



**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, March 25, 2026  
Room 181 B, 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  
Melanie Roberts, Association for Bright Children of Ontario  
Nancy Silva Khan, Autism Ontario (Central West Chapter)  
Samantha Sweet, Centre for Diverse Learners  
Sarah Pennington, Community Living Hamilton  
Susi Owen, CNIB Hamilton and Niagara  
Vanessa Doslea, Lynwood Charlton Centre

**Regrets**

**Staff**

Angela Giardino, System Principal, Special Education, Inclusion & Equity  
Heather Fudge, Hamilton-Wentworth Elementary Teachers Local (HWETL)  
Jennifer Bibby, Canadian Office and Professional Employees (COPE 527)  
John Manzin, System Principal, Special Education, Inclusion & Equity  
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

<b>Item</b>	<b>Discussion/Decision</b>
<b>1. Welcome and Call to Order</b>	Judy Colantino called the meeting to order at 5:33 pm welcoming everyone
<b>2. Land Acknowledgement</b>	Judy Colantino, Chair of SEAC
<b>3. Approval of Agenda</b>	On the motion of Susi Owen, seconded by Sarah Pennington, the Committee recommends that the agenda be approved <b>CARRIED.</b>
<b>4. Safe and Responsible Use of AI at HWDSB</b>	<b>Michelle Lemaire, Superintendent of Program, Equity &amp; Innovation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An overview of the AI Framework for staff and students was provided to guide future use</li><li>• The framework is adapted from the Educational Computing Network of Ontario (ECNO), which supports forward-thinking learning in education</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The framework is grounded in the Board’s commitment to human rights, equity, Indigenous educational wellness, as well as its values, multi-year strategic plan directives and goals, and legislative requirements related to privacy</li> <li>• In addition to staff use of AI tools, students in secondary schools, aged 13 and over will have access to Copilot 13+, with embedded restrictions and specific security features</li> <li>• AI access and instructional focus will be aligned with grade divisions: K-3, 4-6, 7-8, 9-12</li> <li>• Classroom norms and guidelines will be followed to support responsible and appropriate learning</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Future Preparedness for Students with Special Education Needs</b></p>	<p><b>John Manzin, System Principal, Special Education, Inclusion &amp; Equity: Transition Navigation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An overview of future preparedness programs for students with special education needs were presented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><i>Transitional Work Experience Program (TWEP)</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Structured program that provides students with meaningful, on-the-job training and practical work experience</li> <li>○ The program serves students aged 16-21 who have been identified as having special education needs</li> </ul> </li> <li><b><i>Intensive Transitional Work Experience Program (ITWEP)</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A specialized program that provides students with intensive on-the-job training and meaningful work experience through partnership with HWDSB</li> <li>○ The program is designed for students aged 18 to 21 who require more intensive transition support</li> </ul> </li> <li><b><i>Project SEARCH</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A school to work transition program for students with intellectual or communication disabilities, who are at least 18 years of age or older</li> <li>○ The program provides participants with meaningful workplace training and employment preparation</li> <li>○ Graduates of the program have been hired by a variety of local employers, including City of Hamilton, Lococco’s, Denningers and Sobey’s</li> </ul> </li> <li><b><i>Community Transition Network Event: Pathways to Transition</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This event will take place on April 30 from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm at Nora Frances Henderson Secondary School</li> <li>○ This session is intended for parents/guardians and students aged 14-21 with special education needs who are planning for life after high school</li> <li>○ Attendees will have the opportunity to connect with a range of community organizations and access information, resources, and support related to post-secondary pathways and transitions</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Approval of the Minutes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ February 25, 2026</li> </ul>	<p>On the motion of Lindsay Bray, seconded by Nancy Silva Khan, 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>a) HWDSB SEAC Letter to Board of Trustees</p> <p>b) HWDSB SEAC Letter to Minister of Education</p>	<p>a) On the motion of Nancy Silva Khan, seconded by Susi Owen, the Committee approved the letter to be sent to the HWDSB Chair and the Board of Trustees <b>CARRIED.</b></p> <p>b) On the motion of Sarah Pennington, seconded by Nancy Silva Khan, the Committee approved the letter to be sent to the Minister of Education, and shared with SEAC Chairs across Ontario <b>CARRIED.</b></p>
<p><b>8. Updates</b></p> <p>a) Trustees</p> <p>b) Local Association Representatives</p> <p>c) Superintendent</p>	<p><b>a) Dawn Danko, Trustee, Ward 7</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the beginning of March, Trustees approved Guiding Principles for the Program Strategy Review</li> <li>• Trustees also approved the Binbrook II boundary review recommendations</li> <li>• Trustees approved a motion that directs staff to work with the City of Hamilton and community partners to identify opportunities for active transportation which addresses school area traffic concerns for Ward 4 schools</li> <li>• In response to ongoing suggestions about potential changes to public education governance, Trustees also approved a motion to write a letter to the Ministry of Education to request province-wide consultation and research on the best governance model before changes are made</li> <li>• A letter will also be sent to the Ombudsman’s office to review the potential impacts of removing English Public School Board Trustees with respect to fairness, openness, transparency and accountability</li> </ul> <p><b>b) Lindsay Bray, McMaster Children’s Hospital Developmental Pediatrics and Rehabilitation Portfolio, SEAC Vice Chair</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On Saturday, May 2, the Ron Joyce Children’s Health Centre (RJCHC) will host its 3rd Annual All Abilities Fashion Show, sponsored by the clothing label <i>Living Life to the Maks</i>. The event celebrates survivors, resilience, faith, and love in the lives of young warriors</li> <li>• RJCHC is seeking 20 individuals currently receiving services who are interested in participating in the fashion show to showcase and celebrate their accomplishments</li> <li>• The event will take place from 1:00–5:00 p.m. at the Ron Joyce Children’s Health Centre and will feature the Ron Joyce Resonance Choir, Ron Joyce Hammerheads Cheer Team, a silent auction, and vendors</li> </ul> <p><b>c) Sharon Stephanian, Superintendent of Special Education, Inclusion &amp; Equity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World Autism Awareness Day will be celebrated on April 25 at the Education Centre with a <i>Family Carnival</i> from 10:00-2:00 pm – activities include face painting, a sensory room, balloon twister, live performances, crafts and games. This free drop in event is open to families, no registration is required, and it will take place rain or shine. Community organizations will be onsite to provide</li> </ul>

	<p>information and resources, including Woodview, Autism Ontario, Autism Program McMaster Children’s Hospital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychological Services staff will present the Building Responsive Approaches for Instructional Needs (BRAIN) Document at the Ontario Council of Administrators of Special Education (OCASE) Symposium on May 14 in Mississauga – the presentation will be delivered to an audience of approximately 100 attendees</li> <li>• Professional learning sessions for Principals, Vice Principals and Managers scheduled for April, May and June will focus on supporting neurodivergent learners – planning for these sessions is currently in the early stages</li> <li>• System Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) meetings have begun for students being considered for potential placement in special education classes - to date, requests have been received for approximately 150 students</li> <li>• A presentation was delivered at the Ontario Public Supervisory Officers Association (OPSOA) in collaboration with Michelle Lemaire, Superintendent of Program, Equity &amp; Innovation, and Estella Jones, Superintendent of Equity &amp; Quality Instruction Math, highlighting the Board’s work integrating program, mathematics, and special education</li> <li>• Todd Graves, retired principal, will serve as a temporary principal effective April 1, until end of June following the retirement of John Manzin</li> </ul>
<p><b>9. Correspondence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Toronto District School Board – Recurring Unmet Needs of Students with Disabilities</li> </ul>	<p>Judy Colantino will contact the SEAC Chair of the Toronto District School Board to seek clarification regarding SEAC rights and provide an update to the Committee at next meeting</p> <p>On the motion of Melanie Roberts, seconded by Nancy Silva Khan, the Committee recommends that the correspondence be read and filed</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>CARRIED.</b></p>
<p><b>10. Other Business</b></p>	<p>Judy Colantino read a personal letter of thanks to John Manzin, acknowledging his leadership, dedication, and ongoing support of students with special education needs throughout his tenure. She expressed the Committee’s appreciation for his significant contributions to special education and inclusion, and extended best wishes to him on his upcoming retirement</p>
<p><b>11. Adjournment</b></p>	<p>On the motion of Melanie Roberts, seconded by Susi Owen, the Committee recommends that the meeting be adjourned. The meeting adjourned at 7:42 pm</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>CARRIED.</b></p>