

# SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Wednesday, March 4, 2026, at 6:30 pm**

**Hybrid Meeting: [Join the meeting](#)**

In-Person: St. Francis Room (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor) Catholic Education Centre

Online:

## 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 - **Karen Applebee**

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  
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info@wcdsb.ca



**SEAC Committee Meeting Agenda**

<b>Date&amp; Time:</b>	March 4, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.
Location (Hybrid)	In-Person: St. Francis Room (2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor), Catholic Education Centre Online: Via Teams: <a href="#">Join the meeting</a>
<b>Next Meeting:</b>	April 1, 2026 @ 6:00 pm
<b>Committee Members:</b> Kim Murphy, Amanda Hennig, Cindy Benedetti, Karen Applebee, 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 February minutes:</b> Motion by: Seconded:	
<b>5. School System Operational Business:</b> 5.1. Assistive Technology 5.2. Sapphire Program at Laurier	C. Runstedler L. Allan
<b>6. Ministry Updates (10 min)</b> 6.1. Durham DSB Letter to the Minister re: Provincial Proposal to Replace Trustees with Provincially Appointed Supervisors	G. Foran
<b>7. SEAC Committee Functions:</b> 7.1. Security for SEAC meetings	
<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>	February 4, 2026, at 5:15 p.m.
<b>Location (Hybrid)</b>	In-Person: Special In-Person Event: St. Anthony Daniel Parish 29 Midland Dr, Kitchener, ON N2A 2A9
<b>Next Meeting:</b>	March 4th, 2026 @ 6:30 pm
<b>Committee Members:</b> Kim Murphy, Amanda Hennig, Cindy Benedetti, Karen Applebee, 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: Kim Murphy Seconded: Cindy Benedetti	
<b>3. Declared Pecuniary Interest</b> N/A	
<b>4. Approval of the January minutes:</b> Motion by: Bob Sikora Seconded: Conrad Stanley	
<b>5. School System Operational Business</b>	
<b>6. Ministry Updates (10 min)</b>  <b>6.1. Ministry of Education SIP &amp; SEA Monitoring Visit</b>  ➤ Positive feedback was received from the Ministry of Education following their SIP (School Improvement Planning) and SEA (Special Education Amount) monitoring visit at <b>Resurrection School</b> and <b>St. Mary's School</b> .  ➤ The Ministry acknowledged strong practices and noted evidence of effective implementation at both sites.  <b>6.2. SEAC Communication to Administrators</b>  ➤ SEAC requested that this positive feedback from the Ministry be formally shared with school administrators.	G. Foran



<b>7. SEAC Committee Functions:</b> 7.1. Grace for All Event	All
<b>8. Policy Advice to the Board</b> N/A	
<b>9. Updates</b> 9.1. Trustee Updates ➤ Trustees Sikora shared Trustee updates for the month of January 9.2 WRFN Updates ➤ <a href="#">Kaleidoscope Kids Flyer</a> ➤ <a href="#">WRFN's School Navigation Workshop Series - Modified Days Flyer</a>	
<b>10. Pending Items</b> N/A	
<b>11. Adjournment</b> Motion by: Jeanne Gravelle Seconded: Conrad Stanley	
<b>12. Action Items Place Holder</b>	



**Date:** Wednesday March 4, 2026  
**To:** Board of Trustees  
**From:** Director of Education  
**Subject:** SEA – Assistive Technology

**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)**

Regulation 306 Special Education Programs and Services

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

Policy 1001 - Ends

**Special Education Plan:**

Pg. 76 & 81

**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:**

The focus of this report is to address how Assistive Technology (AT) supports students with diverse learning needs as well as the staff who work with them. The central issue is ensuring that all learners—regardless of their challenges, disabilities, or diagnoses—are equipped with the tools they need to meaningfully access the curriculum. Assistive Technology plays a key role in allowing students to participate more independently in classroom activities, while also supporting staff in delivering instruction that is responsive and inclusive.

Assistive Technology benefits a wide profile of students, particularly those whose Individual Education Plans (IEPs) outline specific accommodations or modifications. These learners may present with a range of needs, including Learning Disabilities, Developmental Delays, Visual Impairments, and Speech challenges or delays. For these students, Assistive Technology provides alternative pathways for communication, comprehension, and expression, helping bridge gaps that may otherwise hinder academic engagement.

The overarching goals guiding the use of Assistive Technology are grounded in promoting student independence and inclusion. We aim to ensure that all students can access the curriculum with confidence—either independently or with minimal guidance—regardless of the nature of their challenges. Just as important is supporting students in using AT tools to interact and collaborate with peers in inclusive classroom environments, contributing to both academic and social development. To achieve these goals, we employ strategies centered on continuous, year-round training. Both staff and students receive ongoing learning opportunities designed to build proficiency with AT tools and devices. This ensures that technology becomes a natural and effective part of classroom routines rather than an isolated or underused resource.

Fostering understanding and confidence among staff is equally critical, as their comfort with these tools directly influences student success. A variety of resources support this strategy. Training is offered both on-site and virtually, tailored for students, staff, and in some cases, entire classes. Staff have access to online handouts and instructional videos that supplement their learning and deepen their understanding of AT tools. Additionally, teacher workshops expand awareness of different technologies and highlight practical ways these tools can be integrated into instruction to better support student learning.

To assess the effectiveness of these efforts, several metrics are used. Students' and staff's ability to demonstrate and apply newly learned software skills serves as a key indicator of progress. Anecdotal observations and comments provide qualitative insight into day-to-day improvement. Ongoing



feedback from Special Education Teachers (SETs) and Classroom Teachers (CTs) help determine whether AT tools are effectively applied in learning contexts. Ultimately, measurable improvements in students' ability to access the curriculum—such as increased length or quality of written responses—serve as strong evidence of success.

**Recommendation:**

Presented for your information.

**Prepared/Reviewed By:** Annalisa Varano  
Director of Education

Gerald Foran  
Superintendent of Learning: Special Education

Chris Runstedler  
Assistive Technology Resource Teacher

\*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.



**February 19, 2026**

The Honourable Paul Calandra  
Minister of Education  
Mowat Block, Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON

Dear Minister Calandra:

**Re: Provincial Proposal to Replace Trustees with Provincially Appointed Supervisors**

On behalf of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) of the Durham District School Board, I write to express our profound disappointment and concern regarding the Ontario government's proposal to expand the use of provincially appointed supervisors in place of locally elected trustees in the province's school boards.

The suggestion that trustees could be removed (or their role diminished) undermines local democratic control of education and erodes community confidence. Trustees serve as a non-partisan, direct voice of families and students, particularly those receiving special education supports. In contrast, supervisors appointed by Queen's Park lack accountability to local parents and caregivers. Furthermore, examples from other boards show that important mechanisms for transparency - such as live-streamed SEAC meetings and regular trustee-parent communication - have been curtailed under supervision, challenging families' ability to stay informed and engaged.

We also note that there is no financial savings for the Ministry or school boards by replacing Trustees with Supervisors but, in fact, costs more. The salary for 1 provincially appointed supervisor is approximately \$350,000 per year, whereas the remuneration costs for the 12 Trustees at the DDSB is \$240,000. From our perspective, replacing Trustees with provincially appointed supervisors, who have no connection to the local community and do not understand the unique needs and culture of that community, runs contrary to PPM 170 regarding transparency, collaboration and building trust and does so at a higher cost to school boards and, by extension, Ontario taxpayers.

Furthermore, setting up Parent/Student Support Offices, to be staffed by current Board staff, while a great point of contact for parent/students to obtain information regarding Board process or policies, is not a replacement for the advocacy a Trustee does on behalf of students and parents. As employees of the Board, staff is accountable to the Board itself; in contrast, Trustees are accountable to their constituents. Parents and students, especially those who require special education accommodations, will lose an important avenue to hold teachers, schools and the Board accountable for ensuring that students are receiving those accommodations appropriately.

In the DDSB, SEAC members, including trustees and representatives from eight different associations (along with our *At Large* members), work collaboratively to advise the Board on special education programs, services, and parent



## Durham District School Board

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support. This local advocacy is vital to ensuring students with exceptional needs receive tailored supports that enable their success.

We are concerned that removing elected trustees will disconnect families from decision-making processes and weaken the advocacy structures that help protect the rights of students with special education needs. We urge the Ministry to preserve local governance and strengthen, not weaken, the voices of parents and caregivers in shaping education policies that affect their children.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eva Kyriakides".

Eva Kyriakides

Chair, SEAC

Durham District School Board

cc: Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees  
Chandra Pasma, Shadow Minister of Education ([CPasma-QP@ndp.on.ca](mailto:CPasma-QP@ndp.on.ca))  
John Fraser, Education Critic ([jfraser.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org](mailto:jfraser.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org))