

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, February 18, 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 Kyla McKee
Senior Psychologist Sara Schleien
Chief of Social Work & Attendance Carolyn Ussher

Recording Secretary: Diane Kent

1. Call to Order:

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides called the meeting to order at 6:31 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:

- There were no regrets at this time.

- Absent:
 - Tara Culley, Durham Down Syndrome Association
 - Kathy Kedey, VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children
 - Hanah Nguyen, Easter Seals Ontario

4. Welcome Guests:

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides welcomed special guests: Michelle Monk, Secondary Representative, Peter Bozanis & Dave Robinson, Elementary Representatives, Riisa Dear, Social Worker, Sandra Newton, Psychometrist and Lisa Wry, Head Secretary-Williamsburg PS.

5. Approval of Agenda:

That the agenda for February 18, 2021 be approved.

MOVED BY: Trustee Donna Edwards SECONDED BY: Trustee Darlene Forbes

CARRIED

6. Approval of the Minutes from January 21, 2021:

That the minutes from January 21, 2021 be approved.

MOVED BY: Claudine Burrell SECONDED BY: Elizabeth Daniel

CARRIED

7. Inclusive Student Services Report – February 2021:

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

- Student Learning Shifts: School Closures and Re-Opens
- SMHO Student Mental Health Action Kit
- Launch of Resource: Addressing Anti-Black Racism & Its Impact: A Well-Being Toolkit for Families
- Carea Partnership/Transition to Work Program
- Staff Wellness
- Excellence in Practice Highlight
- 2021/2022 School Year Planning

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

System Shift to Remote Learning for Most Students - January

Supports embedded included:

- Speech-Language Pathologists supporting DDSB@Home provided training to their peers on service pivots to support remote learners. Topics included tips for virtual class observations, remote assessments, sharing resources for engaging students online and administrative considerations.
- Innovative Technology Facilitators and Trainers to support educators and individual learners.
- Communication of support access & virtual services communicated to all schools.

SMHO: Student Mental Health Action Kit

- School Mental Health Ontario launched a toolkit to support Mentally Healthy Return to School.
- Toolkit includes strategies such as: "ABCs"- Acknowledge, Bridge, Connect.
- Resource link has been shared with Administrators & SERTs.
- Implementation supported through Toolkit Support Sessions facilitated by Steffanie Pelleboer, DDSB Mental Health Leader.
- Toolkit available on the SHMO website: <https://smho-smso.ca/>.

NEW: Addressing Anti-Black Racism & Its Impact: A Well-Being Toolkit for Families

- Resource created with collaboration of Social Work and Psychology team members from the collaborators:
- *"This toolkit was developed to provide racially competent resources to Black families; however, we believe that its contents can be beneficial for all communities seeking greater understanding of the impact of Anti-Black Racism. In addition, we wish to highlight our diverse staff and demonstrate our readiness to provide support to all members of the DDSB community."*
 - Includes:
 - Racism and Its Impact on Mental Health
 - Black History: Knowledge is Power
 - Anti-Black Racism: Understanding the Issues and Impact
 - Anti-Black Racism: Discussions with your Child
 - Building Positive Racial Identities: Love your Melanin!
 - Self-Care Tips
 - Community Resources

February is Psychology Month – We're Here to Help

A public service announcement video on the DDSB Psychological Services Team was shared with SEAC. For more information about accessing DDSB Psychological Services, please speak to your school or visit <https://bit.ly/2YFXP9v>.

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

Making Mental Health and Well-Being Our Priority

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!

Student Learning – Transition to Work Program

- As we all know the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major effect on our lives. Many of us are facing challenges that can be stressful, overwhelming, and cause strong emotions. During this pandemic, it is critical that our students recognize what stress looks like and learn to cope with stress in healthy ways help us and those around us become more resilient.
- Our partners from Carea Community Health Centre facilitated a workshop for the students in Transition to Work programs on the topic of “Stress Management” on Monday February 1st from 1:00 pm-2:00 pm.
- This workshop focused on what stress is, how stress can make people feel, what causes stress and strategies and techniques for reducing stress.

DDSB Well-Being & Mental Health: Staff Wellness

- Mental health is crucial for everyone and that includes staff. Continuing with supporting the importance of our mental health and well-being, all DDSB staff have been invited to the following mental health and wellness sessions:
 - **Mental Health Awareness** - February 11, 2021, 3:30 pm
 - **Stress Reduction Tool bag**- February 25, 2021, 3:30 pm
 - **Wellness Session-Overcoming Burnout** – pre-recorded and available
- We all contribute to promoting welcoming, safe and inclusive environments where we can have meaningful conversations about our mental health and well-being.

Bell Let's Talk Day

- The **2021 Bell Let's Talk Day on January 28th** was a great opportunity for us to move our vision into action by becoming part of a larger conversation that breaks down stigma and creates opportunities for conversations about mental health and well-being.
- Schools were encouraged to:
 - Post to Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat a message about mental health and well-being.
 - Share pictures or stories of the great work you are doing to promote mental health and well-being in your schools.
 - Retweet messages related to mental health and well-being.

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

Excellence in Professional Practice- Highlight

- The Speech and Language team has been contacted by an early childhood organization providing service in Oregon and in Washington requesting permission to use an SLP video focusing on phonemic awareness.
- This organization became aware of the work of DDSB's SLP team and wants to use this exemplary work as a part of educator and parent training.

2021/2022 School Year – Special Education Programs

- Planning has started for the 2021/2022 school year.
- Initial phase of planning is gathering of student-based placement requests (new or changed placements).
- Consultation includes inter-department considerations (Transportation, Facilities Services, Family of Schools) such as routing challenges impacting students.
- Feedback welcome from SEAC members.



Andrea - on behalf of the Inclusive Student Services Team



8. **Staff Reports:**

Administration:

Superintendent Andrea McAuley

This evening we welcome Lisa Wry. Lisa Wry will bring experience and knowledge gained through previous roles in Payroll, Community Use of Schools and as Head Secretary at two different schools as she joins the Inclusive Student Services team in March. Lisa is the successful candidate who will transition with Diane in the weeks ahead. Please join me in welcoming and congratulating Lisa.

We look forward to celebrating Diane's immense contribution to the department and to SEAC including a presentation during our March meeting.

On February 8th, schools re-opened to all in-person learners. We thank educators across all roles who supported in-person learning for students with special education needs during school closures. We also thank the teams that moved quickly to shift to virtual learning and then made the switch back to in-person when the province announced the timing of school reopening which included the Durham Region.

8. Staff Reports: (cont'd)

Superintendent Andrea McAuley

Elementary schools are in the midst of the final transition date for students moving between in-person and DDSB@Home. Planning has included focus on sharing of IEPs for important continuity of programming.

Educators continue to support student well-being and learning. Inclusive Student Services team members provide essential supports for inclusion, accommodation and clinical services. All of the teams in Inclusive Student Services are engaged in examining our practices & processes within our commitment shifts to ensure centering Human Rights and Equity in our work. Our commitment shifts to ensure anti-oppressive practices included department wide participation in a lead by Dr. Nicole West-Burns on February 17, 2021. Dr. West-Burns guided reflection such as thinking about where processes and practices de-centralize students rather than focus with the student at centre.

PAaC on SEAC for February 2021 includes:

- IEP Update
- Review of proposed changes to special education programs and services
- Review of parent/caregiver resources to ensure that they are user friendly and easy to understand

An update of data of students with IEPs was provided within our January SEAC minutes with contextual pieces of how students are accessing learning (in-person or through DDSB@Home) and will be provided in our February minutes as well for alignment with PAaC on SEAC.

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

Planning for the 2021-2022 school year has commenced. In consultation with families, schools have submitted new placement or placement change requests for student access to special education class programs. We will be working, across a number of departments, to build the special education program plan for next school year. Considerations at this time include:

- Possibility of virtual based programs
- Continuity of low enrolment programs, Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH) program and Self Regulation Classes with commitment to engage consultation process towards 2022-2023 decision making

We look forward to bringing an update to SEAC on planning as we move through the months ahead.

8. Staff Reports: (cont'd)

Superintendent Andrea McAuley (cont'd)

To support school teams in planning for next year, Inclusive Student Services is about to release two documents:

- 1) Transition Planning for Students with Special Education Strengths and Needs (2021)
- 2) Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) Process: Planning Guide for School Teams (2021)

Both of these documents will be circulated to SEAC members as well as made available to staff and public.

Board:

Trustee Donna Edwards informed SEAC members that the Board of Trustees received presentations and information on Student Census Data; Anti-Black Racism Strategy Update; Preliminary Budget Planning and Updates to the School Year Calendar at the virtual Board meeting that was held on Tuesday, February 16, 2021.

The Definitely Durham 2020 Hall of Fame Inductees were also announced:

- Geoff Warburton, Singer/Grammy Nominated Song Writer - Pickering
- Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier of Ontario & Ontario Minister of Health – Whitby
- Jessica Phoenix – Equestrian, Olympian & Pan Am Medalist – Uxbridge
- Dale Hawerchuk – NHL Hockey Player - Oshawa

9. Presentation:

Superintendent Andrea McAuley introduced Riisa Dear, Social Worker and Sandra Newton, Psychometrist who provided committee members with a PowerPoint and hand-out information on “Addressing Anti-Black Racism and its Impact: A Well-Being Toolkit for Families”. Riisa and Sandra highlighted sections of the toolkit which included the introductory pages, resources, self-care tips & tools for caregivers and clinical & community resources for families. The toolkit roll-out and implementation was also shared. They also answered questions from committee members.

Chief Social Worker Carolyn Ussher and SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides thanked Riisa Dear, Social Worker and Sandra Newton, Psychometrist for their presentation.

10. a) Open Discussion Period:

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

- Underestimating children with a disability – How to navigate when parents and/or students feels a child is being under-estimated or under-valued

Discussions took place among committee members and the following reflections were shared:

10. a) Open Discussion Period: (cont'd)

- Review IEP – collaborative document – input strategies and goals
- How does it look through the lens of pandemic – access to SERTs to make IEP a living document
- A lot of phone calls/e-mails in collaboration with SERTs
- Relationship is already established with parents and families/ zoom meetings/ a lot parents don't understand the back and forth of the IEP
- Having 1000 of students move to virtual campus – bridge, understanding of the IEP – connection between IEPs and reports cards
- Collaboration in the IEP – when there is an issue – have that discussion – safe environment, involve the child as well – student voice
- Sharing information – feeling comfortable – change strategies in the IEP
- Parent having someone coming in to have a 2nd set of ears at a school meeting
- To get child comfortable with their IEP
- Reader digest – hits the highlights of the IEP – when going to high school to refresh teacher's memory of IEP
- How do we ensure dialogue moves forward when there is changes in administrators and SERTs – building relationships
- How does the relationship get built in the first place – what do the initial contacts look like – trust – communication flow – could be other pieces in play

Superintendent Andrea McAuley suggested building a presentation and open discussion for the March SEAC meeting to pair the abilities and strategies that schools are currently engaging and bring SEAC's voice in terms of families and communities. SEAC's elementary and secondary school representatives will prepare the presentation. Special Education Officer Kyla McKee also prepared a jam board for SEAC representatives to reach out to their communities and share with families for further input.

10. b) Business Arising from the Minutes:

- "Draft" letter to Ministry of Education re: Support for Learners funding

As schools have now pivoted back to in-person learning, discussion took place among SEAC members and it was decided to defer the letter to the Ministry of Education regarding Supports for Learning funding.

10. c) New Business:

- March Break Change & Proposed April SEAC Date Change to Thursday, April 8th or Wednesday, April 7th

Due to the recent Ministry announcement regarding the change of March Break to now take place in April; this will require a modification to the March and April SEAC meeting dates. Discussions took place among committee members and it was agreed upon to move the Thursday, March 25, 2021 SEAC meeting date to Thursday, March 18, 2021 and to move the Thursday, April 15, 2021 SEAC meeting date to Thursday, April 8, 2021.

MOTION:

THAT THE THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 2021 SEAC MEETING DATE MOVE TO THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 2021 AND TO MOVE THE THURSDAY, APRIL 15, 2021 SEAC MEETING DATE TO THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 2021.

MOVED BY: Rowin Jarvis

SECONDED BY: Trustee Darlene Forbes

CARRIED

11. Association Reports:

VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

We've been having a blast with our 2021 Webinar Series over the past few weeks! We've been able to bring professionals, young adults, children and families together to learn and connect, virtually. It's not too late to join the fun. All webinars are free of cost thanks to the generosity from our friends at The Elks & Royal Purple Fund for Children!

Upcoming:

Feb. 23 @ 8pm Advocating as a Family

Mar. 2 @ 8pm Meet & Greet 2

Supporting families of children with hearing loss is at the heart of what we do which is why we are very excited to announce that we are offering FREE one-year memberships to families who have children that have been recently diagnosed with hearing loss. Make sure to like, comment and share our posts on social media to spread the word and help grow our VOICE community!

Save the date for our Annual VOICE Conference 2021 May 7 & 8, 2021! With the health and safety of our families and professionals top of mind, we will be hosting our Conference virtually. Get ready to hear from some fascinating professionals - you won't want to miss it!

VOICE has teamed up with Sound Intuition and the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (CHHA) to offer an afternoon of Dungeons & Dragons for teens and young adults February 20 @ 2pm! There are only FIVE spots available, so make sure to register soon.

12. Correspondence:

There was no correspondence at this time.

13. Community Concerns:

Trustee Donna Edwards informed committee members about a Netflix documentary entitled, "Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution". Crip Camp starts in 1971 at Camp Jened, in New York, and is a summer camp designed for teens with disabilities. The film focuses on campers who turned themselves into activists for the disability rights movement and follows their fight for accessibility legislation.

13. Community Concerns: (cont'd)

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides shared her concern regarding the Metrolinx Durham Scarborough Bus Rapid Transit project with committee members. The project proposes that a section of Highway #2/Dundas Street, from Byron Street to Perry Street/Green Street become an exclusive Transit Mall. With the proposed closure of a section of Highway #2 through downtown Whitby, rerouting traffic around the downtown core, will be necessary. This will result in additional traffic around schools that are located around the periphery of the downtown core and affecting student transportation drop-off and pickup times. Discussions took place among SEAC members and it was decided to draft a letter regarding SEAC's concerns to the Ministry of Transportation, Metrolinx and the Town of Whitby.

14. Celebrations and Success:

Claudine Burrell noted that February being Black History Month, she shared that the Honourable Dr. Jean Augustine was the first black woman to be elected to Canada's House of Commons as a Member of Parliament. Among her accomplishments as an MP was the introduction of a motion, passed unanimously, to have February proclaimed as Black History Month in Canada.

15. Next S.E.A.C. meeting – Thursday, March 18, 2021.

16. Adjournment:

That the meeting does now adjourn at 8:25 p.m.

MOVED BY: Trustee Donna Edwards

SECONDED BY: Elizabeth Daniel

CARRIED

Report respectfully submitted by:
Eva Kyriakides, SEAC Chair

ACTION PLAN

ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY	COMPLETION
"Draft" letter to the Ministry of Transportation, Metrolinx & the Town of Whitby re: Scarborough Bus Rapid Transit project	SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides	By next SEAC meeting.