



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

## **Memorandum**

To: Board of Trustees

From: Tracy Barill, Director of Education

Date: February 26, 2024

Subject: **Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting – February 13, 2024**

Origin: Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education

Please find attached a copy of the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting held on February 13, 2024.

TB/PS/pw

Attachment: Minutes of February 13, 2024



**DURHAM CATHOLIC  
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**Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Meeting**

Feb 13, 2024, from 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM

Catholic Education Centre, 650 Rossland Road West, Oshawa  
*North and South Board Rooms*

**Members Present:**

*Valerie Adamo, Chair, VOICE for the Hearing Impaired (Virtual)*

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

*Julie Sorhaitz, Learning Disabilities Ontario (In-Person)*

*Shona Casola, Autism Ontario – Durham Region (Virtual)*

**Trustees Present:**

*Robert De Souza (In-Person)*

*Jim McCafferty, Trustee (In-Person)*

**Staff Present:**

*Shelley Phoenix, Senior Manager, Social Work and Child and Youth Counsellors (In-Person)*

*Francesca Mosier, Student Services Coordinator (In-Person)*

*Paula Sorhaitz, Superintendent of Education (In-Person)*

**SEAC Representatives:**

*Lo Davis, OECTA Representative (In-Person)*

*Patricia Bosley, CUPE Representative (Virtual)*

*John Di Vizio, CPCO Representative*

*Narmilee Dhayanandhan, APSSP Representative*

**Regrets:**

*Alex Massis, Community Representative*

*Claudia Nosseir, Grandview Kids*

*Walter Heeney, Vice Chair, Durham Down Syndrome Association*

*Candace Julien, Community Representative*

**Minutes**

**1. Opening**

**1.1. Call to Order**

Valerie Adamo called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m., offered the opening prayer and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**1.2. Memorials and Prayers**

**1.3. Land Acknowledgements**

**1.4. Roll Call and Apologies**

**1.5. Approval of the Agenda**



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Motion: SS-2024-02-13-01

Approval of the Agenda

Motion moved by Jim McCafferty and seconded by Robert De Souza

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the agenda of the Tuesday, February 13, 2024, meeting, as presented.” (CARRIED)

**1.6. Approval of the Minutes of January 9, 2024, SEAC Meeting**

Motion: SS-2024-02-13-02

Approval of Minutes

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Robert De Souza

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the Minutes of the Tuesday, January 9, 2024, meeting, as presented.” (CARRIED)

**1.7. Declarations of Interest**

None

**2. Items for Information/Decision**

**2.1. Announcements**

**2.2. Presentations**

**2.2.1. Julie Sorhaitz – Intro on Learning Disabilities**

**Julie Sorhaitz presented on Learning Disabilities & ADHD in High School:**

**What are Learning Disabilities?**

- Learning disabilities (LDs) are brain-based difficulties that affect one or more ways that a person takes in, stores, remembers or uses verbal (speech) and nonverbal (non-speech) information.
- LDs are difficulties in processing information. LDs occur in people with average or above average thinking and reasoning abilities.
- Specific Learning Disorder (DSM-5) - Different from intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities or neurological or motor disabilities
- LDs are not caused by environmental factors such as language differences or socio-economic status, but those factors may compound the impact of an LD.
- LDs can interfere with learning basic skills such as reading, writing, and math. They can also interfere with higher level skills such as organization, time management and social communication skills.

**Types of LDs & ADHD:**

- Dyslexia
- Dysgraphia
- Dyscalculia



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- Non-Verbal Learning Disability (NVLD)
- ADHD

### **LD and ADHD in High Schools**

- Students are older:
  - May know their needs & supports better.
  - May have been unsupported longer/more frustrated with academics.
  - May demonstrate difficulty with more advanced reading comprehension and written expression (even when supported) because LD/ADHD often leads to less practice.
  - Challenge finding materials that are age appropriate; technology can help here.
  - Expected to be more independent & manage several different platforms at one time.
  - Expected to track more deadlines independently.

### **Some suggestions:**

- More executive functions support needed.
- Role of morphology (word parts: prefixes, bases, suffixes) and syntax
- Digital materials in all classes (literacy happens everywhere)
- Explicit teaching for exams in the classroom, as often these students are less able to access lunchtime & after school supports.
- Memory aids - Sometimes for direct memory support and sometimes to accommodate for the extra cognitive load required to read, write, and focus.

### **2.3. Discussion Items**

#### **2.3.1. Review IEP Process/IPRC Process (Francesca Mosier)**

### **Individual Education Plan (IEP) Process**

- IEPs are developed for a student who has been deemed to require a special education program or services in order to achieve curriculum expectations and/or to demonstrate learning.
- Planning the IEP is accomplished through the combined efforts and in communication with the student, student's parents, staff, and other professionals involved with the student.
- The classroom teacher in consultation with the program support teacher make decisions regarding the program planning of the IEP. (Level of Achievement, Program Goals, Learning Expectations, Teaching Strategies, and Assessment methods.
- A team approach underlies the IEP process and focuses on how the student is expected to progress through the Ontario Curriculum with or without accommodations, modified expectations, and or alternative programs, as well as how the student will make key transitions from grade to grade, elementary to secondary and secondary to postsecondary destination.



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**Overview of the IEP Process**

1. Gathering Information
2. Setting the Direction
3. Developing the IEP as it Relates to the Student's Special Education Program and Services
4. Implementing the IEP
5. Review and Update the IEP

**Summary of Initial Identification of Placement Review Committee (IPRC) Timelines:**

- At no time should a parent/guardian be blocked from requesting an IPRC
- The first option considered by the IPRC for place is "regular class with indirect support" because the Board's service delivery model does not require a student to have an IPRC to access services.
- After an IPRC request, a meeting is usually scheduled within two to three weeks of the request.
- Prior to the IPRC, Principal and/or PST contacts parent/guardian for a preliminary discussion
  - Understanding their rights concerning the IPRC, as explained in the parent's guide.
  - Request additional information that may be relevant to the decision.
  - Review results of assessments and explain any recommendations.
- During IPRC meeting, the Committee will make a decision about identification and placement.
- At least once every school year, IPRC is reconvened to review student's identification and/or placement.

**2.3.2. Review 2022-2023 Director's Annual Report (Paula Sorhaitz)**

**Paula Sorhaitz reviewed the 2022-2023 Director's Annual Report Highlights and discussed the strategic priorities within the report:**

**Strategic Priority 1: Witnessing Faith**

- A pastoral planning resource was developed to guide and strengthen home-school-parish partnerships.
- Continuing to offer annual retreat experiences for students and staff.

**Strategic Priority 2: Celebrating Inclusion and Well-Being**

- Partnered with the Abilities Centre to facilitate the Leading Equitable and Accessible Delivery (LEAD) Process
- System-level learning on human rights concepts and principles. Training topics included historical or intergenerational trauma, understanding different forms of discrimination, and ways to engage in race-based conversations.

**Strategic Priority 3: Teaching and Learning**

- Professional Development for all educators on the new Grade 9 De-Streamed



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Math curriculum, the new Grade 1-8 Math curriculum, including coding and financial literacy.

- STEM leads in each of our schools were provided with training.
- The Student Indigenous Education Circle grew to include an Elementary and a Secondary circle.
- Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Metis and Inuit Voices, and Contemporary Indigenous Issues and Perspectives in a Global Context was introduced at all secondary schools.

### **Strategic Priority 4: Expanding Pathways**

- To increase awareness and promote the skilled trades and apprenticeship pathway to under-represented groups, female students were invited to participate in the Build a Dream Career Expo, Durham College's Skilled Trades Day for Girls, and Centennial College's Durham Trades Day
- Enrolment at Centre for Success and Reconnect continued to grow and both programs reached maximum enrolment.
- Construction was completed at the new Oshawa Reconnect site.

### **Strategic Priority 5: Managing Resources**

- Intentionally expanding the use of job advertising platforms to encourage participation by candidates from historically marginalized groups; and the incorporation of bias-free hiring guidelines.
- Engaging in boundary reviews
- Implementing a new framework to equitably allocate financial and administrative resources to schools.
- Continuing our Multi-Year Technology Equalization Plan to ensure that all schools maintain a 2:1 technology ratio.

#### **2.4. Business arising from the Minutes**

##### **2.4.1. Feedback on SEAC Brochure**

Branding will be updated on the brochure with Communications. The Special Education Advisory Committee was asked to send any additional content suggestions for the brochure to Paige Wiggans.

##### **2.4.2. Feedback on Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan (BPIP)**

Every year in February the Safe Schools Committee reviews and revises the BPIP. The Special Education Advisory Committee was asked to send any additional feedback to Paige Wiggans.

##### **2.4.3. Letter for Approval – Support for Adult Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Paula Sorhaitz thanked Edward Secnik, Alternate for Autism Ontario, and Helen Killoran,



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Student Services Coordinator, for providing information for the letter. Paula discussed the draft letter.

The Special Education Advisory Committee asked for Edward and Helen to review the drafted letter and bring the revised letter to the next meeting for approval. The Special Education Advisory Committee was asked to send any additional content suggestions for the letter to Paige Wiggans.

Motion: SS-2024-02-13-03

Approval of the Business arising from the Minutes

Motion moved by Julie Sorhaitz and seconded by Jim McCafferty

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the business arising from the minutes.” (CARRIED)

## **2.5. Staff Reports**

### **2.5.1. Student Services Report – Francesca Mosier, Shelley Phoenix, Paula Sorhaitz**

#### **Francesca Mosier presented the February Coordinator’s Report:**

- On January 15th, Student Services and Academic Services offered a full-day professional learning session to more than 60 educators at the Pope Francis Centre. The morning focused on the new language curriculum and the UFLI resource. The afternoon was a virtual Lexia training session provided by Greenfield Learning. Additional Lexia licenses have been ordered. Once assigned, participants from the literacy professional learning session will receive Lexia licenses to support their students.
- January 19th, AT Specialists offered Assistive Technology training (Read & Write and Orbit Note) to DCBRT (Behaviour Resource Team) members so they can better support students on their caseload who have AT.
- On February 1, Superintendent Sorhaitz and Student Services Consultant, Teresa Ezquerra, attended a meeting at the Abilities Centre to discuss the Summer TRIS (Therapeutic Recreation in Schools) Program. Students that are currently involved in the TRIS program at DCDSB schools will be offered an opportunity to participate in the summer program again this year. The program has been a huge success in the past two summers it was offered.
- DCBRT members offered training sessions for Educational Assistants on the Jan. 26th PA Day including Full Day BMS, Adult Lead Peer Interaction and Communication Core Boards.
- SLPs also offered training sessions on Augmentative and Alternative Communication and Core Board, as well as Self-Regulation and Co-Regulation for EAs.
- On February 7, BRT offered a Professional Learning Series (PLS) to educators at schools that are currently receiving BRT’s services. The session focused on the importance of self-care of the educator, data collection, reframing behaviour and the power of connection and communication.





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### **Project SEARCH Update**

- Interns are currently in their second round of internships at either Hillsdale Estates and Terraces Long Term Care or Durham Region Headquarters
- Interns are hosting their Employment Planning Meetings this week.
- Information Night for potential Project SEARCH students and their families will be held February 28, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. at the Pope Francis Centre – hybrid event.

### **Sharing of Excellence Series for Educators**

- February 9, 2024 – Universal Behavioural Approaches in the Classroom
- February 19, 2024 - Group Reinforcement Systems & Class Wide Behaviour Management
- February 20, 2024 – Math Manipulatives in the Classroom
- February 22, 2024 – Behaviour Management Systems Training - Recertification
- February 22, 2024 - Creating a Mentally Healthy Classroom Series (Part 4 of 5)

### **Shelley Phoenix presented the Mental Health Report:**

- School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) document currently being reviewed in our schools: Centring Black, Indigenous and Marginalized Perspectives in Mental Health Promotion at School: Examining and Decentring whiteness.
  - This resource is being used within staff meetings and MH trainings to examine the ways in which we are creating learning environments, curricula and services that are affirming, supportive and meaningful.
  - The document reviews each area of the AIM model and explores ways in which they can be made identity affirming.

### **Parent/Guardian Videos**

- Videos on mental health and wellness related topics have been created for parents, guardians, and caregivers as a means of increasing caregiver knowledge and skills.
- These videos have increased caregiver access to information as opposed to the uptake of the live virtual sessions offered in 2023.
- The videos can be found on the DCDSB YouTube page or Mental Health website and are being sent out with the DCDSB News

### **Black Mental Health Day**

- Monday, March 4, 2024
- DCDSB will be hosting an event at Notre Dame C.S.S.
- Featuring keynote from Roxanne Francis (Social Worker)
- Followed by a panel discussion.

### **Professional Development**

- Educators attended a Prepare, Prevent Respond; Suicide Prevention, Life Promotion training on February 6<sup>th</sup>- 86 educators have been trained since May 2023





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- Will be offered to the staff of Archbishop Anthony Meagher on March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Upcoming:
  - Mental Health First Aid- February 20th and 21<sup>st</sup>
  - Sharing of Excellence- Creating a Mentally Healthy Classroom- Part 4 of 5- February 22nd

**Paula Sorhaitz presented the Superintendent's Report:**

**Lead Process**

Student Services continues to lead accessibility efforts in DCDSB.

- 40+ teachers in DCDSB enrolled in "Educator Inclusion and Accessibility" E-learning course through the Rick Hansen Foundation
- Learning around the "Dear Everybody" campaign

**Numeracy Support:**

Concetta Siquerra is our Numeracy Support Teacher

- Nine schools being served (outside of priority schools who already have intervention teachers assigned to them)
- Continued partnership between Student Services and Academic Services to ensure we widen the net of support for students with IEPs.
- Block one of first five schools completed, Concetta now focusing on four other schools.
- All nine schools will receive further support prior to EQAO testing to ensure continuation of skill development and consolidation of learning.

**PST Meetings:**

- In March PSTs going to discuss best practices on how to support students with IEPs through the EQAO process.
- At the February 13 meeting, Dr. Sue Correia, Ashely Toohey and Keely Owens-Jaffray walked PSTs through psychological assessments and discussed learning disabilities and executive functioning.
- Monthly PST topics will cover various exceptionalities.

Motion: SS-2024-02-13-04

Approval of the February 13, 2024, verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader, and Superintendent Reports

Motion moved by Robert De Souza and seconded by Jim McCafferty

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept the verbal Coordinator, Mental Health Leader and Superintendent Reports of the February 13, 2024, meeting.”  
(CARRIED)



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**2.6. Association Reports**

**Learning Disabilities Ontario**

Other Information: Information on our scholarship for students transitioning to post-secondary education will be released soon.

**2.7. Correspondence**

**2.7.1. Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) – Feedback Required**

Paula Sorhaitz discussed the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) form:

- The purpose of this form is to obtain targeted feedback to support discussion at the next MACSE meeting.
- Provide input on issues related to special education programs and services.
- Four sections: Successful Practices, Challenges/Issues, Possible Solutions/Future Directions, and Other Comments.

The Special Education Advisory Committee took time during the meeting to provide feedback on the form.

**2.7.2. Letter from K. MacKenzie, Board Chairperson, and S. Belcourt, SEAC Chairperson, PVNCCDSB**

The Committee agreed that no further action was needed and accepted the correspondence.

Motion: SS-2024-02-13-05

Motion to accept correspondence

Motion Robert De Souza, Seconded by Julie Sorhaitz

“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee accept the correspondence from PVNCCDSB.” (CARRIED)

**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 Tuesday, March 5, 2024, at 7:30 p.m.

Motion: SS-2024-02-13-06

Motion to Adjourn

Motion moved by Jim McCafferty and seconded by Robert De Souza



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“THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of February 13, 2024, adjourn.” (CARRIED)

**3.3. Closing Prayer**

Closing prayer was offered by Trustee Robert De Souza. The meeting was adjourned at 8:59 p.m.

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Valerie Adamo

Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee

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Paula Sorhaitz

Superintendent of Education, Resource

Recording Secretary: Paige Wiggans