

Inclusive Student Services Impact Update

2023-2024 • Volume 4

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

Under Ontario's Education Act, every student is entitled to a program which meets their needs. In Durham, our SEAC helps the Board protect the rights of students with special learning needs. SEAC provides information, advice, and assistance to parents/guardians whose children may require additional support. SEAC is comprised of representatives from local parent associations that provide consultation to the DDSB on special education programs and services.

The SEAC is currently comprised of three DDSB Trustees and the following associations and roles:

Eva Kyriakides, Association for Bright Children (ABC)

Elizabeth Daniel, Member at Large

SensaRAneb Burrell, Autism Ontario, Durham Chapter

Morgann Cameron, Member at Large

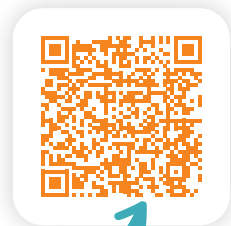
Tara Culley, Durham Down Syndrome Association

Charmain Brown, Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children (OPVIC)

Rowin Jarvis, Learning Disabilities of Durham Region

Jennifer McLaughlin, Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support

The SEAC is dedicated to establishing supportive educational environments that assist students with special strengths and needs in reaching their full potential. Additional information can be found in the [DDSB SEAC brochure](#).



Actioning the Results of the SEAC Parent/Caregiver Survey

From May to June 2023, a SEAC Parent/Caregiver Survey took place to:

- Gather parent/caregiver feedback;
- Learn more about what is and is not working around communication; and
- Receive parent/caregiver suggestions on how we can improve across the DDSB.

Thank you to the 1,118 respondents to the survey. The feedback from the survey highlighted that many families felt communication practices have been helpful in feeling welcomed and engaged as partners in education. The survey also provided us with valuable information about where we can make improvements to better understand the experience of families in working with school teams.

Survey responses received were representative of all municipalities within the Durham Region, representative of all grades (Kindergarten to Grade 12+) and representative of students across all categories of exceptionality.

Key Findings—Communication:

- 72.4% respondents were very satisfied (35.5%) or somewhat satisfied (36.9%) with the communication received from their child's support team members.
- Working well in terms of communication—Top 3: emails, outreach/updates, and applications/tools (Remind, Seesaw)
- Needs improvement in terms of communication—Top 3: progress updates/outreach, connecting with support team, and Individual Education Plan (IEP). We will focus on educator awareness, implementation, and adherence as we seek to improve.
- The majority of parents/caregivers expressed being comfortable (87.3% rated 3-5/5) during the Identification Placement Review Committee (IPRC) conversation but a lower percentage indicated feeling that the Special Education was productive (64.6% rate 4-5/5).
- 16.6% (represents 185 participants) were not at all familiar with the DDSB's Parent/Guardian Guide to Special Education IPRC.
- In alignment with the DDSB Indigenous Education Policy and Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy, actively addressing ableism and engaging in culturally responsive, affirming practices are essential to improving on the experience of families.



SEAC Message for Parents/Caregivers

Thank you for all that you do to support our students both in and out of class. Without you, many students would not be able to attend school, learn and form meaningful relationships with others. SEAC is dedicated to continuously improving the way we work together with parents, students and staff. To that end, we created the parent/caregiver survey to see what we are doing well and areas where we can improve—this survey's focus was on communication and some of the overall points are listed above.

Other takeaways that were highlighted as part of the survey responses that we would like to share:

- Establishing a good relationship with parents/caregivers is key in building trust and a solid team around each student. Many parents do not know how to navigate the school system, so making them feel like a valuable part of the team is important.
- Communication does not always have to be about issues; sharing a positive experience or moment is as impactful for a student as working through any challenges that they face in the school career.

We have heard from DDSB parents/caregivers and wanted to share some of the messages we received. We hope that in sharing a few of the quotes directly that there is inspiration to keep improving these important relationships. We look forward to hearing about all the new ideas and stories in the coming months.

"My child has shown great strides in her JK year, and we can't wait to see how much she grows in SK."

—Kindergarten Parent/Caregiver

"Our SERT and teacher are amazing, but I find the frequency of touch points are too far apart for our students with exceptionality. Yes, parents can request it but it is hard to know how things are going and if issues arise they sometimes aren't addressed timely because we don't know where things are."

—Grade 1-3 Parent/Caregiver

"I would like more communication regarding my child's participation in learning activities and his progress. He does not share much, so we are left guessing much of the time. I also don't know how his behaviour has been, so I'm hoping no news is good news."

—Grade 4-6 Parent/Caregiver

"My son is nonverbal and therefore I am completely dependent on his school team to communicate what transpired in his day. It is important to me that I understand everything in his day that may be impacting his development and behaviour."

—Grade 4-6 Parent/Caregiver



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