



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

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Meeting

Jan 9, 2024, from 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM

Catholic Education Centre, 650 Rossland Road West, Oshawa
North and South Board Rooms

Members Present:

Valerie Adamo, Chair, VOICE for the Hearing Impaired (Virtual)
Walter Heeney, Vice Chair, Durham Down Syndrome Association (In-Person)
Julie Sorhaitz, Learning Disabilities Ontario – Durham Region (Virtual)
Alex Massis, Community Representative (Virtual)
Claudia Nosseir, Grandview Kids (In-Person or Virtual)
Edward Secnik, Alternate, Autism Ontario – Durham Region (Virtual)
Shona Casola, Autism Ontario – Durham Region (Virtual)
Donna Callaghan, Alternate, Durham Down Syndrome Association (In-Person)

Trustees Present:

Robert De Souza (Virtual)

Staff Present:

Yulan Fisher-Brown, Senior Manager, Mental Health Initiatives/Mental Health Leader (In-Person)
Helen Killoran, Student Services Coordinator (In-Person)
Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education (In-Person)
Jim Wilson, Superintendent of Education (In-Person)

SEAC Representatives:

Lo Davis, OECTA Representative (In-Person)
Patricia Bosley, CUPE Representative (Virtual)
John Di Vizio, CPCO Representative (Virtual)
Kyla Edgecombe, APSSP Representative (Virtual)

Regrets:

Jim McCafferty, Trustee
Candace Julien, Community Representative

Minutes

1. Opening

Chair Adamo called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m. 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



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Motion: SS-2024-01-09-01

Approval of the Agenda

Motion moved by Walter Heeney and seconded by Alex Massis

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the agenda of the Tuesday, January 9, 2024, meeting, as presented.” (CARRIED)

1.6. Approval of the Minutes of December 5, 2023, SEAC Meeting

Motion: SS-2024-01-09-02

Approval of Minutes

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Claudia Nosseir

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the Minutes of the Tuesday, December 5, 2023, meeting, as presented.” (CARRIED)

1.7. Declarations of Interest

None

2. Items for Information/Decision

2.1. Announcements

2.1.1. Introduction/Welcome – Alternate for Durham Down Syndrome – Donna Callaghan

Chair Adamo welcomed Donna Callaghan to the Special Education Advisory Committee as the alternate for Durham Down Syndrome.

2.1.2. Introduction/Welcome – Alternate for Autism Ontario – Durham Region – Ed Secnik

Chair Adamo welcomed Edward Secnik to the Special Education Advisory Committee as the alternate for Autism Ontario – Durham Region.

2.1.3. Introduction/Welcome – Trustees appointed to SEAC (2024 Committee Membership)

Following the Board meeting on December 18, 2023, Committee Memberships were confirmed. Superintendent Paula Sorhaitz announced that Trustees Robert De Souza and Jim McCafferty will serve on SEAC for the 2024 year.

2.2. Election for Chair of Special Education Advisory Committee

2.2.1. Election for the Position of Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee – Paula Sorhaitz

Superintendent Sorhaitz opened the floor for nominations for the position of chair of SEAC for the period of January 9, 2024, to December 31, 2024.

Nominee

Moved By

Seconded By

Willing to Stand?



Valerie Adamo Walter Heeney Julie Sorhaitz Yes

2.2.2. Comments from Candidates

2.2.3. Motion to Close Nominations

Superintendent Sorhaitz called three times for further nominations. Nominations were declared closed.

Motion: SS-2024-01-09-03

Close Nominations

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Walter Heeney

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee close nominations for the position of Chair of SEAC.” (CARRIED)

Superintendent Sorhaitz announced that Valerie Adamo, representative for VOICE for the Hearing Impaired, was acclaimed to the position of Chair of SEAC.

2.2.4. Acceptance Speech by the Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee

Valerie Adamo assumed the position of Chair and expressed their thanks.

2.3. Election for Vice Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee

2.3.1. Election for the Position of Vice Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee – Chair

Chair Adamo opened the floor for nominations for the position of Vice Chair of SEAC for the period of January 9, 2024, to December 31, 2024.

Nominee	Moved By	Seconded By	Willing to Stand?
Walter Heeney	Valerie Adamo	Alex Massis	Yes

2.3.2. Comments from Candidates

2.3.3. Motion to Close Nominations

Chair Adamo then called three times for further nominations. Nominations were declared closed.

Motion: SS-20224-01-09-04

Close Nominations

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Alex Massis

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee close nominations for the position of Vice Chair of SEAC.” (CARRIED)

Chair announced that Walter Heeney, representative for Durham Down Syndrome Association, was acclaimed to the position of Vice Chair of SEAC.



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2.3.4. Acceptance Speech by the Vice Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee

Walter Heeney accepted the position of Vice Chair and expressed their thanks.

2.4. Presentations

2.4.1. 2024 School Year Calendar – Jim Wilson, Superintendent of Education

Superintendent Wilson presented two elementary options and two secondary options for the 2024-2025 school year. Superintendent Wilson noted that Christmas break is the same for all 4 options and noted March break changes between option 1 and option 2. Superintendent Wilson noted PA Days are subject to change.

A survey will be sent out on Friday, January 12 and will be open for 1 week to collect feedback. The Board needs to submit their calendars to the Ministry of Education for approval by March 1.

2.4.2. Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan – Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education

Superintendent Sorhaitz shared an overview of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. She noted how the plan is reviewed and revised on a yearly basis. Superintendent Sorhaitz asked the Committee for their feedback on the plan.

Principles for Bullying Prevention and Intervention (Evidence-Based):

- Bullying is a relationship problem.
- Bullying interventions require a developmental approach.
- Bullying interventions require a systems approach.
- Leadership is the Foundation for Systems Change.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Requires:

- A whole-school approach
- Home-school-parish connections
- Education for staff, students, and families
- Input from advisory groups such as SEAC

Providing feedback to assist in the annual review of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan is requested for the February agenda under Business arising from the minutes.

2.5. Discussion Items

2.5.1. Review SEAC Terms of Reference

Chair Adamo asked the Committee if there was any feedback from the Committee on the DCDSB SEAC Terms of Reference. Hearing none, the terms of reference will remain as presented.

Chair Adamo referenced Appendix 3 – SEAC Annual Calendar in the Terms of Reference as a reminder to follow the appendix to ensure we are receiving the activities throughout



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the year.

2.5.2. Review SEAC Brochure

Superintendent Sorhaitz asked for the Committee to review the DCDSB SEAC brochure for content to ensure it is current and reflects the role and responsibilities of the Committee.

Vice Chair Heeney suggested adding Special Projects related to Special Education, such as Project Search. A follow up was to include a link to the information on the website within the brochure.

Providing feedback on the brochure is requested for the February agenda under Business arising from the minutes.

2.6. Business arising from the Minutes.

None.

2.7. Staff Reports

2.7.1. Student Services Report –Helen Killoran, Yulan Fisher-Brown, and Paula Sorhaitz

Helen Killoran presented the **Coordinator's Report:**

- Last month, the Durham Catholic Behaviour Resource Team (BRT) implemented Movement Floors at St. Francis de Sales and St. Joseph (Uxbridge).
- Crystal Grande, a Behavioral Support Specialist (BSS) on the Behaviour Resource Team, installed the pathways.
- These up-regulating and down-regulating movement paths are designed to assist students in regulating their bodies, fostering a calming effect on their nervous systems. As a result, students become more primed and prepared for learning, contributing to a conducive and nurturing learning environment for all.
- Our school board has over 20+ schools with these regulating floors.

- On December 12, Assistive Technology Specialists (ATSS) from the Assistive Technology Team provided Read & Write and Orbit Note training to all elementary and secondary Program Support Teachers (PSTs) at our monthly PST meeting.

Yulan Fisher-Brown presented the **Mental Health Report:**

SMHO Wayfinder for K-12:

- Wayfinder is a tool for educators that gathers mental health promotion and literacy resources in an easy-to-use and sequenced way.
- This digital, clickable guide offers a variety of mental health lessons and activities organized by grade, including virtual field trips, lesson plans, read alouds, grab and go activities, and much more.
- Educators have shared that it feels comparable to having a mental health



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promotion program tailored for each grade level.

Grade 7 Wayfinder example shows core lessons, Ministry of Education Health & Physical Education Modules, Learning Activities and Consolidation of Learning over a 10-month period.

Upcoming:

- Bell Let's Talk Day- Activities and announcements to be shared with schools on January 24th.
- Sharing of Excellence- Surviving Educator Burnout Book club on January 30th
- Sharing Of Excellence- Creating a Mentally Health Classroom- Understand on January 31st.

Paula Sorhaitz presented the **Superintendent's Report:**

PST Learning:

- Inservice on AODA training, Read and Write (Elementary), OrbitNote (Secondary) and Supporting students with executive functioning needs.
- Dr. Sue Correia spoke to Supporting Students with Executive Functioning Needs. Very well received presentation.
- AODA training was provided from the Communications Department. A takeaway from the training was to think beyond the student and how visual accessibility may impact their parents/guardians.

Upcoming:

- Continuation of the math manipulatives learning series
- IOL tips and tricks for PSTs
- Alternative goals and report cards
- Transitional planning (elementary to secondary)
- January 12 Science of math webinar – hosted by Ontario Council of Administrators of Special Education – collaboration of Academic Services and Student Services, and Math Resource Teachers
- January 15 Lexia Training – Voluntary full day pull out with 49 registrants. Targeted primary division Grades 1-3. Morning session is about language curriculum and resources, and afternoon session is Lexia training. Additional Lexia licenses based on availability will be provided for participant classrooms. Supporting our goal of building capacity and infrastructure.

Motion: SS-20224-01-09-05

Approval of the January 9, 2024, verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader, and Superintendent Reports

Motion moved by Walter Heeney and seconded by Robert De Souza

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept the verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports of the January 9, 2024, meeting.” (CARRIED)



2.8. Association Reports

Trustee Robert De Souza noted that the first Board Meeting of the year is scheduled for January 22, 2024.

Learning Disabilities Association – Durham Region

New Programs or Services:

Proceeding with setting up a scholarship for secondary students to support their transition from high school to post-secondary. More information to come.

Other Information:

January 27th from 9:30-1:00pm Learning Disabilities Association has partnered with the Whitby Public Library for Family Literacy Day. There will be a Story Time Takeover as well as a table out front with resources and swag.

VOICE for the Hearing Impaired

Other Information: We are looking to host camp again this year and are currently working on confirming a location. More information to come.

2.9. Correspondence

2.9.1. Town of Whitby Resolution

The Council of the Town of Whitby adopted a resolution regarding Support for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), noting that the bulk of government funded programs for individuals with ASD end at age 18 in Ontario. They joined the Town of Ajax in requesting that the Government of Ontario provide core funding for organizations providing programs, care, and services for adults with ASD as part of the 2024 Provincial Budget.

It was agreed that the letter be received and filed.

The Committee requests that staff draft a letter of support. Edward Secnik, alternate for Autism Ontario – Durham Region volunteered to help with the letter writing.

Helen Killoran noted that the letter could include the length of waitlists, limited availability of day programs and cost of programs for students and their families. As well as an opportunity to request an extension to Autism Ontario funding (OAP).

A draft of the letter is requested for the February agenda under Business arising from the minutes.

2.9.2. Durham Region Resolution

Council of the Region of Durham passed a resolution as well and requested that the Government of Ontario provide core funding for organizations providing programs, care, and services for adults with ASD, including Autism Home Base, as part of the 2024 Provincial Budget.

It was agreed that the letter be received and filed.

3. Other Business



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3.1. Board Communications

3.2. Motion to Adjourn

Motion: SS-20224-01-09-06

Motion to Adjourn

Motion moved by Claudia Nosseir and seconded by Julie Sorhaitz

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of January 9, 2024, adjourn.”
(CARRIED)

3.2.1. The next meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee will be held on
Tuesday, February 13, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.

3.3. Closing Prayer

Closing prayer was offered by Walter Heeney. The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

Valerie Adamo
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee

Paula Sorhaitz
Superintendent of Education, Resource

Recording Secretary: Paige Wiggans