



GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

The Special Education Advisory Committee meeting was held on Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at the Administration Building, 451 Park Street West, Windsor, ON.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Kim McKinley, Trustee

Joanna Conrad, Windsor-Essex Down Syndrome Association

Tim McCarthy, Autism Ontario

Lisa Tome, Windsor Council of Home and School Association

Cheryl Lovell, Trustee

Mandy Hayes, Community Living Association

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

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

BOARD PERSONNEL IN ATTENDANCE

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

Laura Bates, Supervising Principal of Special Education

Jodi Burgon, OPC Elementary

Theresa Williams, OPC Secondary

REGRETS

Marc Crundwell, Supervisor of Psychological and Speech Language Services

RECORDER

Melissa Beaton

1. Call to Order

Chairperson McKinley called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm.

2. Acknowledgement of Traditional Lands and Water

Chairperson McKinley read the approved GECDSD Land Acknowledgement.

3. Approval of Agenda

Moved by: C. Lovell

Seconded by: M. Furduric

That SEAC approve the Agenda for April 8, 2026.

The motion was carried.

4. Declaration of conflict of interest

None

5. Approval of Minutes

Moved by: T. McCarthy

Seconded by: J. Conrad

That SEAC approve the Minutes of March 11, 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

- Empowering Transitions

The Empowering Transitions initiative, funded through the Ministry of Education's Breaking Barriers grants, include two connected projects designed to support students with learning disabilities and/or ADHD as they transition from elementary school to high school. Both initiatives focus on building student confidence, self-understanding, and self-advocacy skills to reduce anxiety and promote successful transitions.

The first initiative, Student-Centered Learning and Exploration, uses the STEPS (Successful Transitions from Elementary to Post-Secondary) program developed by the Regional Assessment and Resource Centre (RARC) at Queen's University. Delivered in collaboration with Learning Support Teachers, the program supports Grade 7 and 8 students in understanding their learning profiles, Individual Education Plans (IEPs), strengths, area of needs, and accommodation strategies. Students also develop communication and self-advocacy skills essential for high school. The program is being implemented through both individual school models and a family-of-schools model, involving multiple elementary schools and collaboration with secondary Learning Support Teachers.

The second initiative, Level Up! Know Your Brain. Own Your Game, is a one-day, high energy transition event for students with learning disabilities and/or ADHD, scheduled for April 28, 2026. The event includes interactive sessions, team-building activities, and a keynote presentation by Scott Hammell, a four-time Guinness World Record holder. Students will explore how they learn, gain practical strategies, build confidence, and reframe learning differences as strengths. Parent and guardian learning sessions are also being offered, focusing on supporting successful transitions to high school, understanding learner profiles, and fostering self-advocacy. Together, these initiatives aim to empower students and families, strengthen collaboration between elementary and secondary schools, and better prepare students for the academic and social demands of high school.

8. Special Education Updates

- Tier 3 Updates

C. Mills provided an update on student achievement following the transition of RISE students to full-day homeroom placement in September 2025. The review compared report card data from the 2024-2025 (when students were supported through RISE) to school year to 2025-226 (homeroom placement).

Overall, the data shows stable to modestly improving achievement across subjects, with no evidence of a system-wide academic decline following the transition. Literacy outcomes demonstrated mild improvement, including fewer extreme low achievement

results and greater consistency in reading and writing profiles. Mathematics showed some of the clearest improvement, with many students experiencing gains of approximately one achievement and a noticeable reduction in lower-range results. It also highlighted a significant decrease in incomplete grades, suggesting improved access to instruction, assessment completion, and operational supports. While some individual variability in achievement was observed, this variability was connected to the consistency of supports rather than to student placement.

The findings indicate that the transition from RISE to homeroom placement did not result in academic harm and supports the continuation of inclusive practices with targeted interventions. Next steps include ongoing monitoring of former RISE students, continues strengthening of literacy supports across classrooms, and triangulating report card data with additional assessment measures to further inform instruction and support planning.

- Professional Development Updates
 - L. Bates shared an overview of the GECDSB Professional Activity (PA) Day learning, highlighting a strong system-wide focus on inclusion, equity, and supporting the whole child. Elementary and Secondary ESS PA Days held in January and February featured sessions on understanding student experiences through the video Growing Up Invisible, followed by reflective discussions and exploration of resources. Afternoon sessions focused on reviewing behaviour and safety plans. Professional development feedback, drawn from over 2,000 responses, emphasized increased awareness of equity versus equality, the importance of belonging, and a renewed commitment to inclusive language, practices, and student leadership. The update also included upcoming subject-specific professional learning scheduled for April 24, including sessions for LST, GLS, MAPS, ESL and STEPS staff. Topics include the use of artificial intelligence to support inclusive classroom practices, adapted physical education, and experiential learning through an Incubator Art Lab. Additional PD opportunities were shared, including sessions for SWDHH staff and upcoming GECDSB and OSSTF ECE professional learning events.

- Special Education Plan Review
 - Standard 3 – Roles and Responsibilities
 - Standard 8 – Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities
 - Standard 11 – Provincial Demonstration Schools in Ontario
 - Standard 14 – Equipment
 - Section C – Special Education Advisory Committee
 - Feedback/revisions were collected to apply to the 2026-2027 plan.

- Special Education events/dates
 - World Autism Day - April 2, 2026
 - Day of Champions (Elementary) – May 7, 2026, at Sandwich Secondary
 - Day of Champions (Secondary) – May 8, 2026, at Sandwich Secondary
 - Miracle League Days – May 19, 25 and 26, 2026 & June 2, 3 and 11, 2026 at Libro Centre Amherstburg

9. Items for Future Agendas

No items.

10. Association Reports

- L. Tome, Windsor Council of Home and School Association – Hugh Beaton Public School is hosting a production of Alice in Wonderland from May 26 – 28th, 2026.
- M. Fuduric, Learning Disabilities Association Windsor-Essex County – the 7th Annual LDA Parent Conference is being held May 20, 2026, information and flyer was shared with the committee. Social Skills – Dealing with Emotions Jr. started on April 11, 2026. LDAWE will be at the University of Windsor on April 27th from 9am – 12pm with the Accessibility Office, to support transitions.
- A. Denhartog, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise – FASD funding has moved to Partners for Planning.
- M. Hayes, Community Living Association – We have partnered with Windsor Family Network and their event Passons, People and Possibilities Fair being held on Saturday, April 11, 2026, at the Fogolar Furlan.
- J. Conrad, Windsor-Essex Down Syndrome Association – Celebrated World Down Syndrome Day on Saturday, March 21, 2026. In April we are starting an 8-week reading program, as well as dance classes for teens and adults, caregiver events, and gym rentals to promote socialization.
- T. McCarthy, Autism Ontario – Autism Ontario is pleased with the additional investment in the Ontario Autism Program (OAP). “We recognize the financial and emotional stress on families resulting from long waits for core clinical services for their autistic children,” says Marg Spoelstra, CEO of Autism Ontario, “so we are thrilled to see an increase of \$186 million for OAP; and we look forward to learning the details of this investment as well as the government’s strategy to ensure all autistic children have timely and equitable access to evidence-informed core clinical services.” Wait times for therapy are now at 5 years with some areas reporting up to 7 years. 88,000 registered but only 23% are receiving services.
Autism Ontario submits recommendations on Proposed School Resource Officer (SRO) regulation – the submission outlines considerations related to student well-being, school safety, and the potential impacts of police presence in school environments, particularly for autistic students and Black, Indigenous and racialized students with disabilities. It also highlights the importance of clear guidance, appropriate safeguards, and meaningful community engagement in the development and implementation of any such programs.

11. Distribution

- Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board – Impact of Bill 33, Supporting Children and Students Act 2025

12. Adjournment

Chairperson McKinley adjourned the meeting at 2:24pm.



NEXT MEETING, May 13, 2026

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

Vicki Houston, Director of Education

Chris Mills, Administrative Liaison

Kim McKinley, SEAC Chairperson

[Ministry SEAC website](#)