

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, June 5, 2019

6:00 pm Library, Resurrection CSS

WCDSB Mission Statement

*As disciples of Christ,
we educate and nurture hope
in all learners
to realize their full potential
to transform God's world.*

CHAIR: Irene Holdbrook

MEMBERS

WCDSB Trustee – **Jeanne Gravelle**

WCDSB Trustee – **Tracey Weiler**

Waterloo Regional Down Syndrome Society – **Kim Murphy**

Waterloo Regional Police - **John Gilbert**

Autism Ontario – Waterloo Chapter – **Frank Thoms, Vice Chair**

CNIB – **Irene Holdbrook, Chair**

Family and Children's Services of Waterloo Region – **Stuart Cross**

Waterloo Region Family Network – **Sue Simpson**



35 Weber Street West • P.O. Box 91116 • Kitchener Ontario Canada • N2G 4G2
Telephone: 519.578.3660




Waterloo Catholic
District School Board

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SEAC Committee Meeting Agenda

Date& Time:	Wednesday, June 5 th , 2019, 6:00 p.m.
Location:	Library, Resurrection CSS
Next Meeting:	T.B.D.
Committee Members: Kim Murphy, John Gilbert, Frank Thoms, Tracey Weiler, Kevin Dupuis, Jeanne Gravelle, Irene Holdbrook, Stuart Cross; Sue Simpson	
Administrative Officials: Laura Shoemaker, Erin Lemak	

1. Opening Prayer Welcome	L. Shoemaker
2. Approval of Agenda Motion by: Seconded:	
3. Declared Pecuniary Interest	
4. Approval of the April Minutes Motion by: Seconded	
5.School System Operational Business 5.1. Budget, Special Education Plan	L. Isaac
6. Ministry Updates (10 min) 6.1. Durham CDSB's SEAC Letter to Minister of Education – April, 2019 6.2. Ontario North East SEAC Letter to Minister of Education – May, 2019 6.3. Letter from WCDSB Social Workers 6.4. Letter from APSSP 6.5. Letter to the Minister - Brant H. N. CDSB 6.6. Letter to the Minister - Peel School Board 6.7. DDSB SEAC Letter to Minister of Education June 3, 2019 6.8. Letter to the Minister – WCDSB Trustees	Laura Shoemaker



7. SEAC Committee Functions 7.1 Pro Grant	SEAC members
8. Policy Advice to the Board	
9. Updates (20 minutes) 9.1. Association Updates 9.2. Trustee Updates	
10. Pending Items	
11. Adjournment	
12. Action Items Place Holder	




Waterloo Catholic
District School Board

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SEAC Committee Meeting Minutes

Date& Time:	Wednesday, April 3, 2019, 6:00 p.m.
Location:	Boardroom, St. Mary's H.S.
Next Meeting:	Wednesday, May 1, 2019
Committee Members: Kim Murphy, John Gilbert, Frank Thoms, Tracey Weiler, Kevin Dupuis, Jeanne Gravelle, Irene Holdbrook, Stuart Cross; Sue Simpson	
Administrative Officials: Laura Shoemaker, Erin Lemak	

1. Opening Prayer Welcome	L. Shoemaker
2. Approval of Agenda Motion by: Jeanne Gravelle Seconded: Sue Simpson	
3. Declared Pecuniary Interest N/A	
4. Approval of the March Minutes Motion by: Jeanne Gravelle Seconded: Kim Murphy	
5. School System Operational Business 5.1. Assistive Technology and Special Education Liaisons <u>Carol Sullivan – Teach Town:</u> Presented on the importance of the TeachTown program (now available for each of the WCDSB secondary schools and 10 pilot elementary schools) for children with ASD. Because these children have such difficulty with social skills, they tend to struggle with developing age-appropriate friendships. Social awkwardness may cause them to become socially isolated. Research suggests that improving the social skills of children with ASD is one of the most powerful predictors of a positive outcome. Children with ASD need to be directly taught the specific rules of social interaction.	Chris Runstedler Carol Sullivan Antonieta Leonardo



Explicit instruction on the following topics will improve social skills for students with deficits: joint attention, greetings, social play, conversation, perspective taking, reading and interpreting nonverbal communication.

Antonietta Leonardo – Lexia

Lexia® is an online literacy tool that provides explicit, systematic and personalized reading instruction by targeting skill gaps as they emerge. At Waterloo Catholic we are using the the Lexia Core 5 platform for students at the elementary and junior levels. Lexia Power Up Literacy is used for intermediate and secondary students. Lexia was first introduced as part of an LD Ministry Pilot and has now been expanded to all of our schools.

Both Lexia Core 5 and Lexia Power Up Literacy includes 3 essential components:

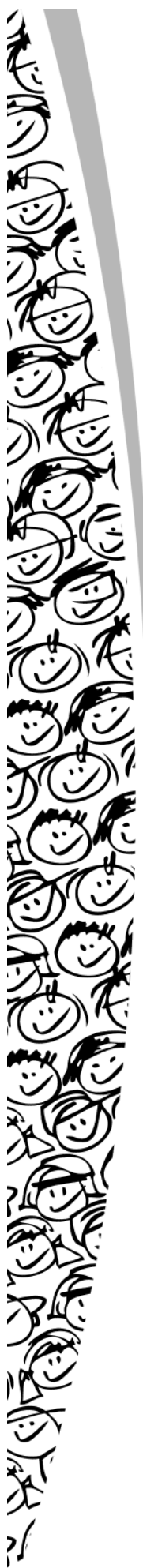
- 1.The online student program that includes guided practice and instruction.
- 2.The teacher portal that provides important data about how the student is progressing through each level
- 3.Targeted instructional resources to further support the online lessons and to target areas where students are demonstrating a particular need.

Chris Runstedler – Assistive Technology

- Assistive Technology at WCDSB is measurable, observable and improves learning. It is funded through SEA (Special Equipment Amount) fund. This equipment is to provide students with accommodations that are directly required and essential to access the Ontario curriculum and/or a board-determined alternative program and/or course and/or to attend school.
- SEA Assistive Technology Applications are reviewed on monthly basis and request is submitted to IT to deliver chromebooks/iPads with all required programs to students.
- Replacement computer equipment is provided for students with SEA claims coming into WCDSB
- Non-computer equipment is usually transferred between boards
- SEA moves within WCDSB – equipment is moved with the student (elementary to High School etc...)

Main Categories for Software Support:

- Learning Disabilities (Read and Write for Google, Kurzweil, WordQ, Mindomo Graphic Organizer Software, Livescribe pen)
- Physical Disabilities (word processing, Read and Write for Google (speech input...)
- Visual Disabilities (Zoomtext, Jaws, Read and Write for Google, Kurzweil web license, Firefly by Kurzweil for iPad)
- Cognitive Disabilities (iPad with apps 91+ Early Literacy & Numeracy aps, Board Maker Online Picture Communication software)
- Communication Needs (iPads and Proloquo2go



Access to Assistive Technology

Software	School Access	Home Access
Read and Write for Google	All WCDSB Google/GAFE accounts	Full Home Access with Chrome Browser/ios
Mindomo Graphic Organizer	All WCDSB Google/GAFE accounts	Full Home Access with Chrome Browser/ios
Personal Laptop/chromebook	SEA claims	Take Home Privileges for laptops/chromebooks
Livescribe Pen	SEA claims or as requested	
iPad with 91+ early Literacy/Numeracy Apps	SEA claims or school purchased	
Boardmaker Online	Every school has an online account	
Proloquo2go	SEA claims	
Zoomtext and other Vision software	SEA claims	Take Home Privileges for laptops/chromebooks

- GAFE and Chromebooks is a 'normalization' tool so that we can minimize the White Elephant in the room for LD students; 'stigma associated with using 'Spec-Ed Tools/Software'
- Home Access including Read and Write is available for all students
- Current Software Tools for Students with Developmental Delays, Physical Disabilities include the iPads/Boardmaker Online.

Access to the Curriculum:




- iPad for touch technology, portability
- used by KidsAbility, IBI therapists, parent community
- tools for the visually impaired – zoom, scanners via camera...
- built in accessibility features (speak text, word prediction, Siri)

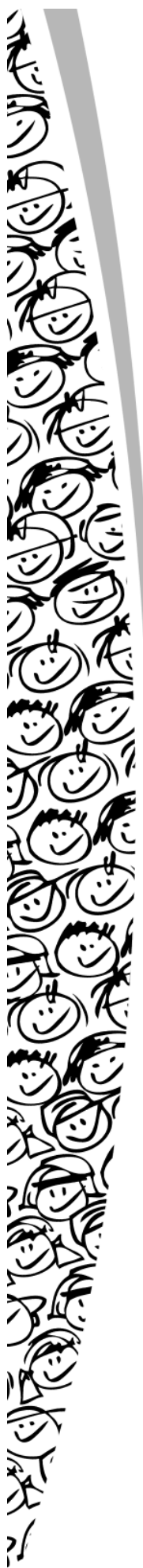
6. Ministry Updates (10 min)

6.1. Durham CDSB's SEAC Letter to Minister of Education - March, 2019

Expressing the concern about the recent changes to the provincial funding model for Autism services and the impact that it will have on children, families and school boards.

Laura
Shoemaker

<p>6.2. Laura Shoemaker re: new Ministry Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiting for more information from the Ministry, no exact information has been confirmed yet. • WCDSB is working out the plan on transitioning large number of students requiring support (more than 65): • Principals already met with the Kidsability • Increased the number of EAs and BCBAs to help with the transition • Bringing BCBAs and SLPs to the classroom to do the Tier 1 support 	
<p>7. SEAC Committee Functions</p> <p>7.1 Pro Grant - On hold until funding announcement from Ministry is made.</p>	<p>SEAC members</p>
<p>8. Policy Advice to the Board:</p> <p>Budget will be discussed on the May 22nd meeting. Kim Murphy suggested that the board should prepare the options (motions) prior to the May 22nd meeting. Confirm the options at the first meeting in May.</p>	
<p>9. Updates (20 minutes)</p> <p>9.1. Association Updates</p> <p>WRFN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New group formed "New Chapter". First meeting on April 30th. Please see information below: https://wrfn.info/events/event.cfm?ww_event_eventID=C562B60C-FF8B-C864-18A1-B81D52ED2AB8 <p>WRDSS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canadian Down syndrome conference 2019 • WRDSS Mini Conference May 2019 • Up Side Down Charity Golf Tournament 2019 <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  Canadian Down Syndrome Conferen </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  WRDSS Mini Conference May 201 </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  Up Side Down Charity Golf Tourna </div> </div> <p>9.2. Trustee Updates</p> <p>Jeanne presented updates from the March meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation, Learning and Engagement Update • Assessment and Evaluation Practice in Schools • Student Success Plan • School Year Calendar • Autism Update • Information on 2019-20 Education Grants and New Vision for Education <p>For more details, please check the link: https://www.wcdsb.ca/wcdsb-board-meeting-bulletin-march-2019/</p>	



10. Pending Items N/A	
11. Adjournment Motion by: Kim Murphy Seconded: Jeanne Gravelle	
12. Action Items Place Holder	

2019-2020 Special Education

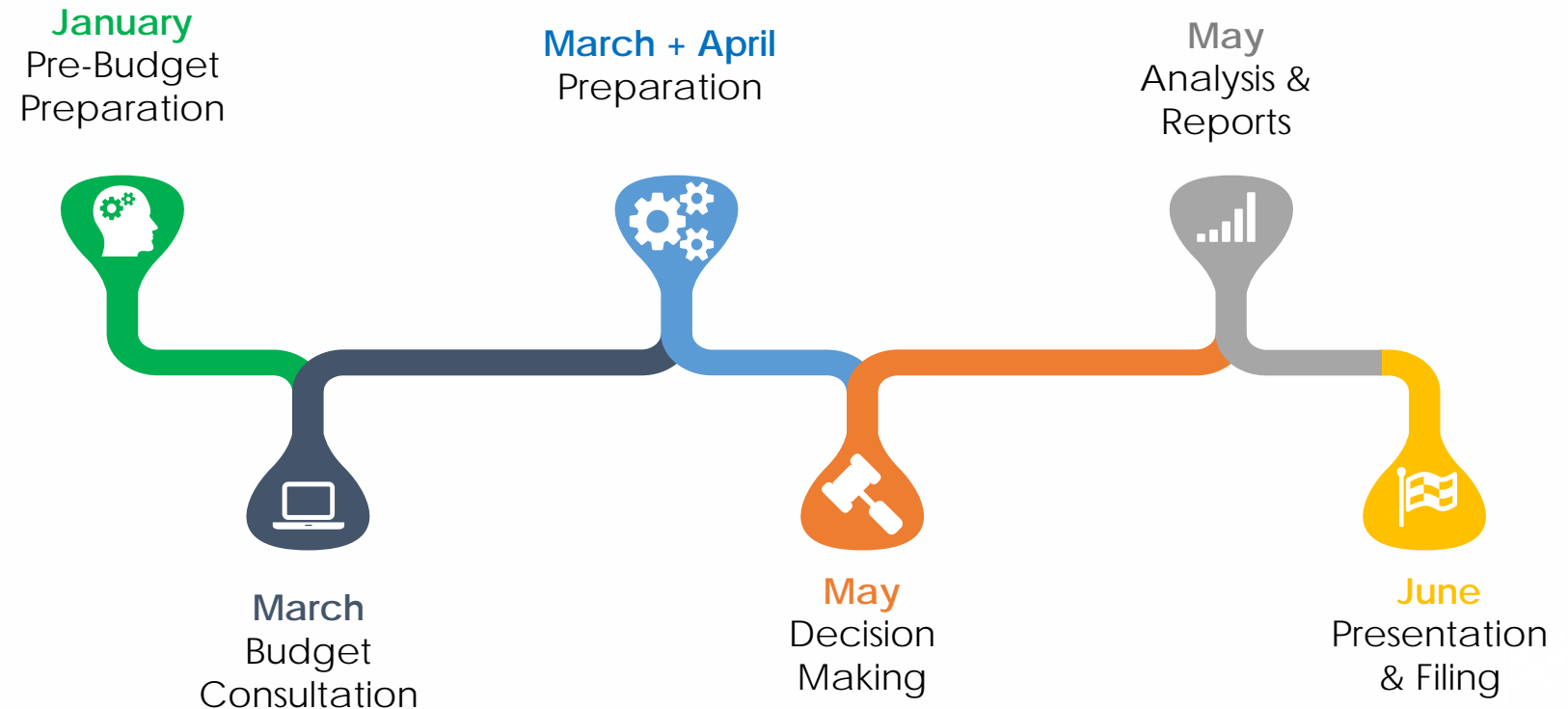
Estimates Budget

June 5, 2019

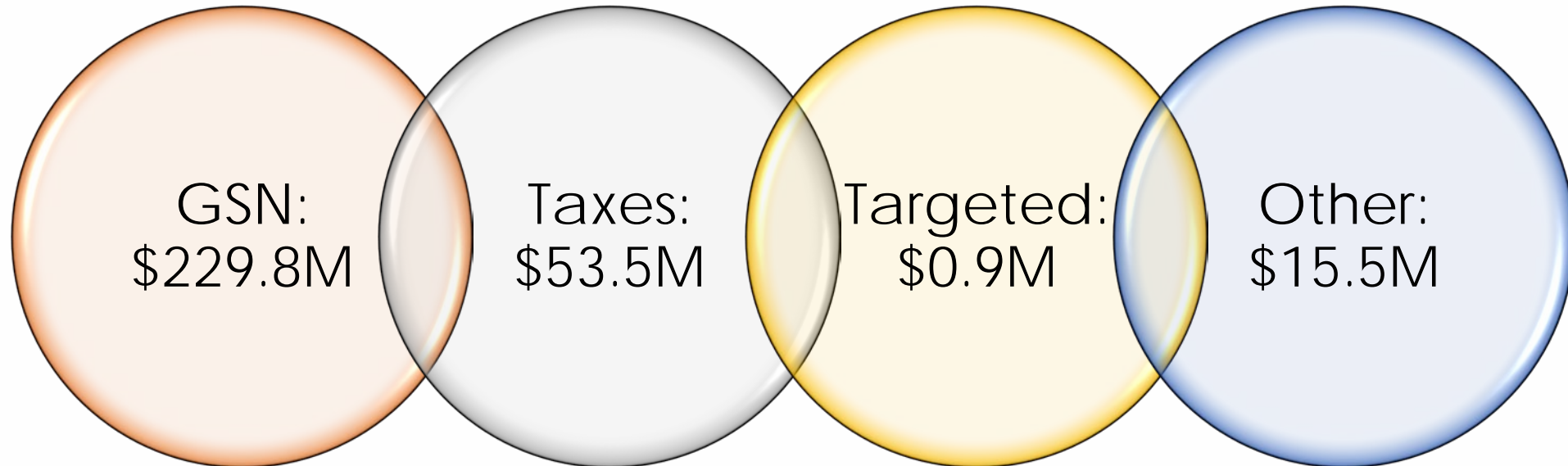
Presentation Overview

- Budget overview
- Grant Announcement: Special Education Summary
- Special Education funding
- Special Education expenditures
- Questions

The Budget Process



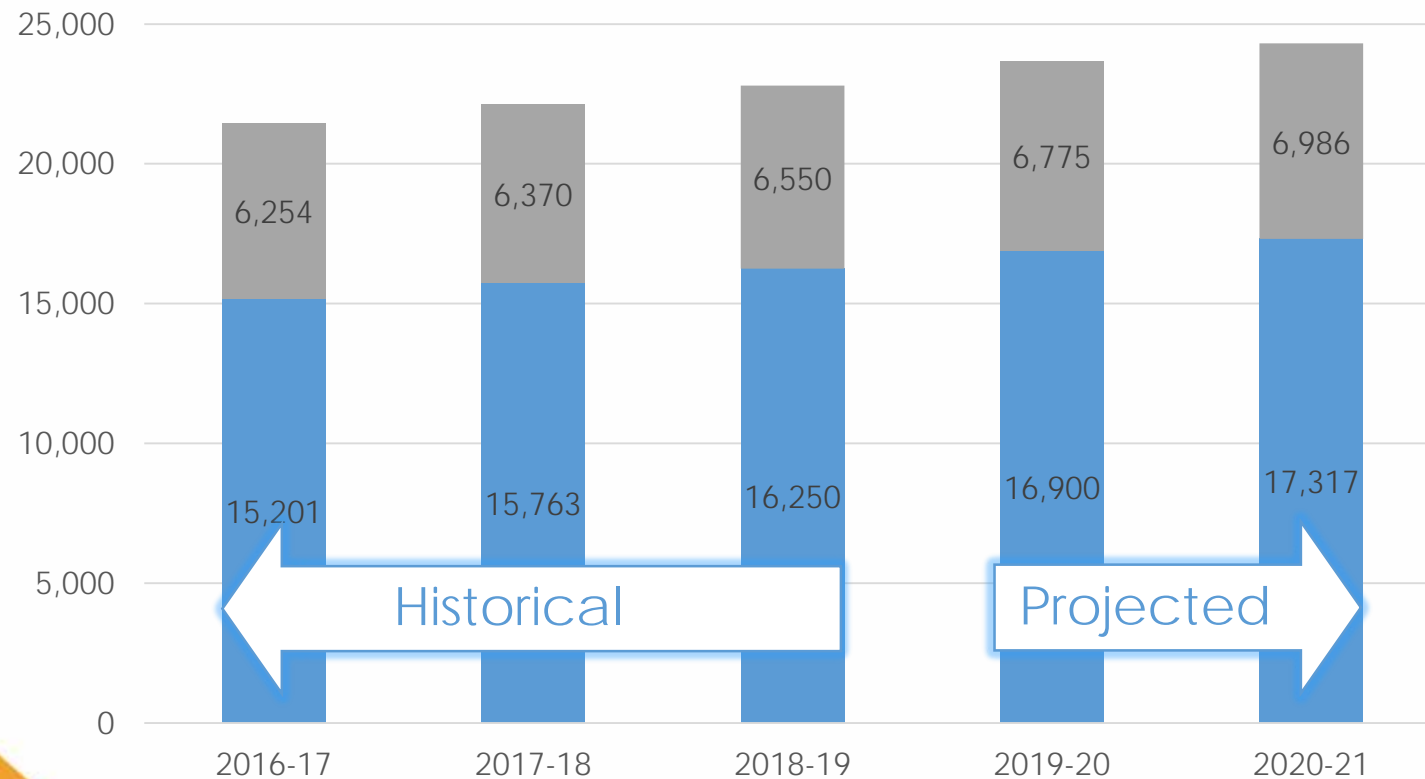
Total Board revenues: \$299.7 Million



The above budget information is draft 2019-20 Estimates

Enrolment Trends

- Funding is largely based on a board's enrolment
- Some Special Education funding is based on defined needs



Grant Announcement: Special Education

Impact to Special Education

GSN

- Continued funding for Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDT)
- Increased funding for Applied Behaviour Analysis

Priorities and Partnership Fund (formerly EPOs)

- Continued funding for Mental Health Workers in Schools*
- Continued funding for Well-Being and Mental Health*
- Continued funding for Supporting Students with Severe Learning Disabilities*
- Elimination of the Local Priorities Funding (LPF)

*funding levels not yet announced

Staffing Highlights

- Local Priorities Funding (\$1.9M) Supported:
 - 11 Educational Assistants
 - 5 Elementary Special Education teachers
 - 3.5 Secondary Special Education teachers
 - 1.0 Hearing
 - 0.5 Vision
 - 0.5 Gifted
- Mental Health Workers
 - 2.0 Social Workers
- Supporting Students with Severe Learning Disabilities
 - 1.0 Speech/Language Pathologist
 - 0.5 Communicative Disorder Assistant

Staffing Highlights

- Educational Assistants and Child and Youth Care Workers – staffing levels remain at current levels
- Reductions related to funding:
 - Speech Language Pathologists
 - Communicative Disorder Assistants
 - VP – Elementary
 - Classroom teachers
 - Itinerant teachers
 - Social Workers
 - Psychoeducational Consultants

Once more details are known, there is potential that positions could be added back

Special Education Summary

	2017-2018 Estimates	2018-2019 Estimates	2019-2020 Estimates
Revenue	\$ 31.2 M	\$ 34.1 M	\$ 34.5M
Expenditures	31.5 M	35.0 M	34.7M
Shortfall	\$ 0.3 M	\$ 0.9 M	\$ 0.2M

Special Education Funding

Funding Allocations	2017-2018 \$M	2018-2019 \$M	2019-2020 \$M
Special Education Per Pupil Amount	\$ 16.3	\$ 17.3	\$ 18.6
Special Education Equipment	1.0	1.0	1.1
Differentiated Special Education Needs Amount (Incl. SIP & MDT)	11.1	12.2	12.5
Section 23 Facilities	0.9	0.9	0.9
Behavioural Expertise	0.1	0.2	0.4
Congregated Classroom Allocation	0.7	0.7	0.6
TOTAL	\$ 30.3	\$ 32.3	\$ 34.1

Student Services Expenditures

	2017-2018 \$M	2018-2019 \$M	2019-2020 \$M
Staffing costs	\$ 30.6M	\$ 34.0M	\$ 33.7
Department costs	0.9M	1.0M	1.0M
Total costs	\$ 31.5M	\$ 35.0M	\$ 34.7M
% staffing vs. total	97%	97%	97%

Questions





**DURHAM CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**
Learning and Living in Faith



Tuesday April 9, 2019

Dear Minister Lisa Thompson
Minister of Education
Mowat Block 22nd Floor
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

I am writing today, on behalf of the Durham Catholic District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee to express our concern about the recent changes to the provincial funding model for class size averages and mandatory e-learning courses.

We are very concerned about the impact these changes are going to have on students with special education needs and our students who are at-risk for a variety of social, emotional and academic reasons. These most recent changes will have a detrimental impact on their education. The proposed class-size average of 28 is not in the best interest of any student, especially students for whom individual attention, additional support, and a differentiated program is essential for their success. Relationships with teachers are critical for this group of students. The research is very clear; children and youth develop resiliency when they have strong connections with one or more caring adults. Students who are not connected at school and are struggling as a result are not likely to develop the connections with teachers when they are in classes of 30 or more.

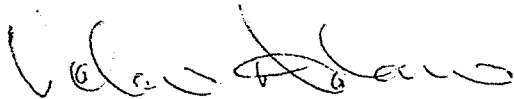
Students with special education needs or students who are at risk require significant support to have meaningful and equitable access to education. This drastic increase in the class-size averages is the opposite of such support. When secondary schools begin timetabling to meet your proposed class average, fewer teachers will mean a reduction in course options or sections. The negative impact will be multifaceted.

- Fewer courses mean fewer teachers to support our students in terms of their well-being.
- Fewer courses mean fewer electives; electives are often the glue that keep students connected to school.
- Fewer courses means specialized classes that support students with learning needs (e.g., Learning Strategies (GLEs)) will disappear because they typically have lower enrolment.
- Fewer courses means that students' options will be limited which will in turn limit the pathway choices of our students.

The proposed change requiring all students to take four mandatory e-learning credits is equally as concerning for this particular group of students. Besides the obvious issue of inequitable access to technology and Wi-Fi across the province, e-learning will simply not benefit all students. Individual learning styles are varied and not all students have the independence, problem-solving skills or resiliency to be successful in e-learning platforms. This includes, but is not limited to students with special education needs or students who are already at-risk for learning difficulties. Four mandatory courses will further erode choice from students who need to have the opportunity for as much choice as possible.

We strongly encourage you to reconsider the proposed changes to secondary education. We ask that you consider the impact that these changes are going to have on all students, but especially those with special education needs and/or students at-risk because of social, emotional and academic concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Valerie Adamo', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Valerie Adamo
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee
Durham Catholic District School Board

cc: Chairs, District School Board Special Education Committees



DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD ONTARIO NORTH EAST

☐ **Schumacher Board Office**

Street Address:

153 Croatia Avenue, Schumacher, ON P0N 1G0

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 1020, Timmins, ON P4N 7H7

Tel: (705) 360-1151

☐ **New Liskeard Board Office**

Mailing and Street Address:

198022 River Road

New Liskeard, ON P0J 1P0

Tel: (705) 647-7394

May 22, 2019

Minister Lisa Thompson
Minister of Education
Mowat Block 22nd Floor
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

via email: minister.edu@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Thompson:

I am writing today, on behalf of District School Board Ontario North East Special Education Advisory Committee, to express our concern about the recent changes to the provincial funding model for Autism services and the impact that it will have on children, families and school boards.

The government and the school system, is relied upon by parents of children with special needs, regardless of the diagnosis, in order for their children to have meaningful access to education. We have been contacted by parents in our communities who fear the changes that have been made to the levels of financial support will have a devastating impact on the futures of not only their children, but other school children as well. Our community schools, already feel the pressures of often being the only hope for some parents and families, as the widening gap in the amount of available support from community agencies in North East Ontario, continues to be an obstacle for them. Our region is given 48 intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) spaces (through HANDS) for children from an area that ranges from Muskoka to the James Bay coast. Many agencies have indicated to us that the level of service that families will be able to receive will be diminished as they will have to choose what kind of service they will have to purchase with their reduced dollars. This could mean having to pick from some IBI service or respite care or groceries. Having to make these kinds of choices will no doubt put more pressure on our resources.

Another issue that requires remedy is how the waitlist for service works in Northeast Ontario. For example, if a student on the service waitlist lives in Smooth Rock Falls, service providers must attempt to meet the needs of that student in their home community. This student cannot be "leapfrogged" until every attempt is made to meet the needs of the student. The difficulty in getting service in our small, rural towns means that delays in service are inevitable and cause backlogs to be longer than necessary.

We are proud of the level and quality of programming we currently offer our students with autism, but we know we cannot provide the same level of specialization that an IBI program would offer. We have seen, time and time again, the benefits of such interventions for students who have qualified for this important skill building programming.

...2

On behalf of our many families and students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, we request that the Ministry of Education review their funding decision to reduce full funding for this important, life changing programming that these students deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Brush". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'R' and 'B'.

Bob Brush
Chair of DSB Ontario North East

Phone: 705-288-4974

Email: bob.brush@dsb1.ca

Copy: Lesleigh Dye, Director of Education DSB Ontario North East
Christine Heavens, Chair, DSB Ontario North East Special Education Advisory Committee
Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committee
Members of Provincial Parliament for Northeastern Ontario

May 28 2019

Irene Holdbrook, Chair
Special Education Advisory Committee
Waterloo Catholic District School Board
35 Weber St West
Kitchener, ON
N2M 4G2

Dear Chair Holdbrook:

On May 15th, 2019, it was announced that the **Social Work service area will be reduced by 1.5 FTE Social Workers. This constitutes a total reduction of 16 % of our team who currently support approximately 13 schools with 3672 students.** We are significantly concerned with the impact that these cuts will directly have on student wellbeing, success, safety and school wellness as a whole.

The role of School Social Workers at WCDSB is incredibly diverse. The role includes:

- Responding in a timely manner to student mental health crises and generalized mental health concerns
- The completion of mental health assessments including suicide risk assessments with either immediate safety contracting occurring or facilitating a smooth transfer to local hospitals for further assessment
- Individual, family and group interventions to support the resolution of mental health crisis
- Critical incident and Compassionate Care response
- Navigation of community resources and referral/service co-ordination as needed, supporting individuals and families waitlisted for service
- School wide Prevention and Awareness (Tier 1 and Tier 2 level interventions including staff consultation, professional development, delivery of parent workshops, school wide generalized supports and event planning, classroom workshops)
- Case management of students enrolled in Section 23 alternative education programming
- School re-engagement and attendance support, including individualized re-engagement plans to address mental health barriers and increase graduation rates

School Social Workers improve the mental health of children and youth and are an integral part of a school's educational team. The majority of mental health problems (70%) begin in childhood and adolescence and these can have a major impact on the healthy development, engagement with learning and future functioning into adulthood of children and youth. Approximately, 1 in 5 children and youth in Ontario will experience a mental health problem with 28% of students reporting that they do not know who to turn to seek help. Overall, the prevalence for mood disorders, lifetime suicidal thoughts, and lifetime suicide planning were statistically significantly higher in Waterloo Region than other regions in Ontario. Rates for both Emergency Department visits and hospitalizations for intentional self-harm were consistently and statistically significantly higher for Waterloo Region than for all of Ontario from 2006 to 2017 (e.g. 199.8 versus 139.4 ED visits per 100,000 population in Waterloo Region and Ontario in 2017, respectively). These students are in our schools and are supported by School Social Workers.

The proposed reductions in social work translates to a significant reduction in mental health assessments and students being supported each year. We understand the need for fiscal responsibility. However, the reductions to social work are occurring during a time when mental health is being made a priority by the Government of Ontario, recognizing that suicide is the leading cause of death for adolescents in Canada. WCDSB recognizes the intersection of mental health and student success and has prioritized Mental Health and Well Being in the MYSP and Well Being Strategy. **The reduction of 1.5 FTE Social Worker is not consistent with government and board priorities.** Social Workers are the only staff in our system whose professional training allows for immediate risk assessments and mental health intervention that not only supports students at risk of harm but also supports Administrators and Teachers in managing these critical incidents.

In order to hold true to our board's mission, "to educate and nurture hope in all learners to realize their full potential" we ask that you consider the impact that reductions in social work will have on students and families.

Respectfully,

WCDSB School Social Workers

Cc: L Notten (Director of Education), B Conway (Chair, Board of Trustees), M Van Alphen (Vice Chair, Board of Trustees), L Shoemaker (Superintendent of Learning, Special Education), S Maharaj (Executive Superintendent of Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer), R Miller (Chief Social Worker)



May 28, 2019

I Holdbrook, Chair
Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)
Waterloo Catholic District School Board
35 Weber St West
Kitchener, ON
N2M 4G2

Dear Chair Holdbrook;

I am writing on behalf of the Association of Professional Student Services Personnel (APSSP) to express our grave concerns in response to the recent cuts to our membership: 1.5 FTE Social Work, 1.0 FTE Psychoeducational Consultant and 1.0 FTE Speech-Language Pathologist. These cuts account for a total reduction of 3.5 FTE or 13% of student services professionals supporting our most vulnerable and at-risk students.

As you are aware, members of our union group work in our schools, to assess and provide interventions that address mental health and attendance concerns; speech, language and communication issues; as well as, psychological and cognitive profiles / learning needs. All of which, if left untreated and unaddressed, lead to significant barriers to learning and school engagement resulting in lower graduation rates. With the prevalence and complexity of such issues on the rise, Ministry and Board priorities have incorporated strategies to address these issues, including increased government funding specifically for these supports. As a group we are very concerned and disheartened that the board has chosen to reduce staffing in these areas. WCDSB's historic commitment to professional student service staff represents a significant part of our goal of inclusivity in ensuring that every student who enters our Catholic schools will have an opportunity to succeed in their educational program despite the challenges they may bring with them to the school door. The difficult decisions you make at budget time do make a difference for our students.

We would like to speak more specifically about how the reductions in each discipline will directly impact the students and families of our community:

Psychoeducational Consultants

Our Psychoeducational Consultants provide vital information for programming, IEP development, and for the High Needs Verification process. The 20% reduction in Psychoeducational Consultants will result in a corresponding decrease in the completion of psychoeducational assessments and consultations, depriving the most vulnerable students of the opportunity to better understand their individual learning profile and educational needs. Thus, limiting access to the supports that they require and impacting the quality of IEP programming in meeting their individual needs.

Federal and provincial standards recommend 1 Psychological Consultant to every 1000 students. WCDSB is already staffed well below this standard. It is important to remember that school psychoeducational assessments are often the only source of assessment that families have access to, due to finances and extensive

waitlists for more cost-effective community assessments. In fact, when a student is demonstrating barriers to learning, waiting upwards of three years to understand the students' profile and learning needs is not helpful for that students' programming and educational success. Additionally, students often come to our board with community assessments and diagnoses that require consultation and further explanation for appropriate program planning. Our Board consultations provide important information about these assessments, a variety of learning profiles, related mental health and psychological issues and psychiatric diagnoses. All of which directly impact student learning and achievement. Board employed Psychoeducational Consultant expertise is invaluable to students, school staff, and families of WCDSB.

Speech-Language Pathologists (SLP)

Our board employed Speech-Language Pathologists manage a caseload of approximately 100-170 students (of all ages) per school year. SLP service not only includes consultation, assessment and direct programming in partnership with the communicative disorders assistant (CDA), but also Tier 1 interventions providing classroom-wide support in the areas of speech and language. Speech-Language Pathologists work with a variety of student needs including, but not limited to, non-verbal students with voice output technology, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Developmental Delays, expressive and receptive language delays, fluency, and articulation. Specific supports include building speech, language, communication, emotional literacy and pro-social skills. All of which allow students to successfully access the classroom curriculum, participate actively in the broader school community and build their sense of belonging and inclusion.

With recent changes to the Ontario Autism Program and both preschool and community-based speech and language services, the caseloads and level of supports required by board employed SLPs will continue to increase. With an overall decrease of 1/3 of our speech and language department (1.0 SLP, 3.0 CDAs), the impact will include:

- A decrease in student support through direct programming (a decrease of approximately 135 speech and language sessions per week) including augmentative and alternative communication support
- Limited ability to Support Tier 1 interventions (i.e., emotional literacy, staff training and capacity development),
- Increased waiting times that will impact the support available to students, families and schools through consultations and assessments

Knowing the importance of having strong oral language skills in order to develop literacy, this reduction will have a significant effect on student achievement throughout the student's school career, thereby limiting student success and engagement.

Social Work

Our School Social Workers will support approximately 1600 students/families this school year (an increase of over 400 students from the 2017/2018 school year). This increase in service is directly related to the increase in complement for the current school year and equates to the provision of support to 1 in 15 students. The loss of 16% of the WCDSB Social Work team will directly result in:

- Significantly fewer suicide risk assessments per year, which will subsequently place students in our system at greater risk for ongoing self-harm, suicidal ideation, suicide attempts and completed suicides. School Social Workers are the only staff in our system whose professional training allows for immediate risk assessments and mental health interventions that not only supports students at risk of harm but also support Administrators and Teachers in managing these critical incidents.
- Decreased access to social work service to provide preventative support and follow-up

- Decreased daily support to students experiencing significant mental health difficulties impacting attendance (i.e., anxiety – school social workers support students intensively to return to classes when anxiety is heightened). Currently our School Social Workers support a decrease in Absenteeism through student and family engagement, the development of individualized interventions to return students to the school and the classroom, deter early leavers and increase graduation rates.
- Less Tier 1 and Tier 2 Interventions. The current complement of School Social Workers over the past year have resulted in the ability to:
 - Develop staff capacity through lunch and learns, staff meeting presentations, availability for consultation/discussion/problem solving, including the understanding of what it means to be a trauma informed school/system.
 - Provide increased support and the development and facilitation of Mental Health Sessions in classrooms and through school wide initiatives
 - Support an increase in parent events providing information and links to community based mental health issues and services – bringing services to parents through community health carousels and breaking down barriers to access resources in our community
- Decreased availability to support a collaborative approach to mental health support, bridging the efforts and interventions of school, home and community

In a time of increasing enrollment, reducing 13% of our professional student services staff seems contradictory to WCDSB's MYSP and Well Being Strategy. We urge you to reconsider the proposed budget and to consider the significant impact that the reductions of APSSP staff will have for our most vulnerable students, families and school communities. The heart and soul of an inclusive school system is a strong Special Education department, with sufficient supports and services for all exceptionalities. Any reduction in APSSP staff will result in fewer supports to meet these needs.

Respectfully

Sandra Ayerst MSW RSW
President
APSSP Waterloo Chapter

Cc: L Notten (Director of Education), B Conway (Chair, Board of Trustees), M Van Alphen (Vice Chair, Board of Trustees), L Shoemaker (Superintendent of Learning, Special Education), S Maharaj (Executive Superintendent of Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer)

May 21, 2019

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson
Minister of Education
22nd Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Dear Hon. Lisa M. Thompson,

On behalf of the Special Education Advisory Committee for the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board, we are writing you today to express our concerns regarding the recent changes to the provincial funding model for Autism services and the impact it will have on children, families and school boards.

We are in support of the concerns expressed in the letter by Durham Catholic District School Board on Wednesday, March 6, 2019 and similarly feel there is a lack of clarity around the process of students returning to our school systems and presenting a difficulty to our Special Education/Student Services Departments. We also feel that our board has no clear understanding of which students will be returning or when, nor has there been any indication from you or the Ministry of Education as to what you promised increased support to school systems will look like. Additionally, we are asking for clarification on what the funding will look like going forward into September 2019 as the board, families and all concerned are unable to develop a plan to support these students who generally require intensive support and comprehensive planning around transitions.

We strongly request that the Ministry of Education informs us immediately as to the funding and transitional support that they are going to provide so that the staff at the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board can provide a safe and accepting environment to meet the needs of all of these students.

Thank you and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Christine Dragojlovich
Co-Chair
Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board
Special Education Advisory Committee

C: Mike McDonald, Director of Education & Secretary BHNCD SB
Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees



BRANT HALDIMAND NORFOLK
CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

322 Fairview Drive, P.O. Box 217, Brantford, ON N3T 5M8
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May 10, 2019

Honourable Lisa Thompson
Minister of Education
Mowat Block 22nd Floor
900 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Thompson:

I wrote to you on January 16, 2019, expressing our concern that our students with special education needs have been negatively impacted by your decision on August 24, 2018 to change the SIP allocation amount. This resulted in a loss of \$850,000 for students with special education needs. It is disappointing that you have not responded to this concern.

It is more disappointing, however, that you have continued to make decisions that will negatively impact students with special education needs. On March 15, 2019, Ministry of Education staff communicated that Local Priorities Funding will be eliminated. This decision resulted in a loss of \$16,000,000, much of which was used to support students with special education needs. For example, a large percentage of the Local Priorities Funding was used to meet the number of Teaching Assistants required to support students with special education needs.

Your decision to reduce the number of elementary and secondary teachers has also impacted students with special education needs. This decision has resulted in a reduction in centrally assigned staff who support students with special education needs. This decision has also resulted in greatly reduced course options for students with special education needs in secondary schools.

In closing, it is not too late to change the negative impact of these decisions. Your government's decision to revisit the changes to supports for children with autism demonstrates that you can change your decisions once the negative impact is clear. Please reconsider how you are supporting students with special education needs and change course before it is too late.

Sincerely, 

Shelley Foster
SEAC Chair, Peel District School Board

c: Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees

June 3, 2019

Minister Lisa Thompson
Minister of Education
315 Front Street West, 14th Floor
Toronto ON M7A 0B8

Dear Minister Thompson:

Re: Provincial Funding Model for Class Size Averages and Mandatory E-Learning

The Durham District School Board's Special Education Advisory Committee ("SEAC") writes to express its concerns with respect to the provincial funding model for class size averages and mandatory e-learning.

We believe that increasing the class-size average to 28 will have a detrimental impact on our students with special education needs. We know that students build resiliency when they develop meaningful connections with one or more caring adults¹. Class sizes of 30 or more will result in teachers having less time for individualized attention for all students and will inhibit those important connections from being made. As exceptional learners are already at risk due to a variety of social, emotional and academic needs that require individual attention, additional supports and differentiated learning, the ability to make meaningful connections with teachers and school is imperative to ensure their success.

At the secondary level, the increase in class-size average will result in fewer teachers and, therefore, fewer electives for students. Given the requirements for graduation and electives required for some students to enter post-secondary programs, if faced with this choice, it is likely that electives that are currently provided that are not required for post-secondary acceptance will be the ones eliminated (photography, fashion, art, shop, etc.). These reductions could impact access to work experience and trade program opportunities, an area we need more of not less. For our students with special education needs, electives are the classes where many of these students can channel their strengths. Fewer electives will have a negative impact on their sense of well-being and limit meaningful pathway choices.

We also have serious concerns with respect to the proposed change requiring students to take four mandatory e-learning credits. Over and above concerns relating to equitable access to technology and wi-fi across the province, many studies have shown that e-learning is not suitable for many students and, in fact, can result in lower success rates. Students in this age group mature at different rates and many lack the independence, problem-solving skills and resiliency to be successful with e-learning programs. E-learning courses make it difficult, and in some situations, impossible for exceptional

¹ Durham Region Health and Wellness, School Health, Educators, "Mental Health Promotion", <https://www.durham.ca/en/health-and-wellness/educators.aspx>

students to receive the supports that they need to be successful, such as modifications, accommodations, extra teacher support, etc. setting them up for learning difficulties and results that will not accurately reflect their capabilities. For our students with IEPs, there is a legal obligation to ensure the supports set out in that document are provided, something that mandatory e-learning may not be able to provide.

In light of the above, the Durham District School Board's Special Education Advisory Committee requests the Ministry consider the following suggestions:

1. Provide e-learning opportunities to students across the Province as an option, but not make it mandatory for all students.
2. Encourage professional learning for staff, and e-learning exposure for students in Learning Strategies courses to allow for specific opportunities to explore the D2L platform and gain direct experiences with digital learning with the support of their SERT. This will allow students to self-assess their confidence and suitability to this learning delivery method.
3. Allow students all access to all pathways (community living, workplace, college, university) online, should they wish, including during alternative school times, to encourage students to explore other opportunities (e.g. summer courses).
4. Slow down changes to class size and establish clear guidelines to measure and monitor impact on students, particularly those with special needs.
5. Provide further transparency about students' pathways and monitor how changes are impacting pathways, including students earning a Certificate of Achievement and Certificate of Accomplishment.

Should the Ministry proceed with the proposed changes, we have the following questions:

1. Learning for All, K-12, a report that is "based on one of the most important findings of educational research since 2000", states "that all students learn best when instruction, resources, and the learning environment are well suited to their particular strengths, interests, needs, and stage of readiness", and further indicates that "personalization, precision and professional learning" are what is most needed for students to learn best. How do the current proposals support personalization, precision or professional learning?²
2. Learning for All, K-12, further explains that tiered intervention,

"approaches help improve student achievement because they rely on greater personalization and precision in instruction. Their success depends on educators' clear understanding of their students' strengths and needs, the types of learners they are, their readiness to learn in a given subject at a given time, and the kinds of learning tasks that are likely to engage their interest and stimulate their thinking".³

² "Learning for All, K-12" A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, page 8.

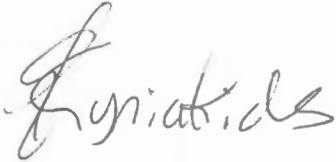
³ "Learning for All, K-12" A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12, Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, page 13.



How would compulsory e-learning or larger classes help teachers gain a better understanding of students' strengths and needs, the type of learners they are or their readiness in that subject?

Durham District School Board's Special Education Advisory Committee strongly encourages the Ministry to reconsider the proposed changes and consider the impacts they will have on overall student achievement, but in particular, the achievement of students with special education needs.

Sincerely,



Eva Kyriakides
Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee
Durham District School Board

cc: Chairs, Special Education Advisory Committees
Lisa Millar, Director of Education, DDSB
Andrea McAuley, Superintendent of Education, Inclusive Student Services



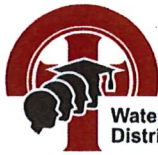
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Waterloo Catholic
District School Board

w w w . w c d s b . c a

April 17, 2019

The Honourable Lisa Thompson
Minister of Education
Mowat Block, 22nd. Floor
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Thompson

On Monday April 8, 2019, the Board of Trustees passed a motion to write a letter expressing our concerns around the proposed changes to publicly funded education, specifically the announcement made on March 15, 2019 by the Ministry outlining *The New Vision for Education*.

These changes by your Ministry will have a significant and negative impact on the Education system both in the short term and the long term for the students of our board, serving Waterloo Region. As democratically elected School Board Trustees, it is our primary focus to advocate for student achievement and well-being, all the while voicing the concerns from the stakeholders who elected the Catholic Board of Trustees in Waterloo Region. We write to you to share our concerns, with the hope that your Ministry will reconsider some of the changes you have proposed, as they present challenges to our school board in meeting the needs of our students.

Class Sizes

The Ministry of Education has announced an increase in the funded PTR in grade 4 to 8, raising the funded average class size from 23.85 to 24.5 and the average class size requirements in secondary were adjusted from 22 to 28 students for grades 9 to 12. We have many concerns in regard to these proposed changes.

- Smaller class size provides teachers with the opportunity to build strong, meaningful, and engaging relationship with students.
- The proposed increase to secondary class size is in direct contravention of our local collective agreement with our secondary teachers. Therefore, we must staff our secondary school classes at 22:1, which will result in a 4 million dollar deficit to our budget. This in turn is placing pressure on all of our budget lines,

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but most especially those related to student success and program supports for the classroom.

- There has been no definitive direction on the above noted matter causing confusion and uncertainty when planning for the new school year.
- Increasing the *average* class size in secondary school to 28 will, in actuality, have the consequence of creating some classes between 35 and 40 students. This impacts the student-teacher ratio and causes concern about reaching all students to achieve success.
- Increased class sizes at the secondary level will impact the Board's ability to offer specialized and elective courses such as the arts, technology, and languages to name a few. It will also place a strain on smaller schools in terms of their ability to offer all the senior math and science courses. As a result, schools will have difficulty offering viable Pathways to students, and this would seem to be a direct conflict with the government's stated priority of promoting skilled trades, experiential learning, math, technology and the sciences.
- In real terms, a funded PTR of 28:1 would result in 80 fewer teachers in our 5 secondary schools, which would provide approximately 480 less sections across our system, based on current and projected student enrollment. That is an unacceptable loss of programming for our students.
- Further, we have currently had to surplus everyone in our central program and special education departments; some work directly with students and others fulfill coaching roles, but in short – all are instrumental to the success of our students. We are not generously staffed in program and special education supports and to be reduced to nothing is clearly unacceptable. Boards wish to work with the Ministry to support student outcomes and responsiveness to Ministry priorities, but some central staff are necessary to support the work of those goals.
- The funding changes for grade 4 to 8 is not minimal, as it creates significant budget pressures for boards; for WCDSB, it is a significant million-dollar liability.

E-Learning

The Ministry of Education has announced that the delivery of all e-learning courses will be centralized, and secondary students will take a minimum of 4 e-learning credits out

of the 30 needed to achieve an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. This proposed change causes much concern for student success.

- The articulation that it will be a “centralized delivery model” with a target of an average of 35:1 leaves us questioning the quality of the program and the potential for high failure rates which impact the government priorities regarding credit accumulation and graduation rates.
- Further and most significantly, the centralized delivery model leaves us questioning what assurances will be given regarding Catholic Course content and Catholic teachers delivering the courses to our students.
- Having the ability to offer e-learning as an option is important when working to support all students. However, this type of learning is not suited for all learners and will have a negative impact on student success and has the potential to contribute to a dramatic drop in graduation rates across Ontario.
- We are also concerned regarding the plans for both availability of technology and supervision for those students who will have eLearning courses built into their timetable. As well, students who live in poverty may not have the devices and/or technology necessary to access e-learning at home, providing road blocks for families who are marginalized to fully participate in e-learning in a manner that is equitable and inclusive.

Special Education

- With respect to the Ontario Autism Program, we would encourage the ongoing consultation process with families, school boards, and professionals.
- With changes to the OAP, more students with ASD are and will continue enrolling in our publicly funded Catholic schools and with the critical issue of historical underfunding of special education, we worry there will not be enough supports based on funding cuts, specifically the Local Priorities Fund.
- While the Local Priority Fund was a recent addition within the past two years, it was providing our school board with much needed staffing in the area of special education, English Language Learners and Guidance supports. The loss of these positions, compounded with the others, once again makes our most in-risk students even more vulnerable.

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- In general, students with special needs will suffer with larger class sizes and mandatory e-learning courses. We need more supports for our most vulnerable students, not less.

### Funding Cuts

- Overall, many of the proposed funding changes, especially the loss of EPO grants, the elimination of local priorities funding and the changes to funded Pupil-Teacher Ratios, will result in significant job losses, a reduction in the programming we can offer here at Waterloo Catholic and most importantly, a significant and sustained threat to our student outcomes, coupled with an inability to successfully work towards our stated goals and priorities.

We understand and appreciate the work of this government to be fiscally responsible, however, we do not believe that it should be done by targeting the youth of Ontario and the most vulnerable of Ontario's students, whose futures depend on the world class education system that we currently have in the Province of Ontario.

We will continue to educate and nurture hope in all learners to realize their full potential to transform God's world and be the heart of the community where there is success for each and a place for all, as stated in our mission and vision statements. We welcome an opportunity to collaborate with you to find solutions that will truly benefit our students, and our future.

Sincerely,

Bill Conway

Chair of the Board

On behalf of The Board of Trustees for the Waterloo Catholic District School Board

Cc: Amy Fee, MPP  
Mike Harris Jr., MPP  
Belinda Karahalios, MPP  
Catherine Fife, MPP  
Laura Mae Lindo, MPP  
Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association  
WCDSB Board of Trustees  
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