

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, February 7, 2024, at 6:00pm

Hybrid Meeting:

In-Person: St. Francis Room (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.*

CO-CHAIRS: Cindy Benedetti and Laura Shoemaker

MEMBERS

WCDSB Trustee - **Bob Sikora**

WCDSB Trustee – **Conrad Stanley**

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

Waterloo Regional Police - **Amanda Hennig**

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

Waterloo Region Family Network - **Erin Sutherland**

Centre for ADHD Awareness - **Daina Colbourne**

International Dyslexia Association Ontario - **Laura Shoemaker**

Autism Ontario - **Monica Wenzlaff**

Member at Large - **Jeanne Gravelle**



**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@wcsb.ca



SEAC Committee Meeting Agenda

Date& Time:	February 7, 2024, 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:	March 6, 2024 @ 6:00 pm
Committee Members: Kim Murphy, Amanda Hennig, Cindy Benedetti, Erin Sutherland, Daina Colbourne, Laura Shoemaker, Jeanne Gravelle, Monica Wenzlaff, Bob Sikora, Conrad Stanley	
Administrative Officials: Gerald Foran, Erin Lemak	

1. Opening Prayer Welcome	Erin Lemak
2. Approval of Agenda Motion by: Seconded:	
3. Declared Pecuniary Interest N/A	
4. Approval of the January 10th minutes: Motion by: Seconded:	
5. School System Operational Business 5.1. WCDSB Reading Intervention Strategy	Antonietta Leonardo Special Education Liaison
6. Ministry Updates (10 min) 6.1. MACSE – Feedback (form shared with the committee) 6.2. PVNC Catholic District School Board letter to the Minister of Education	G. Foran
7. SEAC Committee Functions 7.1. PAAC on SEAC (Presentations – Updates) 7.2. April 23rd Presentation by Dr. Parekh and Michal Jacques	G. Foran
8. Policy Advice to the Board	
9. Updates	
10. Pending Items	
11. Adjournment Motion by: Seconded:	



12. Action Items Place Holder	



SEAC Committee Meeting Minutes

Date& Time:	January 10, 2024, 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:	February 7, 2024
Committee Members: Kim Murphy, John Gilbert, Cindy Benedetti, Erin Sutherland, Daina Colbourne, Laura Shoemaker, Jeanne Gravelle, Monica Wenzlaff, Bob Sikora, Conrad Stanley	
Administrative Officials: Gerald Foran, Erin Lemak	
Regrets: Jeanne Gravelle, Kim Murphy, Daina Colbourne, Erin Sutherland	

Meeting commenced at 6:02 pm

1. Opening Prayer Welcome	Erin Lemak
2. Approval of Agenda Motion by: Erin Sutherland Seconded: Trustee Stanley	
3. Declared Pecuniary Interest N/A	
4. Approval of the December 6, 2023, minutes: Motion by: John Gilbert Seconded: Monica Wenzlaff	
5. School System Operational Business 5.1. MLL & Spec Ed Protocol Barb McCourt and, Student Achievement Consultant and Laurie Smits, Special Education Liaison presented WCDSB ML Special Education Protocol. Vision, Universal Supports for MLLs, Tiered Levels of Support and timelines. SEAC Members asked clarifying questions.	Barb McCourt Student Achievement Consultant Multilingual Learners K-10 Laurie Smits Special Education Liaison
6. Ministry Updates (10 min) Chair Sekura shared correspondence from OCSTA on behalf of the Ministry of Education regarding Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) seeking feedback.	
7. SEAC Committee Functions PAAC on SEAC (Presentations – Updates) SEAC members discussed upcoming presentation. Speakers and location have confirmed. Members discussed hybrid option. Discussed possibility of daycare on site. Superintendent Gerald to provide SEAC with speaker's book, concern with content.	All



8. Policy Advice to the Board N/A	
9. Updates WRPS: John Gilbert introduced Amanda Hennig, who will be replacing him as the WRPS represented on SEAC. Amanda's bio was shared. Thanks, and congratulations was given to John for his time and passion. WRFN: N/A WWDSS: N/A Trustee Updates: Chair Sikora updated SEAC on events attended since December. Autism: Monica Wenzlaff updated SEAC on new resources on Autism Ontario. Link: Autism Ontario SEAC updates - January 2024.docx IDA: N/A	
10. Pending Items N/A	
11. Adjournment Motion by: John Gilbert Seconded: Erin Sutherland 7:00 pm	
12. Action Items Place Holder N/A	



Date: February 7, 2024
To: SEAC
From: Director of Education, Superintendent of Learning: Special Education
Subject: WCDSB Reading Intervention Strategy

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)

Policy/Program Memorandum 168

Policy Statement and/or Education Act/other Legislation citation:

Regulation 306 Special Education Programs and Services

Special Education Plan:

Pg. 67

Alignment to the MYSP:

☒ **Awaken to Belong**

- ☐ Every student can see themselves reflected in their learning.
- ☐ Staff experiences a positive, healthy, and inclusive workplace.
- ☒ Are aware of and/or use the available resources to assist in navigation of the school system.

☒ **Ignite to Believe**

- ☒ Every student experiences the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations (OCSGEs) and the WCDSB pastoral plan within their learning environments.
- ☐ Staff are welcomed and invited to continue to be a partner in their adult faith formation journey.
- ☐ The relationship between home, parish and school is strengthened.

☒ **Strengthen to Become**

- ☒ Every student reaches their full potential.
- ☒ Staff see their impact on student achievement.
- ☐ Are engaged as active partners in our students' Catholic education journey.



Background/Comments:

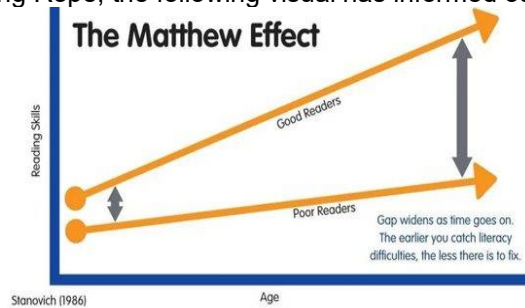
Right to Read:

In October 2019, the OHRC launched a public inquiry into human rights issues facing students with reading disabilities in Ontario's public education system. In March 2021, the OHRC published a report that included 157 recommendations to the Ministry of Education, school boards and faculties of education on how to address systemic issues that affect the right to learn to read. (<https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/right-to-read-inquiry-report>)

At WCDSB our vision statement is “*Our Catholic Schools: Heart of the Community - Success for Each and a Place for All*”. Within our vision statement is the hope that all students will achieve success as we continue to focus on the implementation of the Right to Read report. Scarborough's Reading Rope is highlighted in the Right to Read report and has become an anchor for the professional development that we have engaged in over the past two years. Professional development has been delivered to Special Education Teachers, Administrators and Classroom Educators.



In addition to Scarborough's Reading Rope, the following visual has informed our moral imperative moving forward.



Stanovich (1996) highlights the concept of the Matthew Effect when it comes to the outcomes of struggling readers versus good readers. Without early intervention, the achievement gap widens for struggling readers. This gap impacts students as they move from Elementary into Secondary, and it also impacts their choices for post-secondary options. Therefore, it is imperative that we implement evidence-based universal screening followed by early evidence-based literacy intervention.

Over the past two years, we have engaged in the following initiatives:

- Introduction to the Right to Read Report and Reading Intervention Series for Special Education Teachers (2022-2023).

- Development of a Reading Strategy Committee (including representation from Special Education/SLP/ML and literacy Consultant (*January 2023 – Ongoing*)).
- Educator and administrator presentations including an Introduction to the Right to Read which occurred in the spring of 2023 and Universal Screening Part One and Two that took place in the Fall of 2023.
- Professional Development for Classroom teachers on the University of Florida Literacy Institute as an option for the continued building of foundational word reading skills.
- Continued implementation and monitoring of Tier Three Reading Interventions (Empower Decoding and Spelling, Empower Comprehension and Corrective Reading.)
- The use of Lexia Core 5 and Power Up Literacy as a possible tier one, two or three resource.
- Universal Screening in alignment with the Ministry of Education PPM 168. Acadience licenses have been purchased for mid-year and end-year screening. At this time, mandatory implementation has been paused by the Ministry. However, there are many classroom teachers that are eager to implement the screener for their students.
- Follow up presentations are being developed by the Reading Strategy Committee that will focus on data interpretation and progress monitoring with data collected from the Acadience Universal Screening tool.
- Implementing modifications as a last resort requiring superintendent approval.
- Individual education plans that currently include modifications will focus on closing the achievement gap for students. Presentations and exemplars are in the initial stages of implementation.

Recommendation:

Presented for your information.

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

*4.2 DIRECTOR Monitoring Reports: Where the Board receives from the CEO a monitoring report that flows from a responsibility delegated to the Director under Board Policy – except where approval is required by the Board 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 CEO, subject in all instances to what otherwise actually occurred.



January 15, 2024

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

delivered by email: Minister.edu@ontario.ca

RE: Supporting Students with Special Education Needs

Dear Minister Lecce,

The special education budgets in many school boards across the province are overspent year after year, yet the needs of students are not always being fully met. This is not because school-based personnel fail to recognize the needs of these students. It is because there is insufficient staff in the schools to implement programming effectively. This leads to growing gaps and frustration for the students as they try to deal with individualized challenges without the support they need. Increased levels of support would most certainly decrease acute behavioural and mental health struggles. Moreover, consistent levels of support for our students early in their schooling would potentially avert later, more significant struggles.

As per our mandate, the PVNC Catholic Special Education Advisory Committee is actively making recommendations on matters impacting the establishment, development, and delivery of special education programs and services - specifically focusing on providing recommendations to update the funding formula that would help serve our students with special education needs. We would ask you to explore three recommendations specifically tied to financial resources in order to update the funding formula to better serve these students. In addition, we have provided 2 other recommendations for review, that the SEAC committee believes, if adopted, would benefit students with special education needs. Please review and consider the following recommendations:

Many students with special education needs are not able to access a school bus in the same way most children do. This could be because of self-regulation issues, anxiety, physical disabilities, etc. This is an equity issue. They deserve the same access to transportation that the students who are able to take the regular school bus have. The current funding for this issue is tied to students taking smaller buses. For boards with a large geographical area and rural components, such as ours, these small buses are

unavailable; we must rely on taxis and vans to transport these students. The 196 students in our Board with special transportation needs generates \$98,000 of funding while costing our school board \$1,256,000 - a gap of well over a million dollars.

Supervision of elementary students during lunch and recesses is largely the work of educational assistants in many school boards. In PVNC Catholic, elementary teachers complete 80 minutes of supervision per week, as well as working with students, contacting parents, preparing lessons, extracurricular activities, etc., during these scheduled student break times. This results in the bulk of the supervision completed by educational assistants. Our school board currently receives \$300,000 per year to cover all elementary supervision for the year. We encourage you to review the actual cost to school boards in this area, including the cost of covering lunch and breaks, and fund at a more realistic amount.

A portion of funding for special education is often linked to the SIP process and formal testing and diagnosis of students. This means that only students with severely unsafe behaviour or clear medical diagnoses would qualify for enhanced funding. Formal testing of students who are clearly struggling academically, behaviourally, or socially but are not a significant safety risk often takes a significant period of time to occur. There are long waiting lists in school boards for psychometric testing. This results in students with clear needs not being tested, and hence funded, until at least the junior years of elementary school. As a result, we encourage you to continue additional funding for assessments and enhance the allocation of targeted funds through SIP.

Furthermore, this lack of funding is especially apparent for children entering kindergarten. We see students arriving to ELKP with communication, toileting, behavioural and cognitive lags with little or minimal community support in place. It often takes months to work with parents/guardians to begin exploring the child's needs and development through medical and community-based professionals. With no enhanced funding for these students, personnel has to be pieced together to assist these students. This lag in funding results in insufficient personnel to meet the needs of these students during their first five to seven years of schooling. Without the appropriate level of funding for the help they require, these students often fall further behind academically and socially. We encourage you to examine this funding in order to help all students reach their potential. Though early identification of language and math issues is a step forward, it is unrealistic to believe that remediation and intervention can happen without the additional personnel to implement these programmes.

Currently, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Health often operate within their own silos, with communication and collaboration of services being extremely difficult if not impossible in some cases. Increased collaboration and communication, including fostering the involvement of

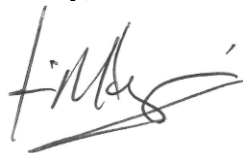
community professionals with specific expertise to support students from their respective discipline should be a priority in our system. Seamless coordination and communication between each respective Ministry would allow a more timely, comprehensive, and effective delivery model.

Students with caregivers who struggle with transportation, booking/ keeping appointments, mental health impediments, etc. would have those barriers removed. Priority care to students and families would more effectively be delivered with enhanced coordination and communication by all.

Another area where the lack of integration between ministries negatively impacts our students with special education needs is when they prepare to transition from secondary school into the workforce. Targeted funding for these students, beyond traditional school co-op placements, could lead to greater connections and training through the involvement of community organizations. Additionally, if employers were incentivized to invest in these students and retain them as employees following the completion of placements or volunteer hours, this could lead to an increase in opportunities for employment for these individuals as they transition into adulthood.

Our committee believes that updating funding and addressing gaps in coordination and communication to deal with the challenges mentioned above is crucial to the success of our students and the balancing of the special education budget. We encourage you to work to address these needs in order to allow each of our students to benefit fully from their experience in Ontario's school system.

Sincerely,



Kevin MacKenzie
Board Chairperson



Shawna Belcourt
Special Education Advisory Committee Chairperson, Peterborough Victoria
Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board

cc. Chairs of Ontario School Boards' Special Education Advisory Committees