



GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

The Special Education Advisory Committee meeting was held on Wednesday, February 12, 2025, at the Administration Building, 451 Park Street W., Windsor, ON.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Tim McCarthy, Autism Ontario
Kim McKinley, Trustee
Chelsey Lackovic, Windsor Council of Home and School Association
Nancy Armstrong, Trustee
Joanna Conrad, Windsor-Essex Down Syndrome Association
Mary Ann Fuduric, Learning Disabilities Association of Windsor Essex County

BOARD PERSONNEL IN ATTENDANCE

Chris Mills, Superintendent of Schools/Special Education Program and Services
Laura Bates, Supervising Principal of Special Education
Vicki Houston, Director of Education
Shelley Armstrong, Superintendent of Business and Treasurer of GECDSB
Shawn Maheux,
Marc Crundwell, Supervisor of Psychological and Speech Language Services
Jennifer Newton, Education Coordinator/Transition Service Navigators
Bianca Rota, Education Coordinator/Transition Service Navigators

REGRETS

Martha Vukov, Community Living Essex County
Amanda Denhartogh, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise
Michelle Lowes, OPC Elementary Representative
Teresa Williams, OPC Secondary Representative

RECORDER

Melissa Beaton

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m.

2. Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we are on land and surrounded by water, originally inhabited by Indigenous Peoples who have travelled this area since time immemorial. This territory is within the lands honoured by the Wampum Treaties; agreements between the Anishinaabe (Ah-nish-e-naa-bay), Haudenosaunee (Hoe-den-oh-show-nee), Lenni (Len-eh) Lenape (Le-naw-pay) and allied Nations to peacefully share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Specifically, we would like to acknowledge the presence of the Three Fires Confederacy, Ojibwe (Oh-jib-way), Odawa (Oh-dah-wah), Potawatomi (Paw-taw-watt-ohme) and Huron/Wendat (Wen-dat) Peoples. We are dedicated to honouring Indigenous history and culture while remaining committed to moving forward respectfully with all First Nations, Inuit and Métis

3. Approval of Agenda

Moved by: M. Fuduric

Seconded by: J. Conrad

That SEAC approve the Agenda for February 12, 2025.

The motion was carried.

4. Approval of Minutes

Moved by: K. McKinley

Seconded by: N. Armstrong

That SEAC approve the Minutes of December 11, 2024.

The motion was carried.

5. Business Arising as a Result of the Minutes

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

6. Special Education Presentation

- Budget Survey

Presented by Superintendent of Business and the Treasurer of the GECDSB S.

Armstrong. Superintendent Armstrong focused on the budget development process, legislative requirements, and funding allocations. The Board must develop and approve a balanced budget by June 2025, as mandated by the Education Act. The budget process includes planning, consultations, and finalization, ensuring alignment with the Board's mission, vision and strategic priorities.

Key points discussed included the education funding formula, which considers factors like student enrolment, class size and school needs. Special Education Funding (SEF) was highlighted with a total allocation of \$62.4 million for the 2024-2025 school year, including per-pupil, differentiated needs, complex supports, and specialized equipment. The Board faces a deficit which resulted in a Multi-Year Financial Recovery Plan to achieve a balanced budget by 2026-2027. Challenges such as political uncertainties, enrolment changes, and inflation were also noted, with opportunities for public consultation through surveys, emails, and delegate participation at committee meetings.

- Kindergarten Entry Planning Information Night

Superintendent Mills introduced J. Newton and B. Rota to the committee, who are currently working as Transition Service Navigators. This position, in part, helps parents/guardians navigate pathways to school. They are currently working with our communications officer to update the Board's website to include pre-school supports, early years supports and supports for students aged 6-12 years. This year the Board hosted it's first Parent Information Night, Kindergarten Entry Planning for September 2025 for Students Requiring Supports and Services. The night included a transition timeline, registration, observations, and meetings with school teams and community partners. Specialized services, like psychological support, speech language, behavior services, and rehabilitation therapies, were highlighted, along with guidance for families of children with hearing, vision, and developmental needs. The presentation emphasized partnerships with Indigenous communities, external agencies, and resources like the SmartStart Hub and John McGivney Children's Centre to ensure seamless transitions and tailored student support.

The team also shared upcoming events: An Evening with Dr. Todd Cunningham and Planning for Success to Adulthood.

7. Special Education Updates

- Update on Restructuring Supports for Special Education
Superintendent Mills provided an update to the committee. A lot has been done, with more to do. Communication with parents/guardians took place in November, all principals reached out to families with students currently in RISE, we received approximately 170 responses. Administrators were asked to acknowledge the change and our commitment to ongoing support and invited input. Many themes were developed from this consultation with parents, including academic support, social/emotional support, teacher efficacy, professional development, resources, staffing considerations, and community partnerships. We have consulted with Superintendent of Student Well-Being as it relates to social/emotional support. Our next steps include consultation with union partners, principals, and students. We continue to review school profiles, our current resources, explore community partnerships, consultation with other boards and applications for Removing Barriers grants.
- PD Updates
L. Bates shared the professional learning for January and February 2025. In January elementary ESS staff spent time engaged in discussing the key components of planning and implementing Behaviour Plans. Matt Bergman from Novak Education presented to secondary staff with a focus on “A Deeper Look at Firm Goals and Flexible Means”.
February both Elementary and Secondary Educators, ESS and PSSP took part in the Provincial Priorities, achievement of learning outcomes in core academic skills, preparation of students for student success and student engagement and well-being.

8. New Business

There is no new business.

9. Association Reports

- M. Fuduric, Learning Disabilities Association Windsor-Essex County – our spring programs are available on our website, <https://www.ldawe.ca/programs2/>, subsidies are available Ontario Trillium Benefits.
- T. McCarthy, Autism Ontario - Celebrate the Spectrum (CTS). <https://celebratethespectrum.com/>
Note: The deadline to order flags, bracelets or croc charms is March 19, 2025 to have them arrive before World Autism Day on April 2, 2025.
Mind Matters: Supporting Mental Health. <https://www.autismontario.com/news/mind-matters-supporting-mental-health>.
Autism Ontario will be adding new mental health resources to this page, check regularly for updates. New Video: Finding Mental Health Supports for Autistic Kids & Teens. [Finding Mental Health Supports for Autistic Kids & Teens](#)
There are an assortment of video clips and resources available for download by clicking on the links (above).

School Mental Health Ontario. [Parents and caregivers - School Mental Health Ontario](#)
Call for Autistic Participants: The Report Card Project The Re Storying Autism
Collective is recruiting autistic individuals 16 years of age or older to participate in an
online exhibit sharing their experiences of k-12 educational assessments or report
cards.

10. Distribution

- Durham District School Board to Ontario College of Teachers
- Ottawa Catholic School Board to Minister Dunlop
- Ottawa Catholic School Board to Ontario Directors of Education
- Algoma District School Board to Ontario College of Teachers
- Ottawa Catholic District School Board to SEAC Chair

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 p.m.



NEXT MEETING, March 19, 2025

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

Vicki Houston, Director of Education

Chris Mills, Administrative Liaison

[Ministry SEAC website](#)