



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

## **Memorandum**

To: Board of Trustees

From: Tracy Barill, Director of Education

Date: April 22, 2024

Subject: **Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting – April 9, 2024**

Origin: Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education

Please find attached a copy of the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting held on April 9, 2024.

TB/PS/pw

Attachment: Minutes of April 9, 2024



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## **Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Meeting**

Apr 09, 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)*

*Walter Heeney, Vice Chair, Durham Down Syndrome Association (In-Person)*

*Donna Callaghan, Alternate, Durham Down Syndrome Association (In-Person)*

*Julie Sorhaitz, Learning Disabilities Ontario (In-Person)*

*Claudia Nosseir, Grandview Kids (Virtual)*

*Alex Massis, Community Representative (Virtual)*

### **Trustees Present:**

*Robert De Souza (Virtual)*

### **Staff Present:**

*Shelley Phoenix, Senior Manager, Social Work and Child and Youth Counsellors (In-Person)*

*Helen Killoran, Student Services Coordinator (In-Person)*

*Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education (In-Person)*

### **SEAC Representatives:**

*Lo Davis, OECTA Representative (In-Person)*

*Patricia Bosley, CUPE Representative (Virtual)*

*Melissa Vickery, CPCO Representative (Virtual)*

*Narmilee Dhayanandhan, APSSP Representative (Virtual)*

### **Regrets:**

*Jim McCafferty, Trustee*

*Shona Casola, Autism Ontario – Durham Region*

*Candace Julien, Community Representative*

## **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.

#### **1.2. Memorials and Prayers**

#### **1.3. Land Acknowledgements**

#### **1.4. Roll Call and Apologies**

#### **1.5. Approval of the Agenda**



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Motion: SS-2024-04-09-01

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, April 9, 2024, meeting, as presented.” (CARRIED)

**1.6. Approval of the Minutes of March 5, 2024, SEAC Meeting**

Motion: SS-2024-04-09-02

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, March 5, 2024, meeting, as presented.” (CARRIED)

**1.7. Declarations of Interest**

None

**2. Items for Information/Decision**

**2.1. Announcements**

**2.2. Presentations**

**2.2.1. Paula Sorhaitz – Actions to Improve Accessibility**

Paula Sorhaitz provided an update on the Accessibility and Lead Committee, and Departmental Learning and Activities for the 2023-24 school year:

Professional Learning

- Professional development segments at each of the steering committee meetings
- Learning will be adapted from Holland-Bloorview’s “Dear Everybody” campaign (learning modules and resources available for free online)
- Committee members are asked to bring learning forward at departmental meetings

Learning Outcomes

- Articulate why combatting ableism is important and how stigma is a reality
- Understand how misconceptions about disabilities perpetuate stigma

Strategies to examine attitudes and reflections on inclusion

- Listen to and actively seek input from individuals with disabilities in decision-making and policy development
- Set physical environment up for supportive equipment
- Assist/support others in communicating their disability
- Consider using accommodations (ie. visual schedules) with everyone (necessary for some, good for all – universal design)



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Promoting Inclusion - Key Messages

- Barrier-free social interactions are key to promoting full participation in all aspects of life
- A real culture of inclusion cannot be brought about unless everyone embraces it
- Inclusion is a continuum; must be worked at and adapted continuously

Leading Accessibility by Example

- Five new voice amplifiers for use by Student Services staff - for any meetings/training outside of the PFC

Superintendent Sorhaitz noted that the final meeting with Lead Canada is scheduled for May 9.

**2.3. Discussion Items**

**2.4. Business arising from the Minutes**

**2.5. Staff Reports**

**2.5.1. Student Services Report – Helen Killoran, Shelley Phoenix, Paula Sorhaitz**

Helen Killoran presented the Coordinator's Report:

- March New Program Support Teacher Mentoring session focused upon Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and how PSTs can support teachers in their implementation of UDL strategies within the classroom
- Project SEARCH Update
  - Interns have completed their second internship and fourth Employment Planning Meeting. This week is a Transition Week where interns interview for their last internship and engage in an internship reveal and onboarding activities to prepare for the final internship.
  - 15 students have applied to Project SEARCH for next year. The Skills Assessment and Interview Day will happen April 25, 2024.
- On March 21, we celebrated World Down Syndrome Day encouraging people to wear #lotsofsocks and blue & yellow. A numbered memo was shared with all staff outlining resources to use to #endthestereotypes.
- Behaviour Skills Training (BST) is being facilitated by members of BRT & DCART in some of our classrooms. This evidence-based approach is active learning that is geared to supporting staff in their professional development.
- Three applications were submitted to the Provincial Demonstration Schools for consideration for placement in September. By June, students will be notified of their placement from the provincial schools committee.

Helen Killoran also presented on Autism Awareness Month:



## **DURHAM CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

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- April 2, 2024, is World Autism Awareness and Acceptance Day.
- DCDSB supports students with ASD across both Elementary and Secondary panels
- DCDSB Schools celebrated on April 2 by promoting their front foyer displays and participating in activities centered around inclusion and acceptance
- DCDSB has 829 students with ASD and IEP (increase from 242 students in 2018)

### Durham Catholic Autism Resource Team (DCART)

- Supporting student referrals from both Elementary and Secondary
- Services will include a minimum of 12 weeks intensive support, to the school, for students who have been referred to the team.
- Additional supports for students have been provided by our Consultant and Resource Teacher for Autism Services, in Consultative and Crisis Response DCART models
- The objective is to further develop capacity building in the school, while supporting the PST in their roles as Special Education Leaders

### Sonderly Courses in Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)

- Geneva Centre Ministry Course funding for ABA was given to DCDSB on the Sonderly online platform
- \$43,000 was provided to DCDSB. All funds were spent
- A Numbered Memo in February offered courses to all educators who were interested
- 36 Educators registered for courses this year (courses are still available)
- In addition to the 4 ABA certificate courses, new course offerings have been created by members of DCART

### Early Intervention Classrooms (EIC)

- EIC is a communication-based program to support the areas of language/communication, school-readiness skills, self-regulation, play, and social-emotional development for students in kindergarten.
- The small classroom placement has a maximum of 6 students per site.
- DCDSB has 3 EIC sites: St. John XXIII C.S., St. Francis de Sales C.S., St. Bridget C.S.
- September and January entry points into an EIC

### PEAK Assessment in EIC

- Promoting Emergence of Advanced Knowledge (PEAK) is an evidence-based assessment and corresponding curriculum that combines the traditional ABA verbal behavior approach with the science of Derived Relational Responding, It also helps with teaching problem solving skills and advanced language skills
- All members of DCART and EIC Staff were trained in a 2-day certification course
- PEAK is used to support student learning in all 3 EIC sites under the direction of Paige Pascoe, Melissa Hooper, and Erin Wilson (BCBAs)



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After School Social Skills Development Programs

- DCDSB currently offers learning for:
  - PEERS for students in Grades 7-12, PEERS for Dating for high school
  - Friendship Lab for both students and their parents in Grades 3-6
  - Secret Agent Society for students ages 8-12
  - All programs are offered to students with an ASD diagnosis

Shelley Phoenix presented the Mental Health Report:

Leading Mentally Healthy Schools

- SMHO has updated their Leading Mentally Healthy Schools document
- Leading Mentally Healthy Schools is a resource that describes the core components of developing, operating, and sustaining mentally healthy schools in Ontario
- On March 20<sup>th</sup> DCDSB hosted a regional session in which school board teams explore the revised Leading Mentally Healthy Schools resource and participate in implementation planning

Talking About Mental Illness (TAMI) – Intermediate Summit

- On April 4<sup>th</sup>, students from 9 DCDSB schools attended the summit along side students from DDSB and KPRDSB
- The day included a Keynote from Paul Ranger, former Toronto Maple Leaf and DCBSB alumni as well as break out rooms with a focus on Gratitude and creating an action plan to enact upon returning to school.

Secondary Student Mental Health Summit

- Student summit to be held during Catholic Education/Mental Health Week (first week of May)
- Student engagement and leadership has been highlighted both within SMHO's and DCDSB's Mental Health Strategies
- Students from all secondary schools will come together to advise on the needs regarding mental health promotion in their schools and to begin to brainstorm ideas for implementation

Professional Development

- Mental Health First Aid ran on April 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Prepare, Prevent, Respond; Suicide Prevention, Life Promotion training ran on March 1st for the staff of Archbishop Anthony Meagher
- Substance Use and Youth, Partnership with Pinewood Centre of Lakeridge Health- April 11<sup>th</sup>
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training- April 30th and May 1st

Paula Sorhaitz presented the Superintendent's Report:

- SIP claims will be largely the same as last year's claim
- Dr. Diane Lood has accepted the position of Senior Manager of Speech-Language and Psychological Services starting later this month



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- Casual SLP and Psych positions to provide more services to students
- Awaiting announcement on summer funding for special education
- Summer funding for mental health spending confirmed (\$169K approximately)

PST Learning

- Continue to explore viability of alternative report cards in the Edsby platform
- Psych services – ADHD and LD learning
- Summer Rays program presentation
- Road Safety Checklist

Motion: SS-2024-04-09-03

Approval of the April 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 April 9, 2024, meeting.” (CARRIED)

## **2.6. Association Reports**

Julie Sorhaitz, Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region (LDADR):

- 2023-2024 Power to Achieve Scholarship Award Overview and Form
- Presented by the LDADR in partnership with DCDSB
- \$500 to a graduating DCDSB student who has a diagnosed learning disability and is continuing studies (apprenticeship, college, or university)
- Applicants are to submit to their Curriculum Chair or PST by April 26, 2024
- The recipient will be contacted and recognized in June 2024

Walter Heeney, Durham Down Syndrome Association (DDSA):

- Transition from High School Bursary for students with Down syndrome, whose family are members of the DDSA and who will be transitioning from high school.
- Annual scholarship was created by DDSA in 2024 to give a financial gift to DDSA members graduating from high school

## **2.7. Correspondence**

**2.7.1.** Response from Special Education / Success for All Branch, Ministry of Education

Received and filed.

**2.7.2.** Participation House, SEAC Seat

Reach out to the Ministry to inquire on membership composition. Deferred to next meeting.



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**2.7.3. SEAC of Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board**

Deferred to next meeting.

**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 Tuesday, May 7, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.

Motion: SS-2024-04-09-04

Motion to Adjourn

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Alex Massis

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

**3.3. Closing Prayer**

Closing prayer was offered by Chair Adamo. The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 pm.

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Valerie Adamo  
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee

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Paula Sorhaitz  
Superintendent of Education, Resource

Recording Secretary: Paige Wiggans