



Special Education Advisory Committee

Minutes - May 6, 2026

A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) was held virtually on Wednesday, May 6, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. with the following members in attendance:

Trustees: Samantha Estoesta, Joe Meissner

Association Members: Jennifer Checkley (Easter Seals), Jane Martin (Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy), Ami McIntosh (Autism 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), Jennifer Crawford (Administrative Assistant), Stephen McCrae (System Administrator)

Guest: Esther Wainaina (Human Rights Officer - Lead Accessibility Plan), Lisa Weiler Haskins (P 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), John Newton (Autism Ontario), Jeff Senior (Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society), Shannon Taylor (Epilepsy South Central Ontario), Kathy Waybrant (Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy)

Call to Order

Roberta Thompson called the meeting to order at 7:02p.m.

Welcome & Territorial Acknowledgement - Jodi Albrecht

Approval of Agenda

Moved by Jenn Checkley, seconded by Carmen Sutherland:

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

- Carried -

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Carmen Sutherland, seconded by Roberta Thompson:

That the minutes of the April 8, 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

- Information
 - System Updates
 - Student Symposium: Our Voices, Our Future: Student Disability Justice and Joy (Secondary and Grade 7-8 Students)
 - May 6, 2026, 9-1:30pm, Education Centre
 - Focus: Create connections, build advocacy, and share disability joy through speakers and workshops
 - 31 schools participated: 15 secondary, 16 elementary
 - 138 students, 34 from ACE classrooms, 44 Staff
 - Keynote: Disability Aesthetics: Thinking in Access - presented by Jack Hawk, from Tangled Art & Disability
 - Workshops Offered:
 - Next Gen Change: Talina Papazian, Author - You Taught Me
 - Advocacy & Affinity Groups: facilitated by Teresa Dunat (Consultant, Special Education), featuring a student panel

- Building Disability Confidence, Connection, and Allyship: presented by: Winnikka Matthews, Ase Community Foundation for Black Canadians with Disabilities
 - Virtual Art Gallery Tour: facilitated by Jessica Webb (Consultant, Special Education), videos from Tangled Art & Disability featuring their Toronto Gallery and their UK show
 - Finding My Place and Accepting You: presented to ACE students by Camino
 - Feedback:
 - Gathered feedback for next year's symposium
 - How to improve our current systems
 - Feedback for the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan
 - PD day at the end of May for Elementary schools only
 - Elementary teachers: assessment & evaluation focus
 - EA, CYW: learning opportunities, not everyone could attend the sessions in April so will be able to participate in those sessions, building inclusive practices
 - Extended day is open
- Discussion
 - [Special Education Plan Updates](#)
 - SEAC confirmed and approved this addition
 - WRDSB Website Redesign- Presented by: Heather Hughes (Senior Manager Communications), Ross Howey (Associate Manager Communications)
 - Consulted with the Information Technology Team
 - Looked at best practises from other districts, and websites
 - Revamping the corporate and school websites to include:
 - Support Accessibility AODA/WCAG 2.1 AA standards
 - Update of the Visual Identity and Branding Guide
 - Navigation and reorganize of the content layout

- Updating mobile responsiveness and insights
- Current website is running on an older version of Wordpress
- Launch across corporate and school websites: fall/winter 2026
- Feedback specific to the new design of the website
 - More intuitive, more user friendly
 - Easier for staff to update both equipment and staff websites
 - Will work on content after the design is updated
- Feedback:
 - Hoping to have pictures of all students represented at the WRDSB, ACE and regular classes
 - Opportunities to provide feedback coming in June
 - Jennifer will send out the feedback questionnaire for self completion

Chair Report for discussion/feedback - Roberta Thompson

- [Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB Letter](#)
 - Working on a letter from our SEAC group
- [Huron-Superior Catholic DSB Letter](#)
 - Working on a letter from our SEAC group
- [WRDSB SEAC Letter of Support to Thames Valley DSB](#)
 - Finalizing this letter to send out
- [Mental Health Supports](#)
 - Dr. Anupam Thakur, MD. Psychiatrist in Chief, Surrey Place, Toronto, Staff Psychiatrist, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto, and Asst. Professor University of Toronto
 - Mental health and transitions presentation
 - Considers students with intellectual disabilities and mental health issues
 - Highlighting resource: [Books Beyond Words](#)
 - Regression disorder happening after completing high school

- Bridging the gap between school and home environments
- Developing life skills and expressing how we feel
- Share these resources with the ICAN team

Trustee Report - Sam Estoesta

- May Trustees Report
 - Board Meeting took place in April
 - Final report for Strategic Plan Consultations
 - Clearer more accessible language
 - Accountability and action items
 - Larger reporting of implementation and measurement outcomes
 - Trustees developed a motion to approve a new Strategic Plan
 - More consultation taking place
 - No timeline in place
 - Wondering about the inclusion of the Learner Profile in the Strategic Plan
 - Tim Walker Memorial Award for Environmental Stewardship
 - 2025-2026 Recipients: Northlake Woods PS - Native Shade Tree Replacement Project, Trillium PS - Trillium Peace and Learning Garden, FHCI - The Lorax Play, KCI - Greenhouse Garden: A Natural Approach to Soil Amendment and Biodiversity Gains
 - Intro report on the Board Improvement and Equity Plan
 - Transitions and Pathways
 - Grade 9 & 10 math are destreamed
 - Students build math skills and increase confidence
 - Pathway program: robust coop and specialized high skills major pathways
 - Students exploring roles and opportunities they might not have considered previously

- Female identified students in trades
- Concluded presentation with a student video outlining their experiences in the program
- Regular business for the month of May, June's meeting will be about budget to wrap up the school year

Round Table Association Reports

- Jennifer Checkley, Easter Seals Ontario
 - [Dancing with Easter Seals Stars Waterloo, May 29, 2026](#)
 - [Red Shirt Day, June 3, 2026](#)
- Carmen Sutherland, Waterloo Region Family Network
 - [Create and Connect Creative Opportunities for Caregivers](#), May 9, 1-3:30pm Kitchener Art Gallery, May 21, zoom group
 - [Kaleidoscope Kids](#), May 23 June 27, 3:30-4:30pm, Oak Creek EarlyOn Centre Kitchener
 - [Pathological Demand Avoidance Support Group](#), June 4, 7-9pm, register at info@wrfn.info
- Jane Martin, Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy
 - OFCP [50/50 draw](#) continues monthly
 - [OFCP Golf Tournament](#), June 26, 9am, Cardinal Golf Club, King ON
 - Gently used clothing donations to Value Village in support of OFCP
- Amy MacIntosh, Autism Ontario
 - [Mind Matters: Supporting Mental Health](#)
 - [Autism Ontario's School Resource Collection](#)
 - New Diagnosis Resources are available in multiple languages to better support families: [English](#), [French](#), [Farsi](#), [Mandarin](#), [Urdu](#), [Cantonese](#), [Arabic](#), [Spanish](#)
 - [Autism Ontario Scholarships](#)
 - Questions? Reach out to: seac@autismontario.com
- Roberta Thompson, Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society

- [Up Side Down Charity Golf Tournament, June 15, 12pm, Ariss Valley Golf and Country Club](#)
- [Family Picnic](#)
- Summer Camp School, August 10-14, 8:30-3:30pm
- Applied to Master in Critical Disability Studies at York University and was accepted to the program
- Elected as a World Down Syndrome UN Delegate, Buenos Aires, 2027

Adjournment

Moved by Carmen Sutherland, seconded by Jenn Checkley:

That the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting be adjourned.

- Carried -

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.