

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, April 1, 2026, at 6:00 pm

Hybrid Meeting: [Join the meeting](#)

In-Person: St. Francis Room (2nd 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
519-578-3660
info@wcdsb.ca



SEAC Committee Meeting Agenda

Date& Time:	April 1, 2026 @ 6:00 pm
Location (Hybrid)	In-Person: St. Francis Room (2 nd Floor), Catholic Education Centre Online: Via Teams: Join the meeting
Next Meeting:	T.B.D. – Possibly May 20 th , 2026
Committee Members: Kim Murphy, Amanda Hennig, Cindy Benedetti, Karen Applebee, 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	
4. Approval of the March minutes: Motion by: Seconded:	
5. School System Operational Business: 5.1. Active and Community Living - Pathways	E. Lemak G.Foran
6. Ministry Updates (10 min) 6.1. Durham DSB Letter to the Minister re: Provincial Proposal to Replace Trustees with Provincially Appointed Supervisors 6.2. Response from the Ministry re: WCDSB SEAC letters to the Ministry pertaining to Special Education Transition Navigators and Summer Learning funds.	G. Foran
7. SEAC Committee Functions: 7.1. Security for SEAC meetings – update 7.2. Feedback from the Grace for All event	G. Foran E. Lemak
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:	March 4, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.
Location (Hybrid)	In-Person: St. Francis Room (2 nd Floor), Catholic Education Centre Online: Via Teams: Join the meeting
Next Meeting:	April 1, 2026 @ 6:00 pm
Committee Members: Kim Murphy, Amanda Hennig, Cindy Benedetti, Karen Applebee, Laura Shoemaker, Jeanne Gravelle, Monica Wenzlaff, Bob Sikora, Conrad Stanley	
Administrative Officials: Gerald Foran, Erin Lemak	
Regrets: Erin Lemak and Karen Applebee	

1. Opening Prayer Welcome	G. Foran
2. Approval of Agenda Motion by: Bob Sikora Seconded: Jeanne Gravelle	
3. Declared Pecuniary Interest N/A	
4. Approval of the February minutes: Motion by: Cindy Benedetti Seconded: Karen Applebee	
5. School System Operational Business: 5.1. Assistive Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized Equipment Allocation (SEA) is to provide students with special education needs with the equipment and technology that are directly required and essential for attending school. • SEA Funding Model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Formula Component ➢ Claims Based Component • SEA Funding (computer related) is divided into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Computer Hardware ➢ Computer Software ➢ Training Costs ➢ Staffing Costs • Building Capacity in Schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Elementary Teachers have time on schedule for assistive technology ➢ Secondary – each site has 0.5 SEA technicians 	C. Runstedler



<p>Speech and Language Pathologist - Assistive Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology varies from very low tech to high tech tools • Assisting students communicate and function in our community <p>Q&A</p>	<p>V. Miles</p>
<p>5.2. Sapphire Program at Laurier</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For students that are transitioning to post-secondary schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Sapphire is a program created by students for students ➢ First cohort last year ➢ Autistic graduates have the lowest employment out of all categories ➢ Only 15% of Canadian postsecondary institutions have autistic specific supports • First and Only Comprehensive Transition to work program for autistic postsecondary students in Canada • Program is offering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Networking and Mentorship ➢ Career Readiness Training ➢ Work Experience • High school guidance program heads aware of this program <p>Q&A</p>	<p>L. Allan</p>
<p>6. Ministry Updates (10 min)</p> <p>6.1. Durham DSB Letter to the Minister re: Provincial Proposal to Replace Trustees with Provincially Appointed Supervisors</p>	<p>G. Foran</p>
<p>7. SEAC Committee Functions:</p> <p>7.1. Security for SEAC meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ SEAC will seek an alternate solution which doesn't involve security to ensure members feel safe to and from to (i.e., walking in pairs, etc.) 	
<p>8. Policy Advice to the Board</p> <p>N/A</p>	
<p>9. Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WWCSS Updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ World Down Syndrome Day March 21, 2026 ➢ Celebrate World Down Syndrome Day at school on Friday March 13th School Activities Link • Autism Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ World Autism Awareness Day information ➢ Volunteer With Us! <p>Do you want to support our autism community and make a difference in someone's life? Are you at least 16 years old and willing to help? Volunteers are needed to help with regional programs and events! Join us in making a positive impact. Your time and talents can make a real difference.</p> 	



<p>Looking for passionate volunteers in the following cities: Burlington, Orangeville, Waterloo, Wellington, Hamilton Apply today and get involved!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trustee Updates<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ Trustee Sikora shared February updates	
<p>10. Pending Items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Item 6.0. to be added to the April agenda – Gerald to connect with the Ministry to confirm how this possible change might impact SEAC committee.• Feedback from the Grace for All event.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 11. Adjournment Motion by: Jeanne Gravelle Seconded: Cindy Benedetti	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 12. Action Items Place Holder N/A	

Ministry of Education

Minister

315 Front Street West
Toronto ON M7A 0B8

Ministère de l'Éducation

Ministre

315, rue Front Ouest
Toronto ON M7A 0B8



Laura Shoemaker
Cindy Benedetti
Special Education Advisory Committee Co-Chairs
Waterloo Catholic District School Board
c/o Olja.Djukanovic@wcdsb.ca

Dear Laura Shoemaker and Cindi Benedetti,

Thank you for your letters on behalf of the Special Education Advisory Committee of Waterloo Catholic District School Board pertaining to Special Education Needs Transition Navigators and Summer Learning funding.

The Ministry of Education is committed to ensuring that every student, including students with special education needs, has access to the supports they need to succeed in school. The input you provided on these programs and public education funding is useful as the ministry considers opportunities to strengthen programs and services for students. I welcome your comments and suggestions and have shared them with ministry staff.

Each year, the ministry reviews its Responsive Education Programs (REP) funding and considers which programs would be well suited to be included in Core Education Funding based on various considerations including long-term need and staffing requirements.

Thank you again for your suggestions and be assured that your feedback will be considered by the ministry as it considers funding policy for future school years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Calandra', written over a large, stylized, circular flourish.

The Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Education



Date: April 1, 2026
To: Board of Trustees
From: Director of Education
Subject: Community Living and ACTIVE Pathways

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

Alignment to the MYSP:

Learning

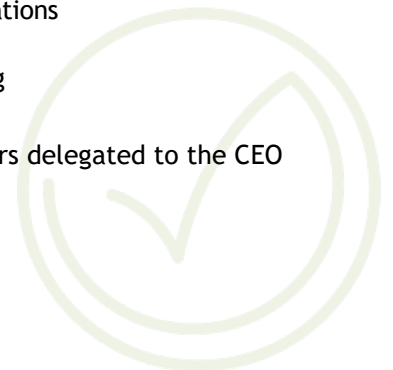
- Support multiple pathways & tools for success
- Accelerate excellence & innovation while building transferable, future-ready skills
- Engage students as co-creators in their learning
- Transform learning through leadership & staff support & development

Serving

- Celebrate & promote our distinct Catholic identity
- Develop faith & live gospel values
- Strengthen connections between home, school, & parish
- Connect faith formation to learning

Belonging

- Create safe, welcoming environments that reflect our diversity
- Promote a sense of mattering & dignity
- Foster equitable, inclusive, & barrier-free learning & work environments
- Engage families & build community partnerships



Background/Comments:

In our Secondary Schools, there are five different pathways (e.g., Apprenticeship, College, Community, University, and Work). The Community Pathway is for students with special education needs who are studying at the ACTIVE (Accomplishing, Community or Certificate, Training, In, View of, Employment) or Community Living level and have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and a Transition Plan, which identify goals for life after school. Special education staff, parents, and community support agencies work collaboratively to plan and prepare for life in the community upon exiting secondary schools.

Students in the ACTIVE and Community Living program, who will be entering the community directly from high school, can take a course in “Exploring the World or Work and Exploring Our World”. This non-credit course provides the opportunity to explore future work placements, volunteer work placements, or community involvement based on individual student interests and learning profiles. Placements may take place “in school” or within various community organizations, agencies, and/or businesses.

Students are required to take part in 30 to 40 hours of pre-placement orientation, involving a basic understanding of health and safety, and work readiness skills. Placements typically take place in the later years of a student’s program, as determined by the Transition Plan. This program provides students with opportunities to identify potential jobs, volunteer work placements or community involvement and to develop skills that could be also used in the workplace or community after leaving school.

The Community Transition Support Worker partners with the secondary schools to find student co-op placements in the community. Examples of student placements have included the following local business sites: Goodwill, Farmboy, YMCA, CPS Medical, Tiny Home Takeout, Dollar Planet, Goodness Me, Waterloo Regional Library, Canadian Tire, Spinco TBC, Cafeteria Services. These workplaces provide a variety of opportunities for our students to build and enhance skills while exploring a variety of interests.

Student Services continues to work on enhancing the programming and implementation of consistent practices across all secondary schools in the use of Special Education sections. We know that it is essential for students to have solid foundational knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their full potential and that the use of evidence based approaches must be used to teach foundational literacy skills. In order to support the needs of all students as well as create consistency between our secondary schools, we purchased and implemented a literacy program for our Community Living and ACTIVE programs with professional development provided to our secondary teachers.

Recommendation:

Presented for your information.

Prepared/Reviewed By: Annalisa Varano
Director of Education

Gerald Foran
Superintendent of Learning: Special Education

Erin Lemak
Principal of Student Services and Care & Treatment Education Programs

*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.

