



Special Education Advisory Committee

Minutes - March 11, 2026

A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) was held virtually on Wednesday, March 11, 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 Bechtel (Spec Ed Consultant), Jennifer Crawford (Administrative Assistant), Heather Inch (Spec Ed Consultant), Kristin Jones (Spec Ed Consultant)

Guest: Lisa Weiler Haskins (VP Educational Assistants Association), Niki Kazemzadeh (Parent of the WRDSB)

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), Stephen McCrae (System Administrator), 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

Roberta Thompson called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Welcome & Territorial Acknowledgement - Jodi Albrecht

Approval of Agenda

Moved by Carmen Sutherland, seconded by Jennifer Checkley:
That the agenda of the March 11, 2026 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, be approved.

- Carried -

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Carmen Sutherland, seconded by Jennifer Checkley:
That the minutes of the February 11, 2026 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

- Discussion
 - [Building Co-operative Relationships: A Neurodiversity Affirming Approach Presentation](#), Erin Bechtel (Special Education Consultant), Heather Inch (Special Education Consultant), Kristin Jones (Special Education Consultant)
 - Professional development initiative
 - Response to rise in referrals for support in Kindergarten to Grade 2
 - Increased numbers of neurodivergent students
 - Offering training for reduction in safety concerns, increased engagement, and solutions and training on how to meet these needs

- For school teams made up of Administrator, Classroom Teacher, and Special Education Resource Teacher
- Use ABA - Applied Behaviour Analysis, to understand why behaviour is happening
- Shifting from compliance models to cooperation strategies
 - Moving towards system-wide culture- began with 45 schools this year
 - PD for ACE Educators and Educational Assistants coming
 - Continuing to grow conversations and build systemic change
- Feedback:
 - Can envision where this will end up in the future
 - Changing community culture and finding allies in education
 - Applauding this venture and excited to see where this goes
 - This is hard work, starting with small groups (15 schools at a time) and engaging in challenging conversations
 - Everyone is learning together. Changing what was historically taught and owning the history we have all been involved in.
 - Making space for practise, growth, and not perfection
 - I love the approach, it makes total sense but how does this work when there are time constraints?
 - I see how this is being acknowledged and addressed.
 - What will happen with the historical behaviour data gathered on students as we embrace the changes?
 - Will be part of the feedback we gather from schools
 - Use as examples for future reference and use
- Draft Policy Review
 - [P1017 Human Rights](#)
 - [P2009 Board Advocacy](#)

- [P3005 Expressions of Sympathy](#)
- [P3008 Use of Board Resources During the Election Campaign](#)
- [P4006 Parking on School Board Property](#)
- [P6005 Adult and Continuing Education](#)
- Feedback:
 - SEAC members will individually submit their feedback on the shared policies.

Chair Report for discussion/feedback - Roberta Thompson

- [Simcoe County DSB Letter](#)
 - WRDSB SEAC is writing a letter in support
- [Letter from Chair, Board of Trustees to the Minister of Education](#)
- [Letter from Chair, Board of Trustees to the Ombudsman](#)
- [Durham DSB Letter](#)
 - WRDSB SEAC is writing a letter in support

Trustee Report - Joe Meissner

- [March Trustees Report](#)

Round Table Association Reports

- Jennifer Checkley, Easter Seals Ontario
 - Ontario post-secondary scholarship applications are open until April 17, 2026. Please visit our [website](#).
 - Summer Camp registration is open. Please visit our [website](#).
- Carmen Sutherland, Waterloo Region Family Network
 - Kaleidoscope Kids, Early ON Oak Creek, 80 Tartan Ave. Kitchener, March 28, April 18, May 23, and June 27, 2026, 3:30-4:30pm, [flyer](#)
 - School Navigation Workshop Series - Making your IEP Work: Virtual, May 6, 6:30-8:30pm, [flyer](#)
 - Evening of Elegance 2026, April 24, 2026, 7-10pm, St. George's Banquet Hall, Waterloo, Tickets available on our [website](#).

- National Accessibility Week Tradeshow & Conference, June 1-2, 2026, Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum, free admission but [registration is required](#)
- Amy McIntosh, Autism Ontario
 - Updates on our [website](#)
- Roberta Thompson, Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society
 - Preparing for World Down Syndrome Day, Mar 21, 2026
 - Teachers and Coaches encouraged to take pictures of class or team rocking colourful socks, post it to social media tagging WWDSS for a chance to win a pizza party, 4 winners chosen randomly

Adjournment

Moved by Carmen Sutherland, seconded by Jennifer Checkley:

That the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting be adjourned.

- Carried -

The meeting adjourned at 9:00p.m.