



**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, April 29, 2026  
Room 180 A, Education Centre**

**Present**

**Association Representatives – voting members**

Danielle Dion-Broadley, FASD Parent & Caregiver Support Group  
Dawn Danko, Trustee Ward 7  
Judy Colantino, Down Syndrome Association of Hamilton, SEAC Chair  
Lindsay Bray, McMaster Children’s Hospital Developmental Pediatrics and Rehabilitation Portfolio, SEAC Vice Chair  
Samantha Sweet, Centre for Diverse Learners  
Sarah Pennington, Community Living Hamilton  
Susi Owen, CNIB Hamilton and Niagara  
Vanessa Doslea, Lynwood Charlton Centre

**Regrets**

Melanie Roberts, Association for Bright Children of Ontario  
Nancy Silva Khan, Autism Ontario (Central West Chapter)

**Staff**

Angela Giardino, System Principal, Special Education, Inclusion & Equity  
Evelyn Amoah, Hamilton-Wentworth Elementary Teachers Local (HWETL)  
Julie Anderson, System Principal, Special Education, Inclusion & Equity  
Julie Boulton, Hamilton-Wentworth Principals’ Council - Elementary  
Krista Brodersen, Hamilton-Wentworth Principals’ Council - Secondary  
Sharon Stephanian, Superintendent of Special Education, Inclusion & Equity  
Todd Graves, System Principal, Special Education, Inclusion & Equity

<b>Item</b>	<b>Discussion/Decision</b>
<b>1. Welcome and Call to Order</b>	Judy Colantino called the meeting to order at 5:37 pm welcoming everyone
<b>2. Land Acknowledgement</b>	Judy Colantino, Chair of SEAC
<b>3. Approval of Agenda</b>	On the motion of Sarah Pennington, seconded by Susi Owen, the Committee recommends that the agenda be approved  <b>CARRIED.</b>
<b>4. Review of new HWDSB website</b>	<b>Allison Reynolds, Senior Manager Communication &amp; Community Engagement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An overview of the new website was presented, emphasizing a more modern, user-friendly design focused on accessibility, ease of navigation, and improved overall user experience</li><li>• Enhancements include larger, more visually clear homepage slides, prominent ad prompt boxes for key information, and a cleaner layout to support quick access to content for all users</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional features include alphabetically organized drop-down menus to streamline navigation, consistent structure and layout across all school and board sites to create seamless user experience, and a cloud-based platform that improves performance, reliability, and accessibility</li> <li>• The site is fully responsive, allowing for optimal viewing and functionality across desktops, tablets, and mobile devices</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Supporting Students with Complex Communication Needs</b></p>	<p><b>Anna Gill, Manager, Special Education, Inclusion &amp; Equity (DHH, BLV and Speech, Language &amp; Communication Services)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation outlined key changes to Speech, Language, and Communication Services beginning in the 2024–2025 school year, including a shift to a Family of Schools (FOS) model and the creation of a dedicated service team – this team uses a speech-language pathologist (SLP) generalist approach, supported by Communicative Disorders Assistants (CDAs) assigned to specific school groupings</li> <li>• Clinicians now work within a broader scope that includes language and literacy, speech assessment, autism support, and complex communication needs, including</li> <li>• Professional development and resourcing were highlighted as key supports, including one SLP resource position and the planned addition of a CDA in 2025–2026. Ministry of Education funding is being used to support priority areas such as Developmental Language Disorder (DLD), motor speech and phonology, autism support, and complex communication needs</li> <li>• Capacity-building efforts focus on strengthening augmentative/alternative communication (AAC) implementation through revised CDA intervention models, including shorter, more flexible service blocks and increased classroom-based support</li> <li>• Staff learning is supported through HUB courses and hands-on opportunities, with an emphasis on practical strategies such as aided language modeling and improved communication partner practices</li> <li>• Overall, the work aligns with HWDSB’s student-centered framework, grounded in compassion, dignity, joy, and trust – the approach prioritizes student well-being, achievement, and inclusion through equitable practices, collaboration, and a focus on creating conditions for learning, responding to student needs, and delivering identity-affirming care and instruction</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Approval of the Minutes</b>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>March 25, 2026</b></li> </ul> </p>	<p>On the motion of Sarah Pennington, seconded by Vanessa Doslea, the Committee recommends that the minutes be approved</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>CARRIED.</b></p>
<p><b>7. Business Arising from the Minutes</b></p>	
<p><b>8. Updates</b>  a) Trustees  b) Local Association Representatives</p>	<p><b>a) Dawn Danko, Trustee, Ward 7</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trustees have approved the 26-27 non-school based staffing</li> </ul> <p><b>b) Vanessa Doslea, Lynwood Charlton Centre</b></p>

<p><b>c) Superintendent</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have moved program to our new office to 460 Main Street East – everyone is welcome to attend the free open house on May 7<sup>th</sup> from 11-2 to tour the space and meet our team</li> <li><b>c) Sharon Stephanian, Superintendent of Special Education, Inclusion &amp; Equity</b></li> <li>• We’re continuing to provide monthly learning sessions to principals, vice principals and managers highlighting special education each month – April focused on how we support principal role to support young people with autism who are not in special classes</li> <li>• In May we focus on a deeper dive into IPRC process, centering students and families and in June will review school improvement plan, what have they learning and impact – we will also have a keynote speaker</li> <li>• During these presentations, we’re also celebrating the accomplishments of students and staff who identify as having a disability</li> <li>• Legislation for school buses has shifted to no lap belts on small buses, can only have 3-point harness if needed</li> <li>• Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup> the Autism Carnival took place, it was a lot of fun for kids, we had over 600 people attended</li> <li>• On April 30<sup>th</sup> the Community Transition Network-Pathways to Transition event will take place at Nora Henderson, with a lot of community agencies taking part</li> <li>• In process of planning for kindergarten in collaboration with various teams that include the program department, social work and mental health, equity and indigenous team – all kindergarten students will start the same day, there will be no staggered starts</li> <li>• Access Athletics take place on May 26<sup>th</sup> for secondary schools and May 28<sup>th</sup> for elementary both at Nora Henderson with various activities for students</li> <li>• RALISE Boccia interschool tournament to take place in May, providing an exciting opportunity for students to participate who have shown interest in Boccia</li> </ul>
<p><b>9. Correspondence</b>  <b>a) Hastings &amp; Prince Edward DSB Proposal to replace Trustees</b>  <b>b)Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB-Impact of Bill 33</b></p>	<p>On the motion of Susi Owen, seconded by Sarah Pennington, the Committee recommends that the correspondence be read and filed <b>CARRIED.</b></p>
<p><b>10. Other Business</b></p>	
<p><b>11. Adjournment</b></p>	<p>On the motion of Dawn Danko, seconded by Sarah Pennington, the Committee recommends that the meeting be adjourned. The meeting ended at 7:34 pm.  <b>CARRIED.</b></p>