



GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

The Special Education Advisory Committee meeting was held on June 11, 2024, at the Administration Building, 451 Park Street W., Windsor, ON.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Tim McCarthy, Autism Ontario
Chelsea Lackovic, Windsor Council of Home and School Association
Mary-Ann Fuduric, Learning Disabilities Association of Windsor-Essex County
Kim McKinley, Trustee
Joanna Conrad, Windsor-Essex Down Syndrome Association
Martha Vukov, Community Living Essex County
Nancy Armstrong, Trustee
Amanda Denhartogh, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise

BOARD PERSONNEL IN ATTENDANCE

Chris Mills, Superintendent of Schools/Special Education Program and Services
Kristie Sweet, Supervising Principal of Special Education
Vicki Houston, Director of Education
Shelley Armstrong, Superintendent of Business and Treasurer
Shawn Maheux, Manager of Financial Services
Marc Crundwell, Supervisor of Psychological and Speech Language Services
Michelle Lowes, OPC Elementary Representative

ABSENT

Louise Cervini, Indigenous Representative
Tina Szymczak, Inclusion Action in Ontario

RECORDER

Melissa Beaton

1. Call to Order
The meeting is called to order at 1:03 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), Leni (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: C. Lackovic

That SEAC approve the Agenda for June 11, 2024.

The motion was carried.

4. Approval of Minutes

Moved by: T. McCarthy

Seconded by: M. Fuduric

That SEAC approve the Minutes of May 14, 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

- Special Education Budget

S. Armstrong and S. Maheux presented on the Special Education Budget. Each year we present the draft budget as it relates to Special Education. SEAC has an opportunity to participate in the budget. They shared that the budget as it is today, is under review. 97.8% of Special Education budget relates to staffing. The Board presented a preliminary budget to the Trustees on June 4th, 2024. We are projecting a deficit of \$6.4 million. All efforts for cost reduction have been looked at, for example professional development, meal, contingency without touching staffing. 80% of the overall budget represents salary and benefits. The deficit must be addressed over the next 2 years. They shared the 3 options with the Committee. First option is leaving the budget as is, this would require approval from the Ministry. The second would see a reduction of \$1.9 million in savings. The third option would see a fully balanced budget. Under option two would get our Board to 1%, 20 positions were identified, in all areas, to get to that point.

The funding model has changed, it is now being called Core Education Funding (CEF). What that has done is moved everything into six pillars including Special Education Fund (SEF).

Discussions have been taking place since the beginning of the year, every department has been thoroughly looked at. Special Education will continue to have a deficit. We are looking at all programs. Administration is in a separate envelope we have been fiscally responsible in that area. We looked at every position and matched it to a funding source, every effort has been made to stay away from reductions that impact students.

New for this coming year, some envelopes of funding have been removed and are now included in the SEF, any carry forward will role into the current year.

There are four elements of the SEF:

Per Pupil Allocation, is base funding to support all students with special education needs. Funding is primarily intended for staffing costs, as well as professional development and learning materials. This allocation is based on total enrollment (not just students with special education needs).

Differentiated Needs Allocation, addresses the variation among school boards with respect to students with special education needs and school boards' abilities to meet those needs due to geographic, linguistic, and sociodemographic factors.

Complex Supports Allocation, is for specialized supports for students with complex special education needs, including students who require support from more than two full-time board-paid staff at a time due to health and safety needs, children and youth who cannot attend regular school due to their primary need for care, treatment or because of a court order to serve a custody or detention sentence; and students with autism and other special education needs.

Specialized Equipment Allocation (SEA) is to assist with costs of specialized equipment essentials to support students with special education needs. This component is made up of the SEA Formula component and the SEA Claims-Based component.

The reported Special Education deficit is \$10.1 million, to help reduce this deficit we look to other areas.

We compared support staff from year to year, no reduction in support staff, with the exception of 5.5 FTE positions. We are combining the Education Assistant (EA) and Developmental Service Worker (DSW) to a single job classification of Student Support Worker (SSW), at a higher grid amount. This exception is to maintain the same level of expenses. We've restructured the position, part of our job is to increase capacity, a change in the grid will help with recruitment and retention. That change didn't come easy.

The three options are subject to a special board meeting, being held June 12, 2024.

Discussion

- Where will that money come from? There is a limited amount of surplus. We anticipate an \$8.8 million deficit and another \$6.4 million. If we continue at this rate, we'll be depleted by 2026-2027.
- You mentioned unfunded support staff? We are funded for 32 Educational Assistants; we currently have 552. No funding for SSW, the board has flexibility on how we hire.
- What is the percentage of sick leave? \$14.6 million, we anticipate \$7-8 million will be unfunded. This is consistent across the province. The sick leave plan won't change, we can try to reduce it. That is bargained centrally.

- Are other boards facing the same situation? If we look at Thames Valley DSB, they are more than double our size, their Special Education deficit is three times less, with over 80,000 students.
 - Why is that? They don't deliver the same model as us.
 - We accumulated \$30 million in surplus, what has happened? Part of that was Covid, utilities, supplies, extra curricular, that effected two school years. We are trying to be responsible with how we budget. We are getting to the point now where the funding isn't increasing to where expenses are. The way we choose to operate is a structural deficit. We may have to reimagine how we are doing things. It was noted most boards don't operate the same model as GECDSB.
 - Are French Immersion (FI) and International Baccalaureate (IB) Program funded differently? Or is that something the Board chooses? We are not funded for IB, some for FI. Challenges with FI class sizes are not maximized, so it becomes an unfunded teaching position. Transportation costs for those programs. We did make one change with FI and Tecumseh Vista Academy and Beacon Heights, readjusted the boundaries.
- Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA)
 - C. Mills shared the Board's plan for 2024-2025. This plan will be included in the Special Education Plan 2024-2025, once approved.
 - Renovations were completed during the 2023-2024 school year at Glenwood Public School, Hugh Beaton Public School, and Riverside Secondary School.
 - Renovations planned for the 2024-2025 school year at Massey Secondary School, Forest Glade Public School/Forest Glade Primary Learning Center, and Queen Elizabeth Public School.

7. Special Education Updates

- PD Updates
 - K. Sweet shared the professional development planned for the month of June.
 - June 7, 2024, we brought all elementary support staff together at the Ciociaro Club.
 - We offered three different sessions, which everyone rotated through. Those sessions included: Can't Read, Can't Write, Here's My Book, Building Better Behaviours and Compassion Fatigue.
- Special Education Plan Review (Standards 1, 4, 6, 9, 12, 14, Appendix 4, SEAC – Section C)
 - Standard 1: The Board's Consultation Process
 - Standard 4: Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies
 - Standard 6: Educational and Other Assessments
 - Standard 9: Special Education Placements Provided by the Board
 - Standard 12: Special Education Staff
 - Standard 14: Equipment
 - Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) – Section C
 - Appendix 4: Ontarians Disability Act 20224-2025 Plan
 - Since the budget has not passed, we will not be able to finalize our Special Education Plan. The Board has had a conversation with the Ministry of Education and they are aware. Feedback and revisions were collected to apply to the 2024-2025 plan.

Discussion

- Traditionally SEAC meetings have been held on Tuesdays, change with DC we are looking for another date, leave it open to the group for discussion.

A vote was called to move the meetings to Wednesday, and it was carried.

- MACSE: Collaborating with the Community May 2024
C. Mills would welcome input.

8. New Business

A motion was made that SEAC support Option 1 for the budget to bring to the Trustees.

Moved by: T. McCarthy

Seconded by: J. Conrad

Discussion

- Is the first option with no layoffs? Yes, it would require the Minister's approval.
- What happens if the Trustees vote to leave the \$6.4 million deficit? Multiple things could happen, right now we are required to report quarterly, would require additional reporting and meetings. If we move forward with it, we are out of compliance with the Education Act. We may have to revise our budget, go into monthly reporting and meetings. Right now, we are considered a medium to high-risk board. This could move us to a high risk. Our risk becomes higher and higher. It is unknown. If we continue the way we are, we are out of funds by 2026-2027. We are only delaying.
- Our board is not the only board, would that not work in our favour? It's a violation of the Education Act. We've seen it happen at other boards. We are trying to be proactive.
- Concerns were shared that the government is not doing their job.
- S. Armstrong is part of every Ministry meeting and it's brought forward where the pressures are, where are the concerns, meet with MPPs, the best we can do is advocate. We are one sector of the entire government.

A vote was requested to support Option 1 of the proposed budget.

The vote was called, and it was

DEFEATED

9. Association Reports

- M. Fuduric, Learning Disabilities Association Windsor-Essex County – We are currently enrolling students in our Summer Programs. We continue to offer Barton Reading over the summer. \$25/week for summer camp, with different themes each week. Our focus is on literacy, math, assistive technology, and their strengths. We welcome any student that is struggling to the camp.
- A. Denhartogh, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise – we had our last FASD Caregiver Support Group, we will pause for the summer and will kick off in September.

- T. McCarthy, Autism Ontario – The David Conforti - Reach for the Stars Award. This award is given to volunteers in the community who have made a direct impact on the lives of children and/or adults with autism. Applications can be found on the Autism Ontario website.

Building Brighter Futures Fund (BBFF) - Financial assistance provided to adults with autism, to better access participation in their communities. These reimbursements could include fees paid for recreation, skill development, respite, professional supports, tuition, etc. Information available on the Autism Ontario website.

Journey to Adulthood - An Overview - June 12th (6:30 - 8:30) pm online via ZOOM. A session for caregivers to assist with the transition from youth to adult. A broad overview will be provided regarding adult services, funding, and supports with key dates for applying. Information available on the Autism Ontario website to participate.

Additional Sessions Available:

June 17th: National Indigenous Peoples Day - Woodland Arts

June 20th: Awesome Moms

June 24th: Rad Dads

June 27th: How to Submit Your OAP Expenses Information Sessions

All above sessions are in the evening. Additionally, the above sessions will also be available for participation in July 2024 as well.

June 29th or June 30th: Autism Ontario Weekend at the Zoo

10. Distribution

There was no distribution.

11. Adjournment at 3:08pm



NEXT MEETING, Wednesday September 11, 2024

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

Vicki Houston, Director of Education

Chris Mills, Administrative Liaison

[Ministry SEAC website](#)