



## Special Education Advisory Committee

Minutes - October 8, 2025

A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) was held virtually on Wednesday, October 8, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. with the following members in attendance:

**Trustees:** Samantha Estoesta, Joe Meissner

**Association Members:** Ami McIntosh (Autism Ontario), Christine MacDonald (Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County), Jane Martin (Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy), Jennifer Checkley (Easter Seals), Lilly Adam (YMCA of Three Rivers), 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:** Lisa Weiler Haskins (VP Educational Assistants Association)

**Regrets:** Lisa Bonnell (Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children), Michelle Hughes (FASD/ONE Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise), Jeff Senior (Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society), Shannon Taylor (Epilepsy South Central Ontario), Kathy Waybrant (Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy), Esther Wainaina (Human Rights Officer - Lead Accessibility Plan)

### 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 Roberta Thompson:

That the agenda of the October 8, 2025 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 September 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
  - Ministry of Education Updates
    - Learning has been identified and defined for the WRDSB that we need to have schools engage in for our PA days and through staff meetings.
      - Keeping schools safe - violence prevention, code of conduct, and health and safety training
      - AI-Artificial Intelligence and looking at this application as a teaching and learning tool, as well as the safety and security connected to AI
      - The SRO program
      - Tackling racism - classrooms free from discrimination, human rights, equity, and inclusive education
    - ECPP is now split into two.
      - ECPP (Education Community Partnership Program) - support students who have been court ordered into a youth justice secure or open custody facility in providing education

- CTEP (Care and Treatment Education Program) - providing funding to school boards to offer programs to students whose primary need for care or treatment prevents them from attending school. Example, students in the hospital at CAIP, students attending program through Starling, Langs in Cambridge
  - Structural and funding changes
  - Providing more flexibility when working with partners in the community
- System Updates
  - Shifting of some Superintendent roles
    - We have added one new Superintendent role with a focus on Indigenous Education. Crissa Hill has taken over this role with shifting portfolio responsibilities
    - Superintendent Pam Kaur retired in June
    - Hired two new Superintendents: Kimberley Pividor, from Toronto District School Board, and Jamila Maliha, from Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board
  - Added an additional Special Education Consultant to balance out the work that is happening and supporting our students and staff across the system.
  - Still waiting for our EQAO results.
  - PD has commenced for Special Education Resource teachers: Acadience screener, Anti-ableism, Neuro-Diverse Affirming Practices, IEP development, Tiered Instruction - Looking at Tier 2 and 3 tools, Universal Design for Learning - Differentiated Instruction, PPM 140, Clevr - New system that holds all of our Special Education data including IEPs - this has replaced our old system, S4S.
  - IEPs will be coming home soon. The IEP will look a little different as we have a new system.

- Held ACE PD for teachers that are new to ACE programs.
- Coming up: Human Rights training for Administrators and MDST teams, it will have a Special Education focus. Will be bringing in Nadya Tymochenko to provide this PD. The areas of focus will be: Duty to accommodate, Suspensions and expulsions and mitigating factors, Exclusions and modified days, Reinforcing the importance of universal design for learning for differentiated instruction, and the use of case studies related to the learning.
- Experienced some transportation concerns with school start up. Schools and consultants were working hard to get things on track. Hiring difficulties at STWSR have impacted routes and availability. The STSWR is committed to providing optimal service to our students.
- Follow up occurred with transportation about our discussion in June concerning lack of air conditioning for Spec Ed students. Keith Prudham, General Manager at STSWR, managed a quick response to find which buses did not have air conditioning running and getting this fixed. We have also worked to add notes for drivers to prioritize and ensure accommodations are made for our Spec Ed students. Working on improving service, reviewing challenges, and planning for the future.
- Update: Shane Plante who presented to us last year about the Enrichment program has moved to another board and taken a VP role in a Board closer to his home. SEAC extends our congratulations. Part of the work that was done included gifted screeners. The WRDSB has connected with other school boards to review enrichment practices, seeking feedback on good things that are happening and challenges they are experiencing. There are Boards that don't offer congregated gifted programming. From our review of other Board practices,

boards are using a screener or the gifted characteristics scales. Some of the challenges identified were related to bias within screeners. Another concern that was raised is the availability tutoring companies and online tests to prepare for screeners which has led to a number of false positives. We engaged in further investigation with a newer screener that is meant to reduce bias. Challenges: it is a US product, uses US norms which are different from Canadian norms. We continue to review and are looking at privacy and security.

- Discussion
  - [Special Education Support Services](#): Presented by Stephen McCrae (System Administrator, Special Education)
  - Student Support Process K-12: Supporting student learning, meeting the needs of our students, cycling through the stages.
  - We use a tiered approach
  - Direct referrals can be made for Itinerant Teacher Support, Professional Student Services Personnel, Additional Central Supports.
  - Feedback:
    - Nice to see the total picture of the Special Education system.
    - For students who do not have an IEP can they access the services? Yes, they can access support. Many young learners do not have established IEP.

#### **Chair Report for discussion/feedback - Roberta Thompson: Stand In**

- [Letter drafted by our SEAC committee to the Minister of Education](#)
  - Shannon and Roberta wrote a letter in support of school Trustees.
  - Would like to send the letter to other SEAC committees to add their support
  - Next steps, sending the letter to other groups, MPPs: Aislinn Clancy and Catherine Fife.
- Navigating Special Education in Ontario Schools Workshop

- Roberta attended, provided a good resource, excellent presentation.
- A guide for parents: [Inclusive Education Resources](#)
- Story: [The Invisible Woman](#) by: Laura MacGregor
  - Powerful moving short story, shared by Jane Martin (Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy)
  - The experience of the fragile first few years moving through life having a child with a disability.
  - Understand and relate to the struggles of the woman in the story, beautiful and inspiring.
  - Felt seen, acknowledging how parents feel, the vulnerability expressed, and what happens behind closed doors.
  - Parents and caregivers are not allowed to express big emotions. Humanising, allowing imperfectness, and being one with your emotions.
  - This story can provide more discussion in the greater community and bring about more understanding of what it is like for parents of special needs children.
  - It is okay to be imperfect and be at one with your emotions.
  - Would like to highlight the dads who also struggle with the same issues brought up in the article
  - Steve is sharing this story with his team. Jodi shared it with her Superintendent colleagues.

### **Trustee Report - Samantha Estoesta and Joe Meissner**

- October Trustees Report
  - Trustees had started a process of consultations to update the strategic plan. A committee formed on how to manage this process. The plan is now well formulated. Information will be coming out soon about the consultation process. There is to be a survey to be distributed to everyone in the Board. In addition there will be facilitated focus groups with all of the committees. SEAC will be one of the groups that will be

included. This should be concluded by the end of the school year, and town halls in each of the cities will also collect further information.

Looking to gather many voices to this process.

- The Summer Learning program was presented at the last Trustee meeting. Amazed by the growth of the program and stats were shared. 4500 students enrolled in the Summer Learning program, encompassed grades K-12, courses in person and online, with 400 students taking co-op placements. The program and its design are changing to meet the needs of our students.
- Samantha and Joe are both on the Policy and Governance Standing Committee. Changes to the Education Act caused a change in structure of the Committee of the Whole and in response there was a creation of standing committees. This group reviews and approves our policies. SEAC is still a necessary reviewer and helping by continuing to provide feedback.
- Samantha also sits on the Agenda Development Committee as the Chair of the Policy and Governance Standing Committee. She will let SEAC know when they have policies coming forward, SEAC can notify her if there is a story you would like them to speak about, or any concerns that arise.

### **Round Table Association Reports**

- Jennifer Checkley, Easter Seals Ontario
  - In the process of scheduling the teleconference with the Easter Seals SEAC reps across Ontario. Updates to come in November.
- Carmen Sutherland, Waterloo Region Family Network
  - Understanding your Child's IEP workshop partnered with both School Boards Sept 23, successful event.
  - WRFN Camp day in partnership with the YMCA Three Rivers happened Sept 28 at Camp Ki-Wa-Y, a beautiful day and over 80 people attended.

- School Navigation workshop: Making your IEP Work Oct 15
  - Upcoming events in the School Navigation workshop series.
- Kaleidoscope Kids continues one Saturday afternoon a month, Oak Creek EarlyOn Centre, 3-4pm
- WRFN General Meeting, Oct 23
- Christine MacDonald, Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County
  - Reading Rocks programs starting shortly
  - Recently cancelled the Social Skills and Executive Skills program due to low registration
  - How to Teach Your Kids About Money, Oct 20
  - Financial Literacy Workshop: Pet Shop for Ages 8-11, Oct 23
  - Financial Literacy Workshop: Budgeting & Expenses for Ages 11-14, Oct 28
  - 11th Annual Family conference, Nov 15, 9-4:30pm
- Jane Martin, Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy
  - 50/50 draw for the OFCP, tickets available on our website.
  - Value Village by the Kitchener Auditorium donates some of the profits to the OFCP. Please consider donating items through this location.
- Roberta Thompson, Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society
  - Just held the 24th annual Any Which Way You Can-A-Thon, raised \$78,000 that will go directly into bursaries for therapies.
  - October is Down Syndrome Awareness month
  - Fall programming is well underway
  - Planning for the annual Christmas party
  - Calendar series, “I belong”, our members are featured in the calendar
    - Calendars available on the website for \$10
    - Campaign: How do you belong in the community?
    - Photographer: Hillary Gauld, One For The Wall
- Lilly Adam, YMCA of Three Rivers
  - Settlement workers assisting schools in the WRDSB, WCDSB
  - Provide service navigation for newcomers to our region.

- Would like to have a SEAC member come and talk at a YMCA team meeting about SEAC and how to support their families (Jodi will connect about the request)

### **Adjournment**

Moved by Carmen Sutherland, seconded by Jennifer Checkly:

That the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting be adjourned.

- Carried -

The meeting adjourned at 8:48p.m.