

OUR MISSION

*The Toronto Catholic District School Board is an inclusive learning community uniting home, parish and school and rooted in the love of Christ.
We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge to lead lives of faith, hope and charity.*

OUR VISION

*At Toronto Catholic we transform the world
through witness, faith, innovation and action.*



**AGENDA ADDENDUM
THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

PUBLIC SESSION

Nancy Crawford, Chair

George Wedge, Vice Chair

Wednesday, April 22, 2020

7:00 P.M.

	Pages
9. Reports of Officials for Information	
<i>9.h Superintendent Update - April 2020 Addendum (Refer to Item 9b)</i>	<i>1</i>
15. Association Reports	
<i>15.c ABC Ontario Association Report</i>	<i>2 - 6</i>
<i>15.d From Autism Ontario regarding Learning@Home The Impact on Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder</i>	<i>7 - 11</i>

Superintendent Update – April 2020- Addendum
SEAC Agenda Items – OUTSTANDING during COVID-19 Closure as of April 22, 2020

	Title/Description
Nominations	<p><u>From February 19, 2020 SEAC Meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter of Interest to serve as Special Education Advisory Committee Member from Joy Alma <p><u>From March 25, 2020 SEAC Meeting - cancelled</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter of interest to serve as Special Education Advisory Committee Member from Wendy Layton Letter of interest to serve as Special Education Advisory Committee Member from Hilary Quinn
Reports of Officials for Information by the Board/Other Committees	<p><u>From March 25, 2020 SEAC Meeting - cancelled</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, math and Students with an Individualized Education plan Safe Schools Committee Mental Health Committee
Consideration of Motions for which previous notice has been given	<p><u>From November 20, 2019 SEAC Meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration of Motion from Sandra Mastronardi regarding Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) and Accessibility Consideration of Motion from Melanie Battaglia regarding Third Party Protocol
Notice of Motion	<p><u>From the February 19, 2020 SEAC Meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration of Motion from Trustee Angela Kennedy on Operational Procedures and Protocol for appealing student exclusions as clearly outlined in the Education Act
Unfinished Business from Previous Meetings	<p><u>From the February 19, 2020 SEAC Meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration of Motion from Tyler Munro regarding Individual Education Plan Completion Rate – Report Request
Items deferred from Previous Meetings	<p><u>From the January 22, 2020 SEAC meeting:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special Education Superintendent Update Parent Reaching Out (PRO) Regional Grant 2019-2020 - \$5,000; Communication from Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board; Set SEAC Goals for this year (from the Draft Annual Calendar); Special Plan Review (from the Draft Annual Calendar); Review of Policy: Special Education Programs and Services (S.P.01); Inquiry from Sandra Mastronardi regarding Student Trustee Report; and SEAC Email Requirements and Internal Member Contact Information Autism Ontario 2020 Pre-Budget Consultation Submission Pending List as at February 19, 2020 <p><u>From November 20, 2019 SEAC Meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inquiry from Tyler Munro regarding Special Education Fair Inquiry from Tyler Munro regarding Email Blasts;
List of Communications	<p><u>From March 25, 2020 SEAC Meeting - cancelled</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater Essex County District School Board Letter to Minister of Education, February 20, 2020
Annual Calendar/Pending List	<p><u>From March 25, 2020 SEAC Meeting - cancelled</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEAC Annual Calendar Pending List as of February 19, 2020 Pending List as at March 25, 2020

Helping Gifted Students Learn Online During COVID 19

(A) For **gifted students online learning** must offer:

- Project-based learning that is more learning activities-oriented, not content-oriented.
- Opportunities to interact with their instructor/teacher in a meaningful way as well as other gifted classmates.
- Activities should be designed to cultivate higher-level thinking and creative problem-solving skills.
- Allow students to move faster through the curriculum and at their own pace. Otherwise, gifted students might find online distractions more engaging and their interest in new and challenging materials might draw them away from slow paced coursework and into the vast amount of information at their fingertips on the Internet.
- Gifted students need to participate in a variety of activities including online discussions, collaborative projects and/or real-time interactive sessions with like-minded peers.
- Gifted students maybe unwilling to ask for help and teachers do not have the advantage of non-verbal clues to pick up on student confusion.
- Confident that they "know what to do," some gifted students may dive in and start working on an assignment before fully reading the directions. Students in classrooms aren't likely to get far down the wrong path before a teacher steps in to redirect. Teachers will need to check students' progress early on during an assignment to ensure this doesn't happen.
- A fully online learning environment can be challenging for all students including gifted students. Students need to be self-disciplined and experienced with working independently to be successful. Students need to be aware of what the differences and expectations are in their new learning environment.

(B) We are concerned about **accommodations and modifications provided to 2e students** (gifted student who also has another exceptionality, such as: a specific learning disability, ADHD, ADD, emotional and behavioral disability, or ASD, etc.).

How will the student's needs be sufficiently supported? Parents/guardians will need to know how and what accommodations are provided in the classroom so they might try to provide them at home. 2e students may need an area free of distracts for test taking. This may not be possible at home.

Some Accommodations/Modifications for 2e students:

- Minimize repetitive work.
- Frequent reminders of due dates.
- May need a private signal from the teacher to regain his/her attention.
- Provide notes to keep the student from getting distracted by taking notes.
- May need to be tested orally rather than written in some or all subjects.
- Allow extra time to complete tests.
- Give the student a checklist of tasks to be completed.
- Provide clear and concise directions, verbally as well as in writing.

(C) Existing successful **online learning opportunities** for gifted elementary and secondary students

1. The Center for Talented Youth (CTY) at Johns Hopkins University (pre-K – 12)
- <https://cty.jhu.edu/online/>
2. Talent Identification Program (TIP) at Duke University (grades 8 – 12)
- <https://tip.duke.edu/>
3. Center for Talent Development (CTD) at Northwestern University (grades 4 – 12)
- <https://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/program/online-enrichment?sort=alpha>
4. Stanford Online High School (OHS) (grades 7-university level)
- <https://onlinehighschool.stanford.edu/>

(D) Additional questions:

- Will "Reach Ahead", a program offering Grade 7 & 8 students the opportunity to earn credits early at a high school in their community, be available? And will Grade 8 students accessing Grade 9 courses receive a credit?

(E) Accommodations to Provide at Home for Online Learning and Gifted students

For gifted students the curriculum is modified by increasing depth and complexity in some or all subjects and it is important that this continues, even during these challenging times. 2e students will also have accommodations.

While all students will need an uncluttered work area free of distractions, this is especially true for 2e students. Parents will need to review their child's IEP. Know what accommodations are provided in the classroom, so you can try to provide them at home. Your child may also know what they are.

Here are a few **Accommodations that parents/guardians** can provide or help with at home:

- Using headphones will help create a quieter workspace.
- Make time to organize materials and store them in a designated location. Provide a specific location for completed work.
- Record assignments or ask the teacher to provide notes so your child doesn't get distracted by taking notes.
- Use visual organizers, post a calendar on the wall to record the daily schedule and assignment due dates. Create a checklist of tasks to be completed and use check points for long-term assignments and monitoring progress.
- Gifted students might find online distractions more engaging than the lesson, especially if they're unable to move at their own pace. Students may need a signal from the parent to regain his/her attention.
- Gifted students maybe unwilling to ask for help and teachers do not have the advantage of non-verbal clues to pick up on a student's confusion. Encourage your child to ask questions regarding unclear directions and assignments.
- Confident that they "know what to do," some gifted students may dive in and start working on an assignment before fully reading the directions. In a classroom, students aren't likely to get far down the wrong path before a teacher steps in to redirect. At home parents may need to check their child's progress early on during an assignment to ensure this doesn't happen.
- Gifted students need to participate in a variety of activities including online discussions, collaborative projects and/or real-time interactive sessions with like-minded peers.

A fully online learning environment will be challenging for teachers and students, including gifted students. To be successful students need to be aware of what the differences and expectations are in their new learning environment. Gifted children who are not self-disciplined and able to work independently are more likely to experience stress or perhaps even depression. This is especially true in unfamiliar situations such as these. Parents will need to help them to accept and understand these new circumstances and be resilient in the face of adversity. Encourage them to advocate for themselves, reach out to others for help and have compassion for and acceptance of themselves and others. Remind them this is only a temporary situation.

(F) More resources to help while schools are closed

Ontario Ministry of Education portal to educational resources, for all students from Kindergarten through to Grade 12. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/learn-at-home>

Nelson is supporting the education community during COVID-19 <https://www.nelson.com/learningonline/parents.html>

MathPickle free online resource of mathematical puzzles, games and more. <https://mathpickle.com>

Problem of the Week offered by University of Waterloo, provides students with an opportunity to solve mathematical problems. <https://www.cemc.uwaterloo.ca/resources/potw.php>

Would You Rather - Students make choices based on mathematical reasoning. <https://www.wouldyourathermath.com>

NRICH offered by University of Cambridge is a free online mathematics resources for ages 3 to 18. <https://nrich.maths.org/frontpage>

Education Place - Grade 1–6 resources for teachers, students, and families to support instruction in the classroom and at home. <http://www.eduplace.com>

Edutopia **Inquiry-Based Learning** <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/what-heck-inquiry-based-learning-heather-wolpert-gawron>

NAGC - Resources for Educators & Parents During COVID-19 <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/resources-educators-parents-during-covid-19>

It's a good idea to check the TCDSB website for resources.

Kahn Academy - Self-teach a variety of subjects <https://www.khanacademy.org>

Mathletics - <https://www.mathletics.com/ca/resources/lessonplans/ontario>

<https://ca.ixl.com>

Math Games Inspire Young Minds

<https://www.edc.org/5-math-games-inspire-young-minds>

(G) Books on Parenting gifted Children

Parenting Gifted Kids, Dr. James Delisle

Homeschooling Gifted and Advanced Learners by Cindy West

The Impact on Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

April 22, 2020 -- During this unprecedented time, the widespread effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closures of schools across the province has caused a monumental impact on students and families in ways not limited to academics. Aside from reinforcing the essential role of special services on ensuring student success and well-being for special education needs students; this new form of learning has also shed light on a variety of other challenges including those outlined below.

Attitudinal Barriers – Media or public discussion that devalues the right to an equitable education and the necessary programs, services, accommodations and/or modifications to the delivery of same. Media or public discussion which identifies the accessibility needs and necessary program, service, accommodation and/or modification needs of special education needs students as laborious and unnecessary.

Disability Related Barriers – Special education needs students; particularly students on the autism spectrum are greatly affected by change to their daily routine and tend to suffer a much higher grade of anxiety when faced with uncertainty and fear. In an inclusive classroom, teachers will have access daily to support personnel who can help to provide any instructional or environmental accommodations and sensory breaks to help redirect the student's focus and attention to the task at hand. Student behaviour plans when not working to de-escalate inappropriate behaviour at school often include an exit strategy that involves calling parents or caregivers to come and pick up their child and take them home. Parents and caregivers in a state of self-isolation cannot provide the breadth of accommodations or sensory breaks required to help their child overcome the large and complex emotions they are feeling during the COVID 19 pandemic. These disability barriers are especially difficult when parents are working from home, also have a disability or are struggling with mental health and well-being challenges of their own.. During this uncertain and scary time, any child will look to their parent or guardian as a source of comfort, stability and safety and a child with a disability will take much more time and effort to console, de-escalate and redirect to the *learning@home* program. These barriers are much more pronounced for students who have a developmental disability, delay or are developmentally immature for their age.

Caregiver Stress – Many parents and caregivers are suffering from “caregiver burnout” as they are experiencing the loss of mental health and overall health and well being services for their special education needs children and for their families. Parents and caregivers are tasked with providing the majority of care to their child which requires significant time and energy and this severely impacts on their capacity to support *learning@home*.

- Many health and community services, supports, therapies, etc., are closed or are delivered in a manner which is inaccessible for many families and their children on the autism spectrum.
- Many parents/caregivers are juggling work along with the complex, high needs of their children while also trying to deliver the *learning@home* content.
- Many parents/caregivers, due to COVID-19 have lost their jobs and the income necessary to support their child's health and well-being needs.
- Some parents/caregivers are single-parents, are battling illness (covid-19 or non-covid related) or are caring for ill or aging family members.

Possible Solution:

Coordinate through the TCDSB psychology and social work department to provide small group teleconference circle of care mini-sessions for those families and students that have been identified as at risk during the "check and connect" phase.

Social Isolation – Autism Ontario, Toronto Chapter recognizes and supports the need for strict adherence to social distancing and self-isolation rules during this time as a collaborative means to slow down and stop the spread of COVID-19. We would also like to bring awareness to the fact that individuals with disabilities and their families often struggle with the ability to "stay connected". The consequential loss of adequate and accessible support can lead to a steep rise in mental health crises requiring immediate intervention and/or hospitalization for this already marginalized and isolated demographic.

- Parents and caregivers of children with special education needs reflect a demographic of families that are already experiencing social isolation and feelings of loneliness within our communities.
- Autism is a neuro-developmental disorder characterized by impairments in social communication which inherently places limitations on the ability of children, youth and young adults to develop friendships and social relationships to which they can stay connected with. The friendship circle for children, youth and young adults on the autism spectrum is often limited to one to two friends during their time at school and/or to any social activities facilitated by school special services staff.
- A heightened rate of post-traumatic stress disorder has already been documented in recent research as a common outcome of quarantine and self-isolation¹

Possible Solution:

Develop peer support programs and new initiatives to connect students with disabilities with their peers by using a variety of different methods such as email, phone and video. Note that students with severe physical disabilities or communication impairments may need creative approaches to connect socially with school friends and peers.

¹ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30460-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30460-8/fulltext)

Loss of Health & Personal Care Supports – Although these services have been deemed as essential services during this time by the government of Ontario, the restructured model which encompasses a stricter health & safety regime may not provide the same level of service and may not provide accessible care for some..

- Since it has been determined by health officials that [it is possible for asymptomatic individuals to spread the virus](#) and that a person may be contagious for three to 14 days before exhibiting symptoms; families are also opting out of having paraprofessionals/PSWs enter the family home for fear of community contagion of COVID – 19.
- Many families are also choosing not to attend clinic appointments (where available) in order to mitigate the same risk as children may be immune-compromised and there may be developmental barriers making social distancing difficult.

Loss of Access to Therapeutic Services – Many service providers like SLP, OT, PT and ABA/IBI have closed, reduced service provision or are providing services which are not accessible to all.

- Where therapeutic services are available in person; families are also choosing not to attend clinic appointments in order to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 contagion as many children are immune-compromised and social distancing may be difficult.

Possible Solution:

Many CTCs are setting up on-line platforms and reaching out to individual families with suggestions for therapeutic exercises and activities that can be carried out at home. This should be required for all students on the School Health Support Program. Exercises and activities should be individualized to the student needs and family capacity. See more information regarding COVID-19 changes to service delivery on the [Children’s Treatment Network](#) website.

Differentiated Learning – *Learning@home* has become an awakening for parents and caregivers to the belief that systemically, educational goals for students with disabilities are often gauged on low expectations. Being fully engaged and informed now on what the general class expectations are in comparison to what was previously modified for their special education needs child is eye opening. Absent or inconsistent differentiated, accommodated or modified and accessible curriculum provided to meet the learning needs of special education needs students.

- Curriculum content and assignment expectations are often sent to students and parents in a manner tailored to typically developing students only.
- Parents and caregivers of students on the autism spectrum, unless certified in the implementation of Applied Behaviour Analysis techniques, are unable to apply these effective principles when helping their children with *learning@home* (PPM 140 - Incorporating Methods of Applied Behaviour Analysis into Programs for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders²).

² <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/140.html>

Possible Solution:

Parents and caregivers should not be expected to differentiate their child's learning. All homework and learning expectations for students with special education needs should be clearly provided by teachers according to the student's IEP and individual learning profile.

Any additional special education resources that are used by teachers or support staff should be shared with parents and caregivers to support *learning@home*.

Individual Education Plan – *Learning@home*, which has essentially transferred all aspects of the school instructional day to the parent or caregiver, does not include any at home support or guidance on how the IEP, which is a living and legal document will be applied.

- How will necessary accommodations or modifications be applied to the curriculum expectations provided through *learning@home*?
- How will learning goals be monitored?
- How will alternative goals be applied and/or monitored?

Possible Solution:

An IEP review should be included as part of weekly check-ins with students, parents and caregivers to ensure that any *learning@home* student or parent/caregiver concerns are met and resolved in a timely manner.

Accessibility features for on-line learning – Students with disabilities often require a wide range of accessibility features for learning, and some of the *learning@home* recommended learning websites do not provide these features.

Possible Solutions:

All recommended websites should be reviewed to ensure that they have the accessibility features that may be required. The available accessibility features for each site should be clearly identified.

Access to Equipment at school – Families need access to the Special Equipment Amount (SEA) funded equipment that supports learning as well as health and safety, such as and not limited to laptops, walkers, standers, and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices. Although best efforts have been made by local school staff, families have not been able to retrieve devices which were not taken home at the start of March break.

Possible Solution:

Arrangements to be made to have equipment delivered to student's home.

Transition Planning – Students who are transitioning in the fall to FDLK, a new grade or division, a new school or placement, to post-secondary or even from class to class (PPM 156 –Supporting

Transitions for Students with Special Education Needs³) need to know how planning will occur along with additional support while learning at home.

- Many FDLK students do not and will not have had access to IBI, ABA, Rehabilitative therapies or transition planning during this critical time. This loss of services negatively impacts on ASD student development during *learning@home* and in preparation for September entry/re-entry to school.
- Due to the inherently rigid nature of ASD, the immense difficulty with transitioning smoothly during times of change or unfamiliarity, coupled with the commonality of co-morbid mental health disorders which accompany ASD; students on the spectrum and their families are experiencing extremely high levels of anxiety, stress and multiple barriers to student success during this time.

Possible Solution:

That students, parents/caregivers be provided with staff resources and staff support through a variety of means to support transition planning at home.

Graduation Planning – Students with disabilities who are hoping to graduate in June, are concerned about marks and requirements to graduate or for admission to post secondary. Families and students are concerned about how planning for graduation will be supported.

Possible Solution:

That local Guidance department staff check in with all graduating special education needs students and their families where appropriate to provide support for their chosen pathway.

The understanding that education cannot be a “one-size-fits-all” model is evident. Online learning is not an effective or an accessible means to learn for all students. The spectrum of strengths and needs reflected in every student with autism should be mirrored in the spectrum of services and support readily available to them creating opportunities for a successful future for every student. Special education needs students would strongly benefit from a cross-ministerial strategic plan developed in close collaboration with all provincial and local partners and in particular with our students and their families.

³ <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/ppm156.pdf>