

To: Special Education Advisory Committee

From: Jennifer Di Francesco

Date: May 21, 2025

Subject: Consideration of Motion - Motion to Reform Disciplinary Practices for Students with Learning Differences (Disabilities) and Special Education Needs

MOVED BY: Jennifer Di Francesco, **SECONDED BY:** Trustee D'Amico

WHEREAS: students with learning disabilities and special education needs, including ADHD, autism, and other neurodivergent conditions, often face disciplinary actions that do not align with their educational and developmental needs;

WHEREAS: punitive measures such as withholding recess, detentions, and exclusion from classroom activities disproportionately impact these students and do not address the root causes of behavioral challenges;

WHEREAS: Research from the American Academy of Pediatrics and educational psychologists highlights that recess and movement are essential for self-regulation, focus, and emotional well-being, particularly for students with ADHD and other learning differences; and

WHEREAS: Traditional punitive approaches often exacerbate behavioral challenges rather than support students in developing self-management skills. A shift toward positive, inclusive discipline aligns with human rights laws, Ontario's Education Act, and best practices in special education.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: SEAC recommend to the Board of Trustees that the policy prohibits the removal of recess and other physical activity as a form of punishment for students with learning disabilities or special education needs;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: SEAC recommend to the Board of Trustees that staff are training on trauma-informed and neurodiversity-affirming disciplinary approaches;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: SEAC recommend to the Board of Trustees that the policy encourages restorative practices, including conflict resolution and behavioral support strategies tailored to individual student needs;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: SEAC recommend to the Board of Trustees that the policy Implements a review system to track and assess disciplinary actions taken against students with special education needs to ensure compliance with equitable practices;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: SEAC recommend to the Board of Trustees that a Positive Discipline Policy is adopted and ensures all schools within its jurisdiction implement the outlined practices by September 2025 for the new school year;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: SEAC recommend to the Board of Trustees the policy prohibit the use of regulation-based supports — such as scheduled breaks, sensory room access, or movement opportunities, etc. — as contingent rewards. Resources that these children need to self-regulate should never be taken away because of not completing work or behavior discipline;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: SEAC recommend to the Board of Trustees that all school-based staff are training on trauma-informed and neurodiversity-affirming disciplinary approaches; and

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: SEAC further recommend to the Board of Trustees that the adoption and implementation of preventative, strength-based strategies that foster emotional regulation, connection, and engagement. These proactive approaches minimize the need for reactive disciplinary measures and contribute to more inclusive, supportive learning environments for all students.

Jennifer Di Francesco
Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada