



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

Memorandum

To: Board of Trustees

From: Gerard Winn, Director of Education

Date: September 23, 2024

Subject: **Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting – September 10, 2024**

Origin: Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education

Please find attached a copy of the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting held on September 10, 2024.

GW/PS/pw

Attachment: Minutes of September 10, 2024



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Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Meeting

Sept 10, 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 (In-Person)
Julie Sorhaitz, Learning Disabilities Ontario (Virtual)
Edward Secnik, Autism Ontario – Durham Region (In-Person)
Claudia Nosseir, Grandview Kids (In-Person)
Mariam Maskell, Participation House Project (Durham Region) (In-Person)
Tracy McGarry, Participation House Project (Durham Region) (In-Person)
Alex Massis, Community Representative (Virtual)
Donna Callaghan, Alternate, Durham Down Syndrome Association (In-Person)

Trustees Present:

Robert De Souza, Trustee (Virtual)

Staff Present:

Shelley Phoenix, Senior Manager, (In-Person)
Teresa Ezquerra, Student Services Coordinator (In-Person)
Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education (In-Person)
Katharine Stevenson, Superintendent of Education (In-Person)

SEAC Representatives:

Lo Davis, OECTA Representative (In-Person)
Patricia Bosley, CUPE Representative (Virtual)
Ashley Toohey, APSSP Representative (In-Person)
Jennifer Harvey, CPCO Representative (Virtual)

Regrets

Walter Heeney, Vice Chair, Durham Down Syndrome Association
Candace Julien, Community Representative (Regrets)
Jim McCafferty, Trustee

Minutes

1. Opening

1.1. Call to Order

Chair Adamo called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m. offered the opening prayer and welcomed everyone to the meeting.



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1.2. Memorials and Prayers

1.3. Land Acknowledgements

1.4. Roll Call and Apologies

1.5. Approval of the Agenda

Motion: SS-2024-09-10-01

Approval of the Agenda

Motion moved by Edward Secnik and seconded by Julie Sorhaitz

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the agenda of the Tuesday, September 10, 2024, meeting, as presented.” (CARRIED)

1.6. Approval of the Minutes of June 4, 2024, SEAC Meeting

Motion: SS-2024-09-10-02

Approval of Minutes

Motion moved by Claudia Nosseir and seconded by Alex Massis

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the Minutes of the Tuesday, June 4, 2024, meeting, as presented.” (CARRIED)

1.7. Declarations of Interest

None

2. Items for Information/Decision

2.1. Announcements

2.1.1. Welcome Gerard Winn, Director of Education – Opening Remarks

Superintendent Paula Sorhaitz introduced Director Gerard Winn. Director Winn brought opening remarks to the Special Education Advisory Committee and highlighted the importance of community partners.

2.1.2. Welcome Participation House as a Local Association

Superintendent Paula Sorhaitz welcomed Tracy McGarry and Mariam Maskell from Participation House as a new association on the Special Education Advisory



Committee.

2.2. Presentations

2.2.1. Katharine Stevenson – Spiritual Theme

Superintendent Katharine Stevenson presented on the Spiritual Theme for the 2024-2025 school year: Living in Hope

- An “Ordinary Jubilee” is a spiritual tradition that occurs every 25 years in the Church
- The Christian sense of hope: Faith, hope, and love are the three theological virtues
- Grade 7 to 12 students participated in a full day workshop in May 2024 and reflected upon what Living in Hope means to them

2.3. Discussion Items

2.3.1. Special Education Plan – Section 2.13 Special Equipment

Teresa Ezquerra updated the Committee on the changes that needed to occur to the Special Education Plan in order to align with the directives.

Motion: SS-2024-09-10-03

Approval of the Special Education Plan 2023-2024

Motion moved by Claudia Nosseir and seconded by Robert De Souza

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve changes to the Special Education Plan 2023-2024.” (CARRIED)

2.3.2. Autism Ontario - Resignation and Nomination Letter

Motion: SS-2024-09-10-04

Acceptance of Resignation and Nomination

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Alex Massis

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept the resignation of Shona Casola and nomination of Edward Secnik as representative for Autism Ontario.” (CARRIED)

2.3.3. SEAC Annual Calendar 2024-2025

Chair Valerie Adamo reviewed the 2024-2025 Annual Calendar with the Committee. There were no concerns with the activities on the calendar as presented. Chair Adamo asked the Associations if any would like to add a presentation to the calendar.



Julie Sorhaitz added a presentation by Learning Disabilities Ontario to the calendar for October 1, 2024. Mariam Maskell added a presentation by Participation House to the calendar for January 7, 2025.

2.4. Business arising from the Minutes

2.4.1. Recordings – Motion by Board of Trustees on April 25, 2022

Superintendent Paula Sorhaitz shared concerns raised by parents in the board who would like to have online access to the meetings. Superintendent Sorhaitz asked the Committee if they would like to request an exemption from the motion be brought to the Board of Trustees.

Chair Adamo asked the Committee if they support requesting an exemption for either livestreaming or uploading recordings following meetings.

Motion: SS-2024-09-10-05

Request a Delegation

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Robert De Souza

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee request a delegation to the Board of Trustees.” (CARRIED)

2.5. Staff Reports

2.5.1. Student Services Report - Teresa Ezquerra, Shelley Phoenix, Paula Sorhaitz

Teresa Ezquerra presented the Student Services Report:

- The week of July 2-5, 20 junior grade students attended an Assistive Technology (AT) Summer Camp
- Some of the learning included Hot keys & tips for Chromebooks, Internet safety, Accessibility features, Read & Write and OrbitNote software, Navigation of Office 365, Self-Advocacy skills, Coding and Mindfulness & Technology.
- As part of the summer Ministry funding to support students with special education needs, 12 educators, including teachers, PSTs, DECEs, EAs and Student Services staff offered a variety of summer literacy and numeracy programs.
- There were 9 programs in all with a total of 73 elementary and secondary students participating.

Shelley Phoenix presented the Mental Health Report:

Summer programming



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- Aspire for Hire Active Harmony Camp
- CABS led STEM Camp and Leadership Camp
- Building Buddies Social Skills Camp
- CYC support within the HeadStart Program (Grade 9 Students)

Mental Health Literacy Modules for Gr. 10 Career Studies

- Supporting the delivery of one new and one updated mental health literacy expectation within the 2024 Career Studies course
Module Content:

10.1 - Strategies for managing stress and navigating balance

- Supports students to plan for navigating school/work/life balance by identifying signs of stress and affirming, analysing, and possibly expanding helpful strategies they can embed into daily routines, both now and in the future.

10.2 - Knowing when, where, and how to seek support

- Helps students to recognize signs that could indicate stress is becoming problematic and know where and how to seek support, should they need it. It also offers opportunities to identify barriers to help-seeking and consider ways to address them.

Wellness Wednesdays

- School announcements and parent information on mental health and wellness has been created and given to all schools to be shared every Wednesday to increase student and parent/caregiver knowledge and reduce stigma

Staff Meeting Podcasts

- Short videos on various topics related to creating mentally healthy schools are being created to show to all staff at staff meetings to ensure streamlined messaging

Upcoming Meetings:

- Mental Health Champions Meeting- September 12
- BWell (Secondary Student Mental Health Leadership) Meeting - September 20

Upcoming Professional Development

- Suicide Prevention/Life Promotion- September 17
- Gr. 7/8 Mental Health Modules- September 24
- Gr. 10 Career Studies MH Modules- September 25
- Substance Use and Youth Engagement- September 26

Paula Sorhaitz presented the Superintendent's Report:

Communications Protocol PPM 170



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- PPM 170 directs that school boards provide a step-by-step process school boards will take in acknowledging and responding to parent inquiries about matters pertaining to their child's education, and information about the types of inquiries parents can have addressed at the:
 - Classroom level
 - School level
 - Board level
- At minimum, boards must ensure the acknowledgement of a parent inquiry within 2 business days.
- Boards shall make best efforts to provide an estimated date of response if a parent inquiry cannot be fully addressed within 5 business days of receipt.

Special Equipment Allocation – funding structure change

- Special Education Equipment over \$5000 now to be fully reimbursed to school boards
- Special Education Equipment costing under \$5000 now to be funded through fixed amount of Ministry funding provided to school boards

Special Incidence Portion update

- The Ministry of Education continues to gather data and audit school boards to determine formula for special education funding – moving toward a centralized formula to be applied to all school boards vs. previous practice of school boards submitting data to receive funding

PST Learning

- September 10 - topics included screeners and IEPs, information on Sagonaska Demonstration School, and updates on referral process to central teams

Summer Learning for Educators

- August 22 - approximately 80 educators (teachers, EAs, DECEs) attended to learn about topics such as supporting students with executive functioning needs, ASD, building mentally healthy classrooms, CRRP and more. Guest speaker Dr. Whitney Rapp, author of Universal Design for Learning in Action

Supply EA Staff Training

- August 27 PA Day - day of professional development on topics such as BMS, using math manipulatives, and best practices for the role of EA

Motion: SS-2024-09-10-06

Approval of the September 10, 2024, verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader, and Superintendent Reports

Motion moved by Claudia Nosseir and seconded by Julie Sorhaitz



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“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept the verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports of the September 10, 2024, meeting.” (CARRIED)

2.6. Association Reports

Mariam Maskell, Participation House Project (Durham Region)

- Family Information Night, Thursday, September 26th, 2024, from 6:00pm-8:00pm
- Participation House Project (Durham Region) wanted to connect with you to keep you informed about our services and changes that are happening.
- RSVP to Andrea Andrus, manager-Community Services and Partnerships (905) 579-5267 x 206 or aandrus@phdurham.com

2.7. Correspondence

2.7.1. Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) - Feedback Required

The Special Education Advisory Committee collaborated on the MACSE feedback form: Communication: Collaborating with the Community.

Motion: SS-2024-09-10-07

Submission to Advisory Council

Motion moved by Claudia Nosseir and seconded by Robert De Souza

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the submission of the MACSE feedback form.” (CARRIED)

2.7.2. Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board letter

Received for information and filed.

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 October 1, 2024.

Motion: SS-2024-09-10-08

Motion to Adjourn



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Motion moved Claudia Nosseir by and seconded by Edward Secnik

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of September 10, 2024, adjourn.” (CARRIED)

3.3. Closing Prayer

Closing prayer was offered by Chair Valerie Adamo. The meeting was adjourned at 8:59pm.

Valerie Adamo
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee

Paula Sorhaitz
Superintendent of Education, Resource

Recording Secretary: Paige Wiggans