

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, January 21, 2021 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 Darlene Forbes

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

Recording Secretary: Diane Kent

1. Call to Order:

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Land Acknowledgement:

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:

- Darlene Forbes, Trustee

Absent:

- Hanah Nguyen, Easter Seals Ontario

4. Welcome Guests:

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides welcomed special guests: Russ Davidson, Secondary Representative and Melissa Sparkman & Shannon Robertson, Elementary Representatives.

5. Approval of Agenda:

That the agenda for January 21, 2021 be approved.

MOVED BY: Tara Culley

SECONDED BY: Elizabeth Daniel

CARRIED

6. Approval of the Minutes from December 17, 2020:

That the minutes from December 17, 2020 be approved.

MOVED BY: Kathy Kedey

SECONDED BY: Claudine Burrell

CARRIED

7. Inclusive Student Services Report – January 2021:

In this edition of the Inclusive Student Services Department Update to SEAC:

- Current School Year Updates
- Mental Health Team Connections
- Supporting Schools – Shift to Virtual
- Annual Update: Service Animals in the DDSB
- Local Advocacy: GrandviewKids Aims for Local Paediatric Complex Care Program
- Supporting Professional (Adult) Learners
- NEW Secondary Course Selection – New Process Winter/Spring 2021
- UPDATED FOR 2021: Grade 8 to Grade 9 Transition Resources
- Team Transitions – Celebrating Diane Kent

7. Inclusive Student Services Report – January 2021:(cont'd)

2020-2021 School Year Update Learners at Home and In-Person

January Return Information

- Survey sent to families of students in Developmental Programs, Practical Learning Programs and Structured Learning Programs.
- Individual considerations also made.
- Approximately 320 learners returned to in-person learning on January 5th.
- Transportation in place for January 11th.

January Revised – Provincial Announcement January 12, 2021

- Communication with all families with in-person learners to plan for either move to virtual or confirm in-person program access.

Note: Grove (ECP) School maintains in-person access for programming.

Making Mental Health and Well-Being Our Priority

'You Matter'

The DDSB realizes that:

- This is a challenging school year.
- Educators care and want to do their best as they support students and families.
- Relationships matter and are essential to resilience.
- Supports and resources are available to students and families.
- Educator well-being matters as well!

Mental Health Team Connections

Every DDSB school has a mental health team with staff from Psychological Services and Social Work. This video was created to provide students with information about connecting with their school's mental health team. The aim is to increase avenues of access for students in need of mental health supports. Link: <https://bit.ly/2JRU4tR>

Annual Update: Service Animals in the DDSB

Service Animal incl. Guide Dog	Support Animal	Visiting Animal
Use of a service animal or guide dog requires that both the animal and the student handler must be certified as having been successfully trained by an accredited training facility.	Use of an animal for emotional support. Important to note that these are animals who are not trained to provide specific supports.	An animal from a service or community group providing support to a group of students, or individual students, to foster inclusion but not as accommodation requirement. e.g., St. John's Ambulance Therapy Dogs

7. Inclusive Student Services Report – January 2021: (cont'd)

Annual Update: Service Animals in the DDSB (cont'd)

Summative Data – 2020 Calendar Year

Service Animal Requests

Received: 9

Approved: 9

Declined: 0

With school closures, Visiting Animals Programs remained "paused" at this time.

Local Advocacy: Durham Ontario Health Care Team (OHT) Paediatric Complex Care Initiative

Recently, the DDSB provided a letter of support toward the advocacy for establishment of a Durham Region based Pediatric Complex Care Initiative.

GrandviewKids, along with other local partners and health care providers such as Hospital for Sick Children, is in the process of positioning services locally for children who are living with medical fragility or technological dependence.

The successful launch of this initiative would increase services, transition, and coordination of care. It also would reduce hospital admissions, hospital stays, and increase quality of life for families accessing the related services.

Supporting Professional (Adult) Learning

- Supporting professional learning is a commitment of all Inclusive Student Services teams. For some teams, members have training in teaching and for other teams that is not an expected part of certification training. For all members, it is important to understand needs of adult learners.

Earlier this month:

- Full day workshop provided by our Chief of Speech and Language Services for members of the Social Work and Psychological Services teams
- Focus on developing and delivering professional development for adult learners in the system
- Aim is to increase learning and knowledge translation opportunities for the system

NEW Secondary Course Selections for 2021/2022

NEW: Students are selecting their courses for 2021/2022 through myBluePrint.

Course selection timelines: Tuesday Feb 16th – March 25th at 9:00 am

Important to note:

- Introduction of the de-streamed Grade 9 compulsory Mathematics course (MTH1W)
- Secondary students currently with DDSB@Home will be enrolled back at their home high school
- Planning is based on two semester calendar (not quadesters)
- Students have option of selecting in-person or virtual for many course offerings

7. **Inclusive Student Services Report – January 2021: (cont'd)**

Revised Transitions Resource: Grade 8 to Grade 9

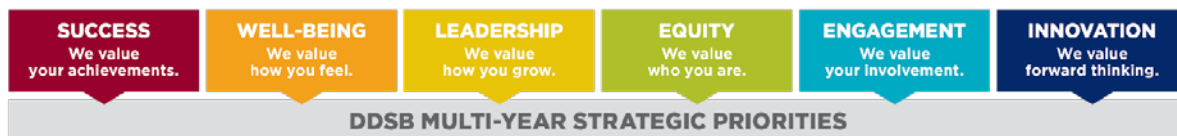
- Video resource for students and families supporting with information
- Created for January 2020; Updated for January 2021
- Will be shared through school teams and social media
- Link will be emailed to SEAC team members

Team Transitions: Retirement of Diane Kent

Congratulations Diane and thank you for the amazing dedication to students with special education strengths & needs, families, SEAC, and ISS teams. Diane will continue to share her immense talents through to March. Our February SEAC will be a transition point for Diane, and we'll set aside time for an acknowledgement of her contributions on behalf of SEAC. Stay tuned for a link of how to share your best wishes as we will be honouring Diane's request for subtle & quieter celebrations.



Andrea - on behalf of the Inclusive Student Services Team



8. **Staff Reports:**

Administration:

Superintendent Andrea McAuley

An important part of well-being is gratitude, finding a few minutes each day for it and expressing thanks to boost those we feel grateful for. Our Administrators report begins with gratitude.

The Inclusive Student Services leadership team thanks our students who continue to inspire us, our families for continuing partnership, to our ISS teams who continue to navigate services during a pandemic and to school teams. School teams, staff across all roles, have continually adapted to the changes this year continues to bring. Most DDSB staff have made the full switch to virtual learning; many while navigating professional and family commitments as their own children are impacted with school closures. Many, across forty-three schools continue to provide in-person learning for almost 400 students who require in-person programming as their needs are not met through virtual formats.

8. Staff Reports: (cont'd)

Superintendent Andrea McAuley (cont'd)

Our most recent information is that 392 learners are accessing programming. 267 learners through programs such as Developmental, Practical Learning Program, Structured Learning Class Program and a few through individual consideration. The other 125 learners are students of Grove School, day treatment, who are accessing in-person learning supported by DDSB staff and staff of our agency partners.

Recently the Province amended direction of mask requirements. Wearing a mask is now mandatory for all students in Grades 1-3, however reasonable exceptions still apply. Families are encouraged to speak with their child's classroom teacher in seeking to explore an exemption due to a medical condition. This masking requirement is in addition to the existing requirement for students in Grades 4-12.

The new requirements also mean that students learning in-person are required to wear a mask while inside the school, in class, in hallways, on school buses as well as outside when physical distancing cannot be maintained (i.e. recess).

Currently, 39 students attending in-person are in Grades 1-3. We are working with school teams through process of whether students are already wearing masks regularly, qualify for exemption (for example, based on medical requirements) or where Inclusive Student Services can assist with programming to develop mask tolerance.

As we work through the Pandemic, the board also keeps press on key commitments outlined in our Operational Plan. The Senior Team looks forward to providing Trustees and the public with a mid-year update in February. This update will subsequently be shared with SEAC and will highlight the intersection with service & programs supporting students with special education strengths & needs at that time.

We continue to grow our partnerships. Tonight, we recognize the Abilities Centre and Virtual Therapeutic Recreation pilot program. Three schools participated in Cohort One and four schools will be participating in the eight-week long program which will run as Cohort Two. This program brings Therapeutic Recreation twice per week to participating PLP classes and, new in this session, an all participants third session on Fridays.

Our final update is the start of appreciation for Diane Kent for the support to SEAC and Inclusive Student Services in service of students and families. Diane has announced plans for retirement, and we look forward to honouring her closer to her retirement in the next couple months.

Board:

Trustee Donna Edwards informed SEAC members that the Board of Trustees received information on the retainer of the new Integrity Commissioner; Unnamed North Ajax French Immersion PS Boundary; Unnamed North Whitby PS Boundary and the 2020-2021 Interim Financial Report at the virtual Board meeting that was held on Monday, January 18, 2021.

9. a) Open Discussion Period

- Parent/Caregiver Engagement Event Planning

SEAC hosted the TEND Academy's on-line virtual sessions "Parent & Caregiver Well-Being Taking Care of Ourselves" in the evening on Tuesday, January 19, 2021 and in the morning on Wednesday, January 20, 2021. Both sessions were a huge success in both supports for families and in raising awareness of SEAC. There was discussion regarding the following items:

- Recorded sessions and if they could be shared with families that were unable to attend the live sessions.
- The contract with TEND for the SEAC sessions included a 30-day access for participants to a recording, not having publication/sharing rights beyond that.
- When sending out the link to participants to also include the TEND attachments, SEAC brochure and SEAC Association Connections.
- When sending out the recorded session to copy all SEAC members in the e-mail and blind carbon copy the participants – for further SEAC awareness and connections – Superintendent Andrea McAuley to check with the TEND Academy.
- Participants feedback was requested.
- How were participants informed of the sessions?

Superintendent Andrea McAuley and SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides thanked Media Technicians Andrew Hunter and Jon Rennie and Inclusive Student Services Assistant Jennifer Durning for all their hard work in organizing and running the sessions.

9. b) Business Arising from the Minutes:

- Stats – Secondary Split Gifted Classes

Special Education Officer Michelle Crawford-Eade shared the following stats in regard to secondary split gifted classes.

Secondary Gifted Program - Course Summary 2020-2021

School	Course Summary
Anderson CVI	10 fully gifted classes, 0 blended ENG1DG, MPM1DG, CGC1DG, SNC1DG, ENG2DG, MPM2DG, CHC2DG, SNC2DG, ENG3UG, MCR3UG
O'Neill CVI	0 fully gifted, 11 blended ENG1DG, MPM1DG, CGC1DG, SNC1DG, ENG2DG, MPM2DG, CHC2DG, SNC2DG, ENG3UG, MCR3UG
Pickering HS	9 fully gifted, 21 blended English - 7 Blended Math 2 Self Contained, 4 Blended Science - 1 Self Contained, 4 Blended Geography/History - 4 Self Contained
Port Perry HS	0 fully gifted, 11 blended (Gifted/Talent Pool/Academic/University Streamed Blended)

DDSB@Home Secondary	14 blended
System Total	19 fully gifted sections, 57 blended

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides shared her concern and inquired if schools had reached out to the Inclusive Student Services Department ahead of scheduling to plan on how the streaming self-contained gifted classes could still be honoured. Eva noted that in some cases there were 2 blended classes running at the same time. She acknowledged that there is a pandemic occurring but wanted to ensure this would be addressed if schools need to pivot again.

- Ratio of students with special needs on-line vs in-classroom

Students with IEPs – February 2020

DDSB@Home Elementary: 1605*
DDSB@Home Secondary: 1015
In-Person Schools: 10 056**

*Includes 7 class sections of students with placement in the Gifted program

**Including students in Special Education Programs with flexibility to move between in-person and virtual modes

Note: Information at start of Quadmester 3 in Secondary & pre mid-February shift in Elementary which will slightly impact data. Data not validated through report to Ministry and represents an information pull from our student data systems which are live and changing. Provided in response to SEAC inquiry regarding distribution of students with special education needs between virtual and in-person modes of learning.

- “Draft” letter to Ministry re: old & new on-line content compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) & Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Discussions took place among committee members regarding if the Support for Learners funding should be included in the on-line content compliance with AODA & UDL letter to the Ministry. It was agreed upon that a separate letter would be sent to the Ministry regarding this funding and the delivery issues of student's technology. SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides asked committee members to provide any additional feedback to the on-line learning supports/universal design letter to herself or Administrative Assistant Diane Kent by early next week to expedite the sending of the letter to the Ministry.

10. Association Reports:

There were no association reports at this time.

11. Correspondence:

There was no correspondence at this time.

12. Community Concerns:

Tara Culley shared that she had received a few parent concerns regarding feeling pressured and guilty to change their children with special educational needs from attending in-person learning to on-line under the recent lockdown announcement.

Superintendent Andrea McAuley responded that at the start of the school year, special education classes were kept together as a community. The health and safety of staff and students also needs to be considered. Andrea encouraged parents to reach out to their Principal and school teams as student accommodations are an on-going collaborative process.

13. Celebrations and Success:

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides shared that SEAC's first public virtual event, "Parent & Caregiver Well-Being – Taking Care of Ourselves" with speakers Françoise Matthieu and Sarah Stewart from the TEND Academy was a great success.

14. Next S.E.A.C. meeting – Thursday, February 18, 2021.

15. Adjournment:

That the meeting does now adjourn at 7:55 p.m.

MOVED BY: Tara Culley

SECONDED BY: Trustee Donna Edwards

CARRIED

Report respectfully submitted by:
Eva Kyriakides, SEAC Chair

ACTION PLAN

ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY	COMPLETION
"Draft" letter to Ministry of Education re: Support for Learners funding	SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides	By next SEAC meeting.