



Special Education Advisory Committee

Minutes - June 10, 2026

A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) was held virtually on Wednesday, June 10, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. with the following members in attendance:

Association Members: Jennifer Checkley (Easter Seals), Jane Martin (Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy), John Newton (Autism Ontario), Shannon Taylor (Epilepsy South Central Ontario), Roberta Thompson (Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society)

Board Staff in Attendance: Jodi Albrecht (Superintendent, Student Achievement & Well-Being), Jennifer Crawford (Administrative Assistant), Stephen McCrae (System Administrator)

Guest: Esther Wainaina (Human Rights Officer - Lead Accessibility Plan), Deepa Ahluwalia (Human Rights and Equity Advisor)

Regrets: Lilly Adam (YMCA of Three Rivers), Lisa Bonnell (Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children), Samantha Estoesta (Trustee), Michelle Hughes (FASD/ONE Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise), Ami McIntosh (Autism Ontario), Joe Meissner (Trustee), Jeff Senior (Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society), Carmen Sutherland (Waterloo Region Family Network), Kathy Waybrant (Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy), Lisa Weiler Haskins (P Educational Assistants Association)

Call to Order

Roberta Thompson called the meeting to order at 7p.m.

Welcome & Territorial Acknowledgement - Jodi Albrecht

Approval of Agenda

Moved by Shannon Thompson, seconded by Jenn Checkley:

That the agenda of the June 10, 2026 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, be approved.

- Carried -

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Jenn Checkley, seconded by Jane Martin:

That the minutes of the May 6, 2026 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, be approved.

- Carried -

Business Arising from the Minutes

- Proposing recruiting new members for our SEAC group
- Succession Planning
- Posting a recruitment announcement with the WRFN

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

– Information-System Updates

Budget Update

- Reduction in Special Education funding for next year- we are working through this still
- Summer funding has not been released yet, hoping for similar funding from previous years
- [Elementary Behaviour Program](#)- Name Review, presented by Steve McCrae, Special Education System Administrator
 - Shaping the future identity of the program
 - Anchored in WRDSB Conditions for Learning: Pedagogy, Assessment, Learning Environments, Engagement
 - Moving away from giving a student a clinical label that will stay with them through their school years
 - Cultivating Essential Core Competencies: Emotional Regulation, Resiliency, Problem Solving, Building Healthy Relationships, Self-Advocacy, Academic Foundation

- Goal to build skills and continue to support those skills as they return to their home school
- Looking for a new name for this program: Cedar, Pine, Paths
Using acronyms, metaphors, and imagery
- Feedback
 - Thoughts in alignment with the Fast Forward program naming: physically and metaphorically moving forward. Using a growth mindset. Name Paths would be in correlation to this other program
 - Cedar is a beautiful tree and is stand alone, can be developed into so many other things, love the acronym
 - A forest of ideas and concepts
 - Love the direction of this program and removing the clinical aspect of the program origins
 - Love nurturing, staff are very supportive, outlining Inclusion, and empowerment
 - Each name is strong
 - Pine is hard, sappy, doesn't change, and not my favourite, this name doesn't make me excited
 - Don't like any of them, Paths is okay, could see this in relation to my child, Pine is a good image, not liking the words associated with the program names proposed
 - Not having words under the title to make an acronym, title is enough
 - Feels students should be listed, eg) Providing, Teaching, Helping, Students
 - Who are we serving, helping, what are we trying to achieve should be reflected
 - Catchy and easy to remember
 - Cool phrases and marketing sell

- Likes the trees as a respite, having a break from a regular class to learn new skills, creating mind & body connections, then return to home school
- Discussion
 - [Multi Year Accessibility Plan](#), Presented by: Esther Wainaina, (WRDSB Human Rights Officer), Deepa Ahluwalia (WRDSB Human Rights and Equity Advisor)
 - Accountable to the AODA, 5 standards: Customer Service, Education, Information & Communication, Employment, Built Environment, Transportation
 - Accessibility Committee members from: Communications, Information Technology, Education, Schools, Special Education, Research, Finance, Human Resources, Transportation, and the Human Rights Branch
 - Looking for gaps and what to focus on in this new plan
 - Accessibility benefits everyone, removing barriers so everyone can participate fully
 - Goal by 2031 for schools to be more inclusive, equitable, and accessible than ever before
 - [Feedback on the Multi Year Accessibility Plan](#), Due June 30, 2026
 - National Accessibility Week was June 3-9, 2026
 - Inaugural National Accessibility Week countdown was implemented this year
 - Collaboration with the Human Rights branch, Special Education, and Indigenous and Equity Reps from various schools
 - Inclusion workshops held at our schools
 - Feedback:
 - Physical spaces, elevator repairs, how does the budget work for these repairs?

- Do repairs at the end of the school year get put off until September? Elevator at son's school has been broken for a few days
 - Facilities project managers map out work that needs to be done in our schools and schedules repairs
 - Reach out to the accessibility team to help navigate accessibility issues
- Stairs and ramps for stages, are you using the Rick Hanson grants?
 - Yes, they are being used, purchased two ramps from this grant for WRDSB schools
 - There is a lift available to schools to book
 - New system memo going out to inform schools of this resource and its availability
 - Looking into getting more to support our schools
- Office of the Auditor General of Ontario
 - [Special Education Needs Report](#)
 - Looking at Special Education programs
 - Provided recommendations
 - 2014-2024 reviewed, enrolment increased 4 percent, Special Education needs increased 7 percent.
 - Studied 3 school boards
 - Developed 15 recommendations- we have begun and will continue to engage in reviewing and responding to the recommendations in the coming year.

Trustee Report -

- [June Trustees Report](#)

Round Table Association Reports

- Jennifer Checkley, Easter Seals Ontario

- Easter Seals Canada has partnered with Scotiabank, through its [ScotiaRISE Supporting Students through Accessible Technology Program \(SSATP\)](#), to offer financial grants to students entering Grade 11 and 12 in fall 2026, to support their future plans. Applicants must be a registered client of Easter Seals Ontario and a resident of Ontario. [Link to application page](#). Deadline to apply is September 11, 2026.
- Easter Seals is concerned around special education funding
- Meeting with various Easter Seals reps to discuss the issue
- Attended Dancing with Easter Seals Stars on May 9, 2026
 - Excellent event, looking for dancers for next year's event
- Carmen Sutherland, Waterloo Region Family Network
 - [Pathological Demand Avoidance \(PDA\) Support Group](#) Meetings
 - July 8, In-person, 500 Hallmark Dr. Waterloo, 6-8pm
 - August 6, Virtual meeting, 7-9pm
- Jane Martin, Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy
 - Gently used clothing donations: Value Village will come to your house to pick up donations
 - Adapted/Family Ceili, Kitchener City Hall Rotunda, October 3, 2026, 1-4pm. Tickets will be on sale.
 - Collecting SEAC members personal quotes to assist with the fall SEAC member drive to promote and source new members for our committee
- Shannon Taylor, Epilepsy South Central
 - Kitchener Soccer Club looking for help in connection with the [Ontario Blind Sports Association](#), looking for soccer coaches for this program
- Roberta Thompson, Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society
 - [Up Side Down Charity Golf Tournament, June 15, 12pm, Ariss Valley Golf and Country Club](#)
 - [Summer Family Picnic](#)
 - Busy planning for next year's events

Adjournment

Moved by Roberta Thompson, seconded by Shannon Taylor:

That the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting be adjourned.

- Carried -

The meeting adjourned at 8:45p.m.