



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

Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Durham Catholic District School Board

September 14, 2021 at 7:30 PM EST

Virtual Meeting

Present:

V. Adamo (Chair, VOICE for the Hearing Impaired), K. Burke (Vice Chair, Learning Disabilities Ontario), J. McCafferty (Trustee), J. Oldman (Trustee), W. Heeney (Durham Down Syndrome Association), S. Casola (Autism Ontario), Alex Massis (Community Representative)

Staff Present:

G. Winn (Superintendent of Education), D. Mullane (Mental Health Leader), T. Ezquerro (Student Services Consultant), A. Roffey (Communications)

SEAC Representatives:

L. Wardle (Principal/Vice Principal Representative), B. Larson (APSSP Representative), M. Cope (CUPE Representative)

1. Call to Order

- 1.1. Land Acknowledgement
- 1.2. Memorials and Prayer

Chair Adamo called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m. and welcomed the Committee as well as Superintendent Gerard Winn who attended on behalf Superintendent Lee-Fernandes. Chair Adamo offered the opening prayer.

- 1.3. Roll Call and Apologies

2. Approval of Agenda

- 2.1. Changes to the printed Agenda
None
- 2.2. Approval of Agenda

Motion:

SS-2021-09-14-01

Approval of Agenda

Motion moved by J. McCafferty and motion seconded by K. Burke.

"That the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the agenda of the Tuesday, September 14, 2021 meeting, as printed."

CARRIED

3. Announcements

None

4. Considerations of Motion

None

5. Declarations of Interest

5.1. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

None

6. Actions to be Taken

6.1. Approval of the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of June 8, 2021

Motion:

SS-2021-09-14-02

Approval of Minutes

Motion moved by J. Oldman and motion seconded by A. Massis.

"That the special Education Advisory Committee approve the Minutes of the June 8, 2021 meeting as submitted"

CARRIED

6.2. Business arising from the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of June 8, 2021

None

7. Presentations

None

8. Discussions Items

8.1. Ministry Goals

Superintendent Winn shared that the Ministry's main focus is transitioning students back successfully this school year. There are no specific goals at this time, but updates may be forthcoming which will be addressed and brought back to SEAC as the school year progresses.

8.2. Goal Setting - SEAC

Superintendent Winn, in consultation with Superintendent Lee-Fernandes, shared that the Student Services will be seeking input on Special Education reviews. He also added that SEAC will play active role in providing feedback throughout the school year. SEAC agreed to align the SEAC goals with the goals of Student Services.

8.3. Calendar Review

This item will be addressed at the next SEAC meeting as well as a review of the recent PAAC on SEAC updates.

9. Delegations

None

10. Notices of Motions

None

11. Unfinished Business from Previous Meeting

None

12. Staff Reports

12.1. Coordinator's Report – T. Ezquerra

Summer Learning Programs ran during the month of July and August. The programs supported development, reading intervention, technology skills, life skills and social emotional learning through the arts.

- PEERS AND Friendship Lab were offered as online programs throughout the summer and will start up again in a few weeks.
- Sonderly courses from Geneva Centre will be offered to staff throughout the year.
- Summer transition programs ran from August 23-31 where select groups of students were invited to participate in activities to meet educators, fellow classmates and to become comfortable with the learning environment

- Year 1 Kindergarten transition programs supported early information gathering and discussion to support student well-being and achievement.
- Lexia and Read & Write licenses have been renewed for the 2021-2022 school year and every student has access to the Read & Write program.
- PST Chromebooks will be added this year, as the budget permits.

Teresa Ezquerra answered questions as they arose.

12.2. Mental Health Leader's Report - D. Mullane

With the Ministry money that was provided for summer mental health supports, Student Services was able to pre-purchase many resources for this year and provide many opportunities for students, staff and parents including programs and resources focused on mental health promotion and prevention. Some of these initiatives include:

- The Social Work Access Line, which was operational throughout the summer
- A virtual Kids Have Stress Too! Group run by two of our Child and Youth Counsellors
- Self-regulation kits created for every elementary school
- Collaboration with three community partners (Carea Community Health Centre, Taibu, Family Services Durham) to develop and offer virtual group programs and workshops for children, youth, and parents/caregivers
- A professional speaker series for parents/caregivers, focused on supporting their child's mental health through the pandemic and their return to school. There are two remaining workshops in the speaker series: Sept 23: Charmaine Lane - Supporting your Child's Mental Health Through the Impact of Racism and Oppression; Sept 28: Nicole Tuzi (Sick Kids) - From Zoom to Classroom- How to Support Your Child's Social-Emotional Development When Returning to School.
- Staff professional development opportunities were created, including a partnership with Sick Kids hospital with PD for all Kindergarten educators on the topic of early years mental health.
- Some of the clinical staff participated in PD in suicide risk assessment, understanding eating disorders and Facing Your Fears, a CBT group intervention for students with ASD and anxiety.

All staff were provided with PD on September 1, with a focus on a mentally healthy return to school and what that might look like. The year was kicked off with a video message from Dr. Kristen McLeod on a Trauma-Informed Approach for Surviving September, with some great reminders about the need to provide safe and caring classrooms for all, and to mobilize focused support for those

disproportionally impacted by COVID-19. New resources from School Mental Health Ontario were also shared.

On September 2nd, all of Student Services participated in a full-day training with Tend Academy called Compassion Fatigue and Secondary Trauma: Essential Tools for Times of Crisis and Uncertainty.

This year, in-person training has resumed. Student Services is pleased to share that ASIST Tune-Up was provided on August 25th, and a SafeTALK session on August 30th. Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) will be offered on October 13 and 14 for school staff in a gatekeeper role, and two safeTALK sessions for EAs on the Oct 8 PD day.

Other programs, such as Roots of Empathy, TAMI Classroom program, Mental Health First Aid will also be running this year, with virtual adaptations.

Finally, last Friday was World Suicide Awareness Day. Each year on September 10th, people in over fifty countries around the world connect with each other by officially recognizing World Suicide Prevention Day. World Suicide Prevention Day is a chance to promote understanding about suicide in the hopes of preventing future suicides and their devastating impact. All staff were reminded about suicide prevention opportunities and resources available through the board, including our own protocols and staff trainings available. SEAC members are invited to visit the Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention (CASP) website for further information: <https://suicideprevention.ca/WSPD>

12.3. Superintendent's Report - G. Winn

Superintendent Winn welcomed back all the SEAC members. He thanked the various Board staff who supported the learning programs and events throughout the summer and for facilitating transition programs before the start of school.

Superintendent Winn informed that a small team from Student Services and Program Support attended the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario's Educators' Institute. This was a two-day sharing of information and resources that will be shared throughout the school year.

Superintendent Winn shared the COVID-19: Health and Safety operational guidance for schools. The document constitutes a return to school direction issued by the Ministry of Education and approved by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Superintendent Winn also shared that students may attend in-person learning daily for the full school day in elementary and secondary and remote learning will remain an option.

Superintendent Winn provided a detailed breakdown of the protection measures that the Durham Catholic District School Board has put in place to ensure the health and safety of staff and students with respect to COVID-19, including

- Screening;
- Masking;
- Hand Hygiene;
- Distancing and Congregating;
- Cleaning and Disinfecting;
- Ventilation;
- Use of shared materials and spaces and
- Student transportation

Superintendent Winn communicated that students who are entering grade three and grade 6 in-person will be writing the EQAO assessments for math, reading and writing in the Spring. Grade 9 students attending in-person will write the Grade 9 assessment. More information from the Ministry is forthcoming. In regard to the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSST), students graduating in 2021-2022 are exempt, however students graduating in 2022-2023 are required to write the test.

Superintendent Winn answered questions from the committee members as they arose.

Motion No.

SS-2021-09-14-03

Approval of September 14, 2021 Verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports

Motion was not addressed and will be returned to the October 5, 2021, Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting

13. Association Reports

Autism Ontario – S. Casola

- Upcoming Meetings or Conferences:

We have a number of excellent webinars available “on demand” on our website:

<https://www.autismontario.com/programs-services/webinars/recent-and-upcoming-webinars>

- New Programs or Services:

We have a number of distance program offerings – primarily virtual workshops being and programming for children and youth offered in Durham Region – all can be found here:

https://www.autismontario.com/events?custom_325=Durham&event_type_id=All

Website: www.autismontario.com

14. Correspondence

None

15. Inquiries and Miscellaneous

None

16. Pending Items

None

17. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Motion:

No. SS-2021-09-14-04

Adjournment

Motion moved by J. Oldman and motion seconded by K. Burke.

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of September 14, 2021 adjourn.”

CARRIED

18. Closing Prayer

The closing prayer was offered by Alex Massis.

Valerie Adamo
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee

Susie Lee-Fernandes
Superintendent of Education

Recording Secretary: Delfina Pinto