



GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

The Special Education Advisory Committee meeting was held on Wednesday, January 14, 2026, at the Administration Building, 451 Park Street West, Windsor, ON.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Kim McKinley, Trustee

Joanna Conrad, Windsor-Essex Down Syndrome Association

Sarah Yang, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise

Tim McCarthy, Autism Ontario

Mandy Hayes, Community Living Association

Chelsey Lakovic, Windsor Council of Home and School Association

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

Chandrika Abhang, Trustee

Cheryl Lovell, 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

Paula LaSala-Filangeri, Speech Language Pathologist

RECORDER

Melissa Beaton

1. Call to Order
K. McKinley called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm.
2. Acknowledgement of Traditional Lands and Water
K. McKinley read the approved GECDSD Land Acknowledgement
3. Approval of Agenda
Moved by: M. Fuduric
Seconded by: C. Lackovic

That SEAC approve the Agenda for January 14, 2026.

The motion was carried.

4. Declaration of conflict of interest
None

5. Approval of Minutes

Moved by: J. Conrad

Seconded by: S. Yang

That SEAC approve the Minutes of December 10, 2025.

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

- Speech Language Service presented by Paula LaSala-Filangeri

This presentation outlined the role of the Speech Language Pathologists (SLP) within the GECDSB schools. SLPs are regulated professionals with graduate-level clinical training and strict ethical standards, often serving as the first point of support for students with communication needs. The presentation emphasized that communication skills form the foundation of all learning, impacting reading, writing, oral communication, social interaction, and overall school success. SLPs support students across the entire school system and engage in a wide range of services, including collaborative consultations, comprehensive assessments, written clinical reports, individualized intervention planning, treatment blocks, and ongoing progress monitoring. Their work is integrated with curriculum expectations and directly supports foundational academic and communication skills. Typical SLP involvement may include eight or more treatment sessions, continual communication with educators and families, and adjustments to goals based on student needs.

SLP services help create inclusive, supportive learning environments where all students can thrive.

Following the presentation, members asked several questions regarding SLP staffing and service delivery. It was noted that the board employs 7.0 FTE SLPs, representing nine individual staff, who on average have approximately 30–60 students on their caseload, depending on school needs. SLPs provide both individual and small-group intervention blocks for students with similar goals, with programming varying by school needs.

Members asked about the referral process, and it was explained that referrals begin with an email and the use of an informal checklist to guide initial discussions and determine whether a formal assessment is appropriate. A form letter is shared with families in JK, SK, and Grade 1. SLPs provide consultation across K–12, with direct therapy focused primarily on JK–Grade 1. There is a wait time for formal assessments; however, SLPs prioritize timely intervention and determine the most appropriate point for assessment based on student needs.

The committee also discussed collaboration with the John McGivney Children's Centre (JMCC). JMCC provides medically based services, while board SLPs focus on curriculum-related needs. SLPs may refer students to outside agencies when needed and can support non-verbal students as part of their service role.

8. Special Education Updates

- Update for Supports on Tier 3 Students – C. Mills
The Tier 3 update highlighted continued success in student integration, with staff noting improved academic achievement, greater social confidence, stronger self-advocacy skills, and reduced behavioural concerns. Positive parent feedback and strong staff collaboration were emphasized as ongoing strengths. Upcoming activities include a system- and school-level review of report card and attendance data, along with gathering student voice through return visits to schools to monitor progress. The department continues to focus on meaningful participation for all students by addressing academic gaps, supporting technology use, and reducing stigma. Capacity building remains a priority through SEA training, literacy initiatives, and improved resource allocation such as increased LST time and optimized scheduling.
- Professional Development Updates – L. Bates
January professional learning focused on strengthening staff capacity across elementary, secondary, and PSSP teams. Elementary SSW, CYW, and SWDHH staff engaged in whole-child learning, including discussion of the documentary *Growing Up Invisible* to deepen understanding of the developmental impacts of neglect. Afternoon sessions centered on reviewing program supports and examining behaviour and safety plans. Secondary staff participated in similar whole-child learning, with additional focus on the impacts of childhood neglect and supporting MLL/ELL learners, followed by collaborative review of behaviour and safety plans.
PSSP teams—including Speech-Language Pathologists, Psychology, Social Work, Behaviour, and Open Minds—received additional guidance from supervisors regarding expectations for the professional learning days.
Professional learning also supports several Breaking Barriers Grant initiatives, including the Junior/Intermediate Literacy Pilot in five elementary schools, designed to enhance Tier 2 and Tier 3 structured literacy instruction using UDL, structured literacy practices, assistive technology, and data-informed decision-making. Additional training is being provided for the AIM (Accept, Identify, Move) self-regulation curriculum, which is being piloted across several schools through CYW-mediated programming to support students experiencing social-emotional and behavioural challenges.
- Special Education events/dates
 - World Braille Day – January 4, 2026
 - International Day of Education – January 24, 2026
 - Family Literacy Day – January 27, 2026

9. Items for Future Agendas

We have the next few months of meetings planned; if there are additional topics you would like to submit for consideration, please email C. Mills or M. Beaton.

10. Association Reports

Information

- T. McCarthy, Autism Ontario - **Webinar: Emotion Management & Energy Accounting**
Date/Time: January 15, 12:00–1:00 PM
Autism Ontario is hosting a virtual conversation with Dr. Isabelle Hénault, Psychologist, focusing on emotion regulation, autistic burnout, and relationship well-being. The session

will offer strategy-focused guidance for autistic adults, parents, caregivers, and professionals supporting individuals across home, school, and workplace settings.

Windsor – Caregiver Coffee & Chat

Date/Time: January 21, 6:00–7:30 PM Cost: Free.

A monthly in-person session for caregivers to connect, share strategies and resources, and find supportive conversation. Coffee, snacks, and a relaxed environment are provided.

West Windsor – Adult Social Club (Clay Model Workshop)

Date/Time: January 20, 6:00–7:30 PM Cost: \$5 per person.

A creative pottery workshop for autistic adults (18+), with or without a support person. Participants will learn hand-building techniques to create items such as a tree, vase, plate, bowl, or planter. Autism Ontario does not provide care-person support.

Windsor – Engineering for Kids (4-Week Program)

Dates: Wednesdays, January 28 – February 18, 6:00–7:30 PM Cost: \$20

In partnership with Engineering for Kids, this program introduces students ages 7–13 to civil engineering concepts, including the design of homes, bridges, tunnels, and skyscrapers. Participants will build structures using the Engineering Design Process. Caregiver must remain on site.

Webinar: Understanding Special Education (For Caregivers of Autistic Learners)

Date/Time: January 22, 12:00–2:00 PM

A live, two-hour session supporting caregivers who are new to special education in Ontario. Topics include key terminology (IEP, IPRC), how special education works, roles of families and schools, and where to find resources and supports. The workshop is designed to help caregivers collaborate effectively with school teams to support student success.

- S. Yang, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise – January’s FASD Caregiver Support Group focused on Surviving the Holidays, which was well attended. An Art and Wellness event is being planned, more details to follow.
- M. Fuduric, Learning Disabilities Association Windsor-Essex County – February 4th Caboto Charity Pasta Night from 4-7pm. February 20th, 1st Annual Indoor Golf Tournament being held at On the Green Indoor Golf. an indoor golf tournament is planned. For more information, please visit our website at <https://www.ldawe.ca/events/>. Our Winter programs are starting next week. Parent Support Groups are held the third Tuesday of each month from 6-7pm, registration is required: <https://www.ldawe.ca/parent-support/>

11. Distribution

None

12. Adjournment

Chairperson McKinley adjourned the meeting at 2:02 pm.



NEXT MEETING, February 11, 2026

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

Vicki Houston, Director of Education

Chris Mills, Administrative Liaison

Tim McCarthy, SEAC Chairperson

[Ministry SEAC website](#)