

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday December 5, 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
Allyson Eamer, Easter Seals Ontario
Rowin Jarvis, Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region
Elizabeth Daniel, Member at Large
Jennifer McLaughlin, Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support
Jessica Wells, Member at Large

Trustees: Donna Edwards Kelly Miller Michelle Arseneault

Staff: Superintendent, Andrea McAuley
System Lead, Conor Jinkinson

Recording Secretary: Lisa Wry

1. Call to Order:

Superintendent Andrea McAuley called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

2. Land Acknowledgement:

Superintendent Andrea McAuley 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, live, and learn.

This statement was co-created in partnership with the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation and the Chippewas of Georgina Island.

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 providing learning and working environments that centre human rights and equity and are safe, welcoming, respectful, equitable, accessible, inclusive, and free from all forms of discrimination, oppression, harassment, and harm.

3. Welcome Guests: Lisa Wray-Secondary Representative, Melissa Cook-Elementary Representative

Regrets: Jennifer McLaughlin, Jessica Wells.

Absent: None.

4. Approval of Agenda:

That the agenda for December 5, 2024, be approved. With the addition of an item under section nine; membership request from Grandview Kids

MOVED BY: Trustee Michelle Arseneault SECONDED BY: Trustee Donna Edwards

CARRIED

- a) Superintendent Andrea McAuley informed committee members of the election process for the positions of SEAC Chair and Vice-Chair following the Ontario Education Act Regulations.

Tara Culley nominated, Eva Kyriakides for 2025 Chair of SEAC. Eva Kyriakides accepted the nomination. Nominations were called three times for the position of Chair of SEAC with no further nominations Eva Kyriakides was acclaimed Chair of SEAC for 2025. SEAC member Eva Kyriakides as the newly elected Chair assumed the role and conducted the remainder of the meeting. Chair Eva Kyriakides thanked committee members for electing her to the position of Chair of SEAC.

- b) **Election of the Vice- Chair:**

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair.

Elizabeth Daniel nominated Tara Culley for position of Vice-Chair and following three calls Tara Culley was acclaimed Vice-Chair for SEAC 2025.

5. Approval of the Minutes:

That the minutes from November 7, 2024, be approved.

MOVED BY: Elizabeth Daniel SECONDED BY: Tara Culley

CARRIED

6. Staff Reports:

System Lead Conor Jinkinson shared information and updates from the Inclusive Student Services (ISS) department:

ISS Impact Update Practical Learning Program (PLP)-the focus of this program is literacy, numeracy, and practical learning skills.

Here is what students had to say about the program:

"It's like a second home and a second family."

"We learn to stick up for ourselves and others."

"We learn to cook and do laundry."

"I like that you give me independence in the kitchen."

"We learn that it's important to get fresh air and that walking helps your mood."

- Students are integrated within mainstream classrooms and as a result feel included as part of the whole school, where all students are able to build relationships and appreciation for one another.
- The classroom environments are created with our Facilities Services department to support the development of skills in our students to serve them when they leave the DDSB and help them reach their potential (e.g., laundry and cooking facilities)
- It was asked what age/grade does the PLP program start and what the practical learning would consist of for younger students. Limited number of PLP classes in primary and junior grades aligned with commitment to inclusion. Programming, in the placement class and within accommodations in regular class placements, supports life skills, literacy, numeracy and work experiences.

Superintendent Andrea McAuley proposed, and presented two draft options, for an Annual Report from SEAC. SEAC provides immense value with the expertise and heart each member brings to the table, and the consultation provided around programs and services and the breadth and depth of conversation had throughout the year. In Durham we have not had an annual report from SEAC, bringing forward a proposal to do so showing highlights of consultation, advocacy, expertise, and heart. Request to SEAC to decide if they approve of the concept, and if so, which format is preferred from an accessibility lens. Once completed the DDSB Creative Services department would assist with the publishing.

- SEAC to consider an annual report; sample draft reports were provided as a possible outline using information from meetings in 2024.
- SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides suggested keeping the reports brief as the minutes are already posted and reviewed some of the suggested highlights.
- Trustee Donna Edward would like to see it sound more like it came from SEAC members.
- Allyson Eamer prefers the longer version because it covers topics and gives weight to what SEAC is and does. Consider highlights at the end of each meeting to help build the report rather than going back twelve months.
- This report would be available to the public and would include direct quotes of impact.
- Tara Culley suggested that members use November minutes to test how it would be built to, create a template for use in 2025.
- Suggestion to have a committee that captures what and why information.
- During conversation at meetings, it could be announced that something that is said should be highlighted "that's a highlight."
- Consider categories without it growing to the minutes.

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides asked members their preference of whether they start fresh for 2025 or keep a smaller version for 2024. A vote was taken by a show of hands with the question of - who would like to start with 2024?

- The consensus of the group was that starting in 2025 would give time to build a more thoughtful and representative document.

- Suggestion to create and share a google document for collaboration where all members can add items during or after the meetings; to build on-going through the year.
- Perhaps reviewing content quarterly.

MOTION TO CREATE AN ANNUAL REPORT STARTING IN 2025.

MOVED by: Rowin Jarvis SECONDED BY: Allyson Eamer

7. **Board:** Trustee Kelly Miller shared with SEAC members that the Board of Trustees received information at the Board Meeting on December 2, 2024, including a report on 2SLGBTQIA+ Compendium of Action and approved SEAC Member at Large. Trustee Donna Edwards added that the compendium for action is in the first draft, and Trustees are excited because it ties everything together with action items. Kelly Miller mentioned within the compendium there is a great list of terms for reference.

8. **Presentation & Discussion:**

SEAC Parent/Caregiver Survey Spring 2025

- Whenever we are putting together a survey, it is important to ensure that we are aligned with our multiyear strategic plan.
- Survey focus in 2023 was on communication
- Always good data in repeatability, measure of change, and different benefits of novel inquiries
- The last survey was concise, by design, with opportunity to elaborate in responses.
- Ensure that we do not unintentionally identify a student.
- Possible topic discussed: are we interested in knowing if the parents are happy with the placement, part of the reason for the question about child's current placement was looking at communication and whether families with children in varying placement receive information differently.
- Last time we landed on communication because there was a lot of questions around communication and the IPRC process was. Wanted to know where the gaps were.
- Be considerate of the time required by those completing the survey.
- Consider asking respondents if they would be interested in being a part of a focus group; further discussion regarding resources needed to conduct the focus groups.
- Action for SEAC members to review the previous survey and results; survey will be on the January agenda for further discussion.
- Findings from the last survey were shared with Administrators and SERTs. As well as informed the update to the Parent/Guardian Guide to IPRC.
- Survey 2025 – to include, at the beginning of the survey, explanation of how the information received from the last survey was put into actions.

- Specifically, as a result of the last survey, we have updated our Identification and Placement Review Committee (IPRC) invitation letter to include the IPRC Guide for Parents/Caregivers.

9. Business Arising from the Minutes

Parent Guardian Guide to Special Education Identification, Placement and Review Committee

- Staff appreciated the feedback from SEAC wanted to come back and ask if the changes reflected the consideration of SEAC. Any feedback would be appreciated now or by early next week.

Trustee Donna Edwards suggested it would be more helpful to have a chart or visual. Superintendent Andrea McAuley responded that a flow chart has been created and is being finalized by Creative Services to accompany the Guide.

SEAC Membership considerations:

- The Abilities Centre membership application-we have not received any further information on potential alternate.
- Grandview Kids has put forward a membership request they have named a member as well as an alternate; both qualifying in accordance with the Education Act
- Amend the language around The Abilities Centre to remove non-voting.
- Trustee Donna Edwards stated the legislation states a Parent Association with Provincial affiliation.
- Question to Grandview would be if they can put forward two members from the parent group.
- Deferred for legal consult and further discussion in next SEAC meeting.

10. Association Reports & Committee Reports

- Durham Down Syndrome association had their annual holiday party. With games and fun for the young ones and a dance for the teens and adults.
- Easter Seals is organizing a youth conference in March.

11. Correspondence

- Limestone District School Board Letter to Ontario College of Teachers.

Requesting special education training as part of the curriculum in the various Faculties of Education. This would need to come as a directive, so lobbying to the Ministry and the Ontario College of Teachers.

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides asked members if the DDSB SEAC would also like to write a letter.

MOTION TO WRITE A LETTER FROM THE DURHAM DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD.SEAC SUPPORTING THE LETTER FROM LIMESTONE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD.

MOVED BY: Allyson Eamer SECONDED BY: Tara Culley

12. Community Concerns

Tara Culley attended and presented at the Lakeside P.S. listening circle. Listening to ways to improve the school and what things are going well. It was a fantastic, relaxed networking opportunity for families, which resulted in community building. There will probably be another follow up session in the new year.

13. Celebrations & Successes

Trustee Donna Edwards Town of Ajax had its first ever International Day of Persons with Disabilities Film Screening-film featured was "A New Story".

Trustee Edwards is also celebrating that her son earned his G2 driver's license.

Next S.E.A.C Meeting

January 9, 2025

14. Adjournment

That the meeting does now adjourn at 8:45p.m.

Adjournment called by SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides

MOVED BY: Tara Culley SECONDED BY: Allyson Eamer

CARRIED

Report respectfully submitted by:

Eva Kyriakides, SEAC Chair

Report Special Education Advisory Committee (cont'd)
December 5, 2024

Table 1 Action Items

| ACTIVITY | RESPONSIBILITY | COMPLETION |
|--|----------------------------------|--|
| Survey focus ideas/generate for January meeting | SEAC members | Note: Thoughtexchange created and circulated to SEAC members to gather input |
| SEAC Membership – Voting/Non-Voting Legal Consult | Staff | December 2024 |
| Draft Letter re advocacy for inclusion of special education training in Bachelor of Education Programs | Allyson Eamer to draft | Prior to January 2025 SEAC for inclusion in agenda package; needed before January 2, 2025. |
| Establish SEAC shared Google Doc for recording notes towards 2025 SEAC Annual Report | Lisa Wry to set up file and link | Prior to January 2025 SEAC |

Inclusive Student Services Impact Update

2024-2025 • Issue 3

Practical Learning Program

The Practical Learning Program (PLP) provides intensive support while teaching and reinforcing essential skills that foster independence in activities of daily living. The program includes school and community-based opportunities for learning including workplace readiness skills. Each student's program is individualized for their unique pathway based on strengths, interests, and program support needs.

Practical Learning Program classes, in accordance with the Education Act s.181/98, have a maximum of ten students. This program is suited for students who may have intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities, and/or autism.

Currently in the DDSB, 845 students access learning and support through 93 Practical Learning Program classes (42 Elementary and 51 Secondary).

Program Focus

The Practical Learning Program provides intensive support while teaching and reinforcing essential skills that foster independence in activities of daily living.

- Development of communication skills;
- Functional literacy and numeracy skills (Ontario Curriculum Expectations or alternative expectations with a focus on functional reading, writing and mathematics skills);
- Life Management Skills (self-regulation, advocacy, self-awareness);
- Independent living skills (grocery shopping, cooking, community engagement, vocational skills);
- Work education opportunities which may be in-school or in-community experiences;
- Healthy Living Skills (physical health and safety, social skills and relationships);
- Integrated transition planning from year to year, particularly from secondary to post-secondary.



"We learn that it's important to get fresh air and that walking helps your mood."

"We learn to stick up for ourselves and others."

"It's like a second home and a second family."

"We learn to cook and do laundry."

"I like that you give me independence in the kitchen."
—Student quotes

Families and Caregivers

Families and caregivers are an essential part of the planning for student learning and well-being.

"The best decision I have ever made for my child's education was to join the Practical Learning Program (PLP). The educators in the program believe our children to be capable and have much to offer our society. When you start with this mindset you can only have positive growth, in all areas of development. The community that they build for our children not only within the PLP program but throughout the school community is truly inspiring. I see my child blossoming daily. I couldn't be more thankful."

-Parent



The Classroom Team

Each Practical Learning Program team is based on a foundation of one teacher and two Educational Assistants. Additional support may be in place including support from community partnerships such as GrandviewKids and provision of School Based Rehabilitative Services (Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy supports). DDSB Inclusive Student Services team members are part of the classroom team supports and, through consent, are involved in the planning for individual students.

"The students in our Practical Learning Program classroom are a meaningful part of all the things that happen around them. They come into the classroom and know what they have to do because their schedule is in front of them. They know that they are a part of our community and are important to us... By the time they graduate, they have established a group of friends around them, they demonstrate confidence by sharing information to the class in whatever form they use to communicate and they feel valued."

-Teacher

"In our Practical Learning Program classroom, students feel safe and comfortable to express themselves in whatever way they are able. In our classroom, a student who communicates with an iPad, modeled for another student how to say hello. He also had her repeat his name. He then followed up with, "Do you like to build sandcastles? The fact that we can target communication as a specific goal and spend quality time teaching communication to the students means that they will be able to use the skills and have a voice throughout their life".

-Team Member

The Practical Learning Program—Classroom Environment

The environment within each Practical Learning Program classroom is designed to meet the diverse strengths and needs of students. Spaces and resources include, but are not limited to:

- Literacy and numeracy resources of high interest meeting students at their individual skills levels for growth;
- Access to a kitchenette for the development of meal preparation and clean up skills. Most programs utilize convection microwaves and are equipped with dishwashers to parallel equipment available through adult support programs;
- Access to laundry facilities;
- Sensory and/or multi-modal rooms available to students as a proactive means to promote self-regulation to assist students with sensory activities that promote their wellness and a return to their classroom learning.



"In our Practical Learning Program classroom, we practice self-regulation strategies daily. We have bean bag chairs, a tent, and rocking chairs to teach students different strategies to regulate."

—Teacher



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

