



Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Meeting Minutes

Durham Catholic District School Board

Sep 12, 2023, at 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Catholic Education Centre, 650 Rossland Road West, Oshawa

North and South Board Rooms

Members Present:

V. Adamo, Chair, VOICE for the Hearing Impaired (In-Person), W. Heeney, Vice Chair, Durham Down Syndrome Association (In-Person), S. Casola, Autism Ontario (In-Person), A. Massis, Community Representative (Virtual), C. Julien, Community Representative (Virtual), J. Sorhaitz, Learning Disabilities Ontario (In-Person), C. Nosseir, Grandview Kids (Virtual)

Trustees Present:

J. McCafferty (In-Person), R. De Souza (Virtual)

Staff Present:

H. Killoran, Student Services Coordinator (In-Person), P. Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education (In-Person), Y. Fisher Brown, Senior Manager, Mental Health Initiatives/ Mental Health Leader (In-Person), K. Stevenson, Superintendent of Education (In-Person)

SEAC Representatives:

K. Edgecombe, APSSP representative (In-Person), J. Di Vizio, CPCO Representative (In-Person), M. Cope, CUPE Representative (Virtual), L. Jemmott, OECTA (In-Person)

1. Opening

Valerie Adamo called the meeting to order at 7:31pm, 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-2023-09-12-01

Approval of the Agenda

Motion moved by J. Sorhaitz and seconded by S. Casola

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the agenda of the Tuesday, September 12, 2023, meeting, as printed.” CARRIED

1.6. Approval of the Minutes of June 6, 2023, SEAC Meeting

Motion: SS-2023-09-12-02

Approval of Minutes

Motion moved by J. McCafferty and seconded by S. Casola

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the Minutes of the Tuesday, June 6, 2023, meeting, as printed.” CARRIED

1.7. Declarations of Interest

None

2. Items for Information/Decision

2.1. Announcements

2.1.1. Autism Ontario Nomination for Alternate Representative Position Letter

Motion: SS-2023-09-12-03

Acceptance of Alternate Representative

Motion moved by W. Heeney and seconded by J. McCafferty

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept Autism Ontario’s nomination of Edward Secnik for the Alternate Representative position with the Durham Catholic District School Board for the 2022-2026 term.” CARRIED

2.2. Presentations

2.2.1. Katharine Stevenson, Superintendent of Education, Faith Formation – Spiritual Theme

Katherine Stevenson, Superintendent of Education, shared details regarding the Spiritual Theme for 2023-2024:

After reflecting last year on what it means to “listen with the ear of the heart,” she noted, we turn to the words of Pope Francis for this year’s theme. During his message for the 57th World Day of Social Communications, 2023, he states, “It is the heart that spurred us to go, to see and to listen, and it is the heart that moves us towards an open and welcoming way of communicating.” With these words in mind, the Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB) community will be “Speaking With the Heart” in 2023-2024.

Grade 7-12 students across DCDSB were invited to apply to participate in the design process for the 2023-2024 spiritual theme poster. In June 2023, 25 students attended a full day workshop. Throughout the workshop, students collaborated with central staff, Chaplains, and a professional graphic

designer as they reflected upon what Speaking With the Heart means to them. Their ideas have been incorporated into this year's spiritual theme poster.

Katherine noted the poster is on the website with content that encourages individuals to reflect upon how Speaking With the Heart can guide our journey together in the 2023-2024 school year. Katherine finished her presentation with the Speaking With the Heart Prayer, which DCDSB will adopt to support the theme for this year.

2.3. Discussion Items

2.3.1. Ministry of Education Goals (see Superintendent's report)

2.3.2. Goal Setting for Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

SEAC will continue to increase their level of engagement and participation in issues and initiatives connected to special education in the Board. Committee Members asked to bring forward ideas to the next meeting.

2.3.3. Calendar Review

P. Sorhaitz shared the SEAC Annual Calendar 2023-2024 which provides topics, information items, presentations and activities that typically occur at monthly SEAC meetings. Associations asked to bring forward a priority and proposed timing to the next meeting.

2.4. Business arising from Previous Meeting

2.4.1. Motion to Approve Special Education Plan 2023-2024

Motion: SS-2023-09-12-04

Approval of Special Education Plan

Motion moved by J. Sorhaitz and seconded by R. De Souza

"THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approved the Special Education Plan for 2023-2024." CARRIED

2.5. Staff Reports

2.5.1. Student Services Report – Y. Fisher-Brown, H. Killoran, P. Sorhaitz

Helen Killoran reported the following in the Coordinator Report:

- The Ministry provided Summer Learning for Students with Special Education Needs Project Funds; several programs were offered throughout the summer.
- higher student enrollment and more programs offered than last summer.
- AT Camp was offered to students in grades 3 & 4 at the beginning of summer; 14 students attended.

- Upcoming learning sessions for Lexia and IOL (IEP program) for PSTs. A session was offered today, September 12, at the PST meeting. Sessions available for staff at the end of September.

Summer Transition Programs, August 21-30, 2023

- Year 1 Kindergarten transition programs supported early information gathering and discussion to support student well-being and achievement.
- Select groups of incoming high school students were invited to participate in activities to meet educators, fellow classmates and to become comfortable with the learning environment

LDAO Educator's Institute, August 22-23, 2023

- Coordinators hosted 8 Program Support Teachers for this virtual event.
- Breakout sessions covered the following topics:
 - Evidenced-based ways to build resiliency,
 - Strategic Literacy in the Classroom: Practical Strategies for Assessment and Instruction
 - Breaking Barriers: The Power of AT and AT in Literacy Instruction
 - Structure Literacy in the Regular Classroom: SORing After Primary
 - Response to Intervention for Beginning Writers
 - Achieving Excellence with Equity in Special Education

Summer Institute for Educators

- Open to all DCDSB employees, participants attended 2 workshops.
- Workshop topics included sessions on Mental Health Literacy, Universal Design for Learning, Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy, Structured Work Systems, VTRA for educators, UFLI- Step-by-Step implementation K-3, Diagnostic Assessment, Resiliency, Supporting Students with Executive Functioning and Self-Regulation Needs, Using Math Manipulatives in Primary, Junior, and Intermediate Classrooms and Creating Accessible Communications Materials.

Project SEARCH Update

- September 5, 2023 - The Region of Durham welcomed 10 Project SEARCH interns for their first day at Durham Region Headquarters.
- Interns were introduced to managers/mentors from Family Services, Legal Services, Facilities and Maintenance Services, Social Services, Food Services, and Environmental Services.
- Helen noted C. Congrady was instrumental in the project.

Autism Updates

- DCDSB After School Social Skills Programs for students with an ASD diagnosis will begin the first week of October. Registration forms will be available from the school's Program Support Teacher. Information also sent out to the parent community to reach out if child is a good candidate. Specific criteria applies for admission to each program, as outlined on the form.

- DCART ran the first social skills summer camp in the first week of July. Program offered to students who graduated from the PEERS program. 7 students participated in a variety of outings within the community. Activities focused on life skills and social skills application.

Yulan Fisher-Brown provided the following Mental Health Report:

- The Ministry provided funds for mental health support, professional development over the summer and into September.
- The social work access line continued to be available over the summer months and it will continue over the school year.
- "Walk and Talk" sessions provided by social work were offered to select students for continuity of care.

Mental Health Champions:

- 36 Educators completed the School Mental Health Ontario MH-Lit course and attended a one-day Mental Health Champion Summit over the summer.
- At the Summit, educators discussed implementing tier 1 strategies in schools and classrooms.
- These educators will "champion" mental health at their schools, sharing resources, ideas and trainings that have been curated by the Mental Health Leadership Team at their monthly staff meetings.
- Currently recruiting a "champion" from remaining schools.

Mental Health Literacy Modules for Gr. 7 & 8

- Modules are ministry mandated, teacher-led, and culturally responsive learning for students in Grades 7 and 8 that respect the individual and diverse needs of students and ensure consistency in mental health literacy learning across the province.
- Mandated to begin in January 2024, the Ministry has created 3 lessons for Grade 7 and 3 lessons for Grade 8.
- In order to support educators in the implementation of these modules, a half-day in-service is being offered to all intermediate teachers at the end of September.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Sorhaitz updated the committee on the mission of the Student Services Department and the Student Services Departmental Goals:

- A mission statement has been created with 3 key pieces: leadership, acumen, and teamwork. The Mission statement includes an adaptation of a quote from St. Teresa of Calcutta.
- Student Services Departmental Goals:
 1. Lead DCDSB Accessibility Efforts
 2. Improve delivery model efficiencies
 3. Increase collaboration and staff efficacy.

Superintendent Sorhaitz discussed how DCDSB is working with LEAD Canada on how to

improve accessibility. Superintendent Sorhaitz answered further questions about partnerships.

Superintendent Sorhaitz asked for input from the Committee on PO610 Code of Conduct. Superintendent Sorhaitz answered questions as they arose.

Superintendent Sorhaitz continued her report and provided a summary of Ministry Goals:

- Continued subsidies for educators and administrators to take Special Education AQ
 - Memo went out to the system on Friday, September 8
 - Large list of approved Special Education AQ courses for the subsidy
- Emphasis on supporting students through de-streaming (TSITs)
 - Focus on intervention teachers and supporting students in de-streamed classes. Transitional Support Intervention Teachers will be in Grade 8 and Grade 9 classrooms.
- Early Intervention Math supports for Students with Special Education needs.
 - Last year, C. Siqueira was in the role of the Early Intervention Math Support Teacher. Their focus is on elementary students, specifically those with special education needs, to help bridge the gap in math and EQAO scores. Math manipulative kits were sent to every school.
- Professional Assessments and Systematic Evidence-based reading programs
- Summer learning for students with special education needs
- Educators' Autism AQ, ABA after school program funding to continue.

The committee discussed drafting a letter to the Ministry regarding budget and timing of information. Superintendent Sorhaitz answered questions about budget as they arose. Committee agreed that a letter be drafted regarding funding for Educational Assistants and brought back to the next SEAC meeting.

Motion: SS-2023-09-12-05

Approval of the September 12, 2023, verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader, and Superintendent Reports

Motion moved by J. McCafferty and seconded by S. Casola

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept the verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports of the September 12, 2023, meeting.” CARRIED

2.6. Association Reports

Durham Down Syndrome Association – W. Heeney

Upcoming Meetings or Conferences:

Durham Down Syndrome summer picnic. Ontario conference in mid-October. Subsidies offered to families attending the conference.

New Programs or Services:

Currently offering speech therapy.

VOICE for the Hearing Impaired – V. Adamo

Upcoming Meetings or Conferences:

The annual conference will be held Oct 13-14 at Sheridan College in Oakville. CEU's of up to 7 hrs are available by attending this event. The event is focussed on professionals on Friday and focuses on Family and those with hearing loss on Saturday. For more information visit the website: [VOICE For Children Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing - Home \(voicefordeafkids.com\)](http://voicefordeafkids.com)

2.7. Correspondence

None

3. Other Business

3.1. Board Communications

3.2. Motion to Adjourn

Motion: SS-2023-09-12-06

Motion to Adjourn

Motion moved by J._McCafferty and seconded by J. Sorhaitz

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of September 12, 2023, adjourn.” CARRIED

3.2.1. The next meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee will be held on Tuesday, October 3, 2023, at 7:30 p.m.

3.3. Closing Prayer

Closing prayer was offered by W. Heeney. The meeting was adjourned at 8:55pm.

Valerie Adamo
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee

Paula Sorhaitz
Superintendent of Education, Resource

Recording Secretary: Paige Wiggans