

**REPORT OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Thursday March 21, 2024 6:30 P.M.**

ROLL CALL:

Eva Kyriakides, Association for Bright Children (ABC) SEAC Chair  
Charmain Brown, OPVIC Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children  
sensaRAneb Burrell, Autism Ontario – Durham Region 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  
Jennifer McLaughlin, Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support

Trustees: Donna Edwards 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 Vice-Chair Tara Culley called the meeting to order at 6:39 p.m.

**2. Land Acknowledgement:**

SEAC Vice-Chair Tara Culley 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:** Chrystal Bryan, retired Principal, Margaret Lazarus - Superintendent of Education, Jacqueline Steer, retired Principal, Chris Conley - Manager, Research and Strategic Analytics, Melissa Cook-Vice-Principal, David Bouchard P.S. Lisa Wray-Vice-Principal, R.S. McLaughlin CVI. Rema Saati – Vice-Principal Southwood Park

**Regrets:** Eva Kyriakides, sensaRAneb Burrell

**Absent:** Deb Oldfield

5. **Approval of Agenda:**

That the agenda for March 21, 2024, be approved: with the follow amendment move item Association Reports to before Business Arising from the Minutes.

MOVED BY: Trustee Donna Edwards

SECONDED BY: Elizabeth Daniel

CARRIED

6. **Approval of the Minutes from February 15, 2024:**

That the minutes from February 15, 2024, be approved:

MOVED BY: Rowan Jarvis

SECONDED BY: Morgann Cameron

CARRIED

7. **Staff Reports:**

System Lead- Conor Jinkinson shared updates and information from the Inclusive Student Services department:

This month focus for the Inclusive Student Services Impact Update, Volume 7, was on the Transition to Work Program

- Building employment skills for students ages 18-21 years
- Extensive transportation training – learning to take public transportation.
- Navigating the workplace
- Deep appreciation sent to the employers hosting students through the Transition to Work Program.
- Efforts are made to align students with their interests through individualized work experience opportunities.

Connection will be made with Work Experience/Transition Coordinators for considerations of working with Durham Region Transit for transit use training.

Please share (sent by email Tuesday March 19, 2024) [Parent's Guide to Ontario's Education System](#) information with your associations.

Special Education Class planning for 2024-2025 is in process Nominal changes from current year. Class changes (moves, opens and closes) will be shared with SEAC in April.

**Board:** Trustee Kelly Miller shared with SEAC members that Board of Trustees has posted the Multi Year Strategic Plan and the Chair as posted a statement regarding anti-oppression and anti-black racism that is in alignment with the Boards Human Rights Policy. Motion put forward to the Board of Trustees around Accessibility Standards in Ontario to make a

recommendation to the Ontario Public School Board Association to take a leadership role in addressing accessibility and accommodation as well as review recommendations and examine how they are going to become a role model and advocate.

## 8. **Presentation:**

Student Census and Anti-Oppression Plan Consultation  
Presenters:

- Margaret Lazarus - Superintendent of Education
- Chris Conley - Manager, Research and Strategic Analytics
- Jacqueline Steer, retired Principal
- Chrystal Bryan, retired Principal

Superintendent Margaret Lazarus expressed appreciation to SEAC for their advocacy and invitation to share the Student Census data report along with Chris Conley.

- As Duty bearers, we are all responsible for promoting human rights and student rights.
- Census provides data so that we know who our students are and can be more responsive to their needs.
- Ask questions so that we can know the intersectionality of our students' individual identities to be more responsive.
- Although we did not have as high of a response rate as we would like, we do have some important data.

In the past census data has been used to:

- Provided additional analyses on disparities and disproportionate experiences and outcomes.
- Ongoing training for staff to identify systemic barriers to student achievement.
- Developed procedures and strategies to close the achievement gap.
- Activated student voice to create relevant and responsive programs.

Next steps after receiving the data:

- Consultations with community members
- Resource Support
- Ongoing Training for Staff
- Interventions to support students.
- Four Pillars: Staff, Students, Parents/Guardians, Community

Jacqueline Steer and Chrystal Bryan were welcomed to present on the Compendium of Action for Black Student Success 2.0.

How did the Compendium come to be?

- 2016 - community forums to hear Black Community Voices
- Formal summation of recommendations was written by committee led by Justice McLeod and expressed the concerns of the Black community with regards to their children's education
- The intention of the Compendium of Action for Black Student Success was to take the recommendations and be specific and intentional in developing a plan for change.

What is the Compendium of Action for Black Student Success?

- Respond and act on concerns of members of Black communities.
- Focus on addressing inequities with our system.
- Identify, prevent, address policies and practices to disrupt and dismantle practices that perpetuate Anti Black Racism
- Implement curricula that affirms, reflects, and responds to Black identities.

Why Do We Need a Compendium?

- Parents/Guardians and Community Voices
- Student Voices
- DDSB 2018 and 2023 Census Data

Why the Emphasis on Black History?

- Black history existed prior to transatlantic slave trade in the 1400s.
- To promote and highlight Black Excellence and Genius

What Is In 2.0 Version of the Compendium and What Makes It Different from the original compendium?

- Responsive to the learning that we have done.
- Written through the lens of the Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy
- Action Items are measurable, and the evidence of impact section is transparent allowing everyone and anyone to see the progress as we work to dismantle anti-Black racism within our system.
- Section 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7 action items directly support our students who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP)

This document has been responsive to the learning we have done and has been written through the eyes of the new Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy. Complete student identity is considered for planning for all students.

Members of SEAC discussed the presentations with the following questions and reflections.

- Thoughts on how to increase census engagement in the future.
- Some students were not aware, and others did not think it would be valuable -need to work on communication with students and families.
- Build confidence; distrust on how the information is being used may have impacted participation.
- Student Senate gave some significant feedback for how to engage students.
- The question was raised, how are parents in racialized communities responding to the potential sense of stigma that could be associated with doing the census? Trust is at the core of this, and we did hear that there were concerns, looking to be available for questions and looking to collaborate with community organizations/representatives. Important to communicate with our parent community what the data is being used for.

**9. Association Reports & Committee Reports**

Association Highlight: Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support

- Group began November 2020
- Support group for Black parents/caregivers supporting a loved one of any age with any type of disability but mostly developmental disabilities.
- Currently over 200 members
- Mostly in Ontario but also East Coast, U.S., Caribbean, Africa
- Sawubona means "I see you."

**Mission Statement**

- The mission of Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support is to offer support and to build the capacity of Black caregivers of persons with a disability and their families.

**Vision Statement**

- Sawubona's vision is for every Black caregiver of a family member with a disability to feel a sense of belonging.

**10. Business Arising from the Minutes**

**Rescheduled 2023-2024 SEAC Meetings/Date Survey Results Wednesday April 3, 2024.**

- Two meetings on April 3, 2024
- One meeting for finance 6:30-7:30 pm
- The other meeting for planning of the advocacy event 7:30-8:30 pm

**2024-2025 Draft SEAC Meeting Dates**

- Thursday, September 5, 2024
- Thursday, October 3, 2024
- Thursday, November 7, 2024
- Thursday, December 5, 2024
- Thursday, January 9, 2025
- Thursday, February 6, 2025
- Thursday March 5, 2025. Proposed alternative: Thursday, March 20, 2025  
*\*Note: Friday, March 6, 2025, is a Board Designated Holiday in the draft school year calendar*
- Thursday, April 3, 2025
- Thursday, May 1, 2025
- Thursday, June 5, 2025

MOTION THAT SEAC MEETINGS MOVE TO THE FIRST THURSDAY OF THE MONTH IN ORDER TO BETTER ADVOCATE IN TIMELY INFORMATION TO BOARD; AND TO APPROVED THE DATES FOR THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR.

MOVE: Rowin Jarvis                      SECONDED Charmain Brown

CARRIED

- **SEAC Sub-Committee: Advocacy Event-** conversation moved to April 3, 2024, meeting.
- **SEAC – Advertising Opportunity for Additional Associations**
  - A fillable form is accessed through the flier link.
  - Request to members to help promote the information.
- **2024/2025 Special Education/Inclusive Student Service Plan – SEAC Section**
  - The SEAC section will be updated and brought to the April 3, 2024, meeting for feedback.

**11. Correspondence**

- Transportation Advocacy Letter will be discussed at the April 3, 2024, meeting.

**12. Community Concerns**

- We have moved through staffing for elementary.
- Significant growth in both elementary and secondary.
- Growing board so we will need additional resources.

Elizabeth Daniel-Shared parent concern from another board but thought the information may be interesting to share with this group. The family is waiting for school Speech Language Pathologist to refer to the community partner for Speech Language Therapy, and it is taking a considerable length of time.

Superintendent Andrea McAuley responded that the DDSB team is generally quite good at responsive and timely supports, but we will do a double check of our team process through lens of the inquiry.

Trustee Donna Edwards – shared searching the Ministry website looking for information around if they have created the new umbrella organization for the local health networks but has not been able to find any updates. Superintendent Andrea McAuley responded that the district has not received further information at this time.

**13. Celebrations & Successes**

Trustee Donna Edwards is celebrating that her daughter Victoria shared four presentations on what it means to have Down Syndrome. She is enjoying it and had lots of great questions.

Tara Culley shared that Adam had a brunch party with his buddy and they decided to play a board game, he was able to read some of the sentences in the game.

Charmain Brown is celebrating that her son Adam was matched with his guide dog.

Lisa Wray is celebrating that they hired a new teacher this year who is bringing joy today for World Down Syndrome Day with inclusion activities in one of the Practical Learning Program Classes at R.S. McLaughlin Secondary School. Students tie-dyed socks blue and yellow in celebration.

**14. Next S.E.A.C Meeting**

April 3, 2024

**15. Adjournment**

That the meeting does now adjourn at 8:23 p.m.

Adjournment called by SEAC Vice-chair Tara Culley

MOVED BY: Trustee Donna Edwards

SECONDED BY: Rowin Jarvis

CARRIED

Report respectfully submitted by:

Tara Culley, SEAC Vice-Chair

**Table 1- Action Plan**

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>COMPLETION</b>
Sharing of professional learning opportunities with SEAC members for consideration of participation.	ISS Department	On-Going

# Inclusive Student Services Impact Update

2023-2024 • Volume 7

## Transition to Work Program

The Transition to Work Program is a special education placement program supporting students 18 to 21 years of age who are intending to enter directly into the work force following their secondary school experience.

“I think the Transition to Work Program is very important to me in life experience and it suits my personal skills. I think it is valuable to learn everything and it can upgrade my skills. I’m really glad that I got a new job and it feels like my dream job has come true. It can make me feel more comfortable and I’m glad to see all the staff... they are very nice and friendly.”

–Student

The Transition to Work Program is designed for students to learn the necessary social, work related and independence skills necessary for transition to successful employment in the community. The program is a bridge between school and adult living. The goal of the program is to develop employability skills and foster independence to support students to become productive, paid workers contributing to the value of inclusive work environments and within their communities.

There are currently five Transition to Work Program classes in the DDSB supporting 44 students.

“I think the Transition to Work Program is good for me... I really enjoy doing it. The Transition to Work Program has actually helped me gain back a lot of work skills, that I had forgotten during the pandemic and has helped learn new work skills.”

–Student



## Program Structure

### Employment Related Skills Training

The focus of the Transition to Work Program is developing employability skills and gaining independence. Students participate in training and practical experience to prepare and introduce them to the world of work. Students attend weekly in-class learning and their work placements. The Transition to Work Program is structured for in-class employment related skills training on Mondays (across all program sites) and work experience (on-job training) from Tuesday to Friday each week.



The purpose of in-class learning sessions varies as the school year progresses based on the student's strengths, interests and needs. Students can expect to learn about:

- basic concepts and skills required to work in the community such as navigating the workplace;
- training certifications, through community service partners, that may include first aid training;
- community employment support programs and financial resources (e.g., Ontario Disability Support Program);
- tools and skills needed for finding the "right" employment opportunity based on their personal skills and interests;
- development of their personal employment portfolios;
- As students get settled into their placements, the in-class portion of the program focuses more on each student's unique situations relating to their placement. Teachers and Educational Assistants work with students and families to plan next steps as required on an individual level for each student on their pathway to gain employment.

**"The program is amazing! It gives the students the opportunity to get into the community and learn in the working world. Getting in the community and working gives the students the opportunity to socialize and develop communication skills. We struggled at first with communication but after a month or so he was able to communicate with us confidently, learn the job, and completed tasks efficiently. Everyone benefits from the program, the students (and) the employer too by gaining a valuable employee to be a dependable member of the team."**

**–Front Store Manager, Shoppers Drug Mart (Pickering Town Centre)**

### Transit Training

Transit training is a key focus of the Transition to Work Program. The ability to effectively take public transit is an integral skill for any student looking to work out in the community and building towards gaining independence. All students in the program receive Durham Regional Transit bus fare in the form of a monthly pass or tickets depending on their situation to be able to access their placement and/or community opportunities. With staff assistance in gaining the skills and confidence to ride public transit, most students grow to use the public transit system as a means of transportation for all their transportation needs, including attending school, work placement and community activities.

## Work Experiences

Students are introduced to different workplaces and learn how to navigate their experience by implementing workplace employability skills necessary for enjoyable sustainable employment.

Students who are in year one of the program will generally have work experience placements that cover a wide range of skills to provide a broad range of practical experience. Students may attend many work placements with this similar focus of exposing them to a range of different jobs and tasks to build their skills and resumes.

As students demonstrate skills and gain insights into their interests through the program, work experience planning is focused on finding experiences aligned with each student's individual goals. This may not always be their ideal career position, but the goal is to have as much connection as possible to their potential career.

For example, a student who is interested in plumbing or automotives may not be able to work as a plumber or a mechanic, however, they can work in the plumbing department of a home improvement store or work in an auto parts store or a mechanics shop so that they are developing skills within their desired industry.

Currently, students in the Transition to Work Program work mainly within retail and service industries. Current examples include restaurants, auto dealership services, retail shopping stores, animal care, community centers, and child/elder care. Employers are recruited based on student interest and skill set matching opportunities.

**"Our Transition to Work Program is thriving. Our students are finding successful employment. We are building strong community partnerships with our employers, and most importantly, our students and their families are very appreciative of the benefits that they are seeing, not only from often finding paid employment, but also from the rewards of a learning environment rich in so many valuable life skills."**

–Transition to Work Program Teacher

## Inclusive Employers and Value of Inclusion in the Workplace

There is significant research on the benefits of diverse and inclusive workplaces. Impacts include direct and indirect benefits such as higher revenue, enhanced productivity, greater employee retention and improved morale (D.Winiarski, Forbes, 2023 and 2024)

**"The program gives the students the opportunity to grow into their role, to mature into being able to meet expectations. It allows for flexibility with how we meet individual student needs. He has required varying levels of support and now we are moving toward complete independence to assess if he can be successful and grow his independence."**

–Owner, FreshCo (Steeple Hill)

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“Through the facilitation of the teachers, the students come prepared to work. There is no leg work required by the employer to have the students come to work. The program offers a longer runway for having the students learn the job to become efficient without the typical training costs. And about costs having the wages and WSIB costs subsidized, the labour costs are zero. There are a few challenges that may come up but they are easily overcome with teacher input. Overall, the program can lead to something. (Student) has a great opportunity for employment...”

–Owner, Canadian Tire (Rylander)

“The benefits for the students are really noticeable, I have experienced them first hand over the years. Working here at Dogtopia gets the kids out of their shell. Some of them have been reluctant to even say hello. Once they become a member of our team they are relied upon, they have to open up to communicate with us, and as a result in a safe environment they open themselves up to new situations.” “Now for the Employer—the students are relied upon. They help us with the daily tasks, which reduces the workload for the team. Subsequently, allowing the trainer to give more personal time to training the student on the job. Having the students here reduces the workload and the stress. When the workplace is happier it allows the employer to coach more and teach the student about their job.”

–Manager, Dogtopia (Pickering)

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## Pathways from Transition to Work

Students who graduated from the Transition to Work Program in June 2023 followed a few pathways including:

- Employment (11 students)
- Entry into a College program (six students)
- Adult day programs (two students)

“I’m reaching out to recognize the amazing efforts of the staff and team for the special needs program... the Transition to Work Program goes above and beyond to ensure the confidence, ability, and overall success of students, especially my stepson... The independence and life-learning that has taken place since (student) has been a part of Mr. Kane’s class has been nothing short of amazing!”

–Parent

For more information about the  
**DDSB Inclusive Student Services Impact Update,**  
 please visit [DDSB Inclusive Student Services](#).

