

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday March 10, 2022 6:30 P.M.

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

ROLL CALL:

Eva Kyriakides, Association for Bright Children (ABC) (SEAC Chair)
sensaRAneb Burrell, Autism Ontario – Durham Chapter
Jenny McLaughlin, Black Parents Support Group
Tara Culley, Durham Down Syndrome Association
Christina Salisbury, Easter Seals Ontario
Rowin Jarvis, Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region
Carolyn McLennon, Member At Large
Donna Edge-Bean, Member At Large
Elizabeth Daniel, Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders
Kathy Kedey, VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children
Vera Mercier, Early Years Consortium – Non-voting member

Trustees: Donna Edwards Darlene Forbes

Staff: System Lead, Kyla McKee, Conor Jinkinson
Associate Director, Jim Markovski

Recording Secretary: Lisa Wry

1. Call to Order:

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

- At this time, we do not have quorum; therefore, voting will not take place at this time.

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 is committed to learning environments that are safe, welcoming, respectful, equitable, accessible, inclusive and free from discrimination while placing Human Rights and Equity at the center.

4. Welcome Guests: Jim Markovski Associate Director - Equitable Education, Anthony Phelan - Vice Principal, Pickering H.S., Dave Robson - Principal Dr. S. J. Phillips.

Regrets: Rowin Jarvis, Jenny McLaughlin, Kathy Kedey, Andrea McAuley.

Absent: Christina Salisbury

5. **Approval of Agenda:** Quorum was achieved at 7:27pm and voting took place. That the agenda for March 10, 2022 be approved:

MOTION BY: Darlene Forbes SECONDED BY: Tara Culley

CARRIED

6. **Approval of the Minutes from February 17, 2022:**
That the minutes from February 17, 2022 be approved

MOVED BY: Tara Culley SECONDED BY: Donna Edwards

CARRIED

7. **Staff Reports:**
SEAC: March 2022 Administration Report

As we see warmer temperatures and a shift with the world around opening up, we are also cognizant of additional worldwide concerns such as the conflict in Ukraine and the impact ongoing issues bring to our students and the staff that support them. As an organization, we are focused on everyday resiliency while also recognizing that what we truly need is empathy, compassion and connection for ourselves and for the students we serve. Schools will need to pivot once again as COVID guidelines reflect recommendations from health authorities, while also furthering the work in Indigenous rights, human rights, and anti-racism. We continue to see a rise in mental health needs across the system and seek to better understand these needs in order to respond with relevant supports. With March Break around the corner, we hope this time brings an opportunity for DDSB staff to rejuvenate in order to continue to support the complex needs of our students and families.

As a district, we recognize three key documents that will influence decision making for student supports and programs:

- Draft revision to PPM81; discussed at SEAC in February
 - The Ontario Human Rights Commission Right to Read Report
 - The K-12 Educational Standards Committee – Recommendations to Government
- We look forward to further discussions with SEAC and updates.

Planning at this time has shifted to include Now, Next and Later in phases of our current, summer and the 2022-23 school year.

Planning for 2022-2023 is well underway. Factors of Consideration:

- Housing growth in Region; DDSB is one of only a few growth enrolment districts in the province
- Service partners increasing services such as Stewart Homes for children and youth with medical complexities
- Programming supports through changes in education such as Inclusive Design Grade 9

Usually during March SEAC, we are able to share the scope of changes to special education programs. This information will be shared in April this year. We want to ensure that program decisions take into consideration student & families preference choices for in-person learning or learning through DDSB@Home, our virtual school. The survey will not close, or data available to our teams, until later this month as we wanted, as a district, to give families the best opportunity to make decisions while being cognizant of operational timelines for planning & staffing.

Our Inclusive Student Services team has commenced updates to the Special Education Plan. Feedback continues to be sought from SEAC members. We will circulate reminder of the direct link to the document on the DDSB website and survey for your input.

Associate Director Jim Markovski shared COVID related information update: As you are aware the province of Ontario has announced updates to health and safety measures, including for the education sector. These changes are part of an overall objective to have schools move toward operations that were in place prior to the pandemic. These updated public health measures for schools will also be in alignment with the measures found within the broader community. Below is a summary of the key changes.

Vaccination Disclosure and Ongoing Rapid Testing Requirements

- Effective March 14th vaccination disclosure procedures are revoked. Rapid testing 3 times weekly for select staff will no longer be required.

Masking for Student and Personal Protective Equipment for Staff

- We are in the process of consulting with our public health unit, Durham Region Health Department, and are awaiting the outcome of a Board Meeting scheduled for Thursday, March 10, 2022 at 6pm to inform our guidance on masking. We expect to have updated guidance to administrators, staff, and families by Friday morning.

Cohorting and Distancing

- Effective March 21st, the cohorting and distancing measures will no longer be required.
- Elementary students can interact with each other across cohorts and grades, both indoors and outdoors and during lunch and recess.
- Shared spaces, such as libraries, cafeterias and music rooms can be fully utilized without distancing.

Screening

- Effective March 21st, on-site daily screening verification will no longer be required. Staff and students will continue to self-screen and self-isolate as needed.
- The [Ontario School Screening Tool](#) has been updated to align with the [COVID-19 Integrated Testing & Case, Contact and Outbreak Management Interim Guidance: Omicron Surge](#)

Updated Case and Contact Management Guidance

The Ministry of Health has revised the [COVID-19 Integrated Testing & Case, Contact and Outbreak Management Interim Guidance: Omicron Surge](#), with updated guidance for close contacts in the community and in households:

- Asymptomatic individuals who are close contacts of a case or a symptomatic individual in the community are no longer required to isolate but must self-monitor for 10 days following last exposure. During the self-monitoring period, close contacts must wear a well-fitted mask in all public settings and avoid activities where they need to take off their mask (for example, playing a wind instrument in music class or playing high-contact sports).
- Asymptomatic household contacts of a case or a symptomatic individual are also not required to isolate if they are 17 or younger and [fully vaccinated](#); 18 and older and have already received their COVID-19 booster; or tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days and have completed their isolation period. Asymptomatic household contacts who are not required to isolate are also required to self-monitor for 10 days following last exposure, as outlined above. Children under 5 who are asymptomatic household contacts are required to isolate for 5 days.

The [Ontario school screening tool](#) has been updated to reflect these changes to isolation requirements.

In-Person Gatherings

- The limitation on in-person gatherings has been removed. In-person staff meetings and school assemblies are permitted to take place. Additional information regarding graduation ceremonies will be communicated shortly.
- Off-site bookings for graduation, commencement and prom venues, with deposits, will now be permitted.

Ongoing Access to Rapid Antigen Tests

- There have been no changes to the ongoing access to rapid antigen tests. Bi-weekly shipments of RATs will continue to support symptomatic testing only for staff and students. Please continue to distribute RATs to staff and students who return from an unplanned absence.

Community Use of Schools

- Plans are in development to gradually open up Community Use of Schools later in March with the initial focus on providing access to support children and youth activities. No vaccination disclosure is required.

Visitors/Volunteers in Schools

- The limitation on visitors/volunteers in schools has been lifted. No vaccination disclosure is required.

Absence Reporting

- Schools are expected to continue to report on daily absenteeism through the absence reporting tool (ART) until April 14, 2022. The ministry is reviewing and monitoring absenteeism and will determine if the requirement will continue beyond this timeline.

Please note that the current expectations for schools to communicate self-reported COVID-19 positive test results will continue to remain in place until further notice.

The following health and safety measures will continue to remain in place for the 2021-22 school year:

- Enhanced cleaning and disinfection
- Promotion of respiratory etiquette and integration of hand hygiene practices
- Isolation room and Clinician room (ISS)
- Ventilation measures
- Promotion of vaccination for students, staff and families.

There was a brief discussion regarding the new measures and the following conclusions were made:

- Requests to attend DDSB@Home if family are not comfortable with the mask removal will be assessed on a case by case.
- Gifted orientation will remain virtual for this year for the comfort of all that may attend.

Board: Trustee Donna Edwards informed SEAC members that the Board of Trustees had a Special Board meeting which rescinded mandatory masking for JK – 12, will continue to provide masks should this change, or should they choose to wear them. A mask friendly environment will be adopted. Standing Committee received presentations from the Affinity Networks as well as an Operational Plan update. Presentation/information reports provided to Trustees included: grade 9 programming presentation from Ajax H.S., Positive School Climate update, capital priorities update, Ministry allowed resubmission of 2 priority request along with 3 new with a scope change, one of the requests would be a secondary school in Oshawa.

Trustee Darlene Forbes indicated Secondary students in North Oshawa will be looking at significant transportation times, until the time a new high school will be approved and built.

8. **Inclusive Student Service Department Report- March 2022**

Updates this month include:

- Mental Health & Well-Being
- Social Work Month
- Transition Supports
- OHRC Right to Read Report Released
- Abilities Scholarship
- World Down Syndrome Day
- Purple Day for Epilepsy Awareness
- Intersectionality Infinity Summit

Mental Health & Well-Being: Social Media Campaign.

- It's ok to ask for help.
- We want you to feel heard, seen, and understood.
- We are here if you want to talk.
- Reach out to school staff or connect with our Mental Health team at [Mental Health Team-connect](#)
- Take time to connect with your social support network.
- Talk about the impact of the pandemic, but also take time to reflect on the positives in your life.
- Be sure to check-in on your loved ones too.
- Find more tips at [Mental Health & Well-Being Resources](#)

Our Mental Health & Well-Being webpage has helpful resources for:

- ✓ Parents & Guardians
- ✓ Students
- ✓ Staff

Visit [Mental Health & Well-Being Resources](#)

March is Social Work Month

Social Workers:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| • Listen | • Develop skills |
| • Advocate | • Promote |
| • Affirm identities | • Challenge |
| • Problem solve | • Protect |
| • Enhance well-being & mental health | • Engage |
| • Facilitate | • Assist |
| • Prevent | • Individualize |
| • Listen | • Support |

Social Workers make a difference

In the words of our students....

Mrs. Buller's Grade 1/2 class celebrated Black excellence by researching and writing about important Black Canadians. They included learning about their school social worker. "She helps students when they are having difficulties....She helps make kids' lives better." We absolutely agree.

Transitions Supports: Employment After High School

Shared with SEAC previously – updated to include recording link.

Presented in partnership with the YMCA and Agilec, the DDSB Transition Coordinator Team (Sade & Braden) facilitated a webinar on “**Aiming for and Obtaining Meaningful Employment After High School**”. During the webinar, both agencies shared information on their services and how students can develop employment skill, access supports while employed (i.e., job coaches, self-advocacy support) and how parents/caregivers can support with advocacy.

[Transition Supports - Employment](#)

Transitions Supports: CICE Connections

Life Beyond High School Webinar Series Presents: *Exploring Post-secondary Education Community Integration through Co-operative Education (CICE) Programs & Academic Accommodations*

Upcoming evening webinar for students and families to Learn, Explore & Ask questions!
When: Thursday March 24, 2022, 6:30 pm - 7:30pm via Zoom.

Featuring Community Partners from Durham College CICE in collaboration with Durham College's Access and Support Centre (ASC) & Fleming College CICE.

Registration Link [Bit.ly/3HHkRkx](https://bit.ly/3HHkRkx)

Community Integration for Community Education CICE - Gives individuals with intellectual disabilities or significant learning challenges the opportunity to enhance their academic and vocational skills with modified programming through a variety of courses. While participating in courses and area of interest. Students will also earn skills that promote independence in areas such as communication, self-awareness, advocacy, community and leadership.

The Access and Support Centre (ASC) at Durham College works with students and faculty to provide full opportunities for academic success. The ASC provides confidential services to students who are temporarily at-risk or identified with an exceptionality, to ensure equal access to all aspects of the academic environment. * Not specific to CICE but all Durham College programs.

OHRC Right to Read Inquiry Report Released

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has released its findings from its Right to Read public inquiry on February 28, 2022. Input into the inquiry findings, which commenced in 2019, included over 3000 survey respondents, data from 8 school districts, and other research and focus groups.

The inquiry cites five areas to help address the current issues in the education system:

- Curriculum and Instruction (emphasizing structured literacy)
- Early Screening
- Evidence-based Reading Intervention Programs
- Appropriate Accommodations

- Timely availability of Professional Assessments
- In its news release, the OHRC summarized the 157 recommendations in the report as follows: *Right to Read* includes recommendations to the Ministry of Education, school boards and faculties of education on how to address systemic issues that affect the right to learn to read.
- While we await a Ministry response to the report, a cross-departmental Durham DSB team is currently working through the report and will be providing updates as the recommendations of the Right to Read report are brought into a local, Durham context. As further information becomes available, we will share it with SEAC.
- https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/news_centre/right-to-read-inquiry-calls-for-critical-changes

LDADR & DDSB Abilities Scholarship 2022

- The Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region and the Durham District School Board partner to provide an annual \$1000.00 Abilities Scholarship Award.
- This scholarship recognizes a DDSB high school student who has a diagnosed Learning Disability and who is continuing studies (Apprenticeship, College or University) in the upcoming academic year.
- Candidates must be full time high school students during the 2021-2022 school year and be entering first year of apprenticeship, college or university in 2022-2023.
- Submission are due no later than April 27, 2022. [Abilities Scholarship Award](#)

Role Highlight: Special Education Resource Teachers

- Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs) help lead inclusive programming in schools, support students directly, connect with families and support educators with resources, coaching and collaboration.
- SERTs are embedded in every DDSB school team; both elementary and secondary.
- Support for SERTs include:
- Collaboration with the Inclusive Student Services integrated team supporting directly in the schools (Instructional Facilitator, Psychological Services, Social Work, Speech-Language, Hearing and Vision);
- Access to a DDSB SERT OneNote of resources and key links;
- Weekly eBulletin providing information & learning supports related to board strategic plan commitments and inclusive programming for students with special education strengths & needs.

Weekly eBulletin for SERTs

As an example, the SERT eBulletin for February 22-25, 2022, included content focused on:

- Dismantling Racism in Special Education (consistent topic)
- Community Based Virtual Appointments During School Hours
- Navigating Toileting Supports
- PowerTPM* Updates
- OSRs (Ontario Student Records)
- EQAO Updates
- K-TEA (Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement) Updates & Reminders

*Special Education Software for consents, IEPs etc.

World Down Syndrome Day – 03.21

- *World Down Syndrome Day* is an awareness campaign aimed at highlighting the abilities and impacts of individuals with Down syndrome.
- March 21st is a special day to advocate, celebrate, and show support for individuals with Down syndrome. More generally, it's a wonderful opportunity to talk about Down syndrome - about *difference* - and highlight the important and impressive things that these individuals contribute to our community each day. In short, it's a chance to pause and **#SeeTheAbility**.

March 26 – Epilepsy Day

- Cassidy Megan, a Canadian, created the idea of Purple Day in 2008, motivated by her own struggles with epilepsy. Cassidy's goal is to get people talking about epilepsy in an effort to dispel myths and inform those with seizures that they are not alone.
- March 26 is designated as an annual day to promote epilepsy awareness. Link: [Purple Day](#)
- Epilepsy Toronto is an example of a GTA based organization supporting children & youth with epilepsy. [Epilepsy Toronto](#)

Intersectionality Infinity Summit

The Neurodivergent Infinity Network of Educators is asking for your assistance to spread the word!

- The Intersectional Infinity Summit is a multi-day online global event the Durham Neurodivergent Infinity Network of Educators is hosting from March 27-April 2.
- Registration gives access to livestreams, Twitter spaces, video screenings, panel discussions, Q and A's, and much more!
- The goal of the Summit is to amplify the voices of Autistic and otherwise. Neurodivergent folx, particularly those who have been most historically marginalized within the community.
- Please see link for additional details:
[Intersectional Infinity Summit March 27 to April 2 2022](#)

Antiracism and Universal Design for Learning

Building Expressways for Success –Andratesha Fitzgerald

- "In a UDL community we are diligent to receive what each learner has to give." (p.73)
- "If we want to reach the rigorous and lofty goals of improving academic achievement, then we have to be mindful and action oriented to provide options that meet the needs of varying learners in our classrooms" (p.87)

9. Open Discussion:

- COVID Related Shifts Considerations for/of Families.
- Children that have trouble with speech have more difficulty while wearing a mask.
- Speech and language have seen significant impact with: in-person/online; masking social distancing and other COVID protocols.
- Concerns with articulation; phonological awareness and developing literacy.
- Frequent change in routine for students took a toll on many with special education strengths and needs.
- Hybrid work schedules may impact transportation needs.
- Transportation works with schools through Principals and families to explore what options exist.
- Concerns for the future as a result of the disruption in learning.
- Social gap closing.

- Literacy and numeracy gap closing.
- Kids are tremendously resilient, and their social skills have improved significantly since September.
- Many children have not experienced school without COVID protocols in place, unlearning and reassurance will need to take place.
- Messaging and on-going support to walk kids through and prepare them to the best of our ability as they transition back to a pre-pandemic space.
- Honour the decisions of individual students and families regarding masking and distancing.
- Social distancing and isolation have impacted kids.

10. Business Arising from the Minutes:

- Distribution of sent correspondence-Definition of a Disability
- Education Finance Deputation
- Tara Culley will be presenting at the Finance Deputation
 - Looking for highlights from SEAC members priorities or concerns

11. Association Reports & Committee Reports:

None at this time

12. Correspondence:

- Thunder Bay CDSB-Bill 172
- Final submission – Definition of a disability
- CSC Nouvelon – Nursing Shortage
 - French original & English translation
- DPCDSB COVID Related Letter to Ministry of Education
- DSC Nouvelon – MNP/PPM 81
 - French original & English Translation

13. Community Concerns:

None at this time.

14. Celebrations and Success:

- Tara Culley is celebrating her son making steps toward becoming more independent.
- Trustee Donna Edwards - K-12 Education Standards final report has been posted.

15. Next S.E.A.C. meeting – Thursday, April 21, 2022.

16. Adjournment:

That the meeting does now adjourn at 7:38 p.m.

MOVED BY: Tara Culley

SECONDED BY: Elizabeth Daniels

CARRIED

Report respectfully submitted by:

Eva Kyriakides, SEAC Chair

Table 1- Action Plan

ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY	COMPLETION
Share link to Special Education Plan 2022-2023 for input from Members	Superintendent Andrea McAuley	Once departmental update has been completed.
Deputation to Finance • Request for Associations priority highlights	Tara Culley	March 30, 2022