

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, December 7, 2022, at 6:00pm

Hybrid Meeting:

In-Person: St. Aloysius (2nd Floor) Catholic Education Centre

Online: [Click here to join the meeting](#)

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: T.B.D.

MEMBERS

WCDSB Trustee – **Tracey Weiler (interim)**

WCDSB Trustee – **T.B.D.**

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

Waterloo Regional Police - **John Gilbert**

Family and Children's Services of Waterloo Region - **Cindy Benedetti**

Waterloo Region Family Network – **Erin Sutherland**



**Waterloo Catholic
District School Board**
Quality, Inclusive, Faith Based Education

35 Weber St. W., Unit A
Kitchener, ON, Canada N2H 3Z1
519-578-3660
info@wcdsb.ca



SEAC Committee Meeting Agenda

Date& Time:	December 7, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.
Location (Hybrid):	In-Person: St. Aloysius Room (2 nd Floor), Catholic Education Centre Online: Via Teams Click here to join the meeting
Next Meeting:	January 11, 2023
Committee Members: Kim Murphy, John Gilbert, Cindy Benedetti, Erin Sutherland, Tracey Weiler	
Administrative Officials: Gerald Foran, Erin Lemak	

1. Opening Prayer Welcome	Erin Lemak
2. Approval of Agenda Motion by: Seconded:	
3. Declared Pecuniary Interest	
4. Approval of the November 2nd Minutes Motion by: Seconded:	
5. School System Operational Business 5.1. Mental Health 5.2. Special Education & Sacraments	Andrea Snyder John Murphy Jeanne Gravelle
6. Ministry Updates (10 min) 6.1. Dufferin-Peel CDSB letter to the Minister: Covid impact on students with special needs 6.2. Durham District School Board letter to the Minister: SIP Claims	
7. SEAC Committee Functions	
8. Policy Advice to the Board	
9. Updates 9.1. Association Updates 9.2. Trustee Updates	
10. Pending Items	



11. Adjournment Motion by: Seconded:	
12. Action Items Place Holder	



SEAC Committee Meeting Minutes

Date& Time:	Nov 2, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.
Location (Hybrid):	In-Person: St. Francis Room (2 nd Floor), Catholic Education Centre Online: Via Teams Click here to join the meeting
Next Meeting:	December 7, 2022
Committee Members: Kim Murphy, John Gilbert, Tracey Weiler, Jeanne Gravelle, Irene Holdbrook, Sue Simpson, Cindy Benedetti	
Administrative Officials: Gerald Foran, Erin Lemak Regrets: Tracey Weiler, Sue Simpson	

1. Opening Prayer Welcome	Erin Lemak
2. Approval of Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change – Section 5.1. Special Education & Sacraments agenda item has been moved to the December meeting <p>Motion by: Kim Murphy Seconded: Karen Applebee</p>	
3. Declared Pecuniary Interest N/A	
4. Approval of the October 5th Minutes Motion by: Karen Applebee Seconded: Kim Murphy	
5. School System Operational Business <p>5.1. BIEP 2022-23 BIEP Q&A</p> <p>5.2. Tutoring update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially, tutoring funds were used to boost summer programs for students with special needs. Focus has shifted to two new programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>After school homework club</u> at both secondary (drop in model) and elementary <u>Literacy</u> Students in grades 6,7 & 8 that are on Modified IEP and showing the need in the literacy skills have been offered tutoring support through two Third parties (LEARNstyle and Indigo) LEARNstyle is offering one on one virtual support Indigo is currently offering in person tutoring to groups of five students (virtual option available for those students that would benefit from this mode of learning) 	Jennifer Ritsma G. Foran



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tutoring funds were initially to end on December 31st but were extended until the end of March <p>Q&A</p>	
<p>6. Ministry Updates (10 min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CUPE amid negotiations of their contract Newswire sent to parents today – In the event of full withdrawal system will be moving to virtual learning on Friday, November 4th. The primary person for programming is the classroom teacher. Special Education teacher to support the classroom teacher <p>Q&A</p>	<p>G. Foran</p>
<p>7. SEAC Committee Functions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Membership updates The new Board has not been officially brought in and this is the last meeting with the old committee members Some organization representatives have already reached out to us Some members stepping down – Sue and Irene Indigenous to be contacted Kim & Jeanne offered to connect with interested members <p>Q&A</p>	<p>G. Foran</p>
<p>8. Policy Advice to the Board N/A</p>	
<p>9. Updates</p> <p>9.1. Association Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WWDSS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continues to offer our members cooking classes, speech and music social groups for all ages, New Parent Program, Mother's Connection, Teen & Adult Hangouts, Evening Speaker Series, and so much more! Annual calendar is now available for pre-order. More details can be found here: https://www.wwdss.ca/event WRFN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WRFN (Waterloo Region Family Network) has hired two new part-time Family Resource Coaches who will be supporting families with a loved one 16 and over. Our Family Activity Day on Nov 20 at Doon Heritage Village from 2 – 4 pm. This event is in support of National Children's Day. This is a free event. Over 130 people have already registered and there is currently still space for more. <p>9.2. Trustee Updates WCDSB Board Meeting Bulletin — October, 2022</p>	
<p>10. Pending Items N/A</p>	
<p>11. Adjournment Motion by: Kim Murphy Seconded: Jeanne Gravelle</p>	
<p>12. Action Items Place Holder N/A</p>	



Date: December 7, 2022
To: SEAC
From: Director of Education, Superintendent of Learning
Subject: Mental Health Update

Type of Report:

- ☐ Decision-Making
- ☐ Monitoring
- ☒ Incidental Information concerning day-to-day operations

Type of Information:

- ☐ Information for Board of Trustees Decision-Making
- ☐ Monitoring Information of Board Policy **XX XXX**
- ☒ Information only of day-to-day operational matters delegated to the CEO

Origin: (cite Education Act and/or Board Policy or other legislation)

SEAC opportunities for informal and continuous consultation with SEAC are afforded at each SEAC meeting during which presentations are made about Special Education Programs.

Alignment to the MYSP:

- Nurturing Our Catholic Community: Promote a culture of belonging and respect, that supports success for all.
- Student Engagement, Achievement & Innovation: Foster maximum opportunity for success for all.
- Building Capacity to Lead, Learn & Live Authentically: Nurture the well-being of all students and staff

Background/Comments:

Early in 2022, The Waterloo Catholic District school board administered the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI) as a School Climate measure requirement by the Ministry of Education. The MDI uses a strengths-based approach to assess areas of development that are strongly linked to wellbeing, health, and academic achievement. Our 2022 data suggests that our students have experienced an overall decline in positive wellbeing since our pre-covid survey in 2019. The data can be used to understand the overall wellbeing of students and to plan interventions.

Two primary mental health practices and approaches that can be linked to MDI measures such as Social and Emotional Well-being, Connectedness, and School Experiences are Trauma Informed Classroom Practices, and Social Emotional Skill Building. These two practices are complementary and both essential for classrooms in terms of student mental health and wellbeing. Trauma Informed Practices are 'Good for All' Classroom approaches that focus on how we understand how students' brains are impacted by stress, how we see and relate to them with curiosity and compassion. Social Emotional Learning are skills that we support students in building, ideally in everyday classroom interactions. Years of research have demonstrated that Social Emotional Learning promotes



academic learning and achievement in addition to fostering social and emotional competencies (Corcoran et al, 2018). Embedding both of these practices and approaches in WCDSB Classrooms are a primary focus of the work of the Mental Health Lead in 2022-2023. Our annual plan [2022-2023 Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan](#) provides the broader objectives of what we hope to achieve over the course of the year, while remaining flexible and adaptive as the needs of our students and system evolve.

Summary of 2021-2022 Mental Health Supports

WCDSB 2021-2022 Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan was aligned with key elements of School Mental Health Ontario's Action Plan during the COVID 19 Recovery Phase as follows:

- 1) Amplify and promote the protective influence of schools
- 2) Identify and address emerging and escalating student mental health problems.
- 3) Mobilize focused support for those disproportionately impacted by COVID-19
- 4) Build and sustain strong safety nets.
- 5) Provide hopeful and aligned communication

Mental Health Leadership Development for Student Wellbeing

As the new Mental Health Lead became oriented with the WCDSB, and in order to ensure that supports were based on need, Mental Health Champions were gathered from each school to engage in mutual learning and to collaborate on the key priorities of Social Emotional Skill Building and Trauma Informed Classroom Principles.

- The *Elementary SEL Subcommittee* launched and promoted School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) Resources throughout the school year, and built a board-wide set of materials to launch SMHO's Virtual Field Trips; Stress and Coping modules for Mental Health Week
- The *Secondary SEL Subcommittee* collaborated in their support of secondary student mental health and wellness. For mental health week, the team built and delivered daily lessons and activities built from SMHO's Virtual Field Trips; Stress and Coping. Additionally, this group planned the development of a Student Mental Health Lead Committee for the 2022-2023 school year
- The *Trauma Informed Classroom Practices Subcommittee* collaborated in the planning of a Live, Virtual April Mental Health PD focused on Trauma Informed Classrooms and the implementation plan for Trauma Informed lessons for 2022-2023 school year

Tier 1 Mental Health Lead Support

In the spring, 2022, the Mental Health Lead collaborated with the Research Coordinator in disseminating what we learned from the Middle Years Report (MDI) and provided tools to link Social Emotional Curriculum from School Mental Health Ontario, as well as Trauma Informed Classroom Principles for schools along-side their unique report. Ongoing interpretation of the 2022 Census data will also be instrumental in ensuring that a clear understanding of the racial and cultural backgrounds of our students are considered in designing a plan that is equitable and culturally responsive.

Ongoing promotion continued with the existing initiatives that have been serving our students well such as; GoZen!, the Umbrella Project, and School Mental Health Ontario tools, materials and strategies.

Some additional Mental Health Activities in 2021-2022 included:

- Launched School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) Resources including: the Mentally Healthy Back to School Support Package, Start Well: 5 Days of activities to Connect, Calm and begin your day, Mentally Healthy Return to School Following Winter Break, Virtual Field Trips, MHLit, Ways to Support Students during World Events, Black Mental Health Week,

- Provided Mental Health presentations at School Staff Meetings, Administrator Meetings, Family of School Meetings and to additional staff groups about Mental Health and Wellness and Trauma Informed Classroom Strategies
- Provided resources for Board wide initiatives to promote knowledge, help-seeking and combat stigma: Bell Let's Talk Day, Mental Health Week, Safe Schools Ambassadors training
- Staff and families, upon educator or social work recommendation, were provided GoZen licenses to promote mental health literacy programming in elementary schools.
- Collaborated with community partners to launch family focused resiliency activities during school breaks (12 Days of Christmas Activity).
- Collaborated with CPIC (Catholic Parent Involvement Committee) to design & launch a 'Parent Hub' based on their goals and themes for the year; Indigenous Education, Diversity & Inclusivity, Mental Health, School & Parent Connection. The hub houses videos prepared by local community organizations to answer parents' questions about how to support their children's mental health as well as information about how to access their services
- Maintained and updated the Board's Mental Health and Wellbeing webpage including content for staff, students, and families
- Help seeking and mental health/wellbeing information made accessible through virtual flyer sent through school messenger, D2L, school newsletters, social media. As well, a BeWell bookmark was provided to administrators translated into four additional languages.
- LivingWorks START suicide alertness and prevention online training was licensed to 23 staff.

2022-2023 Mental Health Supports

WCDSB 2022-2023 Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan was updated to align with the key elements of School Mental Health Ontario's new Action Plan as follows:



School
Mental Health
Ontario

Sant  mentale
en milieu scolaire
Ontario

1. **Centre the needs of students who have been disproportionately impacted.**
2. **Amplify the promotive and protective influence of home, school, and community.**
3. **Elevate student participation and leadership in mental health promotion and stigma reduction.**
4. **Equip school staff to identify emerging and escalating student mental health problems and make connection to appropriate supports.**
5. **Work in collaboration with partners to enhance the system of care for child and youth mental health.**

In Preparation for fall, 2022; Mental Health and Trauma Awareness presentations were made for both NTIP (New Teacher Induction Program) Educator and Equity Champions in August. This fall, SMHO's Mentally Healthy Back to School Support Package was launched by way of Slide deck with Voiceover to administrators for PD, Slide deck with links for teacher reference as well as social media posts and links for students. The importance of relationship, re-establishing a sense of safety, belonging and connection were again highlighted in [The First Ten Days, Start Well, Listen, Believe and Act](#), and [How to Support a Mentally Healthy Back to School for Your Child](#). Available within the support package are practical, evidence-informed resources to promote and protect mental health at school We will continue to draw from the SMHO resources to promote wellbeing and mental health in the coming school year. Additionally, this fall, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Champions, and new Student Mental Health Lead Champions have begun the work of collaborating to develop a plan for 2022-2023 that is in line with the **Tier 1 Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for 2022-2023**.

Tier 1 Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for 2022-2023 is centered around three priorities:

Priority #1: Goal-directed planning, from students to leadership, to improve the organizational conditions that will support mentally healthy schools, through a comprehensive approach to wellbeing.



This priority involves System Leader Collaboration on board-wide initiatives in all priorities areas; Mental Health & Wellness, Physical Health & Wellness, Safe & Caring Schools, Spiritual Wellness, and Anti-Racism. Support will be provided to Principals and Vice Principals to develop a strategy and action plan across each division to foster trauma informed principles, social emotional literacy and promote mentally healthy schools that are safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces for learning for all students. Student voice will be engaged and amplified Mental health, Anti-Bullying, Stigma-reduction and student-identified areas of needs. Stakeholder engagement will continue to be broadened to include teachers and school staff, parents/caregivers, and community partners.

Priority #2 Capacity-Building: Building on a foundation that prioritizes equity in student mental health promotion and belonging for every student; educators and school staff begin trauma informed classroom implementation and promote strength based, culturally relevant, and identity-affirming mental health programming.

The focus of this priority is to work to balance inequities and help students who have been disproportionately impacted during the pandemic by building awareness of the close links between equity and mental health, challenging Eurocentric heteronormative beliefs, and ensuring that all mental health and wellbeing goals, plans, programming, and activities are strength-based, culturally relevant and identity-affirming. Through this lens the launch and maintenance of equity based, evidence informed Social and Emotional Literacy (SEL) programming for students is supported, as well as the system wide launch and maintenance of Trauma Informed Classroom Principles. Board-wide mental health promotion activities to combat stigma and to build mental health and wellness literacy among staff and students will continue to be supported.

Priority #3: Every student and their parents/caregivers have equitable access to relevant resources that support mental health and wellbeing, and are able to identify and access pathways to Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports when mental health needs arise.

Clear pathways of support and help-seeking for students who are struggling with emerging mental health needs are a focus of this priority.

Tier 2 and 3 Mental Health Supports

Tier 2 and 3 supports for students continue to be delivered in the 2022-2023 school year through school mental health professionals including 13 school social worker positions, 4 psychoeducational consultants, and 1 psychologist position serving five families of schools. To support completion of psychoeducational assessments, an external contract was secured for 20 assessments. To support students struggling with chronic attendance concerns and who also experience mental health issues, 1 school social worker position is dedicated to the work of re-engagement. The Student Aware Coordinator continues to be a 0.5 school social work position. Psychoeducational consultants continue to provide consultation and assessment for students with learning needs to identify strengths and needs with recommendations that land on a student IEP. The Psychologist position will support consultation with board collaborative teams and some assessments for students presenting with complex and possibly comorbid mental health issues, behavioural and emotional struggles, complex stressors, possible differential diagnosis, and who may have experienced trauma. We continue to have collaborative relationships and pathways to care in partnership with community child and youth mental health agencies.

Mental Health Leadership Development for Staff Wellbeing

In the 2021-2022 School Year, Mental Health Champions from each school collaborated to develop priorities around Staff Wellbeing. The *Staff Wellbeing* Workgroup identified priorities and delivered on four main recommendations:

- Mental Health & Wellness activities were added to staff meeting agendas; Mental Health Education materials were provided & shared by the Mental Health and Wellbeing Champions
- Separate needs of staff were incorporated into April PD day as well as Staff meeting content
- Information about the Mental Health supports and resources that are currently available were highlighted to staff at monthly staff meetings

- Each school was supported to develop a Wellness Initiative to build connection, promote positive mindset, boost morale and self-care

As the Mental Health and Wellbeing Champions reconvene in 2022-23, the Human Resources Department (Total Attendance Officer and Disabilities Specialist) are supporting the Staff Well-being Priority together with the Mental Health Lead. They will lead the priority of Highlighting Mental Health Resources and supports that are currently available to staff and will provide materials to be shared back at staff meetings and added to Wellbeing Bulletin Boards.

In order to support an ongoing understanding of the needs of our organizational health the *Guarding Minds at Work* survey was administered to all employee groups between October 26-31st. The survey allows employers to assess and address the 13 psychosocial factors known to have a powerful impact on organizational health and the health of the individual employees. The survey is a comprehensive, 68-item questionnaire administered to all employees with an organization. It provides an index of performance across the 13 psychosocial factors. Data gleaned from this survey will help support planning and implementation of staff wellbeing initiatives.

Finally, much of the broader, system-level work is taking place through the work of the Wellbeing Steering Committee. As our focus on multi-dimensional aspects of wellbeing has increased, we will also continue to use natural opportunities to incorporate a wellbeing component into existing whole-board initiatives. The priority of the work of the Mental Health lead will ensure Tier One supports are embedded across all four pillars to ensure seamless integration of the Mental Health and Wellness plan, so our students have alignment of supports and services as opposed to fragmentation of supports and services. The work of equity, mental health, safe schools, and healthy active living share the commitment of student achievement and wellbeing and the work of the committee recognizes the alignment of the WCDSB mission, vision, and values with respect to the work being evidenced and monitored in the MYSP.

Recommendation:

Prepared for your information.

Prepared/Reviewed By:

Tyrone Dowling
Director of Education

Judy Merkel
Superintendent of Learning

Andrea Snyder
Mental Health Lead

*Bylaw 4.2 "where the Board of Trustees receives from the Director of Education a monitoring report that flows from a responsibility delegated to the Director under Board Policy – **except where approval is required by the Board of Trustees on a matter delegated by policy to the Board** – the minutes of the Meeting at which the Report is received shall expressly provide that the Board has received and approved of the Report as an action consistent with the authority delegated to the Director, subject in all instances to what otherwise actually occurred."





Date: November 2, 2022
To: SEAC
From: Director of Education, Superintendent of Learning: Special Education
Subject: Called to Awaken: Informing Parents, Priest and Educators in Preparing our Children with Special Needs for Sacraments

Type of Report: ☐ Decision-Making
☐ Monitoring
☒ Incidental Information concerning day-to-day operations

Type of Information: ☐ Information for Board of Trustees Decision-Making
☐ Monitoring Information of Board Policy **XX XXX**
☒ Information only of day-to-day operational matters delegated to the CEO

Origin: (cite Education Act and/or Board Policy or other legislation)

PPM 156 Supporting Students with Special Education Needs

Alignment to the MYSP:

Nurturing Our Catholic Community:

Faith is lived and witnessed in community: To strengthen and cultivate school, parish and home relationships.

Students and Staff are healthy in mind body and spirit: To strengthen system commitment to school, student and staff spiritual health.

Everyone is included, respected and welcomed: To increase improved awareness respect of differences within our school communities.

Special Education Plan:

Background/Comments:

"Preparation for Sacraments must be appropriate and never onerous to children or families. May our united efforts help children be welcomed to the Sacraments with the preparation necessary for them to feel the fullness of joy that comes with God's grace!" Most Reverend Douglas Crosby, OMI Bishop of Hamilton

Our presentation will include a survey and overview of some of the misconceptions that might exist with respect to students with special needs receiving sacraments and sacramental preparation. This presentation is designed to encourage and support parents with special needs students preparing for sacraments, and to joyfully clarify church teaching with respect to Baptism, Eucharist and First Confession.

Jeanne Gravelle and John Murphy will lead this presentation and discussion. We will include resources from our local diocese (Hamilton), official Church Documents and Teaching (the New Directory for Catechesis), as well as a wonderful video resource made to support a deeper understanding on this topic.



Links to support the presentation:

[Grace for All: Sacraments and Children with Special Needs in Our Catholic Schools Called in Baptism, Eucharist, And Confirmation \(A Resource for Parents, Priests, and catechists preparing children with special needs\)](#)
[SEAC Parent Engagement Night Video - Sacramental Preparation](#)

Recommendation:

Presented for your information.

Prepared/Reviewed By: Tyrone Dowling
Director of Education
Gerald Foran
Superintendent of Learning: Special Education

*Bylaw 5.2 "where the Board of Trustees receives from the Director of Education a monitoring report that flows from a responsibility delegated to the Director under Board Policy – **except where approval is required by the Board of Trustees on a matter delegated by policy to the Board** – the minutes of the Meeting at which the Report is received shall expressly provide that the Board has received and approved of the Report as an action consistent with the authority delegated to the Director, subject in all instances to what otherwise actually occurred."



October 14, 2022

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
Mowat Block, 22nd Floor
900 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Lecce,

The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) is deeply concerned about the impact the last 2 1/2 years of this COVID pandemic has had on the education of the students we represent.

We are writing to request that the Ministry of Education consider providing the option to extend the time students with differing abilities have to remain or continue in Secondary School beyond year 7 and beyond age 21.

The "Ontario's Plan to Catch Up", which you have publicly announced, is a welcome starting point to address some of the educational gaps brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. We too are very concerned but despite the huge impact this pandemic has had on student learning and well-being, we have yet to hear or understand explicitly how your Ministry (and perhaps other applicable Ministries within the government) plan to address the gaps currently faced by diverse learners. Specifically, how are you addressing the gaps experienced by those diverse learners who have graduated or are currently nearing the end of their secondary school education?

Many of the students we represent could not learn online or even attend online. They had no instruction or experiential learning during the first couple of waves because in person learning was not available. And when special education classrooms did eventually open and remain open, these students were unable to benefit from integration into regular classrooms, extracurricular activities, or socialization with students in the mainstream; nor did they have the opportunity to learn from cooperative work experience essential to successes needed in life because it was not available or severely limited in the community. There were and are also vulnerable diverse learners in other programs who have failed to reach their potential or even come close due to similar circumstances and missing the time needed in school and with peers. Parents and guardians of diverse learners could not provide even similar opportunities that the school system could; many of these families struggle with

disparities in income, time, and many other resources which the pandemic worsened as statistics have shown us all. The school system also carries an intricate network that can access opportunities much more readily than parents. For example, there are teams of teachers and ERWs who not only teach, but organize and coordinate co-op opportunities, liaise with businesses in the community, develop resumés, and provide support at the co-op work location.

“Education For ALL” and universal design are good for all but absolutely necessary for special needs students. With some students, we believe that it is a fundamental accommodation that your Ministry consider the option to also extend the time that students can remain in high-school or return to high school to enable their own education recovery, whether that means extending the 7 year maximum for high school, or providing Boards with the funding to accommodate students within other special education programs. We are advocating for the most vulnerable students who require additional time as part of their accommodation to “catch up” and close the gaps experienced during this COVID-19 pandemic. The loss of integration time, cooperative experience, and the learning available within a school system can drastically change the post-secondary trajectory for the most vulnerable students SEAC represents.

We appreciate your attention to this very important matter and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Bruno Iannicca, SEAC Chair, Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board (DPCDSB) Trustee Mississauga Ward 6 and 11	Dely Farrace, SEAC Vice Chair, DPCDSB SEAC Association Representative for Brampton Caledon Community Living
--	--

cc: DPCDSB Trustees

MPPs of Dufferin-Peel

Chairs of Special Education Advisory Committees

November 22, 2022

Hon. Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
15th Floor, 438 University Ave.
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2K8

Dear Minister Lecce:

Re: Special Incidence Portion Claim Funding

I am writing to you on behalf of the members of Durham District School Board's (DDSB) Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), to follow up on our letter to you of February 3, 2022, regarding funding of the Special Incidence Portion (SIP).

We once again would like to remind you that, in the spring of 2018, the previous government announced an increase to the SIP claim funding of \$11,016.00, bringing that funding amount up to \$38,016.00 per student from the previous funding amount of \$27,000.00. On August 24, 2018, after school board budgets were prepared and approved, the Ministry announced that the previously-announced increase would be clawed back. Currently the funding received from the Ministry is \$28,803.00, bringing the net increase to \$1,803.00 per student.

SEACs across the province were dismayed by the Ministry of Education decision to claw back that increase, given that the true costs of supporting a student with a SIP claim are significantly higher than the allocated amount. For example, the average cost, including salary and benefits, for an Educational Assistant is \$58,870. A student who requires 2 plus Educational Assistants to support their learning needs would be at a cost of \$117,740 plus. The Ministry of Education's SIP amount covers approximately 24.2 percent of the true cost to support a student with significant learning needs. The DDSB covers the remaining 75.9 percent of the cost from other Special Education and operational grants.

The budget gap at the DDSB between Special Education revenues and expenditures for the last three years has averaged 5.6%. However, in the 2021-2022 school year alone, the DDSB allocated \$6,699,588 more than was given in Special Education Grants to Special Education services. Some of the revenue the DDSB has used to fund this gap is the Local Priorities Funding, which, as you are aware, is not guaranteed annual funding from the Province.

Furthermore, when you take into account the claw-back of the SIP funding increase in 2018, combined with the reallocation of the Special Education Per Pupil Amount, this resulted in a net **decrease** in funding and a further increase in the DDSB's Special Education deficit. In 2017, the Auditor General highlighted that the Ministry of Education's "[f]unding formula uses out-of-date benchmarks and is due for a comprehensive external review."



Durham District School Board

400 Taunton Road East, Whitby, Ontario L1R 2K6

Phone: 905-666-5500; Toll Free: 1-800-265-3968

Our SEAC is extremely concerned about the direction funding for special education is taking. Inadequate funding of Special Education puts our most vulnerable children at risk by cutting the services that they need to be successful. Our entire system is strained when school boards are required to take revenues from other areas to meet its statutory commitment to children accessing Special Education services.

We urge the Minister to evaluate the true costs associated with SIP claims to support our students and increase funding accordingly. We further request, once again, that the Special Education funding model be reviewed and changed to accurately reflect the increasing and more complex needs of students with special needs.

Sincerely,

Eva Kyriakides

SEAC Chair

Durham District School Board

cc: Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees
Hon. Patrice Barns, MPP
Hon. Matthew Rae, MPP
Hon. Marit Stiles, MPP



@DurhamDistrictSchoolBoard



@DDSBschools

ddsb.ca



@DurhamDistrictSchoolBoard



@DDSBSchools

ddsb.ca