



# GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

## SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

The Special Education Advisory Committee meeting was held on Wednesday, November 13, 2024, at the Administration Building, 451 Park Street W., Windsor, ON.

### MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

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

### BOARD PERSONNEL IN ATTENDANCE

Chris Mills, Superintendent of Schools/Special Education Program and Services  
Laura Bates, Supervising Principal of Special Education  
Marc Crundwell, Supervisor of Psychological and Speech Language Services  
Vicki Houston, Director of Education  
Bianca Rota, Education Coordinator

### REGRETS

Martha Vukov, Community Living Essex County  
Michelle Lowes, OPC Elementary Representative  
Teresa Williams, OPC Secondary Representative

### RECORDER

Melissa Beaton

#### 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:01 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 November 13, 2024.

The motion was carried.

4. Approval of Minutes

Moved by: M. Fuduric

Seconded by: T. McCarthy

That SEAC approve the Minutes of October 9, 2024.

The motion was carried.

5. Business Arising as a Result of the Minutes

- Please send SEAC Committee Members the Ministry of Education presentation.

6. Special Education Presentation

- B. Rota presented our Breaking Barriers: Adapted Physical Education grant. In 2023-2024 GECDSB was awarded a \$40,000 Breaking Barriers grant for adapted baseball in partnership with the Toronto Blue Jays Jays Care Affiliate School Program. Four leadership classes received one day training from the Jays Care Affiliate Program and were responsible for two days of our All-Star Game activities. Every STEPS and GAINS Classroom had the opportunity to join a Leadership class for a day at the Miracle League Fields in Riverside or Amherstburg. The day was paid in full through the grant. The program teaches athletes living with disabilities the core life skills inherent to baseball, including teamwork, communication, determination, resiliency, inclusion, support and courage. Jays Care provided athletes with t-shirts, hats and adaptive equipment so they could represent their teams. Communication aids were sent to each school with 50 premade pictures. Each teacher also received a Jays Care Affiliate School flag to hang in their school. For the 2024-2025 school year we received close to \$75,000 to expand the program. GECDSB will pilot the Leadership Affiliate Program for the Toronto Blue Jays Jays Care, the leadership students will provide feedback for a possible launch across Canada next year. All high school leadership classes where a STEPS program exists have signed on.

We also have a new partnership with the University of Windsor, Human Kinetics program. APEX Program mission is to enhance the lives of adults with developmental disabilities through full inclusion in physical activity and sport. On November 15<sup>th</sup> STEPS teachers and Physical Education teachers will participate in a professional development morning at the University to learn about physical activity and sport for individuals with developmental disabilities by providing adapted physical exercise programming with the goal of enhancing overall health and quality of life. We are working with the University to develop manuals and videos to support physical education classes, along with the possibility of an in-school training with select schools to pilot a 6-week program with Leadership and STEPS students. We hope to see you in May and June at our second annual All-Star Game.

7. Special Education Updates

- Restructuring Supports for Students in the RISE Program, presented by C. Mills. On November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, the Trustees approved the Multi-Year Financial Recovery Plan (MYFRP). What this means for Special Education areas; a reduction in

Psychologists/Speech and Language Pathologists/Communicative Disorders Assistants. A change in delivery model for speech and language to support a mixed model of consultation and direct service. The service delivery model for psychological assessments would be examined to support a centralized list of students waiting for assessments and psychological consultations. A centralized list will help ensure that all students have equal access to the necessary assessments.

Restructure supports for students in RISE – the board will leverage this opportunity to examine class sizes, academic consistency, equitable access, and a more inclusive learning environment for its students.

Our process moving forward will involve engagement with all relevant stakeholders. Consultation has to occur before the final plan is presented.

We are seeking advice from SEAC in the following areas. What questions do you have for each consideration? What are other items we may need to consider?

C. Mills welcomed feedback from the committee, as listed below:

- Restructuring Special Education Staff
  - Who is going to support the students?
  - How are they going to be supported by the LST? What will the LST role look like?
  - Modification who is going to do that.
- Consultation with Union Partners (ETFO, OSSTF-ESS, PSSP)
  - Discussion with union partners may be a redefining of roles.
- Professional Development
  - Social/Emotional
  - Not all teachers are trained in Special Education
- Consultation with SEAC
  - Will continue to bring it back to SEAC for further consultation.
- Consultation and Communication with Parents/Guardians
  - Connection with families
  - Open dialogue with families many ways to communicate with administration, LST and teachers.
- System Communication
- Other – Consultation with community partners, i.e. John McGivney Children Centre, Regional Children’s Centre, Learning Disabilities Association

This is the beginning of the consultation, please forward any questions or considerations to C. Mills.

- Professional Development Updates
  - L. Bates presented the Professional Learning for November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Elementary Educators and ESS staff engaged in Math Learning, Ministry Math Priorities and Knowing the Math Learner. Elementary RISE and ESL Educators took part in JUMP Math, Ministry Priorities and System Learning, Knowing the Math Learner. ECE’s engaged in learning with their teaching partners within their home school. GAINS SSWs will be attending a GAINS learning session with their GAINS team at Tecumseh Vista. ESS in elementary will engage in Math learning with their school teams. GAINS Teams had a choice of multiple sessions to engage in learning to support GAINS classroom programming and planning in a supportive learning

environment. Sessions will be led by community partners, as well as members of the GECDSB Special Education Team. Secondary Educators took part in subject specific areas. Secondary STEPS, MAPS and LSTs focus on providing varied learning experiences. A number of PSSP team members will be leading PD sessions for staff across the system. Members of the Psychology team will engage in additional learning experiences including the Dorothy Hill Memorial Symposium.

T. McCarthy suggested for future professional development a parent/student forum.

- Special Education Survey

C. Mills shared the feedback from our Special Education Survey. The format is a little different this year, it was well received by the committee.

The feedback will be shared with the committee members.

## 8. New Business

- T. McCarthy suggested other school boards have a governance for SEAC members, roles, and responsibilities, can we look at that in the new year? The Ministry presentation could be included.

Did have some questions about a handbook and terms of reference. C. Mills and L. Bates will begin investigating other boards.

## 9. Association Reports

- M. Fuduric, Learning Disabilities Association of Windsor-Essex County – renovations are almost done, we will have 2100 square feet for classroom space. Barton Reading and Spelling is running and open to any child/adult – we are seeing really good success with it. December 6<sup>th</sup> is Kids Club, December 16<sup>th</sup> Youth Group Holiday Party.
- T. McCarthy, Autism Ontario – meeting with virtually with other Autism Ontario SEAC representatives on November 14<sup>th</sup>. West Region, online – Pathways to Special Education Support: Meet and Greet for Families will be held on November 14<sup>th</sup> from 12-1:30pm. Are you interested in learning more about supports to help you navigate special education in your area? Join us for an informative and interactive virtual meet-and-greet, where you can connect with your local Autism Ontario team and volunteer SEAC representatives. During this session, you'll discover the programs and supports available in your region and understand the role of SEACs in advising school boards on special education. It's also a great opportunity to share your school-related experiences and connect with others in your community.

We would also like to extend an invitation to come to our office and have our January 8<sup>th</sup> meeting there.

- A. Denhartogh, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise – we continue to offer our Caregiver Support Group – December will be Surviving the Holiday. Flyer will be shared with the committee.
- J. Conrad, Windsor-Essex Down Syndrome Association – Sadly we have had some loss in our community. Three babies were born in the last three months. A number are falling through the cracks we would like to connect with families. We have ongoing events – Parents Night Out, Christmas Party. We are also looking for someone to deliver a reading program to our youngsters, we do have funding. If you know of anyone, please let us know.

## 10. Distribution

- Autism Ontario Pathways to Special Education Support: Meet & Greet for Families
- Regional Assessment and Resource Centre (RARC) - Parent Workshop Series
- RARC – Post-Secondary Transition Information Night

K. McKinley - next month, will choose a new chair – want to thank all of you for your support.

## 11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:36 p.m.



NEXT MEETING, December 11, 2024

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

Vicki Houston, Director of Education

Chris Mills, Administrative Liaison

[Ministry SEAC website](#)