

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, December 17, 2020 6:30 P.M.

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

ROLL CALL:

Claudine Burrell, Autism Ontario – Durham Chapter
Craig Cameron, Member At Large
Tara Culley, Durham Down Syndrome Association
Elizabeth Daniel, Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders
Rowin Jarvis, Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region
Kathy Kedey, VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children
Eva Kyriakides, Association for Bright Children (ABC)
Carolyn McLennon, Member At Large
Hanah Nguyen, Easter Seals Ontario

Trustees: Donna Edwards Darlene Forbes

Staff: Superintendent Andrea McAuley
Special Education Officer Kyla McKee

Recording Secretary: Diane Kent

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, learn and live.

3. Regrets:

There were no regrets at this time.

4. Welcome Guests

Superintendent Andrea McAuley welcomed special guests: Michelle Monk, Secondary Representative and Peter Bozanis & Dave Robson, Elementary Representatives.

5. Approval of Agenda:

That the agenda for December 17, 2020 be approved.

MOVED BY: Claudine Burrell

SECONDED BY: Tara Culley

CARRIED

5. a) Election of the Chair:

Superintendent Andrea McAuley informed committee members of the process of the SEAC Chair and Vice-Chair following the Ontario Education Act Regulations. Nominations were called for the position of Chair of SEAC.

Tara Culley nominated Eva Kyriakides for Chair of SEAC. Eva Kyriakides accepted the nomination.

Subsequent to additional calls for nominations by Superintendent Andrea McAuley, and there being none, nominations for the position of Chair were closed. Eva Kyriakides was acclaimed to the position of Chair of SEAC.

NOMINATION:

THAT EVA KYRIAKIDES REPRESENTS THE POSITION OF CHAIR OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

MOVED BY: Tara Culley

SECONDED BY: Trustee Darlene Forbes

CARRIED

SEAC member Eva Kyriakides as the newly elected Chair assumed the chair and conducted the remainder of the meeting. Chair Eva Kyriakides thanked committee members for electing her to the position of Chair of SEAC.

5. b) Election of the Vice-Chair:

Chair Eva Kyriakides called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair. Trustee Darlene Forbes nominated Trustee Donna Edwards for Vice-Chair of SEAC. Eva Kyriakides asked for any other nominations and then she closed the nominations. Trustee Donna Edwards was acclaimed to the position of Vice-Chair of SEAC.

5. b) Election of the Vice-Chair: (cont'd)

NOMINATION:

THAT TRUSTEE DONNA EDWARDS REPRESENTS THE POSITION OF VICE-CHAIR OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

MOVED BY: Trustee Darlene Forbes

SECONDED BY: Craig Cameron

CARRIED

6. Approval of the Minutes from November 19, 2020:

That the minutes from November 19, 2020 be approved.

MOVED BY: Tara Culley

SECONDED BY: Carolyn McLennon

CARRIED

7. Inclusive Student Services Report – December 2020

In this edition of the Inclusive Student Services Department Update to SEAC:

- Highlights from Educational Assistant Appreciation Day
- Inclusive Technology Highlights
- Launch: DDSB@Home – Virtual Calming Room
- Special Incident Portion (SIP) Funding Update – 2020
- NEW Professional Learning to Support Students with Mask Wearing
- Inclement Weather Planning
- Gifted Screening Update
- LAUNCH: Life Beyond High School Transition Planning – Web Resource
- LAUNCH: Well-Being Support Workers

Education Assistant (EA) Appreciation Day

- Social Media highlights of the EA Appreciation Day that was held on November 18, 2020 were shared.

Inclusive Technology Highlights

- Inclusive Technology Trainers continue to provide individual student supports both in-person and through virtual connections.
- The team, working with the Instructional Facilitators, is also supporting the embedding of accessible tools within classroom learning.

7. Inclusive Student Services Report – December 2020 (cont'd)

Launch: DDSB@Home – Virtual Calming Room

- Families and educators are collaborating on creative ways to move strategies for in-person learning into a virtual learning environment.
- In this example, students learning through virtual format have access to a digital Calming Room with a variety of tools to support their self-regulation and taking a pause.

Special Incident Portion (SIP) Funding Update – 2020

The Ministry provided the following update on November 26th:

- The Special Incidence Portion (SIP) is one of the six allocations that make up the Special Education Grant, which is part of the Grants for Student Needs. SIP is intended to support students with extraordinarily high needs who require more than two full-time staff to address their health and/or safety needs, and those of others at their school.
- Amendments will provide school boards with a 2020-21 starting SIP allocation based on the highest amount of either:
 - Their 2019-20 SIP funding allocation; or
 - An average of the previous three years (2016-17 to 2018-19) with a growth rate of 5% will also be applied to the 2020-21 starting allocation of each board.
- For DDSB, asset would be average 2nd option: \$2,849,837 + 5%.

NEW: Mask Acceptance and Mask Tolerance Professional Learning Online Modules

NEW FOR SCHOOL STAFF

The Autism Resource Team (ART) is pleased to announce the availability of a new learning module, on the topic of “Mask Acceptance: General Tips and Strategies”. This learning module should now be available in your Professional Learning Hub: <https://professionallearning.ddsb.ca/>. The programming tips and strategies covered in this module are appropriate for school staff who are working with students who require support for accepting masks and mask wearing.

NEW FOR INCLUSIVE STUDENT SERVICES STAFF

ART has created a similar, but clinical, learning module on the topic of: “Building Mask Tolerance”. This learning module is also now available in your Professional Learning Hub.

7. Inclusive Student Services Report – December 2020 (cont'd)

Winter Inclement Weather Planning

On Inclement Weather Days, when transportation is paused*:

Elementary

- Schools remain open for in-person learning

Secondary

- Schools switch to virtual learning
- Exception: Families of students in Special Education classes are being offered opportunity, through preplanning, for in-person learning on these days; availability dependent on consult with families/caregivers. School teams are working quickly through communications and planning; information being centrally gathered in consult with the Special Education Officers

**Transportation considerations include prolonged wait times, and related risk, for students at bus stops, potential diesel freeze and further variables.*

Gifted Screening

Group level testing, December 14th-16th, using the Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test, 7th ed. (CCAT-7) for DDSB students. Testing, as this remains a paper-based process, is based on planning which includes implementation of COVID-19 Health & Safety related protocols, is in place for both in-person learners and DDSB@Home learners.

In-Person Learners - 1031* students participating in group testing

Testing, per annual process, will be facilitated by the SERT. Planning at the school level includes considerations around cohort maintenance and physical distancing. Individual student materials are packaged with the testing materials and items needed (pencil, eraser) in a sealed ziplock bag to be accessed by the individual student.

DDSB@Home Learners – 608* students participating in group testing

- DDSB@Home Learners will participate in testing at either their home school (schools with less than 9 students participating) or at designated secondary school locations. The option of the secondary schools draws on large spaces (e.g., cafeteria) with direct or close direct access to parking lot and in/nearby dedicated washroom space. Considerations for student group size has been included in the planning.
- All protocols above (packaging, physical distancing, masking) are embedded in the planning.
- **Precise numbers fluctuating in consultation with families/caregivers.*

For students in in-person classes self-isolating under the direction from the Durham Regional Health Department (DRHD) where it overlaps the testing block, an alternative assessment block will be available to write the CCAT-7 assessment (January 11-13, 2021 at their in-person Home School). This accommodation is only available for students who met the deadline of Dec. 1, 2020 to write the assessment and for students attending in-person classes that have been told to self-isolate by the Durham Regional Health Department. Note: We anticipate a larger cohort of Grade Four students participating in the screening next fall. Process includes phases of:

- January 11-13, 2021 – Group Testing/Students Self Isolation by direction of DHRD
- Individual Testing Phase (January 2021)
- Results Communication, Program Offers, Staffing and Transitions (Feb-June 2021)

7. **Inclusive Student Services Report – December 2020 (cont'd)**

Making Mental Health and Well-Being Our Priority

We realize that:

- This is a challenging school year
- Educators care and want to do our best as they support students
- Relationships matter
- Supports and resources are available
- Educator well-being matters as well

Stay tuned for a new "PSA" about Mental Health Services inviting student connections with DDSB clinical supports

NEW: Pilot Program Introduction Well-Being Support Workers

Well-Being Youth Workers will offer school-based targeted support and skills building for those students requiring additional supports and skills while also working with our ISS mental health staff (Psychological Services & Social Work) to bridge students in need to more intensive mental health supports.

- 7.0 FTE – Working on a Municipality Based Model
- January to June
- Needs basis
- Services framed by a "Service Options Menu" that has focus in Tier 1 into Tier 2 strategies
- Leadership of team: Steffanie Pelleboer, DDSB Mental Health Leader working in consult with Chief of Psychological Services Steve Graffi & Chief of Social Work Carolyn Ussher

Andrea - on behalf of the Inclusive Student Services Team



8. **Staff Reports:**

Administration:

Superintendent Andrea McAuley

Director's Annual Report 2020

A link to the Director's Annual Report 2020 was shared with SEAC members as part of the agenda package. SEAC members are encouraged to read the letters from both Chair Braney and Director Marsh as they have captured the challenges of 2020, the strength of families, the dedication of staff and the scope of work achieved while pivoting within a pandemic.

8. Staff Reports: (cont'd)

Superintendent Andrea McAuley (cont'd)

Supports for students with special education strengths and needs are woven through the pillars of our Strategic Plan and reflected in the report. We draw attention to a few highlights:

- SEAC members will be familiar with many of the documents reflected in the Success and Well-Being pillars as resources to support families and team members navigate during the different phases of 2020.
- Processes such as referral pathways and traumatic response protocols have been revised to reflect supports to DDSB@Home learners and COVID related protocols.
- Clinical teams, working alongside the Equity & Inclusive Education department, are examining practices centering on anti-racist, anti-oppressive practice.
- SEAC is noted within Engagement and our actioned committed to continue to engage consultation with the Committee in considered actions and review of policy/procedure.

Special Education Survey Launch

A Special Education Feedback Survey for families/caregivers of children/youth with IEPs has launched. The survey is intended to gather feedback on learning programs for students in both special education programs and in regular class placements. It was initiated to gather feedback on our model implemented for Return to School which kept special education class teams, educators and students, together as a classroom community across in-person and at home learning.

We expanded by framing on the following three open ended questions:

- What is working well within your child's learning experience?
- What is not working well within your child's learning experience?
- What can we do to improve/enhance your child's learning experience?

These same three questions are phrased in terms of student learning in a staff survey. The feedback will be used to help shape potential adjustments for the second half of the school year as well as inform decision making for the 2021-2022 school year planning.

Promotional image and survey link shared with SEAC via email. We appreciate promotion of this feedback opportunity through your organizations.

PAaC on SEAC

PAaC on SEAC for December recommends discussion on 1) any considered changes for the next school year and 2) Special Education Plan consultation. The survey will provide us important feedback which will help shape both our special education program planning, both second half of the current school year and next year, as well as the Special Education Plan.

Thank you SEAC members. Thank you for another year of collaborative service to our community.

8. Staff Reports: (cont'd)

Board:

Trustee Donna Edwards informed SEAC members that the Board of Trustees held its annual internal elections for Chair, Vice-Chair, Vice-Chair of Standing Committee and committee representatives at the Standing Committee Meeting on Monday, December 7, 2020. Brock, Scugog, Uxbridge Trustee Carolyn Morton was elected as Chair of the Durham District School Board.

Whitby Trustee Christine Thatcher was elected Vice-Chair. Ajax Trustee Patrice Barnes was elected as the Vice-Chair of Standing Committee. Ajax Trustee Donna Edwards was elected Chair of Education Finance.

Ajax Trustee Donna Edwards and Oshawa Trustee Darlene Forbes were elected as Liaison Trustees for SEAC. Oshawa Trustee Linda Stone and Whitby Trustee Christine Thatcher were elected as Liaison Trustee Alternates.

9. Presentation:

Special Education Officer Kyla McKee provided committee members with a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the Life Beyond High School Online Transition Resource for Families. Kyla noted that due to COVID-19 related restrictions, the annual 'live' event would not be possible and therefore served as a catalyst to the creation of a bit.ly/DDSBLifeBeyondHS with the support of the community partners. Collaboration with community partners created the content for this site. Some community organizations even included short videos that will help our DDSB families make a more personal connection to these agencies. This resource has been shared through school teams and social media launched the week of December 7th. Kyla also answered questions from committee members.

10. a) Open Discussion Period

- Parent/Caregiver Engagement Event Planning

Superintendent Andrea McAuley noted that there are several SEAC members participating in the Parent/Caregiver Engagement Event. It was suggested to draw that group together in early January for pre-event planning meeting. The event has been confirmed for January 19th, 2021. Andrea encouraged SEAC members to share the flyer with their respective associations. The Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) and SCC Chairs have also been invited to this event. Andrea asked if SEAC would like to extend the invitation to the Durham CDSB's SEAC and it was agreed that it would be a good collaboration between the two school boards.

10. b) Business Arising from the Minutes:

- Stats – Secondary Split Gifted Classes

This item was deferred to the January 21, 2021 SEAC meeting.

11. Association Reports:

There were no association reports at this time.

12. Correspondence:

There was no correspondence at this time.

13. Community Concerns:

Tara Culley referenced the e-mail that families received from Director Norah Marsh noting that there are no current plans to close schools however students were encouraged to bring both personal and school items home prior to the winter break. Tara asked how students in small class placements are going to be supported if there is a pivot and schools close.

Superintendent Andrea McAuley responded that school boards received a Ministry memo queuing for preparedness. Secondary schools are set up to make that move quite quickly as 75% of students are currently on-line. Special Education classes since September have been operating with some students at home and some in person learning. Students will have their SEA technology equipment sent home but not health supports at this time. Elementary schools would be more involved to shift to on-line learning.

Rowin Jarvis asked for the ratio of students with special needs who are on-line and in the classroom.

Superintendent Andrea McAuley noted that it changes over time because special education classes are kept together as a school community and students have been able to transition back and forth between in-person and learning from home. Students who are in regular class placements had key timelines where there was transition points such as the middle of November. Students in special education classes, particularly in Developmental or PLP placements, may have had different points where they needed to move back and forth between in classroom and on-line. Superintendent Andrea McAuley offered to go back to the last data point and send out to SEAC.

Hanah Nguyen shared her concern from the community of children with physical disabilities and conditions. As the numbers and screening for COVID continues; many children have symptoms that are on-going and related to their conditions and many are being asked to stay home which is impacting on their on-going learning. Working with community partners in protecting everyone's health, families are looking for some options or discussion.

Superintendent Andrea McAuley responded that this is another asset in keeping special education classes together as a community because in general there will be staff that are familiar with students with different symptoms that are part of their present condition prior to COVID. Andrea also mentioned that if there is concern coming forward to please reach out and Inclusive Student Services will work with DESA and DSAA colleagues to put some tips and strategies together to share with schools.

13. Community Concerns: (cont'd)

Kathy Kedey shared her concern that parents have been reaching out regarding virtual content in the Ministry provided materials a lack of Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) compliance. Kathy wanted to share that there still seems to be a repetition of having to remind staff to make materials accessible to the children in the classroom with hearing loss in the virtual settings.

Superintendent Andrea McAuley thanked Kathy for sharing her concern and mentioned that both herself and Special Education Officer Kyla McKee are on the DDSB@Home Steering Committee and noted there is a lot of learning that transfers over if school boards will be going virtual and is a good reminder for that team as well as for the Inclusive Student Services Department in getting that ready in case needed.

Kathy Kedey had a follow up question regarding talks about the Bright Space on-line learning platform particularly at secondary not being accessible.

Superintendent Andrea McAuley noted that Special Education Officer Kyla McKee will follow up with Innovation Education Officer Tim Ralph for further information and will share with SEAC.

Carolyn McLennon asked if there is any direct communication with the Ministry to ensure accessibility in some of the e-learning initiatives they have started to create on-line learning for elementary?

Superintendent Andrea McAuley replied that there has been a thread in most Ministry memos to ensure boards are ready to serve the accommodations needs of their learners. Andrea also noted that it's important to send feedback to the Ministry as well in terms of advocacy for how important at all stages of planning. If SEAC is interested in providing feedback, the Inclusive Student Services Department can help support with this request as virtual courses are likely here to stay in some essence and it's important in planning with accommodation and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in mind right at the beginning.

Discussions took place among committee members and it was agreed to write a letter to the Ministry of Education to review all the old and the new on-line content to ensure compliance with AODA and the UDL.

MOTION:

THAT SEAC WILL WRITE A LETTTER TO THE MINSTRY OF EDUCATION TO REVIEW ALL THE OLD AND THE NEW ON-LINE CONTENT TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (AODA) AND THE UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL).

MOVED BY: Carolyn McLennon

SECONDED BY: Tara Culley

CARRIED

14. Celebrations and Success:

Trustee Donna Edwards shared that her daughter Victoria has learned how to knit with a loom. She has been knitting and dropping off hats at the local hospitals for premature infants.

Trustee Darlene Forbes and SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides shared that both of their daughters received their G2 driver licenses.

Tara Culley shared that her son Adam is now speaking more slowly and can engage in conversations.

15. Next S.E.A.C. meeting – Thursday, January 21, 2021.

16. Adjournment:

That the meeting does now adjourn at 7:43 p.m.

MOVED BY: Rowin Jarvis

SECONDED BY: Tara Culley

CARRIED

Report respectfully submitted by:
Eva Kyriakides, SEAC Chair

ACTION PLAN

ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY	COMPLETION
SEAC Sub-Committee meeting – prep for Parent/Caregiver Engagement event	Superintendent Andrea McAuley	Prior to January 19, 2021
Send Parent/Caregiver Engagement Event flyer to DCDSB's SEAC	Superintendent Andrea McAuley	December 18, 2020
Ratio of students with special needs on-line vs in classroom	Superintendent Andrea McAuley	By next SEAC meeting.
Stats – Secondary Split Gifted Classes	Superintendent Andrea McAuley	By next SEAC meeting.
Draft letter to Ministry re: old & new on-line content compliance with AODA & UDL	SEAC Member Kathy Kedey	By next SEAC meeting.