

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC) MEETING

**Wednesday, May 20, 2026
 Jim McCuaig Education Centre**

Suzanne Posthumus
 Chair

Alina Cameron
 Vice Chair

AGENDA

PUBLIC SESSION
6:00 p.m. – Board Room/Microsoft Teams

	<u>Resource Person</u>	<u>Pages</u>
1. CALL TO ORDER	A. Cameron	
2. DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST		
3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA	A. Cameron	
4. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	A. Cameron	
5. DELEGATIONS/PRESENTATIONS		
5.1 Mental Health Plan Presentation	M. Semeniuk	
5.2 Delegations – N/A		
6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – PUBLIC SESSION		
• Special Education Advisory Committee - April 15, 2026	A. Cameron	1-3
7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS AND GENERAL ORDERS		
8. WORK PLAN – N/A		
9. CORRESPONDENCE	A. Cameron	4-30
• Moose Hide Campaign - Walk to End Violence event – May 14, 2026;		
• Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board - SEAC Letter to Ministry in Support of Trustees;		
• Invitation – American Sign Language (ASL) Student Performance by Claude E. Garton Public School Sign Club – May 5, 2026;		
• May 2026 at Abiinojiishik amino yawook EarlyON;		
• Ontario Autism Coalition (OAC) Special Education Survey Report (2024-2025);		

	<u>Resource Person</u>	<u>Pages</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence from Waterloo Region District School Board; and • Auditor General of Ontario - Special Education Report, May 12, 2026. 		
10. NEW BUSINESS		
10.1 Special Education Update	M. Fredrickson	Verbal
10.2 2025-2026 SEAC Leadership Scholarships & Awards	M. Probizanski	31-34
10.3 New Classrooms	M. Probizanski	Verbal
11. INFORMATION/ INQUIRIES & ASSOCIATION REPORTS	All	
12. SEAC BUDGET UPDATE	M. Probizanski	
13. PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE (PIC) UPDATE – N/A		
14. EQUITY & INCLUSIVE EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATE – N/A		
15. BOARD UPDATE	Trustee	
16. ADJOURNMENT		

LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC)

Westgate Collegiate and Vocational Institute
Special Needs Classroom

2026 APR 15
6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Suzanne Posthumus, Chair	Alina Cameron, Vice Chair
Anne Antenucci	Branden Robb (alternate)
Trustee Trudy Tuchenhagen (alternate)	Trustee Leah Vanderwey
Liz Tod	Scott McBean
Tara Ingram	

OTHERS PRESENT:

Trustee Patricia Johansen	Michelle Probizanski
Maggie Fredrickson	Simona Serrao
Ryan McDonell	Westgate Collegiate and Vocational Institute - Special Needs Program Staff

ABSENT WITH REGRET:

Trustee George Saarinen	Michelle Blackburn
Sarah Niles	Wendy Carroll
Miranda Myers	

1. **Call to Order**

Suzanne Posthumus, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

2. **Disclosure of Conflict of Interest**

There were none.

3. **Approval of the Agenda**

Moved by Liz Tod

Seconded by Trustee Tuchenhagen

“THAT the agenda for the SEAC Meeting, April 15, 2026, be approved.”

CARRIED

4. **Land Acknowledgement**

Suzanne Posthumus, Chair, acknowledged the lands and traditional territory.

5. **Delegations and Presentations**

5.1 Ryan McDonnell, Principal, and Special Needs Program staff of Westgate Collegiate and Vocational Institute provided a presentation of the special needs program and tour of the special needs classroom.

All members' questions were addressed.

LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC)

5.2 There were no delegations.

6. Approval of Minutes

Moved by Alina Cameron

Seconded by Anne Antenucci

“THAT the minutes of March 26, 2026, SEAC meeting be approved.”

CARRIED

7. Unfinished Business and General Orders

- Suzanne Posthumus, Chair, provided SEAC members with an opportunity to share advocacy updates. SEAC advocacy information for families is available on the Board website.

8. Work Plan

The 2025-2026 SEAC work plan review was deferred to the next meeting.

9. Correspondence

Suzanne Posthumus, Chair, reviewed the SEAC correspondence that was distributed during the month of April 2026, as follows:

- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Community Town Hall Meeting to Build Support for Bill S-234, April 2, 2026;
- World Autism Day Flag Raising invitation – École Elsie MacGill Public School, April 2, 2026;
- Ontario Early Adversity and Resilience Framework Report – link;
- Beyond the Ban -Empowering Children in The Digital Age, April 20, 2026; and
- April 2026 at Abiinojiishiik amino yawook EarlyON.

All members’ questions were addressed.

10. New Business

10.1 Maggie Fredrickson, Principal of Special Education, provided an update highlighting the following:

- Armstrong Public School staff were provided with after-school training on assistive technology, including coaching and classroom modeling;
- training was provided for facilitators and school administrators to support improvements to the Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process;
- new facilitator training for Special Education courses was delivered, with certificates issued upon successful completion; and
- Autism Flag Raising event at École Elsie MacGill Public School was well attended, including participation from three student classrooms and community members.

LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC)

All members' questions are addressed.

10.2 Fall 2026 SEAC Guest Speaker: Ideas and Direction:

Members discussed the possibility of inviting a guest speaker as part of a Fall 2026 SEAC event to engage parents and community members and build awareness of special education.

SEAC members were invited to submit feedback, along with suggestions for potential guest speakers and event themes, to Simona Serrao, Executive Secretary.

11. Information/Inquiries & Association Reports

- Anne Antenucci, representative of Autism Ontario, provided an organizational update;
- Alina Cameron, Community Member, provided the Ontario Autism Coalition (OAC) update;
- Liz Tod, representative of Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, provided an association update;
- Tara Ingram, representative of Easter Seals, provided an organizational update; and
- Branden Robb, representative of Anishnawabe Mushkiki, provided an organizational update.

12. SEAC Budget Update

Michelle Probizanski, Superintendent of Education, confirmed that the SEAC budget status remains the same as previously reported.

13. Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) Update – N/A

14. Board Update

Trustee Tuchenhagen, provided the following Board update:

- at the Finance Committee meeting held on Tuesday, April 7, 2026, budget deputations were received from various stakeholders. The presentations and submissions provided valuable input for consideration in the development of the 2026–2027 budget; and
- at the Board Advisory Committee meeting, April 14, 2026, student achievement update was provided, noting overall improvement across grade levels. While progress has been observed in most areas, math achievement remains a focus, with targeted strategies currently underway to support improvement.

15. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

SEAC

CORRESPONDENCE



**MOOSE HIDE
CAMPAIGN**

**CAMPAGNE
MOOSE HIDE**

TAKE ACTION TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

THUNDER BAY WALK TO END VIOLENCE

DATE/TIME: May 14th 2026 @ 12 pm

LOCATION: Lakehead University Agora

DETAILS: Gather at the Agora @ 11:30
Walk begins @ Noon
Arrive 1077 Golf Links Road @ 12:15
Arrive Confederation College @ 12:45
Guest Speakers outdoor theatre @ 1PM

CONTACT: mricher@onwa.ca / Cell: 807-355-0293

MOOSEHIDECAMPAIGN.CA



MOOSE HIDE
CAMPAIGN

CAMPAGNE
MOOSE HIDE

MOOSE HIDE CAMPAIGN DAY

TOOL KIT FOR K-12 SCHOOLS

ON MAY 14, 2026,
BE IN CEREMONY
WITH
SCHOOLS ACROSS CANADA

Your school community is invited to take part in the annual Moose Hide Campaign Day, an Indigenous-led movement to end violence against women, children, and all those along the gender continuum.

This tool kit will support school staff who would like to participate in campaign day, and plan out how to do so in away that is meaningful for their community.

DO YOU KNOW THE STORY OF THE MOOSE HIDE CAMPAIGN?

Here are a few links you may choose to share with staff, to introduce and explain the significance of the campaign:

Story of the Moose Hide Campaign (2 minutes):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jTjcEnna7gQ>

Story of the Moose Hide Campaign (6 minutes):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FipVWaTaJE&t=4s>

For more videos, please visit the Moose Hide Campaign YouTube Chanel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@Moose-Hide-Campaign>

REGISTER YOUR SCHOOL FOR CAMPAIGN DAY

Why register?

Access free workshops

Join schools across the country

Show that this work matters

For K-12 Education Campaign Day, workshops will be pre-recorded and released on campaign day. This allows educators to choose which workshops are best for their classes and when they would like to participate.

Register at: <https://education.moosehidecampaign.ca>



EMAIL INVITATION TEMPLATE

Dear Staff,

On May 14, our school will take part in the Moose Hide Campaign Day, an Indigenous-led movement to end violence against women, children, and all those along the gender continuum.

You are invited to register your class and take part in this day of learning and reflection. Free online sessions and flexible classroom resources are available for all grade levels.

Register here: <https://education.moosehidecampaign.ca>

If you'd like to connect and share ideas on how we might approach the day, whether school-wide or within individual classrooms, please let me know.

Thank you,
[Name]

ORDER PINS TO SPARK CONVERSATIONS

The moose hide pin is a visible commitment to ending gender-based violence, and a teaching tool for dialogue that is grounded in respect and care.

Share this link to learn about the significance of the moose hide pin (2 minutes): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNssYKUU40g>

Order pins here: <https://education.moosehidecampaign.ca/pins/>

*Wearing the pin signifies:
I will stand up, speak out, and act
with care and respect*



PIN ORDER EMAIL TEMPLATE

Dear Staff,

As we prepare for Moose Hide Campaign Day on May 14, you are invited to order moose hide pins for your students.

The moose hide pin is a powerful symbol of a shared commitment to ending violence against women, children, and all those along the gender continuum.

Please watch this link (2 minutes): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNssYKUU40g>

Order pins here: <https://education.moosehidecampaign.ca/pins/>

If you'd like to be part of a conversation of how pins might be meaningfully shared with students and community, please let me know.

Thank you,

[Name]

BEGIN PLANNING FOR CAMPAIGN DAY

Some questions to consider:

1. What is realistic for our staff community over the next few weeks?
What time can we dedicate leading up to May 14?
2. What is an appropriate entry point for our students?
What feels right for this age group?
3. What is our capacity as educators?
Do we feel prepared to facilitate these conversations?
Would a simple approach (e.g., video + reflection) be most appropriate?
4. What supports are in place if students need them?
How can we contribute to a culture of respect and safety?
5. What is one meaningful way we can mark Campaign Day?
What will this day look like in our class or school, and make our commitment visible?
6. How might we engage families and community?
Are there local Indigenous relationships we can invite, respectfully honour or include?



ATTEND THE EDUCATOR'S CIRCLE

APRIL 15, 4-5 PM PACIFIC TIME

Join other educators in this online gathering for you to learn more about how your school can participate, with opportunities for you to ask questions.

Register here: <https://moosehide.swoogo.com/2026communitystewardcircles>

WHERE COMMITMENT BECOMES ACTION

A Few Suggestions for K- 12 Participation

Minimal preparation:

- Share the campaign day workshops in your classes
- Distribute moose hide pins with a short explanation
- Hold a moment of reflection or silence

Moderate preparation:

- Classroom discussion using guiding questions
- Plan a short action-based activity
- Invite students to write or draw what respect means

Deeper Engagement:

- School-wide assembly or gathering
- Support student-led initiatives (art, spoken word, awareness)
- If appropriate, invite local Indigenous speakers or knowledge keepers

School-Wide Ideas:

- Wear and share the moose hide pins with your community
- Create a wall of commitments (“I commit to...”)
- Host a quiet reflection space (library, classroom corner)
- Create a school wide art initiative
- Host a walk and invite community members to attend

FOR MORE GUIDANCE ON HOSTING AN EVENT

<https://education.moosehidecampaign.ca/events/>

CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

As students navigate identity, safety, and belonging, raising sensitive issues such as gender-based violence can feel overwhelming. The Moose Hide Campaign, committed to ethical relationships, supports these conversations through trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate resources.

For more information on preparing your classroom or school:

<https://education.moosehidecampaign.ca/preparingtheenvironment/>

OUTREACH MATERIALS

For resources & visuals to create your own poster:

<https://education.moosehidecampaign.ca/downloads/>

For our social media guide & to share our social media links:

<https://moosehidecampaign.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/SocialMediaPlaybook-2026.pdf>

Submit a plan of your event for our blog (scroll down to the bottom):

<https://education.moosehidecampaign.ca/events/>

SAMPLE SCHOOL ANNOUNCEMENT SCRIPT

Today is Moose Hide Campaign Day.

We wear the moose hide pins as a commitment to ending violence against women, children, and all those along the gender continuum.

We invite everyone to take a moment to reflect on what respect and safety mean in our community.

THANK YOU!

We celebrate the care, commitment, and leadership you bring to preventing and ending gender based violence.

We hope that you will take a moment to acknowledge your hard work, and honour your school community.

As you reflect on your participation in Moose Hide Campaign Day, consider how this work can deepen relationships, accountability, and reconciliation throughout the year ahead.

To access our library of free lesson plans:
<https://education.moosehidecampaign.ca/lesson-plans/>



MOOSE HIDE CAMPAIGN DAY **IN CEREMONY** **MAY 14, 2026**

Moose Hide Campaign – Educational Toolkit for Teachers

Engaging Students in Ending Violence Through Indigenous Teachings

The Moose Hide Campaign is grassroots, Indigenous-led movement that engages all people—especially men and boys—in taking a stand against gender-based violence. Schools play a critical role in shaping understanding, empathy, and respect among young people.

To support educators, the Moose Hide Campaign offers a comprehensive online education platform with ready-to-use, culturally grounded resources for classrooms.

Teacher Resources Available

Visit: Moose Hide Campaign Education Platform:

<https://education.moosehidecampaign.ca/>

Educators can access:

Lesson plans and classroom activities (elementary to secondary levels)

Discussion guides on healthy relationships, respect, and violence prevention

Videos and reflection tools to support student engagement

Culturally grounded teachings rooted in Indigenous perspectives

Materials available in both English and French

These resources are designed to be flexible, easy to implement, and aligned with curriculum goals while centering respect, responsibility, and community care.

Classroom Opportunity – Indigenous Art Colouring Books

A limited number of Indigenous art colouring books are available for classrooms.

First 10 teachers to apply will receive a full classroom set (one per student)

Artwork is created by local Indigenous artists

Each piece reflects culture, identity, and teachings

Classroom Idea in Action

One Thunder Bay school used the colouring books as more than an art activity.

Students:

Learned about the artists and their home communities

Explored the Seven Grandfather Teachings

Reflected on what each image represented, building deeper understanding of Indigenous values and perspectives

This approach supports cross-curricular learning—combining art, social studies, and personal development.

How to Get Started

Explore the online resources

Integrate lessons or activities into your classroom

Apply for a classroom colouring book set (limited availability)

For more information or to request colouring books:

Contact: mricher@onwa.ca

Together, we can create safer communities by teaching respect, responsibility, and the importance of standing against violence.

March 3, 2026

The Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Education
5th Floor 438 University Avenue,
Toronto, ON. M7A 2A5

Dear Minister Calandra,

On behalf of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) for the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board (KPR) I am writing to express concern regarding the impact of Bill 33, Supporting Children and Students Act 2025 and its potential impact on school boards.

We understand that the Minister has indicated that the intent of the legislation is to improve oversight and accountability within Ontario's education system, however, we believe the removal of Trustees undermines the principles of equity, inclusion and local collaboration that are essential in supporting students with special education needs. These principles take on an even greater level of importance for those students with special education needs and where community services such as mental health supports, therapy providers, transportation options and health care partnerships varies widely from region to region.

We are very concerned that Bill 33 allows the Minister to assume supervision of school boards. The bypass of local governance is of greatest concern. In every school board, trustees and SEACs work together to make decisions designed to ensure that the needs of the students and families in our communities that we both serve have the best opportunity to have their needs met in their local communities. We know that for some, access is limited and we work together to minimize that impact. We do this with meaningful and robust discussion with our SEAC members who represent many families and our trustees who represent their communities. It is about meaningful dialogue and community engagement.

As a board that serves a vast area of rural Ontario and three First Nation communities, we know that some of our families rely on our school board as the only source of support services. For other areas of the board our families and children rely on the strong network of local services. The local context for this work is essential for success. We believe that local context must continue to inform decision making.

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APR 02 2026

We respect the intention to promote consistency and equity across Ontario; however, we believe that the local context must be an important aspect of informed decision making. Like our local board, this province is a combination of rural, urban, large, and small communities, and no two school boards just as no two communities are the same. Decision making is best kept local to best serve the needs of our students.

We respectfully request that the Minister reconsider the removal of locally, democratically elected Trustees. Further we request that the Ministry undertake a large and broad consultation that would include SEACs, educators, stakeholders, and families.

We believe that a system that includes local partnerships, which invests in evidence-based supports, and provides additional and necessary resources would be a path to your intended goals of accountability and greater student success for all.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. We are concerned that the removal of Trustees may have a negative impact on all students for many years to come and we would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the Ministry in the best interest of students.

Sincerely,

Melanie Brynaert

Melaine Brynaert
Chairperson, Special Education Advisory Committee
Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board

- C. Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Hon. Dave Smith, MPP, Peterborough-Kawartha
Todd J. McCarthy, MPP Durham
Hon. David Piccini, MPP Northumberland - Peterborough South
Laurie Scott, MPP Haliburton – Kawartha Lakes – Brock
Tyler Allsopp, Bay of Quinte
Ontario Public School Boards
Chairs of all Ontario Special Advisory Committees
Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)

From: [Simona Serrao](#)
To: [Simona Serrao](#)
Cc: [Michelle Probizanski](#); [Maggie Fredrickson](#)
Subject: SEAC Correspondence: Invitation - ASL Student Performance by Claude E. Garton Sign Club – May 5, 2026
Date: Tuesday, April 28, 2026 10:26:13 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Good Morning,

I am writing to share information about an upcoming event at City Hall that may be of interest to you.

On **Tuesday, May 5, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.**, students from the **Claude E. Garton Sign Club** will be presenting **“O’ Canada” in American Sign Language** prior to the City Hall Council Meeting. This presentation highlights student leadership, accessibility, and inclusion.

SEAC members are warmly invited to attend if your schedule allows.

Event details:

- **Location:** City Hall
- **Student arrival:** 6:00 p.m.
- **Performance:** 6:30 p.m. (prior to the council meeting)
- Parents and guests may sit in a designated area in the council chambers (**limited seating**) or watch from the lobby via TV
- The event will be televised on **Tbaytel Channel 110** and **Shaw/Rogers Channel 10 or 105**, and streamed live on the City Hall website.

Please feel free to attend in person or view the live broadcast. Thank you for your continued support of inclusive and accessible initiatives.

Best regards,

Simona Serrao

***Assistant to Kirsti Alaksa, Superintendent of Business; and
Michelle Probizanski, Superintendent of Education***

Office of the Superintendents

If you are receiving this message outside of your regular work hours, please do not feel obligated to respond immediately. We respect your personal time and encourage you to reply during your scheduled work hours.

Abinojishik-aminoyawook EarlyON Child and Family Centre

May

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 Drop In 9:30 - 4:00	2
3	4 Drop In 11:30 - 3:00 Family Fun Night 3:30 - 6:00	5 Drop In 9:30 - 4:00	6 Drop In 9:30 - 4:00	7 Bear Witness Day 11:00 - 2:00	8 Children Mental Health Week BBQ 11:00 - 3:00	9
10 HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY	11 Drop In 11:30 - 3:00 Family Fun Night 3:30 - 6:00	12 Drop In 9:30 - 4:00	13 Walk & Talk at Chapples 11:00 - 12:00 Drop In 1:00 - 4:00	14 Intercity 10:00 - 1:00 Drop In 9:30 - 4:00	15 Drop In 9:30 - 4:00	16
17	18 CLOSED	19 Drop In 9:30 - 4:00	20 Morning Cuddles & Crumbs 9:30 - 12:30 Drop In 1:00 - 4:00	21 Dilico Spring Feast 10:00 - 2:00	22	23 Drop In 9:30 - 3:30
24	25 Drop In 11:30 - 3:00 Family Fun Night 3:30 - 6:00	26 Parenting Seed Planting Workshop 11:00 - 1:30	27 Drop In 9:30 - 4:00	28 Intercity 10:00 - 1:00 Drop In 9:30 - 4:00	29 Drop In 9:30 - 4:00	30
31						

Abiinojüshiik-amino-yawook

translated means children raised in a good way.

Parents and caregivers of infants and children up to the age of six can access the center five days a week for learning experience, social interaction, support from early childhood educators. As an Anishinabek-led center, parents and caregivers can expect the center to be culturally-safe, relevant, reciprocal, and respectful.

EarlyON Program Information

Drop In - Perfect place for kids to play, explore, and make new friends in a safe and welcoming environment! No registration required—just drop in during our open hours and let the fun begin.

Intercity - The Early Years Community site is a shared space where service providers offer families and children a place to play and explore local resources, supports, and programs.

Morning Cuddles & Crumbs - Rise and shine with snuggles and snacks! Join us for a fun-filled morning where you and your little one can cuddle up and enjoy a tasty, nutritious breakfast snack together.

Family Fun Night - Join us for evening family fun! Enjoy fun activities with your child(ren) and connect with other families in our community. Dinner will be provided. Call 807-939-3160 or text us at 807-632-0530 to register.

Bear Witness Day - Join us as we come together with community organizations to honour Jordan River Anderson. This special day invites people of all ages to “Bear Witness” and stand up for the full implementation of Jordan’s Principle. Location: Kinsmen Northwood Centre, 609 James St. N

Children’s Mental Health Week BBQ - The Clinical & Children’s Services team is hosting a family-friendly event to celebrate Children’s Mental Health Week. Join us for a fun-filled day featuring hot dogs, bouncy castles, face painting, an infant play area, and more! Location: 1115 Yonge St.

Dilico Spring Feast - A gathering hosted by the Bimaadizwin Wiidookaagewin Cultural Program to celebrate the arrival of spring, culture, and connection. Location: 120 Carp River Rd.

Parenting Seed Planting Workshop - A hands-on parent and child workshop! The workshop provides an opportunity for children to practice caring for a growing plant in much the same way as parents care for children. Call 807-939-3160 or text us at 807-632-0530 to register.

2024-25 OAC SPEC EDU SURVEY REPORT



The Ontario Autism Coalition (OAC) Special Education Survey provides a province-wide snapshot of the experiences of students with disabilities and their families across Ontario's publicly funded education system.

With 657 responses across 64 school boards, the findings reveal a system under strain, where access to education is inconsistent, unsafe, and too often conditional on advocacy rather than rights.

Methodology

The survey was distributed province-wide and open to families and individuals accessing special education supports. Responses were collected from August–September 2025 and reflect experiences across urban, suburban, rural, and northern communities.

Key Findings

In School, But Not Accessing Education

- 60% report inconsistent or no access to the curriculum.
- 43% say their child is not receiving a meaningful education.

Students are present in classrooms, but not consistently learning.

IEPs Exist, But Are Not Delivered

- 87% of students have an IEP, yet 50% report that accommodations are inconsistently followed.
- 66% receive little or no follow-up.

IEPs are not functioning as enforceable tools for access.

Exclusion Is Widespread and Systemic

- 33% excluded from parts of school (classes, trips, etc.).
- 26% on modified schedules (increasing significantly).
- 6% remain fully excluded from school entirely.

Students are being removed, reduced, or pushed out when supports are not available.

Safety Is Not Guaranteed

- 66% of families worry about safety.
- 74% report at least one safety concern during the school year.
- Bullying is the most common issue.

Safety is a persistent, system-wide concern.

System Capacity Is Driving Outcomes

- 35% of modified schedules due to lack of resources.
- 100% of fully excluded students lacked needed accommodations.

This is not about student need; it is about system failure.

Families Are Forced to Escalate to Access Basic Supports

- 29% of students needed the advocacy of a school board trustee at least once during the school year.
- Equivalent to ~102,000 students province-wide.

Families are not accessing support through normal school processes; they are being forced into escalation to secure basic rights. It is the trustees who are helping them.

Insights and Interpretation

The data show a system where:

- Supports are documented but not implemented
- Access is inconsistent and unstable
- Families must advocate constantly to secure basic rights

Education policy is not being realized in practice.

Recommendations

1. Enforce IEP Accountability

- Implement audits, clear escalation pathways, and enforceable recourse when accommodations are not delivered.

2. Accommodated Inclusion

- Define inclusion by outcomes (safety, access, and learning) not just placement. Ensure adequate staffing, specialized supports, stable programming, and enforceable accommodations.

3. Track and Report Exclusions

- Mandate province-wide tracking and public reporting of both formal and informal (soft) exclusions, including disability context and accommodation status.

4. Regulate Use of Calming Rooms

- Establish binding standards for calming/seclusion rooms, including documentation, parent notification, oversight, and prohibition of unsafe use.

5. Fund Based on Actual Need

- Index funding to inflation and reform formulas to reflect real student needs in different geographies. Ensure funds reach direct supports. Special education funding is a legal obligation.

6. Set Minimum Staffing Standards

- Establish enforceable ratios for EAs, special education teachers, and clinical supports. Without capacity, IEPs remain unenforceable.

7. Stabilize the Workforce

- Improve compensation, job security, and working conditions to address burnout and turnover. Establish worker-directed training standards.

8. Protect Democratic Oversight

- Preserve trustee authority and SEAC transparency. Do not weaken accountability through further centralization.

9. Restore a Full Continuum of Placements

- Guarantee access to specialized and mainstream options based on need, not cost. Prevent program closures without equivalent supports.

10. Implement AODA Standards

- Adopt the 2022 K–12 Education Standards as binding regulation with timelines and enforcement.

11. Fix Upstream Supports (e.g., OAP)

- With only ~23% of registered children receiving core clinical services funding, unmet needs are shifting into classrooms. Education reform must be paired with adequate disability services, and for all disabilities.

Next Steps

Findings from this survey will guide the OAC's 2025–26 advocacy strategy, including:

- Public awareness campaigns on exclusion & access
- Policy advocacy for the education system accountability
- Continued annual data collection to track system performance

Inclusion without support is not inclusion; it is exclusion by another name



Read the report here!

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR EXPERIENCES

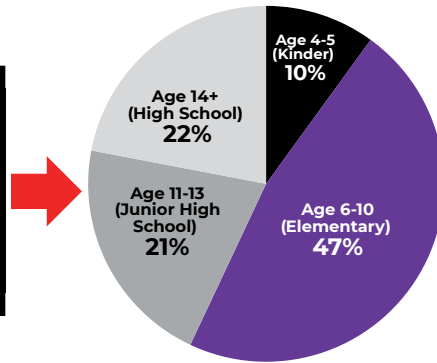


ONTARIO AUTISM COALITION

DEMOGRAPHICS

64
ONTARIO SCHOOL BOARDS REPRESENTED IN THIS SURVEY

657
NUMBER OF STUDENTS REPRESENTED IN THIS SURVEY
*elementary and secondary



STUDENTS ARE ENROLLED BUT NOT ADEQUATELY SUPPORTED

ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN ONTARIO IS INCONSISTENT, UNSTABLE, & INEQUITABLE

Indigenous students, students of colour, & newcomer students are disproportionately impacted

INDIVIDUALISED EDUCATION PLANS

87%
OF STUDENTS HAD AN IEP

42% OF IEPs WERE FOLLOWED INCONSISTENTLY OR NOT AT ALL

25% REPORTED REGULAR IEP FOLLOW-UP

66% REPORTED LITTLE OR NO IEP FOLLOW-UP

Read the report here!



STUDENT EXCLUSION & ACCESS LOSS

33%
EXCLUDED FROM SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

24%
DID NOT ATTEND FULL WEEKS

26%
ON MODIFIED SCHEDULES

FULL EXCLUSION

6% OF STUDENTS LIVING WITH DISABILITIES PROVINCE-WIDE CONTINUE TO BE FULLY EXCLUDED FROM SCHOOL

21,757
STUDENTS WERE FULLY EXCLUDED IN 2024-2025

SAFETY CONCERNS

66%
OF STUDENTS' FAMILIES WORRY ABOUT SAFETY

39%
WORRY FREQUENTLY

74%
REPORTED AT LEAST ONE SAFETY CONCERN

54% EXPERIENCED BULLYING

35% EXPERIENCED ELOPEMENT

30% EXPERIENCED PEER VIOLENCE

TRUSTEES

29% OF STUDENTS LIVING WITH DISABILITIES PROVINCE-WIDE REQUIRED TRUSTEE ADVOCACY AT LEAST ONCE

THAT'S MORE THAN
102,000
STUDENTS WHO NEEDED TRUSTEE SUPPORT

ACCOMMODATIONS

38%
LACKED AN APPROPRIATE PLACEMENT TO MEET THEIR SUPPORT NEEDS

29%
DISSATISFIED WITH LEVEL OF ACADEMIC SUPPORT

43%
DISSATISFIED WITH LEVEL OF PERSONAL SUPPORT

60%
OF STUDENTS DID NOT ACCESS CURRICULUM CONSISTENTLY

26%
DID NOT ACCESS CURRICULUM AT ALL



Waterloo Region District School Board

51 Ardelt Avenue
Kitchener, ON N2C 2R5
T: 519-570-0003
F: 519-742-1364
wrdsb.ca

April 27, 2026

The Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
438 University Avenue, 15th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M5G 2K8
minister.edu@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Calandra,

Re: Support for Funding Priorities for Students with Special Education and Mental Health Needs

On behalf of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) of the Waterloo Region District School Board, we are writing to express our support for the priorities outlined in the recent correspondence submitted by the Special Education Advisory Committee of the Simcoe County District School Board regarding funding support for students with special education and mental health needs.

SEAC appreciates the Ministry of Education's continued commitment to supporting students across Ontario and acknowledges the recent funding announcements. However, as school boards continue to respond to increasing complexity in student needs, sustained and responsive funding remains essential.

The Waterloo Region District School Board serves one of the fastest-growing regions in Ontario. Rapid population growth, changing demographics, and increased demand for specialized services have placed growing pressures on schools and support systems. Similar to the concerns identified by the Simcoe County District School Board SEAC, we continue to see significant increases in the complexity of student needs, particularly in areas related to special education, mental health, developmental disabilities, and behavioural support.

We support the priorities identified in the Simcoe County District School Board SEAC letter, including:

- Ensuring funding models reflect current demographic and enrollment data
- Sustained investment to address the increased complexity of student needs following the COVID-19 pandemic
- Continued progress toward meeting accessibility goals under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

- Adequate funding to support partnerships with community agencies providing mental health and therapeutic supports
- Continued investment in specialized staffing and Special Incidence Portion (SIP) funding to support students with complex needs

These priorities reflect challenges experienced across many Ontario school boards, including in Waterloo Region. Adequate and responsive funding is essential to ensure school boards can continue to provide inclusive, accessible, and supportive learning environments for all students.

The Waterloo Region District School Board SEAC appreciates your attention to these matters and your continued commitment to supporting Ontario's students with special education needs. We welcome ongoing dialogue and collaboration to ensure funding frameworks reflect the evolving needs of students and families across our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Roberta Thompson

SEAC Chair, Waterloo Region District School Board

Cc. Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees

WRSDB Trustees

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April 27, 2026

Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
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Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2A5
minister.edu@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Calandra,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC). We want to add our voice to the concerns being raised by other boards across Ontario regarding the current state of special education funding and the protection of student rights under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Students with special education needs are rights holders, not just recipients of a service. The Ontario Human Rights Code is very clear: every student with a disability has a right to an education free from discrimination and to receive meaningful accommodation. When the supports they need are delayed or simply don't exist, it calls into question whether they are actually accessing the education they are entitled to.

While school boards have a legal duty to uphold these rights, the current funding model makes it incredibly difficult to do so. Our system is under immense strain. We are trying to support more students with increasingly complex needs, but the resources haven't kept pace. This gap between what we are required to do and what we are actually funded to do is a major concern.

Across our region, families continue to experience significant and persistent barriers that limit this access. These include:

- Delays in accessing essential supports such as Speech and Language Pathology services
- Increasingly complex classroom environments without corresponding supports
- Gaps between identified needs and available resources
- Over-reliance on external services with long waitlists creates inequitable access

These aren't just abstract problems; they are systemic pressures that make it harder and harder for boards to meet their human rights obligations.

We are also worried about how the loss of local democratic governance is affecting our most vulnerable students.

Elected Trustees play a critical role in ensuring public accountability, transparency, and community voice within the education system. Trustees are accessible to families, participate in public decision-making, and provide an essential mechanism for concerns, particularly those related to special education, to be heard, understood, and acted upon.

The replacement of Trustees with a provincially appointed Supervisor significantly alters this dynamic. While we recognize the intent of provincial intervention, the current model does not provide the same level of transparency, responsiveness, or opportunity for meaningful engagement with families and advisory bodies such as SEAC.

From our perspective, this shift has created barriers to:

- Open and public dialogue on decisions impacting students with special education needs
- Direct engagement between SEAC and decision-makers
- Community trust in how decisions are made and implemented

While MACSE provides provincial advice, it cannot replace the critical role of local governance. Without elected Trustees and meaningful access to decision-makers, the system risks losing the transparency and responsiveness required to uphold the rights of students with disabilities.

When decisions affecting these students are made behind closed doors without a clear way for the public to weigh in, students' needs, especially the need for specific accommodations can easily be overlooked. This isn't just a governance issue; it's a human rights issue. Equitable education depends on a system that is transparent and actually listens to the families it serves.

As a SEAC, we are guided by both lived experience and community voice. We see firsthand the impact of these gaps on students and families. We also recognize that school boards require adequate, stable, and responsive funding models, alongside strong governance structures, to meet their legal and ethical responsibilities, and to do what they love: educate all students and set them up for success.

We respectfully call on the Ministry to:

- Ensure that funding models align with the actual needs of students, not projected averages

- Support integrated service delivery models that allow boards to provide in-house supports, reducing reliance on external waitlists
- Recognize special education as a human rights obligation, not a discretionary service
- Reinstate and protect the role of elected Trustees as a cornerstone of accountability and community engagement
- Ensure that SEACs have direct and meaningful access to decision-makers, including any appointed Supervisors
- Engage meaningfully with SEACs and communities as partners in identifying and addressing systemic barriers

A publicly funded education system must be one where all students can access learning in a way that respects their rights, identities, and potential and where the structures governing that system reflects the values of transparency, accountability, and inclusion. We remain committed to working collaboratively with the Ministry to support solutions that are equitable, sustainable, and grounded in human rights.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Roberta Thompson

SEAC Chair, Waterloo Region District School Board

Cc. Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees

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April 27, 2026

The Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Education
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M5G 2K8
minister.edu@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Calandra,

Re: Provincial Proposal to Replace Trustees with Provincially Appointed Supervisors

On behalf of the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), I am writing to express our support for the concerns outlined in correspondence from the Durham District School Board dated February 19, 2026, regarding the provincial proposal to replace elected school board trustees with provincially appointed supervisors.

Our Committee recognizes the important role that locally elected trustees play in representing community voices and ensuring accountability within Ontario's publicly funded education system. Trustees serve as a critical link between families, communities, and school boards, helping to ensure that local needs, including those of students receiving special education support, are understood and reflected in board decisions.

SEAC committees work closely with school boards to advocate for students with special education needs and their families. As such, we value governance structures that support strong local engagement, transparency, and responsiveness to the diverse needs of communities across Ontario.

We believe that maintaining locally elected trustees contributes to a system that promotes collaboration, accountability, and meaningful community participation, all of which are essential in supporting student success and well-being.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your continued commitment to supporting students with special education needs across Ontario.

Sincerely,

Roberta Thompson

SEAC Chair, Waterloo Region District School Board

Cc. Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees

WRDSB Trustees

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From: [Alina Cameron](#)
To: [Simona Serrao](#)
Subject: Auditor General Spec Edu Reports
Date: Tuesday, May 12, 2026 10:49:01 AM

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Lakehead District School Board. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, have verified their email address and know the content is safe. (MsgID: LDSB20190424)

Just a friendly heads up!

The [Auditor General of Ontario](#) will release their reports about special education today. They will be commented on by the official opposition [here](#) at 11:00 AM.

Alina

--

Alina A. N. Cameron
B.Sc., [B.H.Sc.](#), M.Sc. Medicine (Community Health Sciences)

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Superior Collegiate & Vocational Institute

SEAC Leadership Scholarship Recipient - Jorja Larrett:

Jorja Larrett is a graduating student who exemplifies leadership through advocacy and support of peers with diverse needs.

As Co-Chair of the Indigenous Fire Council, Jorja has demonstrated strong leadership by raising awareness of important issues such as Orange Shirt Day and representing her school community at events. She approaches her advocacy with care, intention and strong research skills when addressing issues affecting Indigenous students, LGBTQ+ peers, and neurodivergent individuals.

Jorja is knowledgeable and experienced in supporting neurodivergent peers and demonstrates this through her daily interactions. She takes the initiative to correct misconceptions and educate others. Jorja is committed to amplifying voices that are often underrepresented or overlooked. She is a deserving recipient of the SEAC Leadership Scholarship.

SEAC Award Recipient - Royce Moses:

Royce Moses is a graduating student from the Pre-Workplace Program at Superior Collegiate and Vocational Institute. Over the course of his studies, Royce has demonstrated reliability, cooperation, and dedication in the classroom.

Royce has emerged as a natural leader and is a positive role model to his peers by working collaboratively with empathy and respect for all. His strong commitment to both his academic pursuits and personal development has been evident throughout his time at Superior Collegiate and Vocational Institute.

The confidence he has cultivated during his time here will undoubtedly serve him well as he transitions to the next chapter of his educational and professional journey.

Westgate Collegiate and Vocational Institute

SEAC Leadership Scholarship Recipient - Brooklynn Walker:

We are pleased to recommend Brooklynn Walker for a SEAC Leadership Scholarship. We have known Brooklynn for all her years here at Westgate CVI. Brooklynn continues to show great support for Special Needs peers in our halls. Fostering acceptance and respect has been a consistent focus in her time at Westgate CVI, whether it be love and care towards her brother on a daily basis, or the inclusion-based attitude to others in all environments. Brooklynn is an inspiration of positive aid, and a great example of a caring student. Leadership starts with example, and Brooklynn's is one of integrity, love, and support.

SEAC Award Recipient - Jesse Dunning:

It is a pleasure to nominate Jesse for the Special Education Advisory Committee Award in recognition of his incredible resilience, determination, and growth. Jesse has shown remarkable perseverance in overcoming barriers and challenges, always approaching his goals with determination and optimism. He works hard, stays motivated, and continues to grow in independence and confidence. When learning is difficult, Jesse pushes forward, adapts, and takes pride in the progress he makes. His growth and self-advocacy over time are truly inspiring. Jesse is also a kind, respectful, and thoughtful member of our school community. He builds positive relationships with staff and peers, is engaged in school life, and contributes in meaningful ways every day. Quite simply, Jesse is a lovely human being whose positive attitude and resilience make our school a better place. Jesse is highly deserving of this recognition, and we are proud to recommend him wholeheartedly.

HAMMARSKJOLD HIGH SCHOOL

SEAC Leadership Scholarship Recipient: Raija MacLean

We are so pleased to nominate Raija MacLean for the SEAC Leadership Scholarship. Raija is an empathetic, self-aware and thoughtful student whose actions consistently reflect the values of inclusion, compassion, integrity and mentorship.

Raija has a remarkable ability to recognize when others need support, and she responds with both compassion and action. Her giving heart and natural empathy allows her to nurture the unique potential of her peers, especially students with special needs. She promotes an environment where every student feels valued, respected, and included.

A powerful example of Raija's leadership is the friendship she developed with a student in the Special Needs Program. Raija spent time with her daily, joining her during breaks, walking with her through the halls, and ensuring she always felt connected and supported. Their friendship extended beyond the school day: Raija invited her to prom, included her in social activities, and continues to spend time with her outside of school. Through this relationship, Raija modeled what true inclusion looks like - consistent, genuine, and rooted in respect.

Her actions inspire others to collaborate and build meaningful relationships with peers of all abilities. Raija leads by example, showing her classmates that inclusion is not a single gesture but a way of being. She has enriched our school culture, fostering a sense of belonging for all.

Raija's empathy, integrity, and unwavering commitment to supporting peers with special needs make her an exceptional candidate for the SEAC Leadership Scholarship. She has made a lasting impact on our school community, and her leadership will continue to inspire long after graduation.

HAMMARSKJOLD HIGH SCHOOL

SEAC Award Recipient: Zack Tost

We are thrilled to nominate Zack Tost for the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Award. Zack is a student whose presence enriches our school every day. He consistently demonstrates the values at the heart of this award through his determination, positivity and the genuine kindness he brings to every interaction.

Zack is an empathetic and caring young man who is always willing to help others. He supports his peers and friends with a caring and considerate nature, offering both encouragement and humour. His outgoing personality and communication skills allow him to build friendships effortlessly. Zack truly makes connections wherever he goes, which has contributed greatly to the inclusive spirit of our school.

In the classroom, Zack demonstrates determination and a positive attitude toward learning. He approaches tasks with effort and perseverance, demonstrating his readiness to try, grow and be involved. His respectful interactions with staff and peers reflect his maturity and the pride he takes in being part of the school community.

Zack's wonderful sense of humour and love of storytelling brings joy to those around him. Whether he is sharing a story, singing with enthusiasm, or recounting a fun fact or memory, he has a natural ability to brighten the room. His passion for sports, especially Special Olympics basketball and track, highlights his enthusiasm for being a part of a team. He excels in these activities with enthusiasm and heart.

Zack is a student who leads with kindness, lifts others up, and contributes positively to every environment he enters. His character, determination, and joyful spirit make him a wonderful candidate for the Special Education Advisory Committee Award. He has made a lasting impact on our school, and it has been a privilege to watch him grow.