

Agenda – SEAC Meeting

January 22, 2025 – 5:30 p.m.

Limestone Education Centre

220 Portsmouth Avenue, Kingston, Ontario

Virtual Link: <https://bit.ly/SEACMTGJan222025>

Public Meeting – 5:30 p.m.

Acknowledgement of Territory: “The Limestone District School Board is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee. We acknowledge their enduring presence on this land, as well as the presence of Métis, Inuit, and other First Nations from across Turtle Island. We honour their cultures and celebrate their commitment to this land.”

1. WELCOME

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

3. DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4.1 SEAC Meeting – December 11, 2024 (Pages 3-6)

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

6. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES UPDATE

6.1 Supports and Services for students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing/Blind/Low Vision – A Team Approach – Terry Farrell, Itinerant Teacher for Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Team Lead; Katie Kyte and Robb MacKay, Itinerant Teachers for Deaf/Hard of Hearing; Sarah Ruta, Itinerant Teacher of the Visionally Impaired

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7. CORRESPONDENCE

7.1 Letter to the Ministry from Ottawa Catholic School Board SEAC – Correspondence to the Ministry from Ottawa Catholic School Board regarding Inadequate Special Education Funding and Educational Assistant Shortage. (Pages 7-8)

8. ASSOCIATION UPDATES

9. OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 Administrative Report: Superintendent's Report – Superintendent Scot Gillam (Pages 9-11)

10. NEXT MEETING DATE

February 12, 2025

11. ADJOURNMENT

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SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

December 11, 2024

Public Meeting

Roll Call:

Trustees:	Members:
T. Lloyd K. McGregor	Present: A. Martin, Member-at-Large (Queen's University) Z. Rogers, Community Living Kingston C. Lord, Epilepsy South Eastern Ontario Regrets: H. Simson, Learning Disabilities Association of Kingston H. Clark, Autism Ontario E. Clow, Member-at-Large J. Barker, Lennox & Addington Resources for Children L. Clouthier, Easter Seals Ontario K. Hill, Member-at-Large
Invitees:	Staff:
	Present: S. Gillam, Superintendent of Education, Learning for All M. Blackburn, Principal of Educational Services W. Fisher, Educational Services and Safe Schools Coordinator C. Snider, Special Education Program Coordinator M. Aylsworth, Special Education Program Coordinator M. West, Special Education Program Coordinator L. Conboy, Mental Health Lead J. Lalonde, Special Education Program Coordinator N. Dillard, Vice-Principal of Educational Services T. Bonham-Carter, Special Education Program Coordinator
Guests:	Recorder:
None at this time.	J. Senior, Administrative Assistant

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1. WELCOME

Chair McGregor called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Chair McGregor read the Acknowledgement of Territory:

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2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

MOVED BY: Trustee Lloyd that the agenda be approved. Carried.

3. DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None at this time.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED BY Trustee Lloyd that the November 6, 2024, IEC Minutes be approved. Carried.

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

None at this time.

6. EDUCATION SERVICES UPDATE

6.1 Educational Services 2024-25 Monitoring and Operational Plan – Principal Michael Blackburn, Vice Principal Nicola Dillard delivered a comprehensive presentation on the 2024-25 December Monitoring and Operational Plan.

Principal Blackburn reminded SEAC Members of the Mission Statement:

Our mission is to support the creation of equitable, supportive and fully inclusive learning spaces where all students can achieve their goals, develop to their full potential, and experience success. Our purpose is to support staff to recognize the unique strengths and needs of every student and to enable the conditions for learning, engagement, belonging and achievement.

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Principal Blackburn and Vice Principal Dillard reviewed the four foundational principles from the Monitoring and Operational Plan:

- Culture Matters
- Supports Matter
- Programming Matters
- People Matter

Additionally, the Monitoring and Operational Plan lists eight specific key areas of focus for capacity building and support:

- Universal Design for Learning
- Executive Functions
- Assistive Technology
- Relationship Based Approaches
- Accessibility
- Neuroaffirming Practices
- Multi-tiered Systems of Support
- Modification/Accommodations

Examples were provided to illustrate where these principles are implemented and how we track the outcomes. SEAC Committee Members can expect the next updated Monitoring and Operational Plan to be presented at the March 19, 2025, SEAC Meeting.

7. CORRESPONDENCE

7.1 Ontario College of Teachers – Correspondence from Linda Lacroix, Registrar & CEO of Ontario College of Teachers in response to the Limestone District School Board letter received on November 19, 2024. Provided for information.

8. ASSOCIATION UPDATES

None at this time.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 Administrative Report: Superintendent's Report – Superintendent Scot Gillam reviewed the Superintendent's Report that was included in the Agenda Package.

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9.2 K-12 Education Accessibility Standards 24/25 – Superintendent Gillam provided SEAC Members with an update on the current K-12 Educational Accessibility Standards and the progress made by LDSB.

10. NEXT MEETING DATE

January 22, 2025

11. ADJOURNMENT

MOVED BY: Trustee Lloyd, that the meeting adjourn. Carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:32 pm.

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DATE

Via Email

Hon. Jill Dunlop Ministry of Education

Re: Inadequate Special Education Funding & Educational Assistant Shortage

Dear Minister Dunlop,

We are writing on behalf of the special education students in Ontario's schools to express our serious concerns regarding the significant challenges facing these students. Specifically, the insufficient funding for special education programs and services in combination with the critical shortage of Educational Assistants (EAs) severely impact the quality of education and support provided to exceptional students. These act as barriers to these students' rights, as per the Human Rights Code, to access education. Furthermore, the lack of adequate funding for special education has ramifications negatively impacting the entire student population in Ontario, as further explained below.

Funding Challenges:

- **Special Education Grant Shortfalls:** The current Special Education Grant is insufficient to meet the complex and diverse needs of exceptional students. This chronic underfunding forces school boards to reallocate resources from other areas, therefore compromising the overall educational experience for all students. As an example, the Ottawa Catholic School Board currently spends \$26 million more than it is funded to support students with special education needs. This financial strain limits the board's ability to provide essential services and support to its students. **Inadequate Transportation Funding:** Transportation costs for students with special needs continue to exceed the funding provided by the Ministry. This shortfall places an additional burden on school boards and families of students who require specialized transportation and acts as a barrier to access education, which is a human right.

Educational Assistant Shortages:

- **Critical Staffing Gaps:** The province is facing a severe shortage of qualified Education Assistants. This shortage results in significant challenges in providing consistent and adequate support to students with special education needs. Staff absences due to illness and stress often cannot be filled, leaving vulnerable students without the necessary assistance and supervision. This situation poses a direct risk to the safety and well-being of these students and disrupts the learning environment for all students in our schools across the province. This lack of support denies special needs students their legally protected right to access the same level of education as their peers without disabilities. **Students unable to access educational institutions:** A lack of appropriate staff and support can also result in requests to keep students at home. Results from [People for Education's 2023-2024 Annual Ontario School Survey](#) showed that 72% of elementary schools who had daily EA shortages recommended that students receiving EA support stay home and 67% of secondary schools did the same. Note that the province does not keep its own statistics of school exclusion.

- **Urgent Need for Action:** The Ministry must take immediate steps to address this crisis. We urge the government to increase the special education grant to an amount that ensures exceptional students have equitable access to education, when compared to their typical peers. This amount must be adjusted for inflation each year. Furthermore, we urge the government to implement strategies to attract and retain staff in the area of special education. These strategies could include:
 - **Free Tuition for EA Programs:** Offering free tuition for students enrolled in Educational Assistant programs at Ontario colleges.
 - **Retention Bonuses:** Providing financial incentives to encourage EAs to remain in the education sector.
 - **Living wage and benefits:** Most EAs salary is not sufficient to cover the basic cost of living, with an average salary of \$49 000 per year, despite the essential work they do in supporting exceptional students.
 - **Enhanced Professional Development:** Investing in ongoing professional development opportunities for EAs to enhance their skills and knowledge.
 - **Improved Working Conditions:** Addressing workload concerns and ensuring that EAs have the necessary resources and support to effectively perform their roles.
 - **Stable Employment:** Many EAs leave the profession due to lack of full-time stable positions and some are forced to take on multiple jobs to make ends meet. Providing stable funding to pay for full-time positions will enable schools to retain the best EAs and result in lower costs over time when compared to the cost of constantly having to re-staff and retrain new EAs.
 - **Increase and improve all special education resources:** Speech and Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Behaviour Analysts, Resource Teachers and other specialists are wholly insufficient in number to meet the needs of the current student population in the province - significant effort must be expended to improve children's access to the services these specialists bring to the classrooms of the province

The current situation is unsustainable and demands urgent attention. We are facing a special education crisis in Ontario, with students not having their human right of equitable access to quality education met at this time. As such, as chairs of the Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs) across Ontario, we are asking that you take immediate action to address these critical funding and staffing challenges to ensure that all students in Ontario, including those with special needs, have access to the equitable and high quality education and support to which they are entitled under the Human Rights Code.

Sincerely,

Traci Clarke SEAC Chair Ottawa Catholic School Board

Administrative Report: Superintendent's Report

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

01/22/2025

A. Ministry Updates:

French Language Terminology for Special Education

The Ontario government is implementing the new French-language terminology for Special Education that was included in the *Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023* and came into force on January 1, 2025. The new, more neutral and inclusive terminology replaces the phrase “enfance en difficulté” with “éducation spécialisée”, and related variation, in the *Education Act* and the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2011* and in 51 regulations under nine (9) statutes. As a result, the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education (MASCE) will be known, in French, as the comités consultatifs de l'éducation spécialisée (CCES) and the Conseil consultatif ministériel de l'éducation spécialisée (CCMES) respectively.

B. Educational Services Updates:

Special Education – Mid Year Check In

As we begin the second half of the school year, Educational Services Leadership is interested in gathering data from our schools with respect to the impact of the changes to the service delivery in elementary schools.

- Gathering input on the implementation of restructuring and Special Education delivery model.
- Alignment with the Educational Services Monitoring and Operational Plan.
- Survey- Admin, Student Support Teachers (SSTs), Intensive Support Teachers (ISTs), and Learning Program Support (LPS) teachers (January and June), and additional staff, families and students (June).
- Ongoing monitoring – capturing of barriers, successes and strategies.
- Will also be exploring various indicators of quantitative measurements as well.

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Education and Community Partnership Program (ECP) Monitoring 2024-2025

The Ministry of Education regularly monitors ECPs across the province. This monitoring is a key component of accountability for ECPs with the following objectives:

- Confirms the accuracy of the information submitted to the Ministry (applications for ECP).
- Ensures the implementation of Ministry Policy as set out in the Guidelines for Approval and Provision of ECPs.
- Oversees how the education program is designed to enhance student achievement and well-being.
- Addresses outstanding issues and identifies any areas in which the program may not be keeping within the guidelines.
- Provides sector feedback to the Ministry from various stakeholders including students, staff, agency or facility, and board.

Prior to the monitoring meeting, key Educational Services staff and ECP staff will be gathering information that can be shared with the Ministry as well as addressing the following questions:

- How are the board's student achievement goals reflected in the ECP context?
- What are the perceived barriers to student success in this ECP?
- What challenges exist when transitioning an ECP student in/out of the ECP?
- What data/metrics is the board gathering as it pertains to ECP?

During the 2024-25 school year, the Lakers ECP program will be monitored by Ministry staff. This visit will occur sometime in the Spring.

Professional Learning Updates

On Wednesday, January 15, 2025, Student Support Teachers (SSTs) and Learning Program Support (LPS) teachers participated in a learning session. The topics covered included a presentation from KidsInclusive, updates on the Service Delivery Survey, a case study and review of the Barriers Strategy Protocol, the *Third Path*, and an Assistive Technology update, among others.

The Special Education Teacher Course for 2025 has been confirmed and will take place this April and May. This course is mandatory for teachers aspiring to become an Intensive Support Teacher (IST), Student Support Teacher (SST), or Learning Program Support (LPS) teacher. Further details about the course sessions will be shared once confirmed.

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On January 31, 2025, Educational Services staff will support a day of professional learning for Educational Assistants during the Professional Activity Day. The learning sessions will cover topics such as communication and visual supports, case studies, relationship-based approaches, and the *Third Path*, among others. We look forward to spending the day with Educational Assistants and supporting their learning in various topic areas.

Tri-Board SEAC Meeting

The Tri-Board SEAC Meeting for the 2024-25 school year will take place on Thursday, May 22, 2025. Specific details regarding the time and location will be shared later. This year's meeting will be hosted by the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board (HPEDSB). HPEDSB is considering having Micheal Jacques, a gifted presenter who lives with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and has written several books using Assistive Technology, as a speaker. The current SEAC meeting date of Wednesday, May 15, 2025, will be removed from your calendars. More details to follow.

Prepared by: Scot Gillam, Superintendent of Education, Learning for All