



GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

The Special Education Advisory Committee meeting was held on Wednesday, June 10, 2026, at the Administration Building, 451 Park Street West, Windsor, ON.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Kim McKinley, Trustee

Joanna Conrad, Windsor-Essex Down Syndrome Association

Mary-Ann Fuduric, Learning Disabilities Association Windsor-Essex County

Mandy Hayes, Community Living Association

Lisa Tome, Windsor Council of Home and School Association

Tim McCarthy, Autism Ontario

Amanda Denhartogh, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise

BOARD PERSONNEL IN ATTENDANCE

Chris Mills, Superintendent of Schools/Special Education Programs and Services

Vicki Houston, Chief Executive Officer

Laura Bates, Supervising Principal of Special Education

Shelley Armstrong, Superintendent of Business, Treasurer and Facility Services

Shawn Maheux, Manager of Financial Services

Marc Crundwell, Supervisor of Psychological and Speech Language Services

Theresa Williams, OPC Secondary

Jodi Burgon, OPC Elementary

REGRETS

Chandrika Abhang, Trustee

RECORDER

Melissa Beaton

1. Call to Order

Chairperson McKinley called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm.

2. Acknowledgement of Traditional Lands and Water

Chairperson McKinley read the approved GECDSD Land Acknowledgement.

3. Approval of Agenda

Moved by: M. Fuduric

That SEAC approved the Agenda for June 10, 2026.

The motion was carried.

4. Declaration of conflict of interest

None

5. Approval of Minutes

Moved by: T. McCarthy

That SEAC approve the minutes of May 13, 2026.

The motion was carried.

6. Business Arising as a Result of the Minutes

There was no new business as a result of the minutes.

7. Special Education Presentation

- 2026-2027 Special Education Budget

Superintendent Armstrong and S. Maheux shared the overview of the GECDsB's draft 2026–27 Special Education budget. Total special education funding is projected at \$72.9 million, a decrease from \$75.3 million in 2025–26, largely due to declining enrolment. The Special Education Fund (SEF) represents \$60.8 million of this total, with the remainder coming from other Core Education funding sources. SEAC was informed of several Ministry changes, including the introduction of the new Special Education and Disabilities Transitions (SEDT) component to support student transitions into, through, and beyond school, as well as continued interim funding models for the Special Incidence Portion (SIP) and Care and Treatment Education Programs (CTEP).

The presentation also outlined the major Special Education funding allocations, including the Per Pupil Allocation, Differentiated Needs Allocation, Complex Supports Allocation, and Specialized Equipment Allocation. While some grant components increased due to benchmark adjustments, overall funding reflects declining student enrolment.

SEAC was advised that projected special education expenditures for 2026–27 are \$84.9 million, resulting in an estimated special education deficit of \$11.9 million, meaning the Board plans to spend significantly more on special education services than it receives in dedicated funding. Superintendent Mills noted that several programs and positions, including supports for GAINS, STEPS, MAPS, Blind/Low Vision, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, are only partially funded through Ministry grants, requiring the Board to supplement costs.

Members expressed concerns about the ongoing gap between student needs and available funding. Chief Executive Officer Houston referenced the findings from the Auditor General's report, which identified increasing student needs, education assistant shortages, delays in assessments, and inequities in access to support.

- ODA Plan 2026-2027

Superintendent Armstrong presented the 2026–27 Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) Annual Accessibility Plan, which outlines the Board's ongoing commitment to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers for individuals with disabilities. The plan supports compliance with both the ODA and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), and addresses key areas including information and communication, employment, transportation, customer service, and the built environment.

The plan highlights accessibility initiatives completed during the 2025–26 school year, including barrier-free entrance improvements, additional accessible parking, and door modifications at several schools. Planned projects for 2026–27 include new barrier-free washrooms, an elevator installation, automatic and replacement door projects, accessibility-related parking and pathway improvements, ramp construction, and fire

alarm system upgrades with visual strobes. The Board will also continue to review accessibility concerns, gather stakeholder feedback, and update its accessibility practices to support equitable access for students, staff, families, and community members.

8. Special Education Updates

- Professional Development Updates
L. Bates shared Standard 13 – Staff Development for an overview of professional development completed in the 2025-26 school year.
- Special Education Plan Review – L. Bates
Standard 1 – The Board’s Consultation Process
Standard 2 – The Board’s General Model for Special Education
Standard 6 – Educational and Other Assessments
Standard 10 – Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Transition Planning
Standard 12 – Special Education Staff
Standard 15 – Accessibility of School Buildings
Standard 16 – Transportation for Students with Special Education Funds
Appendix D – Coordination of Services with Other Ministries or Agencies
Appendix 5 – ODA 2026-2027 Plan

Feedback/revisions were collected to apply to the 2026-2027 plan.

9. Items for Future Agendas

No items.

10. Association Reports

- L. Tome, Windsor Council of Home and School Association – the association just held our elections for next year.
- M. Fuduric, Learning Disabilities Association Windsor-Essex County – our summer programs are gearing up including Sky High Discovery & Adventure Camp, Barton – Tutoring Assessment, Reading and Spelling, and Reading Readiness Junior. Subsidies are available.
- J. Conrad, Windsor-Essex Down Syndrome Association – a documentary was recently released; Unified Voices: Exploring the Down Syndrome Community in Canada which features a local resident, Jasmine.
- T. McCarthy, Autism Ontario - welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the 2026 update of the [Canadian Bar Association's Child Rights Toolkit](#). As an organization with a history of over 50 years supporting autistic children, youth, and their families across Ontario, we understand how legal and administrative systems shape autistic children’s daily experiences of dignity, inclusion, education, health care, and justice.
 - Gap 1: Limited Engagement with UNCRC Article 23 (Children with Disabilities)
 - Gap 2: Participation, Capacity, and Autistic Communication
 - Gap 3: Education as a Primary Site of Rights Violations

- Gap 4: Disability Bias in Youth Criminal Justice and Child Protection Systems

<https://www.cba.org/resources/practice-tools/the-cba-child-rights-toolkit/>

Child Care Programs: had the opportunity to provide input and recommendations regarding the Ministry of Education's proposed amendments to the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA). Overall, the proposed changes represent a meaningful and positive step toward strengthening child safety and program quality in licensed child care programs in Ontario. Establish missing child procedures, risk assessment and safety plans, training/prevention and adaptive equipment and dignity.

Autism Ontario shares many of the concerns highlighted in the [Audit Report on Special Education Needs](#) by the Auditor General of Ontario. The report confirms what our families have known for years: current provincial special education funding and policies are failing to meet the needs of students, educators, and school boards, resulting in lower academic achievement and higher numbers of students being excluded from school.

Upcoming local events include Crock A Doodle, Thursday, June 18, 2026. Please visit our Facebook page to other summer events.

T. McCarthy also shared that this may be my last SEAC meeting, our association hasn't identified a replacement.

11. Distribution

- Bluewater District School Board – Funding Support for Students with Special Education and Mental Health Needs
- Simcoe County District School Board – Funding Support for Students with Special education and Mental Health Needs

12. Adjournment

Chairperson McKinley adjourned the meeting at 2:41 pm.



NEXT MEETING, September 9, 2026

Board Meeting Minutes available on [GECDSB website](#).

Vicki Houston, Chief Executive Officer

Chris Mills, Administrative Liaison

Kim McKinley, SEAC Chairperson

[Ministry SEAC website](#)