



Special Education Advisory Committee

Minutes - January 7, 2026

A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) was held virtually on Wednesday, January 7, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. with the following members in attendance:

Trustees: Samantha Estoesta, Joe Meissner

Association Members: Jennifer Checkley (Easter Seals), Ami McIntosh (Autism Ontario), Shannon Taylor (Epilepsy South Central Ontario), Roberta Thompson (Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society)

Non-Association Members: Carmen Sutherland (Waterloo Region Family Network)

Board Staff in Attendance: Jodi Albrecht (Superintendent, Student Achievement & Well-Being), Erin Bell (System Administrator), Bobbie Chatha (Superintendent), Jennifer Crawford (Administrative Assistant), Wendy Farkas (Secondary Literacy Consultant), David Lane (Executive Manager Research), Bobbie-Jo Lovell (System Administrator), Stephen McCrae (System Administrator), Carli Parsons (Acting Secondary Principal), Vinay Tiwari (System Administrator)

Guest: Nicole Stockie (WRDSB Parent), Lisa Weiler Haskins (President Educational Assistants Association)

Regrets: Lilly Adam (YMCA of Three Rivers), Lisa Bonnell (Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children), Michelle Hughes (FASD/ONE Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise), Christine MacDonald (Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County), Jane Martin (Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy), Jeff Senior (Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society), Esther Wainaina (Human Rights Officer - Lead Accessibility Plan), Kathy Waybrant (Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy)

Call to Order

Shanon Taylor called the meeting to order at 7p.m.

Welcome & Territorial Acknowledgement - Jodi Albrecht

Approval of Agenda

Moved by Roberta Thompson, seconded by Carmen Sutherland:

That the agenda of the January 7, 2026 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, be approved.

- Carried -

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Roberta Thompson, seconded by Jennifer Checkly:

That the minutes of the December 10, 2025 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, be approved.

- Carried -

Business Arising from the Minutes

- None

WRDSB Special Education & Student Well-Being Report - Jodi Albrecht

- Information
 - System Updates
 - [WRDSB Student Census Presentation](#), Presented by: David Lane, Executive Manager Research; Vinay Tiwari, System Administrator; Bobbie-Jo Lovell, System Administrator; Carli Parsons, Secondary Principal
 - A confidential voluntary survey to help identify differences or gaps in student experiences and outcomes based on students' diverse identities
 - There is a questionnaire for parents of students grades JK-3, and a questionnaire for students from grades 4-12
 - Completed by students during regular school hours

- In alignment with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
- Tentative launch date: March 2026
- Feedback:
 - ACE classrooms are not represented in the current grade breakdown on the survey
 - Open ended options for question about if you have a disability
 - Screening question- use plain language
 - Trustee, Samantha Estoesta shared: Chief Executive Officer for the Government of Canada has an outline for groups relating to disabilities and health conditions - Could look at these groupings to continue their standard
 - Change some wording and shorten the section with the definition, some people with disabilities may get lost in the wording
 - Like the second list of disabilities/health concerns. Feel you could remove the first screening question as it is not needed
 - The labelling can be confusing to some people who don't identify with the overall title but have some of the related learning components
 - Adding an option of "none of the above"
 - How would ACE students participate?
 - Will look at a case by case scenario to support participation.
 - Why are disabilities and health conditions together in the same section?
 - Health issues can impact student learning
 - Belonging and Engagement section

- Feeling included as part of Special Education and a part of the school community
 - Outlining where they do not fit in with mainstream learners
 - Many areas to consider: school, activities, sports etc.
 - Add a question to the survey asking where students are not fitting in to their school communities
- Discussion
 - [Strategic Literacy Planning in Secondary Schools: Access, Equity, and Achievement](#), Presented by: Erin Bell, System Administrator; Wendy Farkas, Secondary Literacy Consultant; Bobbie Chatha, Superintendent
 - Structured Literacy Intermediate Division, grades 7-10
 - Structured Literacy Multi Year Plan: Currently Years 2-4
 - Fluency and language comprehension
 - Tier One, Two, Three approach to learning
 - Collecting reading screening data from grade 9 destreamed classrooms
 - Use of the San Diego Quick Assessment tool
 - Use of this screener for: ACE, Fast Forward, MLL
 - Starts at the pre primer level using word lists
 - Helps to identify the instructional reading level
 - Based on research using Scarborough's Rope and the Science of Reading
 - Dibels 8th: Set of measures used to detect potential risk and monitor student literacy and reading development
 - Blue: Well above benchmark

- Green: At benchmark
 - Yellow: Below benchmark
 - Red: Well Below benchmark
 - Gaps that need to be closed
- Tier 3 increases frequency and comprehension
 - MLL and ACE students have access to Lexia
 - Literacy Support/Lead Teacher in each school
- Feedback:
 - How are ACE classes fitting into this model?
 - Find the right program and fit for the student
 - Adapting resources
 - Going at a slower pace and adjusting instruction accordingly
 - Developing a complex cognitive profile

Chair Report for discussion/feedback - Shannon Taylor

- Chair & Vice Chair 2026-2027
 - Nominations for the role of SEAC Chair and Vice Chair
 - Motion to have Roberta Thompson as Chair of SEAC for 2026-2027
moved by Carmen Sutherland, seconded by Jennifer Checkley
 - Carried -
 - Motion to have Shannon Taylor as Vice Chair of SEAC for 2026-2027
moved by Carmen Sutherland, seconded by Jennifer Checkley
 - Carried -

Trustee Report - Joe Meissner

- [January Trustees Report](#)
 - Strategic Plan Community Consultations
 - Virtual Townhall Meeting, January 22, 2026, 6-8pm
 - Audio, video, and text submissions available

Round Table Association Reports

- Jennifer Checkley, Easter Seals Ontario

- [2026 Summer Camp](#)
 - Camp Registration opens Jan 21, 2026
 - Changes to Family Camp in August
 - Now open to individuals up to age 42
- Carmen Sutherland, Waterloo Region Family Network
 - [School Navigation Workshop - Transitions Workshop](#)
 - Designed to help parents and caregivers support children with exceptional needs through daily and major school transitions
 - Thursday January 15, 2026, 6:30-8pm
 - KidsAbility, 500 Hallmark Dr. Waterloo
- Roberta Thompson, Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society
 - Preparing for World Down Syndrome Day
 - 2026 Calendar Series available on our [website](#)
 - T-shirts and socks available on our [website](#)
 - Pizza party Feb 27, 2026

Adjournment

Moved by Shannon Taylor, seconded by Roberta Thompson:

That the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting be adjourned.

- Carried -

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.