



## Special Education Advisory Committee

Minutes - September 10, 2025

A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) was held virtually on Wednesday, September 10, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. with the following members in attendance:

**Trustees:** Samantha Estoesta, Joe Meissner

**Association Members:** Christine MacDonald (Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County), 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:** Jennifer Crawford (Administrative Assistant), Stephen McCrae (System Administrator)

**Guest:** Esther Wainaina (Human Rights Officer - Lead Accessibility Plan), Lisa Weiler Haskins (VP Educational Assistants Association)

**Regrets:** Lilly Adam (YMCA of Three Rivers), Jodi Albrecht (Superintendent, Student Achievement & Well-Being), Lisa Bonnell (Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children), Jennifer Checkley (Easter Seals), Michelle Hughes (FASD/ONE Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network of Expertise), Jane Martin (Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy), Jeff Senior (Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society), Kathy Waybrant (Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy)

### Call to Order

Shannon Taylor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

### Welcome & Territorial Acknowledgement - Steve McCrae

### Approval of Agenda

Moved by Roberta Thompson, seconded by Carmen Sutherland:

That the agenda of the June 11, 2025 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, be approved.

- Carried -

### **Approval of Minutes**

Moved by Roberta Thompson, seconded by Shannon Taylor:

That the minutes of the June 11, 2025 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, be approved.

- Carried -

### **Business Arising from the Minutes**

- None

### **WRDSB Special Education & Student Well-Being Report - Steve McCrae**

- Board Updates
  - System Updates
    - This school year the consultant team has 19 members and we have 31 itinerant staff supporting our schools. They are helping with school transitions as well as providing equipment for students with orthopaedic, hearing and vision needs. It has been a busy startup getting things kids need to be successful out as quickly as possible. The team is here to support our students and their well-being.
    - Discussions are currently taking place on the new school to be built that will be located by Moffatt Creek PS.
    - Consultants have been supporting schools and staff to support their learners through start up.
    - Referrals will be happening soon through our consultant team.
    - Gwen Le Phuong (Psychology and Social Work Lead), led 3 different events that happened the last week of August at the: Kingsdale Community Centre, Albert McCormick, and Kinbridge Community Centre in Cambridge. We had a variety of

teams there to support families. Backpacks with resources were shared with families. Children were welcomed into one room, and parents were in another for learning sessions.

- [RelATe: Assistive Technology Tools for September](#), No registration is required
  - Digital tools to help your child with research using Google Read & Write
  - Part 2: Writing
    - Monday, September 15: 12:30-1:00 pm
    - Thursday, September 18: 11:30-12:00 pm
  - Part 3: Language Learning
    - Monday, September 22: 12:00-12:30 pm
    - Wednesday, September 24: 12:30-1:00 pm
- Esther Wainaina, Human Rights Officer
  - The Accessibility Committee is in the final year of a multi year plan.
  - There are currently consultations taking place and Esther would be happy to give updates and share what their work looks like with SEAC in the future.
  - The committee is planning on expanding their areas of work for this school year.
  - Their first meeting is next week.

#### **Chair Report for discussion/feedback - Shannon Taylor**

- [Navigating Special Education in Ontario Schools](#)
  - Shannon is attending this session and will update SEAC at the next meeting.
- [Letter from the Chair of the Board of Trustees at WRDSB to Minister of Education](#)

- The letter shares that we have a balanced budget for this school year and asks for consideration for budgetary changes for the 2026-2027 school year.
- Highlights themes across School Boards in support of increased Provincial funding for: Special Education, Inflation, and Short-term supply costs.
- This arose during a budget discussion at a Trustees meeting.
- New Chair SEAC
  - Shannon will remain until January
  - Shannon nominated Roberta to be the next Chair.
- Presentation topics for consideration for 2025-2026
  - Reading Intervention. What practices are used, how is it delivered, what are the tools? How does this look in real time, and how does this carry over to home?
  - ACE classrooms- would like to see what is happening at schools. What are the different classrooms like? Classroom sizes, dynamics, locations.
  - The decision making process for congregated classes and special education settings.
  - Reasoning for the special education structure and why this has been implemented and formatted.
  - ACE-how students are referred, parent communications, MDST team. Explaining to parents the diversity of the classrooms and providing clarity on questions they have about joining congregated settings.
  - Looking at the gap between the information delivered to families and how they interpret what was shared. How to make improvements.
  - There are 4 components that every ACE classroom is set up under. What are they targeting and delivering under those principles? How does it differ across Low, Medium, High support classes? What does the IEP look like in these sections?
  - How can parents help educators?

- Explaining IEP documents. How to develop a document that best supports our students.
- Lifeskills and ACE have been a major focus. We would like to see more information on non-non-speaking students and support and programming available for them. Typing, writing, reading, are struggles for these students. How are they being included in classroom settings?
- Transitions from Elementary to Secondary settings. What does this mean? What is the difference in the ACE classrooms? What are the interventions and strategies utilized?
- New developments in Spec Ed?
- Presentations by the SEA team-special equipment, SLP, and itinerant teachers.
- What are all the types of itinerant teachers, how many are there, and what is available? What happens at a school level?

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

- New framework on standing committees. Joe and Samantha are part of the Policy and Governance standing committee. They will be looking at policy positions and review cycles. The first meeting is coming up this month. There will be elections for chair and vice chair for each standing committee.
- Development of standing committees because the Ministry of Education has developed a new policy that if you miss one meeting you can be elected to be vacated from your seat. Standing Committees have been created to be able to share information and provide reasons to have accommodations to miss meetings when unforeseen circumstances arise. Notice was given at the end of the school year.
  - Feedback:
  - SEAC asked if the school board is trying to remove school board Trustees. Joe updated it is the provincial government that is looking at removing Trustees. Waiting to hear what the decision will be. They are

unclear if it will be the end of the calendar year or the end of the school year when a decision will be made.

- Samantha added SEAC is a valuable voice to represent your communities and Special Education at our local level, and is appreciative of support from this SEAC committee. Roberta asked that a letter be drafted in support for our school board Trustees to the provincial government. SEAC values Trustees as they are elected officials who are able to navigate the system and provide a different access channel for families. They can approach local MPPs to voice concerns on behalf of our students. Shannon took a vote from present members and it was decided that the WRDSB SEAC group would write a letter of support for the Trustees.
- SEAC asked Samantha for copies of letters that other groups have sent to the Ministry of Education to draft a letter from our SEAC group.

### **Round Table Association Reports**

- Jennifer Checkley, Easter Seals Ontario
  - Easter Seals Ontario technology and tutoring funding grant [applications](#). Deadline: Sept 12, 2025
  - Easter Seals Ambassador [applications](#). Deadline: Sept 30, 2025
- Shannon Taylor, Epilepsy South Central Ontario
  - Celebrated a night with the Toronto Argos in August. Included admission to the CNE. I had a wonderful time at this event.
- Carmen Sutherland, Waterloo Region Family Network
  - IEP workshop – Understanding Your Child’s IEP – [please see attached flyer for details](#).
  - IEP workshop – Making Your IEP Work – [please see attached flyer for details](#). Our Back-to-School session in August was very successful and well attended.
  - Camp Davis, Camp Kawawai, Session is full. Looking forward to a fun day of activities.

- Meeting of A New Chapter: Caregivers Connecting, Saturday October 25, 500 Hallmark Dr. Waterloo.
- Roberta Thompson, Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society
  - Any Which Way You Can-A-Thon
    - Sunday, September 28, 1-4pm Waterloo Park
    - [Registration Form](#)
    - Link to [sponsor the event](#).
    - Link to [donate prizes to the event](#).
  - [Therapy Bursaries](#)
    - Available for speech, music, physical and occupational therapy.
    - To help offset costs of private therapy.
    - [Application Form](#), Deadline November 1, 2025
  - [Camp Bursaries](#)
    - Available to assist families with costs involved over and above regular camp fees. Ages 4-21.
    - [Application Form](#) or paper application, scanned back via email, mail, or fax. Deadline November 1, 2025.
  - [Passport Funding Preparation Bursary Program](#)
    - The program helps offset costs of psychological assessments required for young adults to qualify for the Province of Ontario's Passport Funding at age 18.
    - [Application Form](#) or paper application, scanned back via email, mail, or fax. Deadline November 1, 2025.
    - Shortened assessment November 1 deadline.

## **Adjournment**

Moved by Carmen Sutherland, seconded by Roberta Thompson:

That the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting be adjourned.

- Carried -

The meeting adjourned at 8:34p.m.