

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.



**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE
SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
PUBLIC SESSION**

HELD WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 04, 2024

PRESENT:

Trustees:

F. D'Amico
A. Kennedy – Virtual
M. Rizzo – Virtual

External Members:

G. Wedge, Chair
G. Feldman, Vice Chair
R. De Belchior – Virtual
J. Di Francesco
T. Munro
I. Novak - Virtual
M. Seymour - Virtual

Staff:

A. Della Mora
C. Fernandes
M. Meehan
A. Coke
D. Comacchio
O. De Figueiredo
M. Gendron
R. Macchia

S. Adaikpoh, Acting Recording Secretary
S. Hinds-Barnett, Assistant Recording Secretary

External Guest:

Fr. M. Lehman

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the Secretary, Maria Meehan.

5. Roll Call and Apologies

An apology was extended on behalf of Deborah Nightingale. Lisa Mason, Lori Mastrogioiuseppe and Ashley Pabon were absent.

6. Approval of the Agenda

MOVED by George Wedge, seconded by Tyler Munro, that the Agenda, as amended to include the following corrections, be approved:

That the names of the Chair and Vice Chair be omitted from the Agenda Cover and Order Pages due to today's elections.

On the Vote being taken, the Motion was declared

CARRIED

7. Election of Chair

Article 5.12.3 of the Toronto Catholic District School Board's (TCDSB) By-Law 175 (2016) was cited: "If there are two or more nominations for any position, the vote shall be conducted by secret ballot, provided that, with the agreement of a majority of Trustees, a recorded vote may be used pursuant to which the identity of both the Trustee voting and the name of the candidate are recorded and announced."

MOVED by Trustee Rizzo, seconded by Tyler Munro, that public votes be held at this meeting pursuant to the identity of the names of the candidates being announced.

On the Vote being taken, the Motion was declared

CARRIED

The Chair declared a five-minute recess.

The meeting resumed with Maria Meehan in the Chair with no change to the Roll Call.

The Secretary called for nominations for Chair.

MOVED by Tyler Munro, seconded by Trustee Rizzo, that the name of George Wedge be placed in nomination.

George Wedge accepted.

There were no further nominations.

MOVED by Trustee Rizzo, seconded by Jennifer Di Francesco, that nominations be closed.

On the Vote being taken, the Motion was declared

CARRIED

George Wedge was acclaimed Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee for 2024/2025.

The Secretary relinquished the Chair to George Wedge.

8. Election of Vice Chair

MOVED by Jennifer Di Francesco, seconded by Tyler Munro, that the name of Geoffrey Feldman be placed in nomination.

Geoffrey Feldman accepted.

There were no further nominations.

MOVED by Trustee Rizzo, seconded by Tyler Munro, that nominations be closed.

On the Vote being taken, the Motion was declared

CARRIED

Geoffrey Feldman was acclaimed Vice-Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee for 2024/2025.

9. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

10. Approval and Signing of the Minutes

MOVED by Jennifer Di Francesco, seconded by Geoffrey Feldman, that the Minutes of the Meeting held November 13, 2024 be approved.

On the Vote being taken, the Motion was declared

CARRIED

12. Member Statements

- 12a) From Trustee Rizzo regarding Congratulations to George Wedge and Geoffrey Feldman on Election as Chair and Vice- Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee.
- 12b) From Trustee D’Amico regarding Performance of George Wedge and Geoffrey Feldman as Chair and Vice- Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee.

15. Consent and Review

The Chair reviewed the Order Page and the following Items were held:

16a) Draft Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Annual Calendar 2024-2025 – Tyler Munro;

16b) Special Education Plan December 2024 – Jennifer Di Francesco

Sections for Discussion:

5. Special Education Staff;

6. Specialized Equipment; and

7. Transportation for Students with Special Education Needs;

17a) Special Services Superintendent Update – December 2024 – Jennifer Di Francesco; and

18a) Consideration of Motion from Tyler Munro, representative of Inclusion Action in Ontario, regarding Modified School Days, Denial of Education – Richelle De Belchior

16. Annual Calendar Items

MOVED by Tyler Munro, seconded by Jennifer Di Francesco, that Item 16a) be adopted as follows:

- 16a) Draft Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Annual Calendar 2024-2025** received.

On the vote being taken, the Motion was declared

CARRIED

Trustee Kennedy joined the virtual room at 8:12 pm.

MOVED by Jennifer Di Francesco, seconded by Geoffrey Feldman, that Item 16b) be adopted as follows:

- 16b) Special Education Plan December 2024** received.

Sections for Discussion:

5. Special Education Staff;

6. Specialized Equipment; and

7. Transportation for Students with Special Education Needs

On the Vote being taken, the Motion was declared

CARRIED

Ivona Novak left the meeting at 8:52 pm.

MOVED by Trustee Rizzo, seconded by Jennifer Di Francesco, that SEAC recommend to Board:

1. Mandatory professional development for bus drivers that transport students with special needs and provide ongoing support for bus driving staff should they be experiencing challenges with special needs students;
2. That the Minister of Education consider funding for special needs staff on school buses to assist with special needs students; and
3. That items 1 and 2 above be sent to the Transportation Consortium and Minister of Education.

On the Vote being taken on Item 1, the Motion was declared

CARRIED

On the Vote being taken on Item 2, the Motion was declared

CARRIED

On the Vote being taken on Item 3, the Motion was declared

CARRIED

17. Reports of Officials for Information by the Board/Other Committees

MOVED by Geoffrey Feldman, seconded by Jennifer Di Francesco, that Item 17a) be adopted as follows:

17a) **Special Services Superintendent Update – December 2024** received.

On the vote being taken, the Motion was declared

CARRIED

The Chair declared a five-minute recess.

The meeting resumed with George Wedge in the Chair.

PRESENT: (Following Recess)

Trustees: F. D’Amico
A. Kennedy – Virtual
M. Rizzo – Virtual

External Members: G. Wedge, Chair
G. Feldman, Vice Chair
T. Munro
M. Seymour – Virtual

There was no Quorum.

The Chair declared a five-minute recess to establish Quorum.

The meeting resumed with George Wedge in the Chair.

PRESENT: (Following Recess)

Trustees: F. D’Amico
A. Kenndy – Virtual
M. Rizzo – Virtual

External Members: G. Wedge, Chair
G. Feldman, Vice Chair
R. De Belchior – Virtual

J. Di Francesco
 T. Munro
 M. Seymour - Virtual

18. Consideration of Motions For Which Previous Notice Has Been Given

MOVED by Tyler Munro, seconded by Trustee Rizzo, that Item 18a) be adopted as follows:

18a) From Tyler Munro, representative of Inclusion Action in Ontario, regarding Modified School Days, Denial of Education:

WHEREAS: The mission of the TCDSB is to be an inclusive learning community uniting home, parish and school and rooted in the love of Christ;

WHEREAS: Modifying a special need student's school day denies them the ability participate in their school community, interact with their peers and bond the school community with their home and parish;

WHEREAS: Educating all students is the primary purpose of this school board and the publicly funded education system in Ontario;

WHEREAS: Time spent out of class for any student creates a gap in their education that needs to be closed so they may keep up with their peers. The more time out of class the bigger the gap and the more difficult it is to close. Closing this gap is even more difficult for a student that has a disability that affects their ability to learn. Should the gap become sufficiently large the student will not be able to close this gap regardless of supports provided at school or home and they will fail to graduate, be required to repeat a grade, be moved to a segregated Intensive Support Program (ISP) program where their education gap will continue to grow, thus breaking the link with their peers and school community;

WHEREAS: The Education Act provides Principals the ability to arbitrarily shorten a special needs student school day if the resources provided by the board are not adequate to educate the student full time. See:

R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 298: OPERATION OF SCHOOLS – GENERAL

Under daily "Daily Sessions" which states:

“3. (1) The length of the instructional program of each school day for pupils of compulsory school age and pupils in full day junior kindergarten or kindergarten shall be not less than five hours a day excluding recesses or scheduled intervals between classes. R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 298, s. 3 (1); O. Reg. 78/14, s. 1 (1).

...

(3) Despite subsection (1), a board may reduce the length of the instructional program on each school day to less than five hours a day for an exceptional pupil in a special education program. R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 298, s. 3 (3).”;

WHEREAS: Boards and Principals have interpreted this section of the Education Act to allow them to modify a special needs student’s school day up to and including having the student remain at home for an extended period of time and allow routine late drop offs and early pick-ups by the transportation department;

WHEREAS: The Education Act does not require tracking of the frequency of this decision, documentation of the reason, steps being taken to return the student to a regular classroom to resume their education;

WHEREAS: Given the multitude of challenges a Principal encounter every day in the performance of their duties it is easy for them to not prioritize the resumption of the education and return to school full time for a student on modified days; and

WHEREAS: This Modified school days and denial of education issues as it affects special needs students is a widespread problem in public education reported by many parents and organization/associations dedicated to supporting the families of special needs students as outlined in the 2 appendices attached from Inclusion Canada and the New Brunswick Child and Youth’s advocates office. It has also been brought up as an issue at TCDSB SEAC meetings by a Trustee;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: SEAC recommends to the Board a policy be created to track special needs students and those suspected of having special needs who are on modified days, be it one day or for an extended period;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: At the time of determining a modified days schedule will be implemented a report be prepared with key student information, school, date and involved staff and positions listed along with the reason for the decision and the plan to return the student to school full time. This report must be updated every two weeks throughout the school year with progress reports, changes in plans until the

student returned to school full time and/or other developments make it no longer required;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: A copy of the report and updated reports will be added to the student's Ontario Student Record (OSR), provided to parents, the Area Superintendent and Superintendent of Special Services. The Superintendents are to review the reports, delegate and follow up with their staff and others as appropriate with the goal of returning the student to school full time;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: A summary report of the numbers of student on "modified school days" be provided to SEAC and the Board of Trustees on a bi-annual basis, January and June of the school year. Showing monthly totals and year over year changes; and

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: Policy and Staff be ready to implement this process by the start of the next school year.

On the Vote being taken, the Motion was declared

CARRIED

25. Adjournment

MOVED by Geoffrey Feldman, seconded by Tyler Munro, that the meeting be adjourned.

On the Vote being taken, the Motion was declared

CARRIED

SECRETARY

CHAIR