

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, September 17, 2020 6:30 P.M.

An on-line meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee was held on this date.

ROLL CALL:

Claudine Burrell, Autism Ontario – Durham Chapter
Craig Cameron, Member At Large
Tara Culley, Durham Down Syndrome Association
Elizabeth Daniel, Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders
Rowin Jarvis, Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region
Kathy Kedey, VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children
Eva Kyriakides, Association for Bright Children (ABC) (SEAC Chair)
Carolyn McLennon, Member At Large
Hanah Nguyen, Easter Seals Ontario

Trustees: Donna Edwards Christine Thatcher

Staff: Superintendent Andrea McAuley
Special Education Officer Michelle Crawford-Eade
Special Education Officer Kyla McKee

Recording Secretary: Diane Kent

1. Call to Order:

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

2. Welcome Guests:

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides welcomed special guests: Michelle Monk Secondary Representative and Mental Health Lead Steffanie Pelleboer.

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides advised that the Durham District School Board acknowledges that many Indigenous Nations have longstanding relationships, both historic and modern, with the territories upon which our school board and schools are located. Today, this area is home to many Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island. We acknowledge that the Durham Region forms a part of the traditional and treaty territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, the Mississauga Peoples and the treaty territory of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation. It is on these ancestral and treaty lands that we teach, learn and live.

3. Regrets:

There were no regrets at this time.

Absent:

- Kathy Kedey, VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

4. Approval of Agenda:

That the agenda for September 17, 2020 be approved.

MOVED BY: Trustee Christine Thatcher SECONDED BY: Tara Culley

CARRIED

5. Approval of the Minutes from July 7, 2020:

That the minutes from July 7, 2020 be approved.

MOVED BY: Tara Culley SECONDED BY: Trustee Donna Edwards

CARRIED

6. Inclusive Student Services Report

Special Education Officer Kyla McKee

The Inclusive Student Services team has grown for the 2020-2021 school year providing additional support for students, families and school teams.

The system portfolio of Well-Being and Mental Health, and Mental Health Leader Steffanie Pelleboer, have shifted to Inclusive Student Services, bringing Tier 1 to Tier 3 mental health supports together while maintaining key connections with other teams such as Equity and Safe Schools.

Michelle Crawford-Eade joined the department team on July 1st as Education Officer partner to Kyla McKee as that staffing complement returned to 2.0 FTE and the power of collaborative support for school leaders for inclusive programming.

Through Ministry funding, additional mental health staff (Social Work and Psychological Services team members) and Educational Assistants have been added to the supports for students.

6. Inclusive Student Services Report (cont'd)

DDSB@Home

Students have returned to classrooms across the region, both in person and virtually as the DDSB launched DDSB@Home. With an enrolment of over 15,000 students, DDSB@Home is comprised on a secondary school and an elementary school which is comprised of six 'campuses' by grade cluster (e.g., Kindergarten, Grade1/2 up to Grade 7/8 and a French Immersion campus). Each campus is supported by a team of SERTs and Educational Assistants and has an integrated team of Psychological Services, Social Work, Speech Language and Instructional Facilitator to support them. Based on individual student accommodation supports, DDSB@Home also has Interpreter and Intervenor support embedded.

Special Education Programs

IPRCs are legal placements and our commitment is to provide each student individualized programming inclusive of staff with special education training.

We have kept our special education classes intact and connected as a classroom community. This keeps students connected to staff that receive training and support specific to the outcomes of their specific program. The decision also supports the ability for students, for example those with Developmental Disabilities and may be a greater health risk, to move between in-person and at home learning as needed for the individual student and family.

Students in special education programs have their individualized learning, as outlined in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs) supported by a team of educators (Teacher, Educational Assistants, and other connected supported staff). The learning within a special education program space includes teacher supported learning, practice supported by the team and independent work. Each classroom team plans together to support individual timetabling for students. Important to note that students in special education placements in secondary, similar to their elementary peers, have access to a full day, each day, of in-person learning which is in contrast to their mainstream peers who are on an adaptive bell schedule.

Each classroom team, as they do each year, will coordinate students moving between teacher led learning, supported practice and independent practice. That means that on a daily basis, that each of the students (max 10 for the programs referenced) would spend time 1:1 with their teacher, or other members of the educator team, on their specific and individualized learning goals. What this looks like could be teacher working with student in person, EAs connecting with students at home and then the team shifting to reverse that support with independent practice times infused.

7. Presentation:

Mental Health Lead Steffanie Pelleboer provided SEAC members with a PowerPoint presentation on Supporting Student Mental Health & Well-Being. Steffanie highlighted the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 and a focus on the whole school approach. The following resources were also highlighted:

- First 20 Days Guide and Parent Calendar
- Foundations of a Mentally Healthy Classroom
- Inclusive Students Services
- Noticing Mental Health Concerns in your Child

Steffanie also answered questions from committee members.

8. a) Business Arising from the Minutes:

There was no other business arising from the minutes.

8. b) Open Discussion Period

The open discussion period was used to discuss the following topic:

- The Role of SEAC – Review SEAC Handbook

SEAC members were asked to review the DDSB SEAC Handbook and to bring their edit/suggestions to the October SEAC meeting.

Committee members reviewed the role of SEAC. There was a shared concern about the lack of community knowledge of the roles of SEAC members. Discussion took place regarding ways to educate and share information with board staff and the community.

The following reflections were shared:

- How we go about having something interactive, where we can lead parents/guardians to the associations – get that 1st step
- Overwhelming amount of information on DDSB website – simpler is better
- Very few parents are familiar with SEAC – we have some amazing resources in the DDSB – need to make parents aware that we have them.
- SERTs – venue (had opportunity to talk to families) – what is available in the community
- Do as much as we can to promote SEAC – we had the SEAC Chair present at the SERT Capacity Building sessions
- Family support – SEAC awareness in the community, consulted piece – see your voice is reflected in the services & programs.
- Continue to promote SEAC in the community
- Being able to take the information that members get from SEAC and help parents, value of being part of SEAC taking perspective and information from other members and help parents

8. b) Open Discussion Period (cont'd)

- Bring perspective – the specific needs of the association that members are representing
- Broader community perspective – helpful to hear – PAaC on SEAC to put together an annual report – to look at the highlights
- Pushing SEAC more – need to hear more voices from other people that I might not hear from – not in the realm of circle that I interact with
- Clarify our roles – will create more momentum
- As the Ministry looks at consultations that comes out – SEAC would like to have input – helps – getting feedback locally – feedback to policies
- Trying to intertwine with the SCCs and PICs, trying to get time at SCCs meeting – quick presentation to put together
- Push out through social media – as the 2021 school year is now digital – video – who we are & who we represent
- Transparency – a lot of the work has been done – we know who to send parents/guardians to when the system is hard to navigate

9. Staff Reports:

Administration:

Superintendent Andrea McAuley

For the Durham DSB, the 2020-2021 school year has focus on Mental Health & Well-being, Equity and specifically addressing anti-black and anti-Indigenous racism, Opportunity Gap Closing and Innovation. This builds on our multi-year commitment to Ignite Learning across the six priorities while meeting the critical needs of those we serve and those we serve with. We must be active in this work and are proud that professional learning in each of these areas formed the foundation of Ignite Unlearning, a three-day conference which brought staff from across the system into critical conversations that will continue to shift the experiences of our students.

2020 continues to bring opportunities for innovation, compassion and agility. In July, and with thanks to SEAC for the deputation to Budget & Finance Committee, the Board of Trustees approved the 2020-2021 budget. Since that time, the Board has been in receipt of additional funding to support school reopening. Funding included mental health, well-being and special education funding in addition to other designated funds, for example, for additional Facilities Services staff and cleaning related costs for both classrooms and transportation. In addition, approval of expenditure from reserves was also approved by Board earlier this month to support reducing class sizes to ensure distancing.

Understanding the challenging decision for families between in-person and virtual learning, up to this week, we have remained flexible for families requesting switching from original decisions points. This is in addition to the flexibility built into the model for students accessing learning through special education placements. As we move into all elementary students in school full-time following a staggered start, and with secondary students on a quadmester system, it is now time for stability for staffing and students with exception of accommodation needs for program change considerations.

9. Staff Reports: (cont'd)

Superintendent Andrea McAuley (cont'd)

As of September 15th, 3,284 secondary students and 12,828 elementary students have enrolled in DDSB@Home.

Data related to students with special education needs up to today; new data received late this afternoon

- A total of 1,022 elementary and 706 secondary students in regular class placements had opted for DDSB@Home.
- DDSB@Home includes six classes of the elementary Gifted program (drawn from students with program placement through IPRC for the 2020-21 school year).
- 57 elementary and 67 secondary (with exception of Gifted and SSP) students in SE programs have opted to remain at home at this time.
- 88 SSP students (combination of 58 elementary and 30 secondary) selected virtual and have core subjects through the SE class/integration through DDSB@Home (this is a change from 93 previously).

Pivots to service include:

- Extension of the mental health 'button' on the DDSB website to help students and families connect with mental health workers in schools;
- Designation of a clinical space within each school building;
- Virtual Learning Hubs as redesign to both SERT rooms and Academic Resource rooms so that students can keep connection while health & safety protocols are adhered to;
- Utilization of Google Communities specific to each Special Education program type to connect educators for collaboration and planning;
- Continued community partnerships for supports such as School Based Rehabilitative Services and Grove School – all which will continue to thrive but with the pivots COVID has required.

Appreciation

Strength of collaboration, compassion and commitment to individualization are all themes within school start up. We'd like to thank DDSB students and families. Everyone across the DDSB has come together to build the 2020-2021 school year. We'd like to highlight the incredible work of:

- Administrators who have re-staffed, re-timetabled and created new classrooms keeping their individual students in mind right through these processes completed in a very condensed time period and for having returned to work early to ensure readiness for school start.
- Facilities Services staff, many working 7 days a week, to ensure that learning and working spaces were ready and that health and safety remain steadfast is assuring safety protocols for set up and cleaning.

We truly are DDSB #StrongerTogether.

9. **Staff Reports: (cont'd)**

Superintendent Andrea McAuley (cont'd)

Next Steps

To help be responsive to inquiries from families, we have launched an FAQ specific to Inclusive Student Services on the DDSB website. We would appreciate SEAC members taking a look and providing us feedback which will help shape updates.

The commitment of the DDSB teams is to engage voice in the experience of our students and make responsive changes as needed in service of students.

Schools have quickly established routines and the feeling of reconnection and mattering evident as students bring their energy back to learning. This is occurring in both in-person learning and virtual. We will continue to learn from and with our students to continue to adjust programming for well-being, mental health and success.



Andrea - on behalf of the Inclusive Student Services Team



Board:

Trustee Donna Edwards provided SEAC members with updates from the most recent Special Board Meetings. Updates included:

- Province provided the DDSB with \$15.4 million dollars for staffing, special education; mental health; remote learning and ventilation
- The Board approved 1% of the Operational Budget from reserves to address class sizes, as well as transportation costs
- A Request for Proposal (RFP) has been approved for the hiring of a new Integratory Commissioner

Trustee Donna Edwards shared that the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee (SDC) minutes are posted on the Ministry's website. (See below). Associations can follow the general conversations.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/standards-development-committee-meeting-minutes#section-0>

9. Staff Reports: (cont'd)

Board: (cont'd)

The committee is working hard to get the final report out for public consultation. When the final report does come out from the K-12 Education SDC, it would be great to receive feedback from our associations on the final report.

In the meantime, the K-12 Education released a report on barriers related to COVID-19 for students with disabilities with recommendations. (Link below). Trustee Donna Edwards is interested in feedback from you or your associations.

COVID-19 barriers for students with disabilities and recommendations | Ontario.ca

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/covid-19-barriers-students-disabilities-and-recommendations>

10. Association Reports:

Association for Bright Children (ABC)

The Association for Bright Children (ABC) has gone through a change in the Board of Directors. Eva Kyriakides participated in her first virtual meeting with other ABC SEAC Representatives. Discussion included virtual learning for students who are gifted learners.

Durham Down Syndrome Association (DDSA)

The Canadian Down Syndrome Society has put together an “Educator Package – A guide to Inclusive Education for Students with Down Syndrome” resource to assist educators and parents in their journey towards a fully inclusive classroom. If this is your first time working with a student with differing abilities, you are going to experience the satisfaction of teaching students with exceptionalities. If you have experience teaching a diverse group of students, this resource will offer tried and true practical tips and suggestions.

Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region (LDADR)

The Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region (LDADR) are creating a Learning Disabilities (LD) calendar that highlights one LD fact or individual each day. October is LD Awareness Month.

Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders (OAFCCD)

The Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders (OAFCCD) have pushed to improve their on-line presence with website updates at www.oafccd.com and posting interesting articles on their Facebook page.

11. Correspondence:

- Integration Action for Inclusion in Education & Community (Ontario) (2)
- Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region
- “Draft DDSB Letter” Request for Fall 2020 Process: SIP Submission Requirements

Letter from Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region (LDADR)

Received a letter from the association, Melanie Maas has stepped down from her position as SEAC Alternate. Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region has nominated Donna Cook to the position of Alternate.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT DONNA COOK WILL BE THE SEAC ALTERNATE FOR THE LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF DURHAM REGION (LDADR).

MOVED BY: Tara Culley

SECONDED BY: Elizabeth Daniel

CARRIED

“Draft DDSB Letter” Request for Fall 2020 Process Exemption: SIP Submission Requirements

SEAC members reviewed the “draft” letter to the Minister of Education on the “Request for Fall 2020 Process Exemption: SIP Submission Requirements”. No additional feedback or comments were received however, it was recommended for the Board to send the letter to the Minister of Education on behalf of SEAC.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT THE BOARD ON BEHALF OF SEAC FORWARD THE LETTER TO THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION REGARDING THE REQUEST FOR FALL 2020 PROCESS EXEMPTION: SIP SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS.

MOVED BY: Trustee Donna Edwards

SECONDED BY: Tara Culley

CARRIED

12. Community Concerns:

Elizabeth Daniel raised a question regarding how Grade 3 Gifted Testing will occur under current COVID-19 restrictions. Superintendent Andrea McAuley responded that staff are currently working across board and the process is slightly delayed. Andrea noted that she would bring an update back to committee members at the next SEAC meeting.

13. Celebrations and Success:

Tara Culley shared that her son Adam started Grade 9 this September. Adam is taking to school like a rock star and is thoroughly enjoying high school. Tara wanted to give kudos to the school staff, as they have done an amazing job, going above and beyond that students want to go to school.

Trustee Christine Thatcher shared that she was able to meet a service dog "Ibby" on one of her school visits. Ibby was taking a break in the Principal's office and Christine was able to give the dog a treat.

14. Next S.E.A.C. meeting – Thursday, October 15, 2020

15. Adjournment:

That the meeting does now adjourn at 8:45 p.m.

MOVED BY: Trustee Donna Edwards

SECONDED BY: Tara Culley

CARRIED

Report respectfully submitted by:
Eva Kyriakides, SEAC Chair

ACTION PLAN		
ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY	COMPLETION
Edits/suggestions – DDSB SEAC Handbook	SEAC Members	October 15th SEAC meeting
Action-based ideas to promote SEAC to educators/community.	SEAC Members	October 15th SEAC meeting
Grade 3 Gifted Testing – COVID 19 Restrictions	Superintendent A. McAuley	October 15th SEAC meeting