

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

ROLL CALL:

Eva Kyriakides, Association for Bright Children (ABC) SEAC Chair
sensaRAneb Burrell, Autism Ontario – Durham Chapter
Tara Culley, Durham Down Syndrome Association
Rowin Jarvis, Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region
Elizabeth Daniel, Member at Large
Morgann Cameron, Member at Large
Charmain Brown, OPVIC Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children
Jennifer McLaughlin, Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support

Trustees: Kelly Miller Debora Oldfield

Staff: Superintendent, Andrea McAuley
System Lead, Michelle Crawford-Eade
System Lead Conor Jinkinson

Recording Secretary: Lisa Wry

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. DDSB Human Rights & Equity Statement

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:** Chris Conley and Leslie Parsons, Josh Fullan and Katie Konstantopoulos-Maximum City, Lisa Wray, Vice-Principal R.S. McLaughlin CVI, Rema Saati, Vice-Principal-Southwood Park P.S., Lisa Coppins Senior Manager- People and Culture.

Regrets: Rowin Jarvis

SEAC received correspondence on October 18, 2023 from Kathy Kedey stating that she will be stepping down from SEAC, and that at this time VOICE does not have a member to fill the SEAC role. We would like to thank Kathy for her time and valued voice at the SEAC table.

Absent: none

5. **Approval of Agenda:**

That the agenda for October 19, 2023, be approved:

MOVED BY: sensaRAneb Burrell SECONDED BY: Tara Culley

CARRIED

6. **Approval of the Minutes from June 22, 2023:**

That the minutes from June 22, 2023, be approved:

MOVED BY: Tara Culley SECONDED BY: Morgann Cameron

CARRIED

7. **Staff Reports:**

Administration Report:

Superintendent Andrea McAuley provided the Administrative Report: Thank you to Administrators and school teams for a great start up. Our schools are experiencing quite an enrolment growth. There is information on our website [Enrolment Growth and Building New Schools](#) on how students are being accommodated as well as Trustee advocacy with the Ministry for new school builds. Full enrolment numbers will be brought to SEAC after the Ministry reporting date of October 31, 2023. We will also at that time share the number of students accessing through Individual Education Plans (IEP).

We have passed the 30th day of school in the regular calendar, all the IEPs went out using the new software program. Thank you to school teams and families for all their co-operation and collaboration over the past few weeks/months that has led to the design and implementation of the new software system, and related document templates, across the system.

Policy Procedure Memorandum (PPM) 169 Student Mental Health includes 11 specific action items. Our Mental Health team and Positive School Climate team have taken a comparative of PPM 169 and our Mental Health and Well-Being Action Plan which are very much aligned. A report will go to Trustees in November, prior to the implementation requirement of January 1, 2024. Links to the report within the Trustee agenda and presentation video will be shared with SEAC.

Department Report:

System Lead Michelle Crawford-Eade shared that as a Board we are committed to dismantling ableism and as such we are engaged in a proposed name change for two of our service groups, looking to align with more positive language.

1. Hearing Resources, name change proposed: Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
2. Vision Resources, name change proposed: Teachers of the Blind and Low Vision.

System Lead Conor Jinkinson shared as a district we are looking at actions into impact and how actions impact our students, families and staff. We have established the Inclusive Student Services (ISS) monthly Impact Update shared in the attached links. These updates have a variety of information with a monthly focus; specialized equipment was highlighted in volume one and classroom support staff in volume two.

[ISS - Impact Update 2023-2024 Vol. 1](#)

[ISS - Impact Update 2023-2024 Vol. 2](#)

Board:

Trustee Deb Oldfield shared with SEAC members that the Board of Trustees is coming up on a year since its formation. Trustees also received presentations and information about the Boards upcoming organizational meeting on November 20, 2023. In June, the Board created a violence in schools ad hoc committee at the first meeting on September 11, 2023 the committee adopted a term of reference. Further sanctions were placed on Trustee Stone after reviewing the report from the integrity commissioner. Trustees will be attending the Ontario Public School Board Association (OPSBA) advocacy day November 27, 2023-please send any information you would like shared with MPPs in one document through SEAC chair Eva Kyriakides to Trustee Oldfield by Friday November 17, 2023.

8. Presentation:

Leslie Parsons, Research Associate – Student Achievement Support, presented the results of the 2022-2023 SEAC Parent/Guardian Survey

Members were encouraged to use the templates provided to write down any thinking, wonders and action ideas.

- Survey was facilitated in May/June 2023
- Mainly focused on communication
- Response from all regions, and grades represented- Oshawa and Whitby being the highest response rates
- Overall, a high degree of satisfaction
- Slight decrease in satisfaction in the higher grade's comparative to younger grades.

Thematic analysis of qualitative data was applied to the comments provided by the participants taking like-minded comments and grouping them together under themes.

Positive: Attitude/Characteristics/Praise

- Supportive
- Helpful
- Amazing
- Understanding
- Caring

Improvements: Ways to improve the communication experience

- Positive - desire to hear about successes
- In-person
- Consistency

- More time
- Availability

Key findings were that most respondents were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied.

Some families are experiencing gaps mostly around interpersonal and bonding with the teams.

Many were not familiar with the Parent/Guardian Guide to Special Education Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC).

Communication

Areas working well communication:

- Emails
- Outreach updates – informal communication
- Apps/Tools

Areas that could use improvement:

- Progress Updates/Outreach
- Connecting with Support Team
- IEP – Awareness, Implementation, Adherence.

9. Open Discussion

SEAC Planning – Parent/Caregiver Engagement

Members discussed the results of the survey:

- Respondents for students in the higher grades were the least satisfied with communication.
- Impromptu conversation tends to be directly with students in the higher grades.
- Intention is to increase independence.
- Parents are always included in formal meetings.
- May want to consider surveying students in the higher grades as well.
- Traditional surveys may not be the best avenue to reach our students in the 18–21-year-old population.
- Working and focusing this year on transitions with our Transition Co-ordinators have actively been in schools helping set up these transitions.
- Operational pieces are working well, spaces that need improvement are connections, personal connection.
- Need for empathy and understanding.
- Consideration of culturally responsive engagement.
- Consistency, and follow through meeting was good but the outcomes were less satisfying.

Members broke into small groups and suggested the following action items from the general themes:

- Encourage positive connections.
- Interpersonal relationships with the team
- Individual Education Plan (IEP) & IPRC process – share at each meeting the Parent/Guardian Guide to Special Education Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)
- Encourage grade 11 and 12 students to seek transition options.

- Consistency – class to class grade to grade teacher to teacher, school to school
- Trust – real parent involvement
- Communication – how are parents actively involved.
- Who to contact-an advocate outside of the school they can connect with and ask questions.
- Communication/timely – on a regular basis communicate when things are positive and as well as areas of improvement.
- Ask parents how they prefer communication.
- Consideration of a welcome package.

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides proposed sharing information from the SEAC survey with Special Education Resources Teachers (SERT)

- These are the things that are going well,
- Here are some areas that could be addressed.
- How can we as SEAC support?
- Opportunity to share the feedback we have and make an action plan.
- ISS Learning Community. is planned for December 12, SERTs will be in attendance would be a great opportunity to share.
- Possible video to be created, and shared.

MOTION TO WRITE A LETTER OR CREATE A PRESENTATION TO BE SHARED WITH SERTs ABOUT THE SEAC SURVEY RESULTS.

MOVE BY TARA CULLEY SECOND BY sensaRAneb

CARRIED

SEAC Letter will be in the form of the ISS Impact Update in December, and quotes from the survey will be embedded.

10. SEAC Consultation: DDSB Accessibility Procedure

Lisa Coppins joined to bring information forward about the DRAFT DDSB Accessibility Procedure

During an audit by the Ministry, one of the recommendations was to build a document around Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). An additional recommendation is that it become a procedure under the Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy, Representing students, employees and families.

- Feedback was requested from members, via Lisa Wry no later than the morning of Wednesday October 25, 2023.

11. Business Arising from the Minutes

11.1 SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides distributed a DRAFT letter to the Ministry with members and requested feedback about concerns around the promotion of skilled trades before completion of a secondary diploma.

11.2 September 2023 meeting reschedule- SEAC is legislated for 10 meetings and therefore, the cancelled September 21, 2023 meeting will need to be rescheduled. Date options were explored, and the following suggestions were made:

- A meeting in July – which may again have quorum concerns.
- Consideration around timing with budget planning.
- A parent/caregiver engagement night - could have a meeting for an hour before the event, before then moving to the engagement night.

12. SEAC Gallery Considerations

Under legislation we must have an in-person public gallery. There will continue to be live streaming for accessibility which means room 1A will continue to be the SEAC meeting room for the purpose of maintaining live streaming and will be able to accommodate a small gallery.

- Galleries in that past were a great way to build connections with families.
- Attendees will need to pre-register; size limitation of gallery will be embedded in the communications regarding pre-registration.

13. Association Reports & Committee Reports

VOICE Conference Information shared.

SEAC representative on the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)

sensaRAneb Burrell would like to offer an opportunity to other members to represent SEAC on PIC. No other committee volunteers came forward. sensaRAneb will continue to represent SEAC for the 2023-2024 school year but will look to step down for the 2024-2025 school year.

14. Correspondence

- Autism Ontario Nomination of Alternate Representative.
A letter was submitted by Autism Ontario sharing a new member as alternate representative to SEAC.

MOTION: SEAC to make recommendation to the Board of Trustees to approve request from Autism Ontario that Maritza Basaran be the Alternate Representative at SEAC.

MOVE BY: sensaRAneb Burrell SECONDED BY: Tara Burrell

CARRIED

Additional Correspondence:

- Simcoe County DSB - Special Education Funding
- Thames Valley DSB – Special Incident Portion (SIP) Funding
- Waterloo Region DSB – Special Incident Portion (SIP) Funding

15. Community Concerns:

A few members have received an email from a parent advocating for their child with a vision impairment.

DDSB supports students who have Blind/Low vision needs through wrap around supports.

- Classroom Teacher
- Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT)

- Instructional Facilitator
- Transcribers
- Classroom Support Staff
- Teachers of the Blind/Low Vision
- Students are met through a variety of supports including indirect support, building capacity with school-based staff and the Provincial School W. Ross MacDonald through teaching and learning.
- Direct support typically means withdrawal support with a teacher of the Blind/low vision to teach pre braille or proficient braille users for accessibility to curriculum.
- This year we have shifted staffing to include five Teachers of the Blind/low vision and two Special Education Teachers – taking Brille 1 & 2 additional qualification courses.
- The blind/low vision course has not been offered since 2016 but will be offered in 2024.
- Recommendation to the parent to reach out to Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children.
- Support is based on assessments and recommendations, currently we have 3 staff members proficient in braille working directly with students.

Rowin Jarvis shared a community concern question in advance of the meeting. Is *Empower* being used anywhere within the DDSB?

Superintendent Andrea McAuley responded to the inquiry:

- Our school teams have the new language curriculum which leans heavily into the Right to Read.
- *Empower* is a program we have looked at a few times. It comes from the Hospital for Sick Children. The model is really directive with a lot of fidelity constraints on the flexibility within a school.
 - Teacher time within very structured small groups
 - No allowances for student additions to small groups during the school year
 - All teachers must be trained at Sick Kids and therefore no training within the school.
 - If a teacher is trained and leaves a school the *Empower* program goes with the teacher
- We have been engaged in piloting a software program called *Lexia* aimed specifically for students with learning disabilities.
- Our focus as a district is on the whole instruction in classroom practice – strategies in class that align with the ministry directions in terms of phonetic awareness and the literacy curriculum.
- With literacy having grounding in good language practices team coaching requires both an educator and a speech language pathologist; implementation support teams in DDSB are comprised of collaboration between teachers and speech language pathologists.
- Nine additional speech language pathologists for this school year partnered with curriculum coaches working together in schools on the foundations of literacy.

- One of the teams is also focusing on intermediate grades (Grades 7,8,9, and 10) as we know we have students moving from elementary to secondary who are not yet proficient readers.
- Research and project grant to move students who are Deaf, deaf or hard of hearing in literacy and the Right to Read.
- Literacy and Math plan will be going before the Board; once shared with Trustees plans will be shared with SEAC.

16. Celebrations & Successes

Charmain Brown shared that her children have a degenerative eye disease called retinitis pigmentosa and they were the first to receive gene therapy in Ontario, they are both having remarkable success.

17. Next S.E.A.C Meeting-

November 9, 2023

18. Adjournment

That the meeting does now adjourn at 8:38 p.m.

Adjournment called by SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides

MOVED BY: Tara Culley SECONDED BY: sensaRAneb Burrell

CARRIED

Report respectfully submitted by:

Eva Kyriakides, SEAC Chair

Table 1- Action Plan

ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY	COMPLETION
Send copy of the Word Cloud	Lisa Wry	November 2, 2023
Add to next agenda advocacy night	Lisa Wry	November 2, 2023
Share link MH & PPM 169	Lisa Wry	November 9, 2023