



**DURHAM CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**
Learning and Living in Faith

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Meeting

Oct. 01, 2024, from 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM

Catholic Education Centre, 650 Rossland Road West, Oshawa

North and South Board Rooms

Members Present:

Mariam Maskell, Participation House (Virtual)

Julie Sorhaitz, Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region (In-Person)

Walter Heeney, Vice Chair, Durham Down Syndrome Association (In-Person)

Claudia Nosseir, Grandview Kids (In-Person)

Alex Massis, Community Representative (Virtual)

Donna Callaghan, Alternate, Durham Down Syndrome Association (Virtual)

Trustees Present:

Robert De Souza, Trustee (Virtual)

Staff Present:

Yulan Fisher-Brown, Senior Manager, (In-Person)

Helen Killoran, Student Services Coordinator (In-Person)

Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education (In-Person)

SEAC Representatives Present:

Patricia Bosley, CUPE Representative (Virtual)

Frank Porco, CPCO Representative (Virtual)

Lo Davis, OECTA Representative (In-Person)

Regrets:

Valerie Adamo, Chair, VOICE for the Hearing Impaired

Edward Secnik, Autism Ontario – Durham Region

Candace Julien, Community Representative

Jim McCafferty, Trustee

Ashley Toohey, APSSP Representative

Minutes

1. Opening

1.1. Call to Order

Acting Chair Walter Heeney called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m., offered the opening prayer and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.2. Memorials and Prayers

1.3. Land Acknowledgements



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1.4. Roll Call and Apologies

1.5. Approval of the Agenda

Motion: SS-2024-10-01-01

Approval of the Agenda

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Claudia Nosseir

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the agenda of the Tuesday, October 1, 2024, meeting, as presented.” (CARRIED)

1.6. Approval of the Minutes of September 10, 2024, SEAC Meeting

Motion: SS-2024-10-01-02

Approval of Minutes

Motion moved by Robert De Souza and seconded by Mariam Maskell

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the Minutes of the Tuesday, September 10, 2024, meeting, as presented.” (CARRIED)

1.7. Declarations of Interest

2. Items for Information/Decision

2.1. Announcements

2.1.1. EQAO Data Released (Superintendent’s Report)

2.2. Presentations

2.2.1. Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region – Julie Sorhaitz

Julie Sorhaitz presented an OHRC *Right to Read* Update:

- The [Right to Read Report](#) was released February 28th, 2022. It calls for critical changes to Ontario’s approach to early reading including:
 - Curriculum and instruction
 - Screening
 - Reading interventions
 - Accommodations
 - Professional assessments.
- [A 2 Year Anniversary Update](#) was released September 5th, 2024

Curriculum & Instruction

Progress:



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- May 2022: Ontario Ministry of Education released *Effective early reading instruction: a guide for teachers*
- June 2023: Ontario Ministry of Education released the revised curriculum for Grade 1 to 8: Language and Francais and Grade 9: English and Francais
- Revised Kindergarten Program to be implemented in 2025

Continued Need:

- Revision of French Immersion Program
- Revision of teacher education programs
- Continued development of comprehensive, sustained and *job-embedded* in-service teacher professional learning and resources

Universal Screening

Progress:

- August 2023: Ministry released Policy and Procedure Memorandum 168, Reading Instruction and Early Reading Screening (PPM 168)
- Requires boards to screen all children in Kindergarten Year 2 to Grade 2 once per year, with a second screening necessary for students identified as being at risk during the first screening.

Continued Need:

- A central repository of data in a consistent format that can be used to drive system improvement and innovation

Reading Interventions

Progress:

- 2023 Budget: \$25 million to support students in Kindergarten Year 2 (formerly known as Senior Kindergarten) to Grade 2
- 2024-25 Budget: The ministry provided \$12.5 million continued funding to enable school boards to purchase licences, resources and professional learning to support the provision of systematic, evidence-based tiered reading programs and interventions for struggling readers, including but not limited to students with reading disabilities.

Continued Need:

- Support for students in Grade 3 and older who did not have this support in earlier grades
- Mandated removal of existing ineffective programs such as Level Literacy Intervention (LLI) programs

Accommodations

Progress (Minimal):

- Ministry guidance emphasizes accommodations and modifications at the expense of interventions
- Long-debunked approaches such as “learning styles” remain

Continued Need:



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- A new policy and procedure memorandum should be created to outline requirements for clear communication with parents regarding the use of accommodations and modifications and how these are being implemented alongside intervention.

Assessments

Progress (Minimal):

- Ontario has yet to officially recognize dyslexia or update the official definitions of learning disabilities outlined in PPM 8
- Some progress in removing requirements for an assessment to access accommodations, but no written policy standardizing this across the province.
- Starting in 2024-25, the Ministry will be providing yearly and stable funding to school boards for professional assessments.

Continued Need:

- The province should update PPM 8 to align the definition of learning disabilities with the DSM-5 and the recommendations of the Inquiry
- Formalize the Response to Intervention model of assessment for learning disabilities, outline when professional assessments should happen, and how assessments should be used

Addressing Systemic Issues

Progress:

- June 2023: Ontario passed the Better School and Student Outcomes Act (BSSOA).
- The OHRC appeared before the Standing Committee on Social Policy to support the Minister of Education's goal of laying the groundwork for a unified education system focused on improving student outcomes in the important life-long skill of reading

Continued Need:

- Clear, mandatory standards related to curriculum and instruction, early screening, reading interventions, accommodations, and professional assessments
- Central ongoing monitoring and better accountability within the education system
- Stable, enveloped, yearly funding

Julie Sorhaitz asked the Committee if they would be supportive of writing a letter to the Ministry concerning the areas with minimal progress in the Right to Read report.

Motion: SS-2024-10-01-02

Draft a Letter to Ministry

Moved by Claudia Nosseir and seconded by Robert De Souza

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve drafting a letter to the Ministry of Education.” (CARRIED)

2.2.2. Inspire 2026 – Paula Sorhaitz



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Superintendent Paula Sorhaitz presented an overview of the Strategic Plan for Durham Catholic District School Board:

- Support Faith & Wellbeing
- Advance Human Rights & Equity
- Improve Student Learning
- Bill 98 – Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act: School boards are required to adopt the provincial priorities into their trustee-approved multi-year plans (Achievement of Learning Outcomes in Core Academic Skills, Preparation of Students for Future Success, and Student Engagement & Well-Being)
- Student Achievement Plan goals that support provincial priorities:
- Improve students' literacy learning and achievement
- Improve students' math learning and achievement
- Improve students' graduation rates and preparedness for future success
- Improve students' participation in class time and learning
- Improve student well-being

2.3. Discussion Items

2.3.1. SEAC Goals for 2024-2025

An idea was brought forward by the Acting Chair regarding writing letters following Member presentations to ensure the Committee is sharing what we are learning and discussing at SEAC with the Ministry of Education.

2.4. Business arising from the Minutes

2.4.1. Recordings

Deferred to next meeting.

2.5. Staff Reports

2.5.1. Student Services Report – Helen Killoran, Yulan Fisher-Brown, Paula Sorhaitz

Helen Killoran presented the Coordinator's Report:

- All new Program Support Teachers (PSTs) received training on IEP Online (IOL) on September 12 & 19, and Weschler Fundamentals Training on September 19
- PSTs received training on Lexia Power Up which is for students in Grades 6 and up.
- The Board has 1215 Lexia licenses for use in schools. 215 additional licenses were purchased in September. On October 8, a second Lexia training session with cover Lexia Core 5 which is for students up to Grade 5.
- Greenfield Learning, our providers of Lexia, will do a presentation for SEAC in Spring 2025.



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- After School Social Skills Programs for students with ASD have begun. We are currently offering Friendship Lab, PEERS and Secret Agent Society.
- Durham College Behavioural Science program students have begun placements in various schools in the board. They are supporting students with behavioural challenges by collecting data and supporting the school team with strategies

Yulan Fisher-Brown presented the Mental Health (MH) Report:

- The Staff Mental Health Champions from each school met on September 12th.
- Staff shared success stories of mental health promotion within their schools and examined ways in which they could be supporting the creation of a mentally healthy school.
- There were presentations from Jack.org and Erika's Lighthouse, 2 organizations that offer support in organizing student led mental health and well-being promotion in schools and offer funding for various initiatives.

BWell

- The BWell MH Secondary Leadership Group met on September 20th.
- The group spent time learning about what mental health is and sharing some of the initiatives happening at their schools.
- The bulk of the day was spent looking at the data collected from secondary students in the spring and planning accordingly.
- The group will reconvene on December 3rd to work on specific board wide mental health promotion campaigns based on the data and discussions that took place.

TAMI Summit

- The elementary Talking About Mental Illness (TAMI) Summit will take place on November 5th.
- The coalition is currently reviewing the mandate of TAMI to align with the current direction of the province with respect to mental health literacy.
- We will be expanding the student engagement and leadership aspects of the summit and adding in an additional summit in the spring where school teams will return and share their experiences.

Upcoming Professional Development:

- Applied Suicide Intervention Training (ASIST) - October 9th and 10th
- Violent Threat Risk Assessment Level 1 Training - October 23rd and 24th

Paula Sorhaitz presented the Superintendent's Report:

- EQAO data was released on September 26, 2024. Academic Services staff are currently reviewing the data. Dan Allen, Assistant to the Superintendent, and Mike O'Neill, Superintendent of Education, will present the data to the Committee at a future meeting. EQAO results indicate a stabilization of learning in Ontario.

Acadience screening K-2 update:

- Literacy Intervention Teachers continue to support K-2 teachers in screening their students



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PST Learning at a Glance

October topics:

- Grandview – Tiered model of classroom intervention
- Best practices for data collection (BCBAs)

Motion: SS-2024-10-01-03

Approval of the October 1, 2024, verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader, and Superintendent Reports

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Claudia Nosseir

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept the verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports of the October 1, 2024, meeting.” (CARRIED)

2.6. Association Reports

Julie Sorhaitz, Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region – October is Learning Disabilities Awareness Month.

2.7. Correspondence

3. Other Business

3.1. Board Communications

3.2. Motion to Adjourn

3.2.1. The next meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee will be held on November 5, 2024.

Motion: SS-2024-09-10-08

Motion to Adjourn

Motion moved by Robert De Souza and seconded by Alex Massis

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of October 1, 2024, adjourn.” (CARRIED)

3.3. Closing Prayer

Closing prayer was offered by Alex Massis. The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Walter Heeney
Acting Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee



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Paula Sorhaitz
Superintendent of Education, Resource

Recording Secretary: Paige Wiggans