



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

Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Durham Catholic District School Board
March 9, 2023 at 7:30 PM
Virtual and at CEC – North & South Board Rooms

Members Present:

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

Trustees Present:

J. McCafferty, Robert De Souza

Staff Present:

P. Sorhaitz (Superintendent of Education), F. Mosier (Student Services Coordinator), Dr. M. Evans (Senior Manager, Psychological and Speech-Language Services/ Lead Psychologist

SEAC Representatives:

D. Assenza (CPCO Representative) virtually, T. Robertson (APSSP Representative), L. Jemmott (OECTA Representative)

Regrets:

M. Cope (CUPE Representative), F. Pileggi (Communications)

Opening

1.1. Memorials and Prayer

Chair Adamo called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m., offered the opening prayer and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.2. Land Acknowledgements

1.3. Roll Call and Apologies

1.4. Call to Order

1.5. Approval of the Agenda

SS-2023-03-07-01

Approval of Agenda

Motion moved by J. McCafferty, and motion seconded by C. Nosseir.

"That the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the agenda of the Tuesday, March 7, 2023 meeting, as printed."

CARRIED

1.6. Approval of the minutes of February 14, 2023 SEAC Meeting

SS-2023-03-07-02

Approval of Minutes

Motion moved by J. Sorhaitz and motion seconded by J. McCafferty.

"That the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the Minutes of the Tuesday, February 14, 2023 meeting, as printed."

CARRIED

1.7. Declarations of Interest

None

2. Items for Information/Decision

None

2.1. Announcements

Superintendent Paula Sorhaitz announced that Christine Congrady, Student Services Coordinator, won the Community Champion Award on March 4th at the Abilities Centre Gala. Christine was recognized for her outstanding dedication and hard work with Project Search. Congratulations Christine, well deserved!

2.2. Presentations

2.2.1. Durham Down Syndrome Association (DDSA) - Yma Frison, President

Yma Frison, President of the Durham Down Syndrome Association (DDSA), informed the committee that DDSA has been around for over 40 years, supporting people with Down Syndrome and their families. She gave a brief history of the association and shared good news stories about Jan, Assistant Librarian at Fr. Fenelon C.S. and Jocelyn, Teacher's Assistant at Msgr. Philip Coffey C.S., both volunteers and actively involved and engaged at DCDSB.

Ms. Frison invited the committee to share any good new stories about other individuals with Down Syndrome in the community.

2.2.2. School Year Calendar for 2023-2024 – Superintendent Jim Wilson

Superintendent Wilson provided a brief overview of what the calendar for the next school year would look like. Two calendar options for the 2023-2024 school year were presented.

Option 1 would have the first day of school start on September 5, 2023 and March break starting Thursday, March 7 to Monday, March 18th. The 2nd option would have school start Wed.

September 6, 2023 and March Break Friday, March 8th to Monday March 18th.

The committee agreed that, similar to last year, the extra day for the March Break would provide extra time for anyone wishing to travel during the break.

2.3. Discussion Items

None

2.4. Business arising from previous meeting

2.4.1. Draft letter - Requesting the option to extend the time students with differing abilities have to remain or continue in Secondary School beyond year 7 and beyond age 21

The committee agreed that a letter be drafted in support of the Peel-Dufferin CDSB's position requesting to extend the time students with differing abilities have to remain or continue in Secondary School beyond year 7 and beyond age 21.

2.4.2. Draft letter - SIP funding

After further review, the draft letter requires detailed financial data and therefore, the Student Services department will look into acquiring this information and bring back to the next SEAC meeting.

2.5. Staff Reports

2.5.1. Student Services Report - Shelley Phoenix, Francesca Mosier, Paula Sorhaitz

Francesca Mosier presented the Coordinator's report.

- Student Services Coordinators are meeting with school teams as the second step in the Educational Assistant allocation process for the 2023-2024 school year
- New Program Support Teacher mentoring continued with a session on Psychological Assessments
- Sharing of Excellence Workshop Series for March:
- How to use a Token Economy – participants will learn how to develop and implement token economies
- As part of DCDSB's plan to support transitions, in-person Students with Assistive Technology Transition Trips (SWATTT) occurred at each secondary school over the past few weeks.
- Students with Special Equipment Amount (SEA) Ministry-funded Assistive Technology (AT) devices attended SWATTT.
- SWATTT was hosted by the Assistive Technology Specialists (ATs) & AT Techs in collaboration with Program Support Teachers (PSTs) and Intermediate Guidance Teachers (IGTs).

Highlights of SWATTT include:

- Welcome and Introductions
- Tour of school
- Student Voice
- AT-related Kahoot game
- Self-advocacy scenarios
- AT at receiving school
- Follow-up with IGT after SWATTT

On behalf of Shelley Phoenix, Dr. Michaela Evans presented the Mental Health report.

Updates

- Black Mental Health Day event was a success
SOS/Wellness Groups
- Running in half of our secondary schools
- Sharing of Excellence taking place March 22: Engaging Youth in Mental Health and Anti-Stigma Initiatives (Tips for Starting a Student Wellness Group)

Upcoming

Mental Health Series for Parents

- Partnering with community agencies (i.e. Pinewoods, YMCA, Black Health Alliance) to offer virtual webinars that are to be offered to parents
- Tentative dates are April 18th, 25th, May 2nd, 9th

Mental Health Week (formerly Children's Mental Health Week)

- First week of May - collaborating with the Faith department as it is Catholic Education week

Superintendent Sorhaitz thanked the committee for the warm welcome and provided an update on the Special Education Review.

Superintendent Sorhaitz shared that the Student Services Department had the opportunity to provide their input on goals and strategies through a survey.

She informed that a meeting was held with the Program Support Teachers this week and she would be meeting with the Student Services Executive team later this week to talk about departmental goals and look at the feedback from the PSTs.

Superintendent Sorhaitz invited the SEAC committee to participate in the 2023-2024 DCDSB budget ThoughtExchange.

1. Share your thoughts about how we can work together to make sure that all students have access to and receive support for their faith development, mental health, and well-being.

[Please click here to participate in this ThoughtExchange.](#)

2. What are your thoughts on how we can work together to ensure that the voices of our diverse communities are heard and respected, and that disparities are addressed to cultivate a safe and equitable learning environment for all students?

[Please click here to participate in this ThoughtExchange.](#)

3. What are your thoughts on how we can work together to engage students in meaningful interactions, connections and experiential learning opportunities that meet the needs of our diverse student population?

[Please click here to participate in this ThoughtExchange.](#)

Feedback received from the ThoughtExchange questions will help to inform the DCDSB's 2023-2024 budget and strategic priorities. ThoughtExchange is an anonymous platform that will allow everyone to share their thoughts and rate the thoughts and ideas of others.

ThoughtExchange is open until Friday March 24, 2023.

Marie Hammond, Chief Financial Officer will join the next SEAC meeting to discuss the results.

Motion:

SS-2023-03-07-03

Approval of the March 7, 2023, verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept the verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports of the March 7, 2023 meeting.”

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

McCafferty.

CARRIED

2.6. Association Reports

Autism Ontario - S. Casola

Celebrate the Spectrum: Celebrate the Spectrum is our theme for World Autism Day 2023 celebrations. It is an opportunity for positive action to provide spaces of support and advocacy for our diverse communities while learning about autism and how to make our communities better for people on the autism spectrum. The campaign is

flexible, and there are many great ways to get your students involved, including:

- Registering for the Celebrate the Spectrum School Giving Challenge and fundraise in support of Autism Ontario
- Creating a 'strengths link' with your class
- Donating to Autism Ontario Autism Ontario is launching Celebrate the Spectrum to enhance our activities and celebrations throughout the whole month of April.
- Elementary and Secondary Toolkits can be downloaded here: [Celebrate the Spectrum - Toolkits](#)
- Sign your school up at [Autism Ontario CTS Form](#)
- If you are interested in participating in our Celebrate the Spectrum campaign, you can connect with your local Autism Ontario Region or email celebratethespectrum@autismontario.com.

Celebrate the Spectrum School Giving Challenge: Students and their schools are some of our most active supporters. In honour of these young autism champions, we're launching the Celebrate the Spectrum School Giving Challenge, which will run throughout April. The school that raises the most donations in support of Autism Ontario will be eligible to win special recognition, including an article in Autism Matters magazine. Each school's top fundraising student will be eligible for a chance to win an iPad! More detail and the registration form can be found on the Celebrate the Spectrum website at [Celebrate the Spectrum School Giving Challenge](#). Please help us promote this challenge with your schools and school board; let's urge all our school contacts to register and challenge a rival school!

Autism Ontario's Fund Development Department will be mailing trustees and schools to encourage participation over the next month. Keep your eyes open for updates, and if you'd like more detail, please contact Erin Cunningham at erin.cunningham@autismontario.com.

2.7. Correspondence

- 2.7.1. Email from: Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MASC) re: Community Collaboration Form Feedback Form - Response Requested by March 9th

Motion:

SS-2023-03-07-04

Motion to accept and complete form

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept the completed Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education Collaboration form.

Motion moved by A. Massis and motion seconded by J. McCafferty.
CARRIED

Ministry Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) requested the form be filled out and submitted by March 9th. The committee worked collaboratively to complete the form which is attached with the minutes.

3. Other Business

3.1. Board Communications

None

3.2. Motion to Adjourn

Motion:

SS-2023-03-07-05

Motion to Adjourn

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of March 7, 2023 adjourn.”

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

CARRIED

3.2.1. The next meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee will be held on Tuesday, April 11, 2023 @ 7:30 pm

3.3. Closing Prayer

Closing prayer was offered by Chair Adamo

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Valerie Adamo
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee

Paula Sorhaitz
Superintendent of Education

Recording Secretary: Delfina Pinto