

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday January 19, 2023 6:30 P.M.

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

ROLL CALL:

Eva Kyriakides, Association for Bright Children (ABC) (SEAC Chair)
sensaRAneb Burrell, Autism Ontario – Durham Chapter
Tara Culley, Durham Down Syndrome Association
Hanah Nguyen, Easter Seals Ontario
Rowin Jarvis, Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region
Elizabeth Daniel, Member at Large
Morgann Cameron, Member at Large
Carissa Lewis, Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support
Kathy Kedey, VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children
Vera Mercier, Early Years Consortium – Non-voting member

Trustees: Donna Edwards Debora Oldfield

Staff: Superintendent, Andrea McAuley
System Lead, Conor Jinkinson

Recording Secretary: Lisa Wry

1. Call to Order:

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides called the meeting to order at 6:34 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. DDSB Indigenous Rights & Human Rights

The Durham District School Board recognizes Indigenous rights are distinct. In the exercise of those rights, Indigenous staff and students shall not be subject to action with the aim or effect of depriving these distinct rights.

The Durham District School Board is committed to learning and working environments that centre human rights and equity and are safe, welcoming, respectful, equitable, accessible, inclusive and free from discrimination.

4. Welcome Guests: Camille Williams-Taylor - DDSB Director of Education, Anthony Phallan - Vice-Principal Pickering H.S. Shannon Robertson - Principal Westney Hts.

Regrets: Jenn McLaughlin

Absent: Vera Mercier

5. **Approval of Agenda:**

That the agenda for January 19, 2023 be approved:

MOTION BY: Kathy Kedey

SECONDED BY: Carissa Lewis

CARRIED

6. **Approval of the Minutes from December 15, 2022:**

That the minutes from December 15, 2022 be approved:

MOVED BY: Tara Culley

SECONDED BY: Elizabeth Daniel

CARRIED

7. **Director Welcome: Camille Williams-Taylor:**

Director Camille Williams-Taylor expressed that she was pleased to rejoin the Durham District School Board in role as Director of Education; past four years as Director of Education for the Ottawa Carleton District School Board. Camille shared attending to get a feel of not only the nature of the work but how SEAC works as a group. In addition, to understand the engagement and the spirit of the work, and appreciated the time made available for an introduction.

Staff Reports:

Special Education Plan

Ministry Requirements

In accordance with Regulation 306, each school Board is required, every two years, to publish a Special Education Plan outlining programs and services provided by the Board. The Special Education Plan is published on the District website and is submitted to the Ministry of Education. Requirements of the Special Education Plan are outlined in the document, [Ontario Ministry of Education Standard for School Boards' Special Education Plans](#) (2000).

Required Standards

Information required for inclusion in the Special Education Plan is defined by Standards including, but not limited to:

- The Board's General Model for Special Education
- Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies
- Specialized Health Support Services in School Settings
- Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities
- Special Education Advisory Committee

Consultation Process

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) provides important consultation to the board on special education programs and services.

This consultation is ongoing through opportunities such as monthly SEAC meetings including discussions specific to the Special Education Plan (Winter/Spring).

The Board of Trustees is provided with updates through reports including specific to the Special Education Plan (e.g., May) prior to approval being sought for the annual plan (June).

DDSB Special Education Plan

- The [Durham District School Board Special Education Plan](#) continues to undergo annual refinement. Consultation includes opportunities for the Special Education Advisory Committee to provide input into the design of programs and services reflected in the plan.
- The Special Education Plan is in alignment with the DDSB Accessibility Plan based on requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).
- The Special Education Plan continues to be revised annually exceeding current Ministry requirements.

Our commitment as a district is to center Indigenous rights, human rights and equity. This commitment, reflected in the Special Education Plan, is to examine and reconstruct services, to remove discriminatory barriers and address disproportionate experiences and outcomes. This includes professional learning commitments, examination of practices and resources as well as continuing to deepen consultation.

Student Program Foundations

The DDSB is committed to upholding students' right to:

- meaningfully access educational services without discrimination and to be treated with dignity and respect
- equitable educational experiences, opportunities and outcomes
- inclusive and accessible services, programs and environments.
- The DDSB is committed to fostering success and independence for each student by providing a range of pathways, programs, opportunities and services that are responsive to individual identities (including intersecting identities), strengths and needs.
- Students with special education strengths and needs are supported in inclusive environments that enable them to develop to their potential.

As a district we are actively working to uncover, name, challenge and disrupt biases, barriers, structures and discriminatory practices that impede the achievement and well-being of our learners, especially those who are discriminated against and disadvantaged in and by our current systems and structures. Our commitment is to continue to examine and reconstruct services to prevent and address barriers that contribute to disproportional experiences, opportunities and outcomes for students. Our commitment includes addressing ableism, intersectionality, stigma, negative attitudes, stereotypes and assumptions about, unique accessibility and other barriers (for example, attitudinal, physical, architectural, communications or technological barriers) for students with special education strengths and needs. This includes (and is not limited to) increasing awareness and understanding of the social model (versus medical and functional models) of disability and neurodiversity.

DDSB 2022-2023 Special Education Plan

Updates to the DDSB Special Education Plan for the 2022-2023 school year include the following:

- Meaningful interdepartmental and interdisciplinary collaboration that centers Indigenous Inherent Rights, human rights, and equity in our planning and facilitation of professional learning are critical foundations to upholding our responsibilities to our

students and community. Updates to information about informed consent and purpose for assessments to inform programming.

- Updates made to the DDSB Parent/Guardian Guide to Special Education IPRC including shift in language from 'case conference' to 'care conference' and amplified emphasis on the importance of ongoing parent/guardian voice in program and pathway planning.
- Updates made to the DDSB Transition Guide including updates to further centre student and family voice.
- Removal of documents specifically focused on remote learning and intersect with special education processes and tools (IEPs and IPRCs). Needed at the time when we were learning as a district specific to the periods of district-wide remote learning mandate (with provision of in-person learning for limited number of students requiring this support).

Inclusive. Student. Services.

Teams working to support students with special education strengths and programming needs include roles which are school based and roles which are based through the district team supporting school teams.

The Team: School-Based

While working in schools, you can seek connection & support with other school-based professionals including, not limited to:

- Administrators
- ASL Interpreters
- Custodial Team Members
- Developmental Support Workers
- Educational Assistants
- Intervenors
- Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs)
- Special Education Class Teachers/Teachers

The Team: District ISS Team

While working in schools, you will meet individuals in the following Inclusive Student Services roles who are key supports to school teams, families and, most importantly, students:

- Children & Youth Support Workers
- Hearing Resource Teachers
- Instructional Facilitators/Consultants
- Psychological Services Staff
- Social Workers
- Speech-Language Pathologists
- Vision Resource Teachers

Student Program Foundations

- The majority of students with special education needs are placed in a regular classroom. For most students, a classroom teacher, with the support of the school's Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT/s) and board staff, is able to provide individualized programming to support student success.
- A regular classroom is always an option that parents or guardians may consider.

- A regular classroom allows the student to be with their peers, while receiving personalized programming that is outlined in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- The regular class is considered the most inclusive of placements.

Special Education Programs Accessed Through Placement

Further information is provided, as additional slides, specific to special education programs accessed through Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) decision for students with special education strengths & needs.

This information is key within the [Special Education Plan](#) and is also posted on the DDSB website: [Programs & Placements](#)

"As a district, we recognize the talents, gifts, and abilities of each student within our schools.

The intersectional identities that each student arrives with are to be celebrated and amplified as a means of validating the richness of their experiences and as a means of valuing and honoring their whole self."

- Addressing ableism – at all levels – varying grades – seems to be an idea of the minimum standard as opposed to the student meeting *their* potential.
- Often the entry into the school the medical perspective is given and can be the worst-case scenario and not the individual persons necessary reality.

Board: Trustee Deb Oldfield informed SEAC members that the Board of Trustees did not have a Board meeting in December; however, the Board of Trustees received information on the appointment of the new Director of Education for DDSB – Camille Williams-Taylor. Request for future Trustee presentation of SEAC minutes to the Board to be inclusive of key items to highlight identified by SEAC.

9. Open Discussion: Many Paths: Formally: Pathway to IPRC

History on this document is that there is a Ministry requirement that Boards have a public facing resource for the Pathway to IPRC, a process for students that have been formally identified. Connected resource: Parent/Guardian Guide to IPRC. We have changed to language from Pathway to IPRC, because there was a thought of a presumed destination with the process, instead of centring the student. With the help of SEAC a few years ago the document was revised, and the title changed to Pathways to Success. There is a core that needs to remain for legal and ministry requirement, but we do not think this document services our current practices and policies.

Members broke into small groups and worked through the *Supporting Many Pathways to Success* document for the purpose of providing consultation on revision.

The following suggestions were made:

- There are actions that come prior to currently identified Step 1 such as fostering relationship & trust with students and their parents/caregivers
- Communications and relationship building before assessing their child Parent collaboration
- Parent/caregiver often know the strengths and needs, somebody brings attention to additional supports
- Document is currently K-12; consider if differentiation for elementary and secondary may be needed
- Consent is possible from a student standpoint at an early age
- Perhaps alternate to wording of teacher "gathers" may be considered

- **Step 2** Collaboration with the family is missing and seems one directional school to parents/guardians rather than a collaborative conversation
- Important that draft program plans are shared with family before finalizing
- **Step 3** acknowledge the parent/guardian input
- **Step 4** is for educators to reach out to service professionals to confirm scope of service

Superintendent Andrea McAuley also shared some of the reflections of the Leadership team of Inclusive Student Services.

- Choice and voice
- Trust building and relationship building
- Active responsiveness
- When are Special Education and Mental Health separate and when are they interconnected.

Follow-up Plan

- Plan to review again but include the parent facing document as well.
- Consideration of the use of the term *Special Education* thoughts about Accessible Learning.
- Continue to advocate to the provincial government to update documents from a human rights and equity perspective.

10. **Open Discussion: SEAC Handbook:**

- Move to February

11. **Business Arising from the Minutes:**

- SEAC Survey timing - April would be preferred

12. **Association Reports & Committee Reports:**

- None

13. **Correspondence:**

- Summer Therapeutic Recreation Report

14. **Community Concerns:**

- Cancelling of buses is a concern perhaps review if it needs to be both morning and afternoon.
 - Perhaps more transparency for the decisions.
 - Accessible bussing is a concern.
- Decision making about continuing in the gifted program in high school.
 - Student with gifted accommodations and not in the gifted program, students may not be invited to the same outside invitations as those in the direct program

15. **Celebrations and Success:**

- Struggle to get the word out about our associations; however, with this virtual world we are celebrating that we are able to tap into things in the broader/global community to assist students and families.

January 19, 2023

16. Next S.E.A.C. meeting – Thursday February 16, 2023.

17. Adjournment:

That the meeting does now adjourn at 8:25 p.m. Adjournment called by SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides

MOVED BY: Tara Culley

SECONDED BY: Donna Edwards

CARRIED

Report respectfully submitted by:

Eva Kyriakides, SEAC Chair

Table 1- Action Plan

ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY	COMPLETION
Review the SEAC Handbook	Members of SEAC	February 16, 2023