



Special Education Advisory Committee

Thursday October 5, 2023

6:00 p.m.

Education Centre Boardroom / MS Teams

AGENDA

Land Acknowledgement

The Grand Erie District School Board recognizes Six Nations of the Grand River and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, as the longstanding peoples of this territory. We honour, recognize, and respect these communities as well as all First Nations, Metis and Inuit Peoples who reside within the Grand Erie District School Board. We are all stewards of these lands and waters where we now gather, learn, and play, and commit to working together in the spirit of Reconciliation.

AGENDA

Item	Info.	Dia.	Res.	Responsibility
LEAD				
A-1 Opening 6:00-6:05				
(a) Welcome / Land Acknowledgement Statement			√	L. DeJong
(b) Roll Call (incl Visiting Trustees)/Reminder of Livestream on YouTube/Reminder of Closed Caption Feature on Teams			√	L. DeJong
(c) Agenda Additions/ Deletions/ Approvals		√	√	L. DeJong
LEARN				
B-1 Timed Items 6:05 – 7:05				
(a) Inclusive Language Guide	√	√		P. Ashe
(b) Social Justice Series	√	√		P. Bagchee / A. Andratis

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(c) Summer Learning Programs	√	√		L. Thompson/L. Sheppard / L. Miedema
Item	Info.	Dia.	Res.	Responsibility
LEAD				
C-1 Business Arising from Minutes and/or Previous Meetings 7:05-7:20				
(a) Approval of Minutes from September 7, 2023*			√	L. DeJong
(b) Recruitment of new SEAC members*	√	√	√	L. DeJong / K. Jones
LEARN				
D-1 New Business 7:20-7:30				
(a) Communication Boards	√	√		M. Dumoulin/A. Macovik
Item	Info.	Dia.	Res.	
LEAD				
E-1 Other Business 7:30-7:45				
(a) Overview of Accessibility Plan 2022-27*	√	√		J. Senior

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AGENDA

Item	Info.	Dia.	Res.	Responsibility
INSPIRE				
F-1 Standing Items 7:45-7:55				
Policies Out for Comment Please send all comments and feedback regarding the following policies to policies@granderie.ca Comments due by: Friday October 13, 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustee Honoraria Policy (BU-04) 	√			K. Jones
(a) Trustee Updates	√			T. Waldschmidt
(b) Chair/Vice-Chair Updates	√			L. DeJong / K. Jones
Item	Info.	Dia.	Res.	Responsibility
LEARN LEAD INSPIRE				
G-1 Information Items				
(a) Inclusion by Design: Laying the Foundation	√			L. Thompson / J. Senior
(b) Grand Erie Trustee for Mississaugas of the Credit	√			L. Thompson
LEARN LEAD INSPIRE				
H-1 Community Updates				
Nil				

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AGENDA

LEARN LEAD INSPIRE

I-1 Correspondence – 7:55-8:00

(a) LDAO Circular* (if available)	√			L. DeJong
(b) Letter from Thames Valley DSB re. Special Education Shortfalls*	√			L. DeJong
(c) Letter from Simcoe County DSB re. Special Education Funding*	√			L. DeJong

Item	Info.	Dia.	Res.	Responsibility
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INSPIRE

J-1 Future Agenda Items and SEAC Committee Planning

(a) Annual Learning and Operating Plan (ALOP) (Nov)				
(b) Grand Erie Math Achievement Action Plan (GE-MAAP) (Nov)				
(c) The role of the Teacher Consultant				
(d) Update on Nursing Supports in schools				
(e) Inclusion video series				
(f) Follow up on Destreaming in Grand Erie (K. Graham)				

K-1 Next Meeting

Thursday November 16, 2023 MS Teams	√			L. DeJong
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L-1 Adjournment				
Meeting adjourned			√	L. DeJong

Note: Column Abbreviations

* Attachments to the agenda

Info. Item for information only

Dia. Item for dialogue

Res. Item for resolution or recommendation

SSMT Specialized Services Management Team

AGENDA ITEM(S)

Standing:

- LDAO SEAC Circular September, November, February, April and June (as available).



Special Education Advisory Committee

Thursday September 7, 2023

6:00 p.m.

Education Centre Boardroom with MS Teams link

MINUTES

Chair

Chair L. DeJong, Social Worker, Lansdowne Children's Centre

Community Reps

Vice Chair K. Jones, Community Representative

B. Bruce K. Kelly L. Nydam

Trustees

W, Rose

T. Waldschmidt

L. Miedema, Program Coordinator

J. Roberto, Director of Education

Grand Erie Employees

J. Senior, Principal Leader, Specialized Services

M. Tokaci, Information Technology

L. Sheppard, Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Coordinator

L. Thompson, Superintendent of Education

L. Boswell, Community Navigator, Contact Brant

Organizations/Agencies

C. Gilman, Easter Seals Ontario

C. Stefanelli, Program Manager, Woodview Mental Health & Autism Services

Guests

K. Graham, Superintendent of Education

Absent

L. Whiton

Absent with Regrets

T. Buchanan, Supervisor of Employment Supports, Community Living Brant

M. Gatopoulos, Community Representative

R. Vriends, Autism Ontario

Recording Secretary

J. Valstar, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent of Education

A - 1 Opening

(a) Welcome / Land Acknowledgment Statement

Chair DeJong called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. and read the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

(b) Roll Call/Reminder of Livestream on YouTube/Closed Captioning reminder

M. Tokaci, Information Technology, informed members of the YouTube livestream. Chair DeJong reminded members of the closed caption feature available in MS Teams. Trustee Sloat was announced as a visitor.

(c) Agenda Additions/Deletions/Approval

Add G-1 (b) – Resignation of M. Gatopoulos

Add F-1 (c) – Snowball Activity

Moved by: T. Waldschmidt

Seconded by: K. Jones

THAT the September 7, 2023 Agenda be approved, as amended

Carried

B - 1 Timed Items

(a) Student Success – Update on Destreaming in Grand Erie

Superintendent Graham shared an update on Destreaming in Grand Erie, presenting on the objectives and goals of Destreaming, supporting students where they are at, a



Special Education Advisory Committee

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6:00 p.m.

Education Centre Boardroom with MS Teams link

MINUTES

timeline of curriculum revisions, how assessments are done, and the professional development educators will receive. There was discussion and questions from committee members. Superintendent Graham will attend a SEAC meeting in the new year to provide further updates and respond to take away questions.

C - 1 **Business Arising from Minutes and/or Previous Meetings**

(a) **Approval of Minutes**

Presented as printed.

Moved by: L. Boswell

Seconded by: K. Jones

THAT the Minutes dated June 15, 2023 be approved, as presented.

Carried

(b) **Dates for SEAC Meetings 2023-24**

Presented as printed.

(c) **Project SEARCH Funding Update**

Superintendent Thompson announced that Grand Erie will be opening a second Project SEARCH in Norfolk this year and will be receiving funding to start up a program in Haldimand. Also announced was that Grand Erie has received a one-time grant to provide program and services that prevent and remove barriers for students with disabilities.

D - 1 **New Business**

(a) **OSSTF Inclusion Symposium – Summary Report**

Superintendent Thompson and Chair DeJong gave an overview of the Inclusion Symposium they attended in October 2022. The summary report is included in the meeting package.

E - 1 **Other Business**

(a) **SEAC Terms of Reference (ToR) - Review**

Presented as printed.

Superintendent Thompson will investigate whether there can be some flexibility written into the SEAC ToR upon the next review.

(b) **Specialized Services Organizational Structure**

Presented as printed.

(c) **Specialized Services – Department Updates for 2023-24**

Superintendent Thompson shared Grand Erie's focus for 2023-24 on math, student success, supports for educators, continuing work with Shelley Moore, and the situational analysis from Sheila Bennett and team.



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6:00 p.m.

Education Centre Boardroom with MS Teams link

MINUTES

F - 1 **Standing Items**

Policies Out for Comment - Nil

(a) **Trustee Updates**

Trustee Waldschmidt welcomed SEAC members to the new school year and thanked members for their participation in SEAC.

(b) **Chair/Vice Chair Updates**

Chair DeJong provided an update for SEAC members. Vice-Chair Jones asked SEAC members to provide one challenge or opportunity OR a question for SEAC to be shared at the October meeting.

(c) **Snowball Activity**

SEAC members anonymously wrote down an opportunity, challenge or question they have for SEAC to be discussed at future meetings.

G - 1 **Information Items**

(a) **Grand Erie's SEAC Representatives 2022-26**

Presented as printed.

(b) **Resignation of M. Gatopoulos**

Chair DeJong announced the resignation of M. Gatopoulos. A letter of thanks will be sent by Chair DeJong. There was discussion around recruiting new community members.

H - 1 **Community Updates - Nil**

I - 1 **Correspondence**

(a) **Letter from Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board**

Presented as printed

There was discussion about the improved fill rates for Education Assistants within Grand Erie.

J - 1 **Future Agenda Items and SEAC Committee Planning**

(a) Social Justice Series Review

(b) Pathways to different student assessments

K - 1 **Next Meeting**

Thursday October 5, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. in the boardroom at the Education Centre. A virtual option will be provided.

L - 1 **Adjournment**

Moved by: T. Waldschmidt

Seconded by: K. Jones

THAT the meeting be adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Carried



Specialized Services

GRAND ERIE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Seeking Members

FOR THE

Special Education Advisory Committee



Grand Erie District School Board is seeking parents, community members and members of local associations to be part of its Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC).

To be eligible, a person:

- Must be a Canadian Citizen
- Must be 18 years or older
- Must be a resident within the jurisdiction of the board
- Must be qualified to vote for members of the board

The Special Education Advisory Committee makes recommendations to the Board in respect of any matter affecting the establishment, development and delivery of Special Education programs and services.

The term of office for the SEAC is **November, 2022** to **October, 2026**.

The Committee meets once monthly during the school year.

To apply, please write a short letter introducing yourself and describing your interest in Special Education. Submissions must include your name, address and telephone number.

Email your submission to Jennifer Valstar, SEAC Recording Secretary, at:

jennifer.valstar@granderie.ca

For more information visit granderie.ca or contact Jennifer Valstar via the email above or by calling **519-756-6306**, ext. **281173**.

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Grand Erie Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2022-27

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Grand Erie Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

2022-27

Prepared in accordance with:

Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA)
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR)

Plan Availability:

Grand Erie District School Board's Accessibility Plan is posted on the board website at: <https://granderie.ca/board/community/accessibility> and hard copies will be made available upon request. The plan can be made in accessible formats by contacting:

Manager of Communications and Community Relations

Grand Erie District School Board
349 Erie Avenue, Brantford ON

Telephone: (519) 756-1601 or 1-888-548-8878 ext. 281147

E-mail: dave.smouter@granderie.ca

Aim:

Grand Erie's Multi-Year Accessibility Plan describes the measures that will be taken in Grand Erie over the five-year period from 2022-27 to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities who work, learn and participate in the district including students, staff, parents and caregivers, volunteers and visitors to Grand Erie schools and worksites.

Grand Erie's Plan is developed in accordance with the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (IASR), Ontario Regulation 191/11 under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005 and has been guided by the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility K-12 Education Standards Initial Report:

<https://www.ontario.ca/document/development-proposed-kindergarten-grade-12-k-12-education-standards-2021-initial-recommendations>

Implementation of the Plan is guided by the Board's Policy - Accessibility (SO31).

1.0 Definitions and Terminology

Ableism: Attitudes in society that devalue and limit the potential of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are assumed to be less worthy of respect and consideration, less able to contribute and take part, and of less value than other people. Ableism can be conscious or unconscious and is embedded in institutions, systems or the broader culture of a society.

Ableism refers to discrimination towards persons with disabilities. It can be through actions as well as underlying beliefs and attitudes. Ableism involves systemic barriers as well as person-to-person interactions, stereotypes, and negative attitudes that devalue and limit the potential of persons with disabilities.

Accessibility: Accessibility is defined as that which enables people to achieve their full potential.

Accommodation: An accommodation is a means, through reasonable efforts, of preventing and removing – in a timely manner – barriers that impede individuals with disability from participating fully in the services of the board.

Barrier: A “barrier” means anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability, including a physical barrier, an architectural barrier, an information or communications barrier, an attitudinal barrier, a technological barrier, policy or a practice; (“obstacle”)

Disability: Disability covers a broad range and degree of conditions, some visible and some not visible. A disability may be present from birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time.

2.0 Objectives

This Plan:

- 2.1 Describes the process by which Grand Erie will identify, remove and prevent barriers;
- 2.2 Reviews recent efforts in Grand Erie to remove and prevent barriers;
- 2.3 Describes the measures Grand Erie will take in the period 2022-2027 to identify, remove and prevent barriers;
- 2.4 Makes a commitment to provide an annual progress report on Grand Erie’s implementation of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan;
- 2.5 Makes a commitment to review and update the Plan at least once every 5 years;
- 2.6 Describes how Grand Erie will make this Accessibility Plan available to the public.

3.0 Commitment to Accessibility Planning

This Plan will be established, reviewed, and updated in consultation with persons with disabilities, the Board’s Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), the Safe and Inclusive Schools Committee, and other relevant stakeholders. A new Plan is created every 5 years and a progress report shared each year.

Grand Erie is committed to:

- 3.1 Reviewing accessibility issues through a committee as required.
- 3.2 The appointment of the Principal Leader for Mental Health Education and Student Support Services as the key contact for accessibility in Grand Erie.

3.0 Commitment to Accessibility Planning Contd.

- 3.3 Continuing the process of consulting with the Special Education Advisory Committee, the Safe and Inclusive Schools Committee and persons with disabilities.
- 3.4 Ensuring, wherever practicable, that policies, procedures and practices are consistent with the principles of accessibility and inclusive/universal design.
- 3.5 Improving access to facilities, policies, programs, practices and services for students, staff, parents/caregivers, volunteers and members of the community.

4.0 Description of the Grand Erie District School Board

The Grand Erie District School Board serves the counties of Brant, Haldimand, and Norfolk, and the City of Brantford. Grand Erie represents more than 26,000 public school board students in 72 schools, and a dedicated staff of 2,800. Grand Erie is committed to its vision of creating and maintaining accessible learning and workspaces that promote all learners to Learn Lead and Inspire.

5.0 Grand Erie's Multi-Year Strategic Plan

Our Vision

Learn

Lead

Inspire

Our Mission

Together, we build a culture of **learning**, **well-being** and **belonging** to inspire each learner.

6.0 Strategy for Prevention and Removal of Barriers

The principles of inclusionary practice, freedom from barriers and accessible environments inform all Grand Erie policies, procedures, programs, and services. Through the annual accessibility plan progress report process implemented under the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*, Grand Erie's programming, policies and practices have been assessed to ensure continuous improvement in accessibility.

7.0 Barrier Identification

Group	Methods
Students	Barriers to accessibility are identified by students and parents/caregivers. Staff members in all departments work with stakeholders to remove/prevent barriers and develop accommodation plans.
Staff	In consultation with union partners, Grand Erie's Human Resources staff members identify barriers, restrictions and limitations and develop accommodation plans.
Public	Barriers to accessibility are identified by individuals accessing programs and services offered by the school board. Members of the public may bring concerns to the attention of the school. The school will bring these concerns to the Principal Leader for Mental Health Education and Student Support Services if appropriate. The board website also provides an opportunity for feedback: http://www.granderie.ca/board/community/accessibility
Board Wide	Ongoing liaison with bargaining partners, provincial associations, school boards, and public sector agencies provides updates on emerging barriers to accessibility. SEAC and the Ontario Education Services Corporation are examples of some of the resources used for barrier identification. Review of Grand Erie facilities provide up-to-date identification of barriers and permits planning to remove/prevent such barriers. Barriers to accessibility are referred to the Principal Leader for Mental Health Education and Student Support Services for further review and consultation.

8.0 Barriers to be Addressed under the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2022-27

The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation 191/11 filed in June 2011 pursuant to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* identified specific requirements to achieve accessibility in the areas of:

- Information and Communications
- Employment
- Transportation

These requirements build on the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service which came into force in 2007.

Through the 2022-27 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, Grand Erie intends to take action to address attitudinal barriers to accessibility with a special emphasis on supporting all students in inclusive environments. This is in addition to ongoing work regarding identification and removal of barriers in Grand Erie’s physical environment.

Type of Barrier	Location	Action	Effective Date
Systemic	Board Wide	Newly developed and revised policies/ procedures will be reviewed by the Safe and Inclusive Schools Committee, and an Accessibility Committee if appropriate, to provide input from an accessibility lens.	On-going
Systemic	Board Wide	Continue to implement mandatory (AODA) accessibility awareness training to ensure new staff have been trained. Implementation of program to notify employees (new and existing) and their supervisors of completion rate of mandatory trainings (inclusive of AODA training requirements).	On-Going
Attitudinal	Board Wide	Continue to embed discussions at the school level about the Initial Recommendations of the K-12 Education Standards https://www.ontario.ca/document/development-proposed-kindergarten-grade-12-k-12-education-standards-2021-initial-recommendations	

8.0 Barriers to be Addressed under the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2022-27 Contd.

Type of Barrier	Location	Action	Effective Date
Attitudinal	Board Wide	Rick Hansen Foundation School Partnership Initiative. Partner with the Rick Hansen Foundation to provide schools with an online platform to access resources to support the full participation of all.	On-going
Attitudinal	Board Wide	Accessibility Awareness Month, December 2022. #AccessibleGE	Accessibility Awareness Month is held annually
Attitudinal	Board Wide	With the support of Program K-12, Teaching and Learning and Specialized Services, K-12, system school support staff will design course content, instruction, and assessment in an inclusive (universal) design framework in both in-person and remote learning contexts.	On-going
Attitudinal	Board Wide	Implementing a bias-free hiring process that removes barriers for candidates.	On-going
Information and Communications	Board Wide	Provide all schools and work sites with How can we help you? signage to invite requests for accommodation from the public.	Fall 2022
Technology	Board Wide	Technology for Innovation and Learning and Specialized Services K-12 staff provide in-service to improve staff and student understanding of accessibility features available in Grand Erie software	On-going

8.0 Barriers to be Addressed under the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2022-27 Contd.

Type of Barrier	Location	Action	Effective Date
Technology	Board Wide	Ensure technology features are used that support accessibility for all ie. Closed captioning on PD presentations, staff meetings, classroom teaching and presentations.	On-going
Architectural	Board Wide	Facilities Services is working towards creating a geographical representation of accessible sites in Grand Erie to ensure there are fully accessible schools in all geographic areas that comply with AODA standards by 2025.	On-going
Physical	Board Wide	Accessibility requests can be made through submission of information online or through Pride of Place	On-going
Physical	Board Wide	Facility Services will hire an Accessibility Consultant to audit specific schools by geographical area	On-going

9.0 Review and Monitoring Process

Accessibility issues are addressed on an ongoing basis in Grand Erie. Wherever possible, proactive measures are put in place to ensure accessible working and learning environments. Feedback and input are through input received from school board staff, families, and community members.

In respect to the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan the following steps take place:

- (a) An annual report on the progress of the measures taken to implement the Plan is brought to the Board for information in November.
- (b) At least once every 5 years the Plan is reviewed and updated in consultation with persons with disabilities, with the Board’s Special Education Advisory Committee and other relevant stakeholders. The new plan is brought to the Board for information in November.

10.0 Communication of the Plan

In addition to the public availability of the Plan, Grand Erie will post an annual update report on the progress of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan on the Board's website at:

<https://granderie.ca/board/community/accessibility>

Requests for accessible formats of the Plan will be accommodated.

Questions, comments, or feedback regarding the Accessibility Plan may be directed to:

**Principal Leader
Mental Health Education and Student Support Services**

Grand Erie District School Board
349 Erie Avenue, Brantford, ON N3T 5V3
519-756-6301
OR
info@granderie.ca



Grand Erie District School Board

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September 8, 2023

Hon. Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
5th Flr, 438 University Ave.
Toronto, ON M5G 2K8

Via email: minister.edu@ontario.ca

RE: Special Education Shortfalls

Dear Minister Lecce,

On June 27, 2023, Thames Valley District School Board Trustees unanimously supported the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) recommendation that we write you letter about chronic shortfalls in provincial funding for special education.

SEAC's recommendation came as a response to their review of the TVDSB's 2023-24 Special Education Budget and Special Education Plan.

Thames Valley's Special Education Plan, which was developed in collaboration with SEAC, is a comprehensive document that is well-positioned to meet the complex needs of Thames Valley students. The Board of Trustees strongly agrees with SEAC's concern that the availability of financial resources may impact the board's ability to fully implement the Plan. We also stand with the committee in their request for Special Education program expansion, staffing improvements and reduced wait times for services.

Meeting Special Education needs has become more challenging as Thames Valley experiences rapid growth due to residential development and new families moving to the district.

An example of one of the many areas where we have seen an increase is programming for students formally identified through the IPRC (Identification, Placement, and Review Committee) process with a developmental disability. Thames Valley has approximately 11% of its exceptional students identified with a developmental disability, compared to the provincial average of 5.1%. Our data shows that we have an unprecedented

number of 1200 students choosing to stay in school until the age of 21. As a direct result, Thames Valley has needed to increase the number of Developmental Disability classes from 79 during the 2019-20 academic year to 89 for the 2023-24 school year. This adjustment has resulted in an additional cost of \$2.5 million.

Overall, TVDSB's Special Education expenses are budgeted to exceed the Grant for Student Needs by \$3.4 million in 2023-24 (consistent with the prior year). Additional resources are required if we are to successfully meet the needs of special education students and reduce barriers to accessing assessments and resources.

On behalf Thames Valley District School Board Trustees, thank you for your time and consideration of this matter. The Board looks forward to continuing this important conversation and working with the Ministry to provide critical supports to all Thames Valley students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "L. Pizzolato".

Lori-Ann Pizzolato
Chair of the Board
Thames Valley District School Board

cc: Trustees

June 26, 2023

Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
Mowat Block, 22nd Floor
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Stephen Lecce,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Simcoe County District School Board's (SCDSB) Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC). We would like to start off by thanking you for the funding announcements for the 2023-24 school year. As one of Ontario's top growth boards, being provided with this information in a timely manner, is essential in maximizing the efficient and effective use of funding, as well as being able to bring forward a balanced budget in accordance with Ministry requirements. Recognizing that the hard work of preparing for next year's funding allocation has already begun, we are contacting you now with concerns and suggestions for consideration in your decision-making process for the province's future special education funding models.

A key aspect of the special education funding is ensuring allocated funding aligns with the current needs of the board in 2023. To maximize the allocated special education funding, it should be based on the most recent and relevant educational and community needs data, rather than drawing on previous community-data (legacy census data) that may not adequately reflect ongoing changes in population demographics, diversity, or the current and future needs. Simcoe County has changed significantly in recent decades, and these changes need to be taken into account when making financial decisions to support our students effectively. While we appreciate that special education funding has generally increased in recent years in the SCDSB, increases have largely been proportional to changes in enrolment and/or reflected increases in wages, rather than actual increased supports and services for students.

In the SCDSB, approximately 1 in every 5 students (approx. 11,500) has a special education related strength and need. Since the pandemic (COVID-19), the complexity of the needs of students has increased dramatically. Our most vulnerable students, especially those with special education and/or mental health needs, have been disproportionately impacted by the prolonged pandemic, caused by extended periods of school closures, restricted access to community-based services and supports (speech and language and occupational therapy), limited access to other children needed to develop pro-social skills, self-regulation, and strong oral language skills, which are all essential elements to maximizing success at school and in life after school. To minimize the impact of the pandemic on students with disabilities, significant and sustained investment will be required to alleviate long-term negative effects.

The success of students with special education and/or mental health needs at school is also greatly impacted by other aspects of educational funding, including access to appropriate physical space at school (opportunities for therapy at school to reduce unnecessary transition or time away from school), transportation funding (modified start and end times, travel distances to access specialized programming), etc. The SCDSB's Board of Trustees has recently written to the Ministry of Education to express concerns related to the need for capital funding, as well as

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changes in transportation funding. We would like to add our support to those previously identified concerns, and to reiterate the impact that these other types of education funding have on students with special education needs, and the corresponding appropriate supports that the board is then able to offer.

As you know, Ontario was the first province in Canada (2005) to pass legislation (*The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005* [AODA]), with the goal and timeline of removing barriers to accessibility, including in schools by 2025. As we approach 2025 (date identified in AODA), many schools in the SCDSB continue to require significant investments in their facility infrastructure to reduce physical barriers, such as elevators, ramps, accessible washrooms, as well as accessible forms of transportation. We urge the Ministry to communicate with boards as to how these needed changes will be financially supported as the deadline quickly approaches.

Student success at school doesn't begin or end at the school's front door. To appropriately support students with special education needs in schools, a whole community wrap-around approach is required. Funding of services and supports provided through other ministries, such as timely access to community-based mental health supports, medical doctors, speech, physical and occupational therapy, nursing to support students with diabetes, and the Ontario Autism Program (OAP) also impact students' success while at school. Legislated wage restrictions in various public education or health-care sectors have negatively impacted the ability to hire and retain sufficient and high-quality clinical staff, educational assistants, child and youth workers, special education resource teachers, etc., to meet the increasingly complex needs of students emerging from the pandemic.

As the complexity of the needs of our communities continue to grow and change over time, comprehensive funding for Education and Community Partnership Programs (ECCP) (Section 23) needs to recognize the true costs for boards to partner with community agencies to offer successful care and treatment programs for students (transportation, staffing, facility costs, etc.).

The SCDSB's SEAC is supportive of the recommendations outlined in the Ontario Human Rights Commission's Right to Read Inquiry, as well as the recent funding announcements by the Ministry of Education to support improvements in reading instruction. Sustained funding, as well as a long-term commitment will be required to match the increasing complex needs of our students. Professional learning will improve not only the quality of instruction, it will help reduce attitudinal barriers faced by students with disabilities related to stereotypes, lack of knowledge, and sensitivity to their needs.

We also wish to express our support in the concerns recently communicated by many SEAC's regarding the funding of the Special Incidence Portion (SIP). While we appreciate the Ministry's recent updates to this funding model, we are concerned that recent changes may not adequately reflect SCDSB's growth and/or increasing complexity of students. We look forward to an update on these changes, including plans to address the needs of the growth boards within the province.

On behalf of the SCDSB's SEAC we would like to thank you for your time and dedication to all Ontario students, especially the most vulnerable with special education strengths and needs, who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. We wish to urge the Minister to take our concerns and suggestions into consideration when planning for future funding allocations and decisions. We appreciate the Minister's respect for our committee's understanding of our local needs and the importance of our advocacy on behalf of the needs of our students and families. We would be happy for the opportunity to discuss any of the above issues further, and we look forward to your response. We thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Brandy Rafeek
Chairperson, SEAC



Kevin Berry
Vice-chairperson, SEAC

- c: Jodi Lloyd, Chairperson, SCDSB
John Dance, Director of Education, SCDSB
Dawn Stephens, Associate Director of Education, SCDSB
Chris Samis, Superintendent of Student Achievement and Special Education, SCDSB
Hon. Doug Downey, MPP, Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte
Hon. Jill Dunlop, MPP, Simcoe North
Hon. Caroline Mulroney, MPP, York-Simcoe
Andrea Khanjin, MPP, Barrie–Innisfil
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Ontario Public School Boards Association (OPSBA)
Chairs of all Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees