



GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

The Special Education Advisory Committee meeting was held on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, at the Administration Building, 451 Park Street West., Windsor, ON.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Lisa Tome, Windsor Council of Home and School Association
Tim McCarthy, Autism Ontario
Joanna Conrad, Windsor-Essex Down Syndrome Association
Martha Vukov, Community Living Essex County
Sarah Yang, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise
Kim McKinley, Trustee

BOARD PERSONNEL IN ATTENDANCE

Chris Mills, Superintendent of Schools/Special Education Programs and Services
Vicki Houston, Director of Education
Laura Bates, Supervising Principal of Special Education
Marc Crundwell, Supervisor of Psychological and Speech Language Services
Jodi Burgon, OPC Elementary
Theresa Williams, OPC Secondary

REGRETS

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

RECORDER

Melissa Beaton

1. Call to Order at 1:03pm – Chris called to order
C. Mills called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm.
2. Acknowledgement of Traditional Lands and Water
K. McKinley read the approved GECDSD Land Acknowledgement.
3. Elections for Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson (Trustee Chair and Association Vice-Chair)
C. Mills established quorum and declared nominations open for the position of Chairperson for SEAC for the 2026 year.

Nominations for Chairperson

K. McKinley self nominated for the position of Chairperson for the 2026 year. There were no other nominations. C. Mills declared K. McKinley as the Chairperson of SEAC for the year 2026 by acclamation.

Nominations for Vice-chairperson

Moved by T. McCarthy

That J. Conrad be nominated as the Vice-chairperson of SEAC for the year 2026. J. Conrad accepted the nomination. Seconded by M. Vukov. K. McKinley called for any other nominations. There were no other nominations. K. McKinley declared J. Conrad as the Vice-chairperson of SEAC for the year 2026 by acclamation.

4. Approval of Agenda

Moved by: T. McCarthy

Seconded by: S. Yang

That SEAC approve the Agenda for December 10, 2025.

The motion was carried.

5. Declaration of conflict of interest

None

6. Approval of Minutes

Moved by: T. McCarthy

Seconded by: S. Yang

That SEAC approve the Minutes of November 12, 2025.

The motion was carried.

7. Business Arising as a Result of the Minutes

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

8. Special Education Presentation

- Transition Service Navigator Overview presented by J. Newton

The Service Navigation Overview presentation outlined the Transition Navigator initiative, which aims to improve educational outcomes for students with special education needs and/or disabilities by strengthening transition practices into, during, and out of school. Funding through Ontario's REP program will support hiring Transition Navigators who collaborate with school boards, community agencies, and employers to ensure smooth transitions and share best practices.

For the 2025/2026 school year, priorities include sustained Transition Navigator support, enhanced cross-sector collaboration, and partnerships such as with Queen's University's RARC to develop programming for Grades 7 and 8 and host parent engagement events. Additional focus areas include earlier family connections to services, improved referral processes, and proactive planning to reduce crisis-based interventions.

Expected outcomes include stronger partnerships between schools and families, earlier access to community supports, increased family awareness of resources, and smoother transitions supported by aligned plans. The initiative emphasizes individualized planning, resource navigation, and coordinated efforts to prepare students for post-secondary pathways and adulthood.

J. Newton also shared updates on Project Search, including the development of a video and the completion of five structured meetings involving supervisors and students, with Community Living set to assume support after June. Three of these meetings were particularly impactful, led by interns who demonstrated strong self-advocacy, job skill development, and independent navigation—creating a sense of community among participants beyond employment skills.

9. Special Education Updates

Information

- Update for Supports on Tier 3 Students – C. Mills

The presentation highlighted successes in transitioning students from RISE programs back to their homerooms, emphasizing smooth integration, positive parent feedback, and strong staff collaboration. Students demonstrated improved academic achievement and social confidence, with notable progress in self-advocacy and reduced behavioral concerns. Examples included a Grade 9 student achieving a 78% math average post-destreaming and younger students fitting in socially and academically. Parents expressed satisfaction, and staff credited Learning Support Teachers (LST) and Educational Support Staff for their essential roles in planning and support.

Building on these successes, areas of continued focus were identified. These include ensuring meaningful participation for all students beyond physical presence, addressing academic gaps, and overcoming challenges related to technology use and stigma. Staff capacity building remains a priority, with SEA training and literacy initiatives aimed at strengthening instructional practices. Resource allocation, such as increased LST time and optimized scheduling, was also noted as critical for sustained progress.

Next steps involve enhancing staff training, leveraging assistive technology to close learning gaps, and normalizing classroom support to reduce stigma. Optimizing timetables and continuous monitoring of academic and social progress will ensure responsive interventions. These actions aim to build on current achievements and create a sustainable framework for inclusive education and student success.

- Professional Development Updates – L. Bates

There are many exciting professional development opportunities coming up. On January 16, during the elementary assessment and evaluation day, Early Childhood Educators will collaborate with their teaching partners, while Student Support Workers, Support Workers for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and Child and Youth Workers will work together. We are also engaging in discussions with our union partners to share areas of focus and explore professional learning opportunities. On January 30, the secondary professional assessment day will take place, with plans to work alongside the union to address varied learning needs. More details will be shared in January, and these days will look different for elementary and secondary staff.

- Special Education events/dates

- December 3, 2025 – John McGivney’s Hack the Holidays Event

If your organization has upcoming events/dates, please share with M. Beaton and we can pass that information along to the Committee.

10. Items for Future Agendas

If you have ideas for future agendas, please share them.

11. Association Reports

- L. Tome, Windsor Council of Home and School Association – we have meetings coming up in January, March and June. There will be a conference in May, no location has been established yet. As well as a candidate meeting for trustee.
- J. Conrad, Windsor-Essex Down Syndrome Association – We are just wrapping up all of our programs, holiday parties and caregiver support.
- T. McCarthy, Autism Ontario – upcoming events include Windsor caregiver coffee and chat on December 17th from 6pm – 7:30pm. And Windsor teen social club at Crock-a-doodle on December 16th from 6pm – 7pm.

Waiting for core Ontario autism services tops 5 years (according to the Canadian Press, December 2025). Families had been reporting wait times for access to core services

under the Ontario Autism Program creeping upward in the past several years, so advocates set about doing a survey of the community.

Families starting to receive funding now to pay for core therapies including applied behaviour analysis, speech language pathology and occupational therapy are people who registered for the program five years ago, the survey found. Paying out of pocket.

Figures obtained by the coalition through a freedom-of-information request show that more than 84,000 children are registered in the Ontario Autism Program to seek autism services and 19,600 of them are receiving funding to access core services.

“Based on the 2021 Stats Canada census, there are at least one in every 32 children in Ontario who are autistic”.

- K. McKinley, Trustee – interviews for new Trustees are being held December 15th.

12. Distribution

- College of Psychologist/Behaviour Analysis Ontario – Ensuring access and safety in psychological care in Ontario

13. Adjournment

Chairperson McKinley adjourned the meeting at 2:00 pm.



NEXT MEETING, January 14, 2026

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

Vicki Houston, Director of Education

Chris Mills, Administrative Liaison

Tim McCarthy, SEAC Chairperson

[Ministry SEAC website](#)