

# SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

*Wednesday, May 28, 2024, at 6:00pm  
Virtual Meeting:*

[Join the meeting now](#)

## *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@wcdsb.ca



## SEAC Committee Meeting Agenda

<b>Date&amp; Time:</b>	May 28, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.
<b>Location:</b>	Online: Via Teams <a href="#">Join the meeting now</a>
<b>Next Meeting:</b>	June 5, 2024, @ 6:00 pm
<b>Committee Members:</b> Kim Murphy, Amanda Hennig, Cindy Benedetti, Erin Sutherland, Daina Colbourne, Laura Shoemaker, Jeanne Gravelle, Monica Wenzlaff, Bob Sikora, Conrad Stanley	
<b>Administrative Officials:</b> Gerald Foran, Erin Lemak	

<b>1. Opening Prayer</b> Welcome	Erin Lemak
<b>2. Approval of Agenda</b> Motion by: Seconded:	
<b>3. Declared Pecuniary Interest</b>	
<b>4. Approval of the April minutes:</b> Motion by: Seconded:	
<b>School System Operational Business</b>  5.1. Update on Sacramental Kits 5.2. PAAC on SEAC ( <a href="#">Module 3</a> ) 5.3. PAAC on SEAC <b>Quiz</b> 5.4. Next Year's Topics	E. Lemak
<b>6. Ministry Updates (10 min)</b> 6.1 DDSB Letter to the Minister of Education	G. Foran
<b>7. SEAC Committee Functions</b> 7.1. Future Grant Use – Proposal	All
<b>8. Policy Advice to the Board</b>	
<b>9. Updates</b>	
<b>10. Pending Items</b>	
<b>11. Adjournment</b>  Motion by: Seconded:	
<b>12. Action Items Place Holder</b>	



## SEAC Committee Meeting Minutes

<b>Date&amp; Time:</b>	April 3, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.
<b>Location (Hybrid):</b>	In-Person: St. Francis Room (2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor), Catholic Education Centre Online: Via Teams <a href="#">Click here to join the meeting</a>
<b>Next Meeting:</b>	May 15 <sup>th</sup> or 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 2024, @ 6:00 pm
<b>Committee Members:</b> Kim Murphy, Amanda Hennig, Cindy Benedetti, Erin Sutherland, Daina Colbourne, Laura Shoemaker, Jeanne Gravelle, Monica Wenzlaff, Bob Sikora, Conrad Stanley	
<b>Administrative Officials:</b> Gerald Foran, Erin Lemak Regrets: Monica Wenzlaff	

<b>1. Opening Prayer</b> Welcome	Erin Lemak
<b>2. Approval of Agenda</b>  Motion by: Erin Sutherland Seconded: Jeanne Gravelle	
<b>3. Declared Pecuniary Interest</b> N/A	
<b>4. Approval of the March 6<sup>th</sup> minutes:</b>  Motion by: Jeanne Gravelle Seconded: Erin Sutherland	
<b>5. School System Operational Business</b> 5.1. Post Secondary Pathways Support: College and University  ➤ Community Integration Through Co-operative Education (CICE) – Conestoga College Presented by <b>Sarah Daly</b> , Program Learning Strategist, Community Integration Through Cooperative Education from Conestoga College <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program Overview</li> <li>• Admissions Criteria</li> <li>• Core Courses (2,3 core Courses each semester with other CICE Students)</li> <li>• Topics include communication, health &amp; wellness, community resources, life skills</li> <li>• Area of Specialization Courses (modified credits – 1-2 courses, 5 areas of specialization each year)</li> <li>• Areas of Specialization</li> <li>• Filed Placements (1 day a week in Level 1 and 2 days a week in Levels 2-4)</li> <li>• Learning Strategists</li> <li>• Modifications – Tailored for each student based on student needs</li> </ul>	CICE& Accessible Learning WLU



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedules (14 hrs. of class time and 5 hrs. of support time, field placements)</li> <li>• Applying for CEC – through Ontario Colleges application center</li> </ul> <p>Q&amp;A</p> <p>➤ Accessible Learning – Wilfred Laurier University (WLU) Presented by <b>Dr. Jeanette Parsons</b>, Director, Accessible Learning and <b>Anahid Shirkhodaee</b>, Learning Strategist &amp; Educational Supports Coordinator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About 3000 students supported through the program.</li> <li>• Purpose is to provide equitable access (e.g., time)</li> <li>• Identities (students from different communities)</li> <li>• Accommodations</li> <li>• Accommodation Supports</li> <li>• Learning Strategies</li> <li>• Peer supports. – volunteers</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registering with Accessible Learning:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete registration and submit documentation.</li> <li>2. Meet with the Intake Coordinator and Accommodation Consultant</li> <li>3. Sign up for Golden Hawks Orientation to Accessible Learning – GOALS</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Link for parents of students with disabilities on the WLU website</li> </ul> <p>Q&amp;A</p>	
<p><b>6. Ministry Updates (10 min)</b> 6.1. Durham Catholic District School Board letter to the Minister</p>	<p>G. Foran</p>
<p><b>7. SEAC Committee Functions</b> 7.1. PAAC on SEAC 7.2. April 23<sup>rd</sup> Presentation by Dr. Parekh and Michal Jacques: updates</p>	<p>G. Foran E. Lemak</p>
<p><b>8. Policy Advice to the Board</b> N/A</p>	
<p><b>9. Updates</b></p> <p>➤ <b>WRFN- <u>UPDATES</u></b></p> <p>➤ <b>WWDSS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We were delighted to see so many schools and administrators participating in the World Down Syndrome Day on March 21. WWDSS sends a heartfelt thank you to all who shared photos proudly rocking their socks!</li> <li>• WWDSS is holding a Spring Mini Conference - Saturday May 4/24 from 9 am to 1 pm at RIM Park, Waterloo. See details below:</li> </ul>	



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1st Session Young Advocate: Anthony Tamming</li>   <li>• 2nd Session: Positive Advocacy: Practical, proven, and positive strategies to work with Schools to support children with Down syndrome as well as other educational needs. Speaker: Ed Mahoney In this workshop Ed MAHONEY, special education teacher and advocate, will explore what you really need to know to work with educational staff to meet your child's needs. Topics include: Special education legislation What really counts in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) The Identification, Placement And Review Committee (IPRC) Understanding the reality of Ontario schools Approaches to working with staff that really work Meetings The legal framework surrounding special education: The Special Education Tribunal &amp; The Ontario Human Rights Commission If you have additional questions, you would like Ed to address, please email them to <a href="mailto:info@wwdss.ca">info@wwdss.ca</a> by April 30, 2024. OR</li> <li>• 2nd Session: Life After School: Collaborating and Brainstorming with other families This facilitated session for families of adults with Down syndrome will provide an opportunity to connect with and discuss topics of interest. Families will have an opportunity to ask questions, share their knowledge, and build connections with other families. If there are specific topics that you would like to be discussed, please email <a href="mailto:info@wwdss.ca">info@wwdss.ca</a> and we will work to incorporate as many topics as possible.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>CADDAC - <a href="#">UPDATES</a></b></li> <li>➤ <b>TRUSTEE UPDATES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chair Sikora updated SEAC on March events.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><b>10. Pending Items</b> N/A</p>	
<p><b>11. Adjournment</b></p> <p>Motion by: Jeanne Gravelle Seconded: Erin Sutherland</p>	
<p><b>12. Action Items Place Holder</b> N/A</p>	

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

April 24, 2024

**Re: Transportation Support for Students with Special Education Needs – Accessibility to Education and Multiple Pathways.**

Dear Minister Lecce,

Every year the Durham District School Board (DDSB) approves expenditures beyond the Grants for Student Needs Special Education funding envelope to support the needs of our students' requiring accommodations and intensive support services. When expressing challenges boards face in supporting students with special needs to be successful, rarely is the lack of access to public transportation mentioned and how it can be a significant barrier to students with accommodation needs in limiting pathways or their success.

The recent legislative review of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities (AODA) highlighted that the goal of Ontario being accessible by 2025 is an improbable achievement. With approximately 2.9 million Ontarians aged 15+ currently have one or more disabilities and 75% of those surveyed residents with disabilities reported negative experiences, the reviewer, Mr. Rich Donovan declared a crisis in Ontario.

- A study from the Canadian Urban Transportation Authority (CUTA) entitled "[Value Case for Accessible Transit in Canada](#)" identified benefits in providing accessible transportation. Some of the noted benefits of accessible transportation include:
- Greater independence and expanded life choices and options;
- Increased mobility
- Provision of transportation access employment, school, medical, healthcare and other services, often the only option for individuals requiring accommodation
- More affordable option to private providers (e.g., Uber or taxis);
- Improved services for all customers;
- Promotes social inclusion and encourages involvement in the community;
- Creates economic benefits as a result having more people to participate in the labour force;
- Increases ability to access volunteer opportunities;
- Lowers reliance on family members and caregivers in providing private transportation;
- Savings and lower demand of government and social services as people with disabilities have increased opportunities to independently access employment and community program opportunities.

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Durham Student Transportation Services (DSTS) provides school bus services to students who attend programs for both the DDSB and the Durham Catholic District School Board. The Regional Municipality of Durham provides public transportation through Durham Region Transit (DRT). Unfortunately, secondary students are rarely considered in route planning and the provision of transportation services at the municipal level. We commonly hear from municipalities that “school boards have the responsibility to transport students to school”. This was recently highlighted when public transportation routes were changed by Durham Region Transportation (DRT) that removed the ability for secondary students to take public transit to several secondary schools in Ajax. This decision magnified the detrimental impact of eliminating public transportation for secondary students with accommodation needs.

Durham Region Transportation changed the local services for people with disabilities to align with practices with other GTA Municipalities. Door to door services is now limited to a person with a disability that specifically prevents them from using a scheduled transportation service and that the individual must be able to board and unboard the service vehicle independently. This service is not available to students. There is an “On Demand” service which uses smaller vehicles to pick up people from a bus stop on routes with regular service. On demand service has reliability challenges in that it can be canceled due a limited number of small vehicles available. In addition, it is not an option for students with accommodation needs including mobility and/or who are unable to navigate the issues that arise when a pickup is cancelled or changed without sufficient notice.

The lack of reliable, accessible public transportation decreases pathway opportunities and creates additional barriers for students with disabilities in accessing community-based opportunities such as cooperative education programs, apprenticeship programs, and volunteer opportunities. Gaps in access to transportation decreases individuals’ independence and opportunities for social involvement in the community, and further marginalises an already marginalized population. Although Durham Region Transportation has provided a much-appreciated reduced bus pass for students, if the service is not reliable or unavailable, the reduce rate is of no value.

At a recent meeting with DRT, hosted by the Town of Ajax for parents, caregivers, and community members, it became very clear that students were not a priority in providing transportation services when service planning is based on existing ridership data. It is a current cycle of impact where access to service challenges, such as those noted above, result in low ridership and then that data is used to make routing decisions based on ridership. It is important to note that after the community meeting, DRT did reinstate a single bus at both entry and exit bell times to service one of the high schools; this still does not address accessible public transportation at other times of the day.

Transportation issues are a barrier to accessibility for all people with disabilities in Ontario. From challenges to public transportation where available to public transportation being almost non-existent in rural areas, the impacts are limited opportunities and independence.

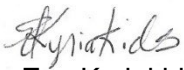
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The DDSB Special Education Advisory Committee requests that:

- The Ministries of Education, Municipal Affairs & Housing and Transportation establish an action-oriented committee (coalition) of board associations, education, transportation, and membership inclusive of representation for people with disabilities. The Committee to develop a framework for moving accessible public transportation initiatives forward with the intended outcome of students with disabilities equitable access to choices and opportunities in educational pathways and programs available to their peers.
- The Ministry of Education take action on recommendations made in the [Education K-12 Standards Development Committee's recommendations](#), particularly, those that are related to transportation and increasing opportunities in educational pathways and programs, so that students with disabilities have equitable access to these pathways and programs available to their peers.
- The Ministry of Education take action to move forward the recommendations made by Mr. Rich Donovan in the 4<sup>th</sup> legislative review of the AODA.

Accessible public transportation benefits students with accommodation needs, their peers, and our communities.

Sincerely,



Eva Kyriakides

Chair, DDSB SEAC

c: Bruce Rodrigues, Deputy Minister

Rachel Osborne, Assistant, Deputy Minister (Acting)

Honourable Raymond Sung Joon Cho, Minister of Seniors and Accessibility

Honourable Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation

Honourable Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Honourable Chandra Pasma – Official Opposition Education Critic

Peggy Blair, Chair, Ministry Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE)

John Henry, Chair & CEO, Regional Municipality of Durham

SEAC Chairs