

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday April 3, 2025, 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
Seana Haley, Grandview Family Advisory Committee
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: System Lead: Michelle Crawford-Eade & 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, live, and learn.

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

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 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.

4. **Welcome Guests:** Tracy Running, Secondary Representative, Kim Argier, Elementary Representative.

Regrets: sensaRAneb Burrell, Rowin Jarvis, Superintendent Andrea McAuley.

Absent: None

5. **Approval of Agenda:**

That the agenda for April 3, 2025, be approved:

MOVED BY: Trustee Michelle Arseneault

SECONDED BY: Tara Culley

CARRIED

6. **Approval of the Minutes:**

That the minutes from March 20, 2025, be approved.

MOVED BY: Trustee Michelle Arseneault

SECONDED BY: Elizabeth Daniel

CARRIED

7. **Staff Reports:**

[ISS Impact Update 2024-2025 Issue 7 – Teachers of the Deaf Hard of Hearing](#)

The DDSB employs nine educators supporting Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, nine ASL/English Interpreters, nine Deaf Blind Intervenors, and one Language Acquisition Support Worker (LASW). Together, this team offers services to over 250 students through school district Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services. A referral to Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services is made through the school's Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) when parent(s)/guardian(s) provide an audiogram from their audiologist.

Impact Update quotes from students, educators, and families where shared.

"Kids Like Me" events were highlighted.

8. **Board:** Trustee Donna Edwards shared with SEAC members that the Board of Trustees has not had any further meetings since the March 20, 2025 SEAC meeting. Trustee Kelly Miller shared a motion put forward at the February board meeting to review the Board policy around bullying, which can be found on page 11 of the [March 17, 2025-Board Meeting Agenda](#)

9. **Presentation & Discussion:**

DRAFT – Deputation to Education Finance

- Core Education Funding for 2025-2026 has not yet been released, no draft budget to review.
- Deputation is opportunity for sharing SEAC priorities and concerns with Education Finance.
- A draft deputation presentation was shared with members for input.

- Feedback was to include: 1) Growth region with concerns of outdated census data being used by the Ministry for funding, 2) Highlight systemic ableism, 3) Transportation funding and 4) Sought maintaining of special education class placement options for families.

SEAC Section of the Draft 2025-2026 DDSB Inclusive Student Services Special Education Plan presented for feedback.

- Any brochure updates can be sent to Lisa Wry

10. Draft 2025-2026 SEAC Meeting Dates

- September 4, 2025
- October 2, 2025, is a conflict with a date of significance-choice of either September 25 or October 16
- November 6, 2025
- December 4, 2025
- January 8, 2026
- February 5, 2026
- March 5, 2026 (March Break 13-20)
- April 9, 2026 (April 3 is Good Friday so move to second week)
- May 7, 2026
- June 4, 2026

A vote was taken to decide the date of the second SEAC meeting of the 2025-2026 school year which resulted in the decision that October 16, 2025, be the date of the second meeting.

11. Business Arising from the Minutes

None

12. Association Reports & Committee Reports

Easter Seals hosted a conference for youth in preparation for post secondary education. In May, Easter Seals is celebrating red shirt day during accessibility week.

13. Correspondence

None at this time.

14. Community Concerns

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides shared that there has been a community concern about changes to the Gifted program and placement.

A discussion took place where concerns about possible changes were raised.

Concerns about funding not coming from Special Education. Limits are not placed on students in the French Immersion program. Previous, orientations were not hosted in the same way that last years were hosted which seemed more like a selling the program. Demographics were sighted as a concern. Issues around anxiety, and that many gifted students have anxiety, that is a gifted trait. 20%* of all students with a gifted diagnosis have additional diagnosis. Concerns for student social settings.

**Note: DDSB data is not congruent with this statement.*

Educators need to be able to adjust their programming working with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles.

As the representative for the Association for Bright Children, Eva Kyriakides feels she needs to advocate for this program.

The Gifted Program will not be hosting an orientation, there will be a program tour like other special education placements, with the Principal and the school SERT.

System Lead Michell Crawford-Eade offered to bring further information forward at a next SEAC meeting.

What are we asking for as a committee?

- Concerns that there has not been consultation,
- Random selection is not looking at individual needs.
- Social network provided by the gifted program, not just about enrichment.
- Fear negative impacts if we pull this back for kids.
- Why now, what has changed and what is the goal of these changes?
- Why wasn't the SEAC consulted before this change happened?

Additional Community Concern from Trustee Donna Edwards

- Inquiry around Transition Planning for students particularly when coming from another Board or community partner.
- How is it ensured that a fulsome transition is being done and who is responsible?
 - All Administrators were trained on our updated procedure in Fall 2024 – steps are clearly outlined for transition supports and connection. A clear process has been established for administrators.

15. Celebrations & Successes

Trustee Donna Edwards is proud of her daughter for advocating for people with disabilities during the provincial election asking candidates what they are going to do to support people with disabilities.

16. Next S.E.A.C Meeting

May 1, 2025

17. Adjournment

That the meeting now adjourns at 8:30 p.m.

Adjournment called by SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides

MOVED BY: Tara Culley SECONDED BY: Trustee Michelle Arseneault

CARRIED

Report respectfully submitted by: Eva Kyriakides SEAC Chair

Report Special Education Advisory Committee (cont'd)
April 3, 2025

Table 1-Action Items

ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY	COMPLETION
DDSB Student Statistics for Deputation	Lisa Wry	Andrea McAuley sent Tara Culley on April 8, 2025
SEAC 2025-2026 Dates for inclusion in Board/District Calendar	Lisa Wry	April 10, 2025
Accessibility Week	All SEAC Members	Wear red, for a photo, during May 1, 2025 SEAC meeting
Further Information re Gifted Placement Planning for 2025-2026	Michelle Crawford-Eade	For May 1, 2025 SEAC

Inclusive Student Services Impact Update

2024-2025 • Issue 7

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Student Services

Students Who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Hearing loss can affect one or both ears and can range from mild to profound levels. All hearing loss can impact a student's academic, social-emotional, and communication development. Hearing loss is determined by a clinical audiologist and documented on an audiogram during a hearing test.

Students who are D/deaf or hard of hearing require specific programming and/or support in the classroom. Students may:

- Exhibit a need for amplification,
- Have hearing loss which affects acquisition of language and academic accommodations,
- Have delayed speech and language development, and/or
- Require alternative form of communication.



Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TODHH)—Who We Are

The DDSB employs nine educators supporting Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, nine ASL/English Interpreters, nine Deaf Blind Intervenors, and one Language Acquisition Support Worker (LASW). Together, this team offers services to over 250 students through school district Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services.

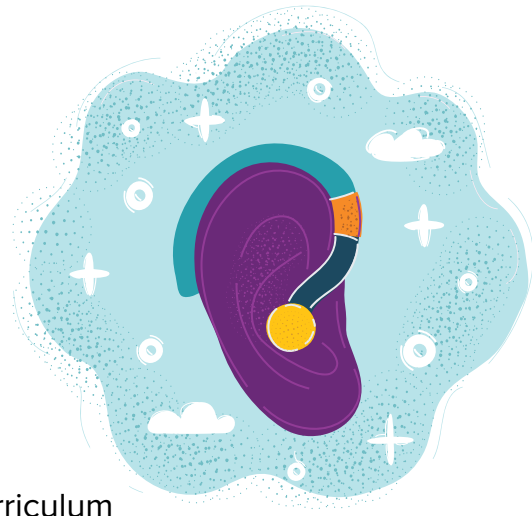
A referral to Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services is made through the school's Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) when parent(s)/guardian(s) provide an audiogram from their audiologist.

“Having a TODHH has made a huge difference in my life. Ever since I was little, I’ve had amazing teachers who made sure I had everything I needed to learn and feel confident. They’ve shown me that my hearing loss doesn’t define what I can do, and because of them, I know I can succeed.”

—Grade 10 student

What We Do

Students who are D/deaf and Hard of Hearing are diverse, encompassing a wide range of abilities, learning styles, and communication abilities. TODHH provide services to students to support language development, social, emotional and/or communication access. TODHH provide opportunities for specialized instruction in areas unique to deafness and reduced hearing from the expanded core curriculum (academic areas of reading, math, and writing), communication and language development, auditory and listening skill development, use of technology, self-determination and self-advocacy, social skills, deaf awareness, and transition (post secondary readiness, employment training, independent skills).



“...With the assistance of the Hearing Resource Teacher, I am able to support my students in a more personalized and effective way, ensuring they can fully access the curriculum. The availability of the Hearing Resource Teacher has been invaluable.”

-Educator

Educational Audiologist

TODHH work alongside an Educational Audiologist, who reviews and evaluates the auditory and listening needs of Deaf and hard of hearing students. Together with the TODHH, the Educational Audiologist promotes communication access to support student participation and engagement.

Families as Partners

High levels of family involvement contribute to positive results for children with hearing loss. Parents/caregivers have the right to be informed and engaged participants in their child’s educational program. TODHH support families in planning, decision-making, and transitions around accessibility in their child’s classroom and educational programming for their child through the Individual Education Plan (IEP).

“The personalized support helped him gain confidence, access learning in a way that worked best for him and develop essential communication skills... This not only enhanced his academic progress but also empowered him to engage more fully with his peers, teachers, and the broader community.”

-Parent/Caregiver

Kids and Teens Like Me Days

TODHH are proud to promote specialized activities for students with hearing loss from Kindergarten to Grade 12 in our Kids and Teens Like Me Days. Activities promote socialization with other students who have hearing loss to make new friends, increase social skills, and enjoy educational opportunities that are fully accessible. Many of our students are the only ones with hearing loss in their school and these district events help students learn that there are others like them who share similar experiences.

Students Who are Deaf Blind

Deafblindness is a unique and separate identification from deafness or blindness. An individual with the combined losses of hearing and vision requires specialized services including adapted communication methods. An Intervenor facilitates the interactions of a person who is deafblind with other people and the environment. They provide access to information, through auditory, visual, or tactile. Intervenor act as a sighted guide, teach appropriate communication methods (sign language, braille, object cues and communication boards), and assist with communication systems. Intervenor adapt the classroom teachers' programming to meet the needs of the student they support.



“The support provided by the Deaf and Hard of Hearing teacher has had a tremendous impact on both my children’s educational experience in the DDSB. Individualized programming helps my children thrive by addressing their unique communication needs, while in-servicing classroom teaching staff foster a more inclusive environment. Additionally, the focus on peer education promotes understanding and the emphasis on self-advocacy empowers my children to confidently use their equipment independently.”

-Parent/Caregiver



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