February – St. John XXIII Catholic School
 - Wellness Warriors empowerment club organized a Student vs. Teacher Triple Ball game, where the student body audience donated a non-perishable food drive item.
 - The Wellness Warriors also hosted a station at our school Wellness Day, where they provided all students and staff with hot chocolate in cups with inspiring messages, and spoke to the students about the importance of taking care of our well-being.
- February – All Saints Catholic Secondary School
 - Stomping Out Stigma – “A Little Love Goes A Long Way” using the Care Bear Theme:
 - Optimism Wins
 - Kindness Matters
 - Be Yourself
 - Feelings Are Important
 - Teamwork and Friendship



- Mental Health Report: PD
 - Director's Meeting: Leading Mentally Health Schools, Supporting Staff Well-Being
 - February 12th with all administrators
 - Sharing of Excellence: Supporting Minds, Anxiety, Mood and Attention
 - February 3rd, 10th and 24th
 - Substance Use and Youth Engagement
 - February 20th
- **Upcoming**
 - Mental Health First Aid
 - February 26th and 27th
 - Gr 10 Careers MH Modules PD
 - March 24th
 - Prepare, Prevent Respond: Suicide Prevention and Life Promotion
 - March 31st
 - Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training Tune up
 - April 7th

Paula Sorhaitz presented the Superintendent's Report:

PST Learning last meeting February 11, 2025 – Sensory Diets, Movement Breaks and Interoception

- Sensory Processing Issues
 - **are real.**
 - Some people are much more or much less sensitive than others to what they hear, see, smell, taste or touch. Sensory processing issues can also affect balance and movement.
 - **can be overwhelming.**
 - Things like bright lights and loud noises can trigger "meltdowns" beyond a person's control. These difficulties can lead people to seek out or avoid sensations.
 - **are misunderstood.**
 - Trouble with sensory processing doesn't mean a person is "difficult" or "overreacting". When provided with the right strategies, people can thrive.
- Movement Breaks as an Antecedent Strategy
 - Increase desired/appropriate behaviors:
 - Academic engagement
 - Time on task
 - Correct responding
 - Task completion
 - Social opportunities



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- Decrease inappropriate behaviours:
 - Aggression
 - Self-injury
 - Self-stimulatory/stereotypic behaviours
 - Time off task
- What is Interoception?
 - Interoception is the ability to be aware of internal sensations in the body, including heart rate, respiration, hunger, fullness, temperature, and pain, as well as emotion states
- How does this relate to Self-Regulation?
 - Self-Regulation Connection: The ability to perceive hunger mobilizes the person to engage in behavior that helps them regulate their body needs
- March 21: World Down Syndrome Day – DCDSB Celebrates:
 - Wear #LotsOfSocks! Ask your students to wear colourful, fun socks on WDSO. It helps to raise awareness and puts some fun into the celebrations!
 - Share your celebrations! Share your photos on social media and use hashtags #WDSO #WorldDownSyndromeDay #endthestereotypes #improveoursupportsystems Please respect privacy and follow school policies when sharing images, especially photos of students.
 - Share amongst your community! Ask a role model or advocate in your community to present to your school or class, in-person or virtually.
 - Look for Lights! On March 21, keep your eyes open for landmarks around the city and across the country that are lit up in blue and yellow to recognize this important day. Tag and share photos of lights with #LotsOfLights

Motion: SS-2025-03-04-04

Approval of the March 4, 2025, Student Services Coordinator, Mental Health Leader, and Superintendent Reports

Motion moved by Claudia Nosseir and seconded by Donna Callaghan

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept the verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports of March 4, 2025, meeting.” (CARRIED)

2.6. Association Reports

Learning Disabilities Ontario – Julie Sorhaitz

- Power to Achieve Scholarship Award applications have been released
- \$500.00 Scholarship Award to a graduating Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB) student who has a diagnosed Learning Disability and is continuing studies (Apprenticeship, College or University) in the upcoming year
- Superintendent Sorhaitz will share via email to DCDSB staff
- Deadline for applications is May 16, 2025



2.7. Correspondence

None

3. Other Business

3.1. Board Communications

3.2. Motion to Adjourn

3.2.1. The next meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee will be held on Tuesday, April 8, 2025 @ 7:30 pm

Motion: SS-2025-03-04-05

Motion to Adjourn

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Alex Massis.

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of March 4, 2025, adjourn.”
(CARRIED)

3.3. Closing Prayer

Closing prayer was offered by Donna Callaghan. The meeting was adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

Valerie Adamo
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee

Paula Sorhaitz
Superintendent of Education, Resource

Recording Secretary: Karen Lutz