

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday March 23, 2023 6:30 P.M.

ROLL CALL:

Eva Kyriakides, Association for Bright Children (ABC) SEAC Chair
sensaRAneb Burrell, Autism Ontario – Durham Chapter
Tara Culley, Durham Down Syndrome Association
Hanah Nguyen, Easter Seals Ontario
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
Kathy Kedey, VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children
Vera Mercier, Early Years Consortium – Non-voting member

Trustees: Kelly Miller Debora Oldfield

Staff: Superintendent, Andrea McAuley
System Lead, Conor Jinkinson
Senior Manager & Clinical Lead-Social Work & Attendance
Carolyn Ussher

Recording Secretary: Lisa Wry

1. Call to Order:

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides called the meeting to order at 6:36 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, 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: Anthony Phalen, Vice-Principal Pickering H.S., Shannon Robertson, Principal Westney Hts. P.S. Rema Saati, Vice-Principal Southwood Park P.S.

Regrets: Rowin Jarvis, Kathy Kedey, Hanah Nguyen

Absent: None

5. Approval of Agenda:

MOTION: To move Community Concern to earlier in the agenda.

MOVED BY: sensaRAneb Burrell

SECONDED: Tara Culley

That the agenda for March 23, 2023, be approved:

MOVED BY: Trustee Kelly Miller

SECONDED BY: Tara Culley

CARRIED

6. Approval of the Minutes from February 16, 2023:

That the minutes from February 16, 2023, be approved:

MOVED BY: Tara Culley

SECONDED BY: Elizabeth Daniel

CARRIED

7. Staff Reports:

The district is engaged in a change process for the software used for all special education related processes and documents including I.P.R.C. (Individual Placement and Review Committee) documentation, Individual Education Plans and service-related documents such as consent for service information. The project started July 2022 with planning implementation for 2023-2024 “next year” Identification Placement Review Committee (I.P.R.C.) and all other currently utilized functions transitioning for a full launch for the start of the 2023-2024 school year (the modified school calendars).

Policy into Practice – Reflections and Learnings

The reflection and learning within the transition process, related to our commitments to human rights and equity, continues to be significant through the examination of the ‘why’ and phrasing of each data point/field. The following examples of updates specific to addressing barriers (e.g., negative to asset-based language) or addressing data duplication, as new software is part of the PowerSchool suite, are provided as a sample from the project team and is not a full list of learnings and actions embedded in the software migration:

I.E.P. Information

- Review of student’s strengths and needs has new field for option of including a student’s interests. This is important as the nuances of a student’s current interests supports opportunities for connection and in the creation of personalized learning resources.

Transportation Form

- Change from “non-verbal” to Form of Communication: Verbal, Augmented Alternative Communication (A.A.C.) (Technology, Sign, Picture Exchange Communication System (P.E.C.S.), Multi-Modal or other. This change better aligns with our commitment to an asset focus, addressing ableism (change from norm comparative language) and will

provide information to drivers about a student's communication language. Descriptors designed in consultation with Karen Timm, Chair – NINE.

Statement of Decision

- A new field has been added which lists others in attendance this may include parent/guardian or student as well as any D.D.S.B. clinicians, Settlement Workers in Schools workers, etc. This reminds Special Education Resource Teachers SERTs that students are key participants in the review and should be encouraged to attend.

The team (IT/ISS) experienced significant project material loss including the loss of all servers and work in the development environment during the cyber incident impacting D.D.S.B. systems in addition to a multi-week downtime required for IT Infrastructure to set up new servers for the application. The original plan for all 2023-2024 I.P.R.C.s to be completed in the PowerSchool Student Programs software was not possible. Power T.P.M. (current software) was made available for February I.P.R.C.s for Grade Eight

I.P.R.C. data entered during this period of time, for 1089, is being entered by Inclusive Student Services clerical staff into the new program to ensure that:

- Individual Education Plan (I.E.P.) planning for all Grade Nine students (Fall 2023) is actioned and is directly based on the updated information from the I.P.R.C.
- Data related to students accessing learning through special education programming (I.E.P.) is a full district data set.

Some of the forms, including I.P.R.C. Statement of Decision will have a slightly different formatting within the new software. Where this occurs, communications to accompany the documentation is being developed. For example, shared with SEAC this evening, the student/parent/guardian letter that accompanies the I.P.R.C. Statement of Decision this spring.

Mental Health & Well-being

Well-being, mental health and learning are intertwined in supporting students as we move policy into practice as a district.

The Durham District School Board (D.D.S.B) 2022-2025 Mental Health and Well-Being Action Plan recognizes that good mental health is an important foundation for achievement and wellbeing. The Plan reflects the District's commitment to cultivate the conditions for healthy learning and working environments, where all our students and staff feel they are welcomed and where students in particular are engaged in school life, both in their classroom learning and the larger school; where they know they are valued, seen and heard, where their identities are affirmed, where they belong and know they matter and are connected to adults that care and are present to their lived realities.

Children's Mental Health Week May 1-5, 2023, is celebrated across Ontario and aligns with the work of the Canadian Mental Health Association's national recognition of Mental Health Week. This year District resources have been organized and developed in partnership with Student Senate with support from the Inclusive Student Services team. Together they have developed a variety of events highlighting this year's theme of Mindful of Me: An Approach to Mental Health. Resources are provided to SEAC and will also be shared electronically for sharing within your organizations.

“Shine Green” was initially started by the Canadian Association for Mental Health as an awareness initiative and called on communities to wear green to bring attention to mental health. While no longer a national initiative, the D.D.S.B continues to participate by bringing our school communities together and wearing the colour green. This year we would like to invite the entire D.D.S.B Community to unite on Wednesday May 3rd, 2023, for a Shine Green Day and wear green as a system to symbolically reflect our ongoing commitment to making mental health a priority.

This is our Administrative Report for March 2023

Members had a brief discussion following the Administrative Report

- We have a number of staff members engaging our planning for Children’s Mental Health Week.
- Generally focused on the student/school experience.
- Offering choice to our young people to providing support on all levels
- Asset lens and impact to our neurodivergent learners

Board: Trustee Deb Oldfield shared with SEAC members that Board of Trustees received information: March 6 during a special meeting. Trustees reviewed the response from Trustee Stone regarding sanctions imposed by the Board, the Board voted to uphold the sanctions, March 20, 2023, at the regular Board Meeting Jill Thompson was sworn in as Trustee for the remaining 2022-2026 term – representing First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Communities. The Board was also reminded that Legacy Autism Program was wrapping up and students transition into school.

8. Inclusive Student Service Department Report- March 23, 2023

Updates this month include, but not limited to:

- Mental Health and Well-Being Action Plan – March Focus
- Black Mental Health Week
- Social Work Month
- Right to Read Update
- Special Education Software Transition Update
- Inclusive Culinary Competition Success
- Program Highlight: Transition to Work

Mental Health & Well-Being Action Plan

The DDSB Mental Health and Well-being action plan is a commitment to learn to understand what goes into the everyday conditions that support mental health and well-being. This has fueled our focus on how positive relationships form the foundational conditions that support positive well-being and mental health. In our work towards human rights, Indigenous rights, equity and inclusion, relationships are essential in building affirming and empowering environments for students. Proactively building relationships sets us all up for success.

Our focus for March is on building unconditional relationships through unconditional positive regard. Unconditional relationships are where students are accepted for who they are and not what they do.

March Mental Health & Well-Being Focus

Unconditional positive regard is defined by humanistic psychologists to mean expressing empathy, support, and acceptance to someone. The message of unconditional positive regard is, "I care about you. You have value. You don't have to do anything to prove it to me, and nothing is going to change my mind." Unconditional positive regard is being intentional in recognizing the inherent dignity and worth of every person and treating people with dignity and respect; all which are human rights concepts.

Unconditional positive regard is tied to our duty bearer responsibility to promote and protect rights, to act in the best interests of the students and do no harm.

Black Mental Health Week: March 6-13, 2023

In 2020, the [Black Mental Health Day Act](#) was passed, proclaiming the first Monday in March each year as Black Mental Health Day and Black Mental Health Week is now acknowledged as the first week of March.

This week strives to raise awareness about the historical and ongoing impact that systemic, anti-Black racism has on the mental health and wellness of Black communities.

Social Work Month

Coming out of the global pandemic, social workers are more essential than ever.

Essential to hearing the hardships, pain and sufferings of individuals and communities.

Essential to navigating systems such as those in criminal justice, health, education and employment.

Essential to advocacy that includes centering and prioritizing diversity, anti-racism, and other forms of oppression and marginalization.

School Social Workers are Essential!

We provide:

- School level consultation
- Direct Service to students and families
- Groups for students (AFFIRM, Black Excellence Made Evident (BeMe), Trails to Wellness)
- Crisis Support
- Professional Development

Students and Families can access Social Work Services through their school Administration, Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT), Guidance, or through the 'Button' on the D.D.S.B website home page.

Your Social Worker Gets You

DDSB to the Right to Read – Update

- DDSB interdepartmental discussions have been ongoing concurrent to all stages of the Right to Read inquiry (Teaching & Learning, Inclusive Student Services – led through Speech Language, Early Years and Equity)

- 4 schools were engaged in a pilot program to explore structure and method for educator practice shift. The learning from this 2021-2022 pilot program set the foundation for learning in the 2022-2023 school year.
- Speech Language Pathologists and Literacy/Numeracy coaches are supporting learning in schools, through book clubs and additional professional development.
- A Structured Literacy Launch Pad (webpage) provides educators with resources related to effective literacy instruction. The resource is updated regularly.
- Schools and educators are engaging in personal learning. This includes school administrators most recently during the March System Leadership (School Administrators, Senior Managers and Senior Team) with follow up through Family of Schools meetings

Speech Language and Hearing Update

- Speech-language pathologists are joining educators from the Early Years Department to collaborate on practices to support thriving in Kindergarten classrooms
- American Sign Language (A.S.L) interpreters are engaging in professional development discussions to explore how A.S.L is acquired through interpreted language
- The Hearing resource team is engaged in work to compare language and literacy assessment tools and methods
- Speech-language pathologists, hearing resource teachers and other Inclusive Student Services team members have engaged in an Orton Gillingham-based training to further their knowledge of structured literacy practices and are currently using this information as a tool in work with students

Special Education Software Transition

Inclusive Student Services (I.S.S) and Information Technology Services (I.T.S) are working in collaboration to migrate special education processes and forms from our current software to a PowerSchool embedded product.

March Update:

- Launch of the Identification Placement and Review Committee (I.P.R.C) forms in Power School Student Programs was postponed until March 1st to allow for thorough pre-testing. I.P.R.Cs held in February were documented in our current software and will be migrated to the new software.
- Processes are on track for a full launch (e.g., Referrals for Services, Individual Education Plan (I.E.Ps), I.P.R.Cs, resource related processes such as Educational Assistant (E.A) Allocation request) prior to the start of the 2023-2024 school year.

As part of the transition, the project team continues to reflect on practices including use of language and collection of data aligned with our "Policies into Practice" commitment. Shifts made include:

Invitation to I.P.R.C.

- Letter revised to require input of date and form of communication for the I.P.R.C. pre-consultation connection with student/parent/guardian. This change helps to reinforce the importance of voice, choice, and consultation.

Transportation Form

- Change from "non-verbal" to Form of Communication: Verbal, A.A.C (Technology, Sign, P.E.Cs), Multi-Modal or Other. This change better aligns with our commitment to an asset

focus, addressing ableism (change from norm comparative language) and will provide information to drivers about a student's communication language. Descriptors designed in consultation with Karen Timm, Chair – NINE.

Grove (ECP*) Advisory Committee

The Grove Advisory Committee is comprised of Directors and staff from all E.C.P.P agencies and D.D.S.B Grove support staff including Grove Administrators (Principal/Vice-Principal), Senior Managers & Clinical Leads for Psychological Services, Social Work and Superintendent. The Committee meets to collaborate on programs supporting children & youth and for updates from the D.D.S.B, impacting all Grove classrooms, to be shared with the partners.

**ECP: Education Community Partnership Programs – Day Treatment & Academics*

Grove Advisory Committee met most recently on March 1, 2023. Discussion topics included:

- Connection with Director Camille Williams-Taylor
- D.D.S.B Mental Health Leadership Team shared information on service scope, trends within services and invitation for connections in service of youth and families.
- Michelle Ho, Durham Region Health shared strategies within a Comprehensive School Health Plan including: health clinics (identification card access clinics) and launch of online immunization records
- Educator sharing of learning programs within Grove including Inclusive Design Grade 9 Math course, Grade 11 Indigenous Voices course and Skilled Trades program pathways (include Trade Fundamental course in partnership with college)
- Expansion of E.C.P.P with Ontario Shores – Eating Disorder Clinic Day Treatment program, program core and referral pathway

Grove Highlight: Kennedy House

Interest and engagement spiked with the introduction of art design and painting sneakers with the youth at Kennedy House.

Inclusive Culinary Competition

The Culinary Arts department at Uxbridge Secondary School hosted an Inclusive Culinary Competition for students from 15 different schools. All competitors access learning through the Practical Learning Program (P.L.P). The recipes were shared with classroom teams ahead of the competition day. Upon arrival, students were outfitted with personalized chef jackets. The competitors had two hours, working alongside peer mentors, to complete three recipes while being cheered on by a full gallery of family members and support staff.

The day was filled with connections, skills and the smell of delicious & creative baking.

Immense gratitude to teacher Dave Brown who created and championed this inaugural competition parallel to students in culinary arts studies.

- Each participant received a chef's jacket with their name embroidered on it as well as an individualized award for the skill they exemplified during the competition.

Program Highlight: Transition to Work

- The [Transition to Work](#) program is designed to bridge between school and successful adult living by providing experiences in various work environments.

- The goal of the program is to develop employability skills and foster independence to support students with special needs to become productive workers with a goal of leading to meaningful, paid employment.
- Through this program placement, students with special education needs can learn, practice, and refine productivity skills and social skills that are essential to participating in meaningful employment, learning more about both themselves and the world of work.
- Each program class, for up to twelve students, is supported by a Teacher and two Educational Assistants.
- There are currently five Transition to Work program classes in the D.D.S.B.

During the height of COVID, work experience placements were a challenge to secure for a number of reasons. We are experiencing a resurgence of work experience placements in the 2022-2023 school year. Students work in a variety of settings which include, not limited to: restaurants, retail, and vehicle dealerships.

Abilities Scholarship – Spring 2023

Presented by Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region in partnership with the Durham District School Board

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 D.D.S.B 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 2022-2023 school year and be entering first year of apprenticeship, college or university in 2023-2024.

[Abilities Scholarship Award Applicant Information Form](#)

For more information: [Abilities Scholarship 2023](#)

Submissions due: April 28, 2023

9. SEAC Membership Related Items

Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children (OPVIC) has sent a letter seeking membership consideration.

- OPVIC would be a great voice around our table.
- At this time OPVIC does not have an alternate and will therefore not be able to proceed with membership.
- The decision was made by members to proceed with the support of OPVIC membership should they be able to provide an alternate.

MOTION: SEAC to make recommendation to the Board of Trustees to approve SEAC OPVIC membership should OPVIC find an alternate

MOVE: Tara Culley

SECONDED: sensaRAneb Burrell

10. Community Concerns:

SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides brought forward a community concern and asked that a motion be made by SEAC as follows.

MOTION: SEAC has become aware of harm directed at the transgender community in particular, as well as the broader 2SLGBTQIA+ community, that has occurred recently. As a Ministry mandated committee comprised of representatives for associations that support students and families of marginalized students with special education needs, SEAC would like to reiterate our commitment to advocating for school environments that are welcoming, respectful, safe, inclusive, equitable, accessible, and free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, racism, oppression, and harm for all of our staff and students.

SEAC requests that this statement be provided directly to the Board of Trustees at its next Board meeting.

MOVED BY: Tara Culley

SECONDED BY: Elizabeth Daniel

CARRIED

World Autism Awareness Day

- will be recognized on April 2nd, linking with the United Nations commitment to amplify assets and strengths of Autistic voices and those with Autism.
- sensaRAneb Burrell also highlighted the resources shared regarding Autism Awareness Day and the ability to sign up for the Autism Ontario Newsletter.

Legacy Ontario Autism Program (O.A.P.) – Trustee Deb Oldfield shared community concerns regarding the end of the Legacy Autism program. Parents/caregivers have been reaching out to Trustees about students transitioning to public schools.

- An opportunity for us to share with Administrators that there is a Legacy O.A.P. conclusion date of March 31, 2023.
- We refer to lists of consideration for special Education class placement; not waitlists.
- We will link with some of our partners - for children and youth who had full time program funding through the Autism Legacy Program we have not had the privilege of meeting them, because they are often in the community in private schools or settings. The only way we can be made aware of students coming into our schools is when the school is contacted to begin the registration process.
- Home school is always the point of registration and connection
- Our commitment as a district is for student to access in or near the community in which a student lives.
- Working collaboratively with the family to provide the best program in the interest of the student. Ensuring the move to school is as smooth a transition for the student and family as possible.
- Often the school team will visit the child in their current environment to help support a program and transition plan.
- The challenge for some students will be the transition from a more private school setting to the larger public-school environment.

11. Consultation: SEAC Section of the [DDSB Special Education Plan](#)

- SEAC members were asked to review any changes needed for the SEAC section of the Special Education Plan:
 - Addressing that the gallery is now virtual and no longer in person should be updated.

12. Open Discussion Period:

Planning SEAC Deputation to D.D.S.B Education Finance Committee

- The provincial budget dropped today, not the Ministry of Education budget.
- We have not been in receipt of the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) for the 2023-2024 school year; currently in limbo until the grants are released.
- Hope would be for SEAC to present on the budget, but we do not currently have a budget from the Ministry to comment on.
- At one time we received the information earlier in the school year which allowed the finance department to create a draft budget.
- Mandated for the Board of Trustees to have a passed balanced budget submitted to the Ministry annually by July 1.
- We know where we have current pressures including student mental health support needs.
- Special Education envelope dollars can only be spent on special education.
- There is money allocated for Special Education throughout the board budget, Transportation, and facilities accommodations as examples.
- A letter to Ministry to explain the impact of late GSN budget information may help in future years, the ripple is to programs and services which impact students.
- Tara Culley and sensaRAneb Burrell will be presenting the deputation to the Education Finance Committee

13. Business Arising from the Minutes:

- SEAC Survey – Timelines Update
 - Considerations for the pending SEAC survey and how the results are going to be addressed
 - Survey will be live for entries from May 30 to June 15, 2023.
- SEAC Handbook – Subcommittee Update
 - SEAC Handbook was shared February 23, 2023, for input, please review and make suggestions.

14. Association Reports & Committee Reports:

- Down Syndrome Association of Ontario: School Transitions
- Autism Ontario: Autism Awareness Day

15. Correspondence:

- Avon Maitland DSB-Special Incidence Portion (SIP) Funding
- Near North DSB-SIP Funding

16. Celebrations and Successes:

Tara Culley shared how her youngest son James was able to speak during school announcements about Down Syndrome on March 21 World Down Syndrome Day.

17. Next S.E.A.C meeting – April 20, 2023:

18. Adjournment:

That the meeting does now adjourn at 8:34 p.m. Adjournment called by SEAC Chair Eva Kyriakides

MOVED BY: Tara Culley

SECONDED BY: Morgann Cameron

CARRIED

Report respectfully submitted by:

Eva Kyriakides, SEAC Chair

Table 1- Action Plan

ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY	COMPLETION
Circulate SEAC Handbook	Lisa Wry	February 23, 2023
Gifted Event Timeline	Michelle Crawford-Eade/Lisa Wry	ASAP
Share with Administrators Legacy Date	Andrea McAuley	ASAP