

Special Education Annual Report 2023-2024



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INTRODUCTION

Special Education

The Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board is committed to meeting the diverse needs of all students within our district and ensuring that each student reaches their academic, social and spiritual potential. We strive to inspire and support learning by assisting in creating safe, inclusive, and faith-filled learning environments. Our goal is to foster learning environments that best meets each student's unique needs and talents and to close the academic gaps that exist so that students can reach their full potential. The provision of special education programs and services, and the allocation of resources, are based on each unique student's strengths and needs, and on the principles of equity and inclusion.

The delivery of specialized programs by the classroom teacher is supported by an interdisciplinary team of professionals at the school and system level. The BHNCDSB spiritual theme is "We are Called to Love" and in support of this theme we ensure that supporting partnerships with agencies, other Ministries, and community resources continue to enhance the ability of the school system to fulfill its mandate of educating all learners in our Board. Parents/guardians are considered full partners in the education of their children, and we work with them closely to enhance students' academic, social, emotional, and spiritual growth. Ultimately, all students will become independent and positive contributors to society that are achieving their potential.

Supported by faith-based learning, the Board's Special Education Services team work together with families to achieve "Excellence in Learning ~ Living in Christ".

The Annual Report was compiled from information provided by members of the Special Education Services Team. It will be reviewed and presented for approval to the BHNCDSB Board of Trustees in June 2024. The Annual Plan will be submitted to the Ministry of Education by July 31, 2024, and posted to the Board website.

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

The membership of SEAC for 2023-24 was as follows:

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Dennis Blake	Trustee Representative
Philip Wilson	Superintendent of Education
Sandra De Dominicis	Student Achievement Lead – Special Education
Debbie Cotter	Resource to the SEAC, Executive Assistant to Philip Wilson
Mischa Dinsmore (Vice-Chair)	Lansdowne Children Centre
Christina Ferrell (Chair)	Woodview Mental Health & Autism Services
Shannon Mason	Principal, Sacred Heart Langton & Special Education Staffing
Kerri Lomax	Principal, St. Michael's Dunnville & Special Education Staffing
Jennifer Rudyk	Principal, St. Bernard of Clairvaux & Special Education Staffing
Tara Buchanan	Community Living Brant
Michelle Drake	Crossing All Bridges
Marilyn Noi	Autism Ontario
Linda McFayden	Contact Brant
Patti Mitchell	Community Resource and Parent, County of Brant

Susan Lentz	Lansdowne Children's Centre
Nil Woodcroft	Haldimand-Norfolk REACH
Shannon Korber	Child & Family Services of Grand Erie
Brandi Bertling	Child & Family Services of Grand Erie
Janelle Sandy	Indigenous Child and Youth Team at Child and Family Services of Grand Erie

Throughout this past school year, representatives from various community agencies presented an overview of the mandate of their agencies. This will continue in 2024-25 as new members will have the opportunity to present information from their respective agencies.

The 2023-24 SEAC heard presentations on the following:

After School Skill Development Program (ASSDP)

The BHNCD SB Applied Behavior Analysis Leads presented about the After School Skill Development Program (ASSDP). ASSDP is a Ministry mandated program supporting students with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the areas of social skills, communication, functional skills, and regulation.

Camp Connect was run in July of 2023. Two groups were run in a camp-style format for select students designed to promote the development of social skills. Each camp ran for 4 consecutive mornings at one location. The students were grouped by age and grade level. Six students grade 6-8 and 4 students grades 3-5.

Each camp was designed to support four to six students, with four staff - three ABA Program Leads and one Camp Coordinator, who was hired from the BHNCD SB EA complement.

The skills targeted included taking turns, suggesting an activity/idea to a peer, leaving an interaction appropriately, asking a friend for an item, offering an item to a friend, giving and accepting compliments, following the rules of a game, and responding appropriately to losing a game. These skills were taught through a variety of fitness activities, board games, pottery making, gardening, crafts, people games, food activities, music, and outdoor exploration. The strategies included explicit teaching, modelling, visual cues, choice, verbal cues, and positive reinforcement.

The feedback from the camp was very positive. Most students learned something new and would like to return to the camp. Staff really enjoyed the camp. Constructive feedback received for the 2023-24 planning is that more students be involved and for a longer period of time.

Math Action Plan (Student Achievement)

Superintendent Temple provided an update on the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board's (BHNCD SB) Math Action Plan. The goals monitored through the year included: conducting regular assessments to measure the progress of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to ensure that progress is consistent and on track

to meet annual targets. The teachers had to periodically review classroom practices using fidelity checks to ensure teachers were effectively implementing high impact strategies. Data-driven decision making encourages and models analyzing assessment data to inform instructional decisions and interventions, ensuring they align with the KPIs and goals. The Special Education focus for the year included math modification audits, SERTs being involved in math interventions in target schools, SERT training on the Key Math resource, professional development (PD) for transition teachers, SERTs and destreaming educators, and the summer skills builder math course for summer 2024.

Accessibility Plan (Superintendent of Business)

Superintendent Keys provided the members with the Integrated Accessibility Policy, Integrated Accessibility Awareness Guide, and the Multi-Year Integrated Accessibility Plan, to seek feedback from members.

Supplementary Gifted Modules

System Special Education Consultant, Glenn Thistle shared an overview of the Supplementary Gifted Modules for the year. Modules included a range of activities related to mathematics, science, STEM, and the arts. Highlights included a trip to Stratford including a workshop with actors, as well as to Tigercat Industries for a full day of learning in the area of skilled trades.

Sacramental Retreats

System Special Education Consultant, Tracie Witteveen, shared an overview of the supplementary retreats that are offered for students who are “exceptional” in their learning and require differentiated instruction to help better understand the sacraments and enhance their understanding. Students were provided with strategies, accommodations, and mentored support to help them actively participate in celebrating their faith and developing a deeper understanding and appreciation for their relationship with Christ.

Orientation and Mobility

Orientation and Mobility Instructor, Rachel Moreau, shared how students are taught how to travel safely. Instructional areas include concept, motor and sensory development, visual and social skills, techniques of orientation and mobility, and the use of devices. Environmental analysis reports were explained. These reports are completed to ensure accessibility for the students within the school environment.

Story Champs

Speech & Language Services highlighted their job embedded professional development using Story Champs in kindergarten classrooms. During the 12 weeks of support, Teachers and ECEs learned about assessment of oral language, implementation strategies and supports for differentiation. The SLPs emphasized the importance of foundation oral language skills and connections to academic learning. This year represented year one of a three-year plan.

Lexia

System Special Education Consultant, Jennifer Tonnies explained the distribution process for Lexia licenses as well as eligibility criteria. This year, the committee expanded licenses to populations with a profile of Learning Disability, Mild Intellectual Disability, and Language Impairment. As of April 2024, the following data was shared: 50% of students gained 1-2 levels in skills, 33% of students gained 3-4 levels in skills, and 7% gained 5 or more levels in skills. She noted that 3-4 levels equates to an entire reading level. Data tracking on usage ensures accountability among Special Education Resource Teachers ensuring the program is implemented as intended for maximum gains in literacy skills.

Empower

Student Achievement Leader for Special Education, Sandra De Dominicis reminded members that Empower™ Reading, is an intensive reading program that was developed by researchers at the Hospital for Sick Children and took over 30 years to develop. Empower™ Reading provides struggling readers with the skills necessary to become successful readers by teaching them various word identification skills and decoding strategies. Empower™ Reading, is a 110-lesson program, that is delivered in 45–60-minute blocks four to five times per week. Eligibility criteria was shared as well as the number of Year 1 participants which included 81 students in 13 schools with 11 trained instructors. Progress and growth to-date was shared which is measured in multiple areas at 3 stages in the learning process and includes measures from the Empower Reading Program as well as selective standardized achievement subtests from the Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Achievement. Significant growth and progress has been made to date. The goal is to have Empower in all elementary schools next school year (2024-2025).

Special Equipment Amount Training (SEA)

System Special Education Consultants highlighted some of the changes with the SEA training model which, this year, includes 6 consultants delivering training to both students and teachers. Consultants shared some of the consistent practices developed across the district including standard communication to schools, sharing of printable and digital resource guides for teachers, students and SERTs and the inclusion of family members in training. They presented visual resources that were created to support students in navigating some of the basic operations and accessibility features in essential software programs. Consultants also created a resource for teachers that summarizes essential skills that students are taught in their training sessions as well as skills that teachers need to support their student's use of their SEA computer. To better understand the needs of secondary teachers in supporting their students with SEA equipment, a survey was developed to gather information about the types of documents that teachers share with students. This data will help to tailor training for secondary students to ensure that they know how to access and work with a variety of document types. Teachers were able to identify specific needs they would like further training on and then have the opportunity to connect with a consultant.

Motivational Address by Assumption College Student

SEAC members enjoyed an inspirational presentation from a current student at Assumption College. She shared her educational journey and challenges with Epilepsy and learning difficulties. The student highlighted how she overcame her struggles with the support of her educators and educational assistants along the way, highlighting the need for individualized programming, and significant accommodations. She will graduate with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma in one more academic year through her perseverance and efforts. She reminded members of the potential of all students given the right opportunities and supports and the impact our decisions have on the success of our students.

Have A Go

At the final SEAC meeting, John Silvestri will provide a brief description and overview of Have A Go, as well as a video of this year's event.

The 2023-24 meeting schedule was as follows:

2023-24 SEAC Meeting Schedules	
Tues., September 19, 2023	Tues., February 20, 2024
Tues., October 17, 2023	Tues., March 19, 2024

Tues., November 28, 2023	Tues., April 16, 2024
Tues., December 19, 2023	Tues., May 21, 2024
Tues., January 16, 2024	Tues., June 18, 2024

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

System Special Education

System Special Education Consultants are assigned to elementary and secondary schools to support staff and enhance student achievement and wellbeing. Their role is to collaborate with school teams and community agencies, and to build capacity among teachers, SERTs, Educational Assistants and parents by providing in-services within schools and in the community. In addition, System Special Education Consultants ensure that Ministry of Education mandates and protocols are followed by providing training and producing resources to support staff in meeting Ministry standards. Through resource creation and information sharing, System Special Education Consultants build capacity, maintain consistency, and enhance communication with parents.

An area of focus for System Special Education Consultants is to collaborate with school SERTs to better understand learners by exploring student profiles, assessment data and evaluation. They assist in the development of student profiles through assessment (Hawaii Early Learning Profile, Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test (CCAT), Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Achievement (WJ), and Battelle Early Academic Survey (BEAS)), observations and program recommendations. System Special Education Consultants dialogue with school teams to determine appropriate next steps and potential interventions. This valuable information could result in the development of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and possibly the formal identification of a student through the IPRC process. The System Special Education Consultant supports the school team in preparing IPRC paperwork in order to ensure appropriate identification and placement of the student.

This year, System Special Education Consultants assumed the role of training students and teachers in the use of computer equipment assigned through the Special Equipment Amount (SEA) process. Following their Phase 1 (pre-recorded) training, every student who receives a laptop computer works with their school's respective consultant for one or more individual sessions to learn and practise their skills in using the assigned equipment. Following the student training session, the consultant connects with the student's teacher to ensure they are informed about the use of assistive technology, and to provide individual training based on the teacher's needs. Please refer to the *Information Technology: Training Model* section of this report, for more information.

Academic Assessments

System Special Education Consultants use two different assessment tools to examine a student's academic performance. The Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Achievement (WJ) is used with the majority of students in elementary and secondary grades. It is a standardized test which explores achievement and provides scores in Broad Reading, Broad Mathematics, Broad Written Language, and Phoneme-Grapheme Knowledge. A breakdown of each broad area is as follows:

Broad Reading	Broad Mathematics
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Letter-Word IdentificationSentence Reading FluencyPassage Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none">CalculationMath Facts FluencyApplied Problems
Broad Written Language	Phoneme-Grapheme Knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none">SpellingSentence Writing FluencyWriting Samples	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Word AttackSpelling of Sounds

With our early struggling learners, specifically those in grades one and two, we use the Battelle Early Academic Survey (BEAS). With its comprehensive breakdown in the areas of *Phonological Awareness* and *Phonics and Word Recognition*, the BEAS provides valuable information about where gaps exist, enabling classroom teachers and school SERTs to tailor programming to address the specific areas of need. This skill analysis

blends very well with primary teachers' use of the Heggerty *Phonemic Awareness* program and SERTs' use of the *Bridge the Gap Phonemic Awareness Intervention Lessons*, to help identify areas of need and work toward closing gaps in students' learning. The BEAS provides scores in overall Literacy and Mathematics, with breakdowns as follows:

Literacy	Mathematics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print Concepts • Phonological Awareness (6 subtests) • Phonics and Word Recognition (7 subtests) • Listening Comprehension • Fluency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers, Counting, and Sets • Geometry • Measurement and Data • Operations and Algebraic Thinking

Cognitive Assessments

System Special Education Consultants are responsible for determining the eligibility of a student to receive a cognitive assessment with contracted psychologists through a committee process. The cognitive assessment referral process involves consultation with school staff, and the review of documents in the Ontario Student Record (OSR) including Provincial Report Cards, EQAO results, WJ or BEAS assessment results, CCAT scores and outside agency reports.

Transitions

The System team places great importance on successful student transitions. Assistance is provided when planning and implementing entry into school for students with high needs, as well as transitioning into special class placements, secondary school and post-secondary opportunities. This liaison with community agencies, school teams and parents/guardians helps to ensure student needs are met by creating supported and informed transitions.

The following chart illustrates some of the processes that System Special Education Consultants have supported during the 2023-2024 school year:

Cognitive Referrals Submitted	IPRCs (school or system level)	Case Conferences	Achievement Tests Completed (WJ and BEAS)
52	329	210	52

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

There are currently 32 Hard of Hearing students in the Board.

Services provided this past school 2023-2024 year included:

- Acquisition of Specialized Equipment Amount (SEA) and materials to support students who are Hard of Hearing and have CAP difficulties.
- Monitoring and troubleshooting such equipment.
- Performing regular checks on ear molds, hearing aids and cochlear implants and FM systems
- Providing in-services for specialized equipment.
- Repairing SEA equipment, as required.
- Consulting on students' IEPs.
- Providing and installing noise reducing strategies for the classroom environment.

- Attending team meetings.
- Acting as a liaison, support and referral source for families and other agencies.
- Interpreting audiological reports.
- Providing accommodations/modifications and programming strategies.
- Assisting students and families in connecting and networking.

Information Technology

Overview of Special Equipment Amount (SEA) Support

The Ministry of Education provides Special Equipment Amount (SEA) funding to school boards each year. This funding is used to assist school boards with the cost of equipment essential to support students with special education needs. The equipment is to provide students with accommodations that are directly required and essential for the student to be able to attend school or to access the Ontario Curriculum. There are two separate funds available for students to access to obtain specialized equipment.

The SEA Per Pupil Amount (PPA)

The SEA PPA fund is allocated for the purchase of **computer and all technology-related equipment**. Each school district receives an allocated PPA amount each SEA year (May 1st to April 30). The allocation includes a base amount, plus an amount which is calculated using a formula that includes the Board's average daily enrolment (ADE).

The SEA Claims-Based

This fund is allocated for the purchase of non-computer-based equipment. Claims-based funding covers the cost of an individual student's equipment needs in excess of \$800 in the year of purchase. Boards are responsible for the first \$800 in cost for any student per year.

Process for Submitting a SEA Claim

There are five different processes for submitting a SEA claim:

- Submitting a claim with a formal assessment
- Submitting a claim without a formal assessment
- Submitting a claim for a student with fine motor issues.
- Submitting a shared claim
- Submitting a trial claim

Recommendations for special equipment are forwarded by the school and reviewed by the team. Claims must meet Ministry guidelines and requirements.

Purchasing SEA Equipment

It is the Board's duty to seek efficiencies for all equipment purchases made with SEA funds. SEA purchases are made using the most cost-effective choices. The allocation of SEA funds to support student needs is done in an equitable and timely fashion. When purchasing SEA equipment, considerations are made for quality, cost, durability, longevity and compatibility with the Board's infrastructure. The SEA team can also repurpose SEA equipment within the system.

SEA Repairs and Replacements

It is the Boards responsibility to ensure that all equipment is in working order and that the equipment meets the student's needs. The Ministry of Education requires Boards to seek financial efficiencies in respect to the purchase of SEA equipment. To comply with Ministry requirements, upgrades and refurbishment are initially considered as an option, before replacing it with new equipment.

Repairs

Non-Tech/Physical Equipment - Non-tech equipment repairs are completed by Motion after a quote has been obtained and the repair has been approved.

Hearing equipment – School and system level staff attempt to problem solve the issue. If the issue remains unresolved, the equipment is sent back to the vendor for repair or replacement.

Tech Equipment - The SEA team works very closely with our Information Technology (IT) department to ensure the most efficient and effective processes are in place for the maintenance and repair of SEA technology equipment. The Board has assigned one computer technician who is dedicated to SEA equipment work orders.

Replacements

SEA equipment will be replaced or upgraded **only** for the following reasons:

- the student's needs have changed and the equipment no longer meets their needs.
- the student outgrows the equipment.
- the equipment wears out through use.
- the equipment is broken and is unrepairable.
- the equipment is no longer functioning in a way that meets the student's needs.
- the equipment is too old and can no longer be serviced or supported.

Taking SEA Equipment Home

The Ministry of Education requires that all equipment purchased through the SEA claim process remains the property of the school board. The equipment has been purchased for the student because it is 'essential' for learning, therefore SEA equipment must be at school and available for student use throughout the day. It is the responsibility of the school Principal to grant permission to take SEA equipment home and to ensure that it is returned to school in working condition. The school principal will only grant permission to take SEA equipment home for the following reasons:

- to complete unfinished schoolwork, assignments or projects at home.
- for home instruction.
- summer school.

The Reclamation of SEA Equipment

SEA equipment can be reclaimed if:

- The student outgrows the equipment.
- The student is not using the equipment.
- The student no longer needs the equipment.
- If the parents/guardian(s) no longer want their child to have the equipment.

SEA Transfers

When a student moves to a new school within the district, or to another publicly funded board within Ontario, the SEA purchased equipment must move with them. The receiving/new board has the option to decline the equipment. When a decision about transferring equipment is being made, consideration is given to factors such as a student's best interests, equipment compatibility and the efficiency/practicality of completing a transfer.

The SEA coordinator is responsible for all transfers. The Board receiving the equipment is responsible for requesting the equipment, and responsible for all shipping costs associated with the transfer.

In the 2023-24 SEA year, 53 students with SEA equipment transferred into our board and 49 transferred out.

SEA Equipment Management and Disposal

Maintenance and Management

Equipment purchased with SEA funding is a set of physical assets which boards have a responsibility to protect, maintain and manage as a public resource.

To ensure that equipment is safe to use, inspections are completed annually on all electric and hydraulic claims-based equipment. All inspections are performed in compliance with O.H.S.A. - R.R.O., Reg.851, Section #51. Upon review of the inspection reports, any necessary repairs and maintenance on the equipment is arranged and completed.

Disposal

Any equipment that has outlived its effectiveness and/or safe usage needs to be disposed of in a safe and environmentally friendly way.

- Any unused SEA equipment goes into Board storage and is reassigned to other students until the equipment reaches its end of life or is rendered obsolete.
- Unusable tech equipment is picked up and taken by a Board approved recycling company. All computer equipment is recycled in an environmentally friendly manner. Hard drives and labels with student names are removed from laptops and equipment before it is picked up.
- Some non-tech equipment is kept for parts. Equipment that is made from recyclable materials is sent to be recycled. Non-recyclable equipment is safely disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner.
- Some non-tech items that sit in storage for over 5 years and never get used are donated to organizations who accept equipment and provide it to members of the community in need and who can't afford it.

For the Needy Not the Greedy located in the Niagara area. They are a non-profit organization supplying assistive medical devices for both individuals and organizations in need. A truck load of unused SEA equipment from surplus was donated to them in the fall.

Collaboration

The Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board SEA team collaborates with other boards through the SEA Coordinators Council, a regional body consisting of 17 Boards.

The Board also collaborates with our community partners like Lansdowne Children Centre to ensure their role in the SEA process aligns with our SEA processes.

Training Model

Students who receive SEA computer equipment receive training on software that has been identified as essential to their learning. The Brand Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School board implements an "in-house" training model where training is completed internally. Students may receive training in any or all of the following programs: Microsoft Word, Microsoft Edge, Word Q3, Smart Ideas and Boardmaker. System Special Education Consultants are responsible for providing training at the schools they are assigned to. All Boardmaker training is completed with the student's educational assistant and provided by the IT special education consultant.

To facilitate understanding and to ensure that support is provided to all those involved in the learning process, training is comprised of three phases: two student sessions and one classroom teacher support session. The first student session is an initial/introduction phase, followed by a one-to-one training session. The trainer will decide if the student requires subsequent training sessions for additional support. Once the student training is complete, the trainer will provide a support session to the classroom teacher.

The initial phase is delivered asynchronously and consists of a series of modules posted in the *Computer Training* course within Brightspace. All students who require training are enrolled in the course and are given access to the necessary modules. Each of the modules include lesson and a demonstration of a skill, followed by a hands-on activity. Students are expected to independently complete all modules before phase two training date. There are two training paths set up in the Brightspace course. Two pathways were created to meet the differing needs of students. Path 1 provides a high level of modeling and scaffolding at a slower pace whereas Path 2 provides students with a less scaffolded introduction to a broader range of accessibility tools. The purpose of the initial/introduction phase is to familiarize the student with their new equipment and train them on the basic functions and operations of their device.

All the modules in this course provide students with a strong foundation of the basic tools and operations of the essential software. The *Computer Training* course is not only intended for initial training purposes but also as a learning resource that students can access at any time to review skills and increase their competency in the use of the equipment and software.

The second phase which is comprised of one-to-one training which is delivered synchronously, approximately one week after the completion of the initial modules. The one-to-one training is individualized to reflect the student's academic needs outlined in their Individual Education Plan. The individual training involves a brief review of the basics skills that were taught during the initial phase of training. Followed by customized lesson that incorporates the use of the essential assistive technology tools that will assist the student in achieving the learning expectations within the context of the Individual Education Plan. Subsequent individualized training sessions are scheduled on a as needed basis.

The third phase is a classroom teacher support session. The purpose of this session is to provide support to the classroom teacher, to ensure that they have the necessary skills to support the students use of the equipment. The content of this session will be determined and driven by the classroom teacher's needs. Classroom teachers need to be fully proficient in the following competencies:

- Making documents fully accessible, by converting to MS Word or through the MS Edge browser.
- Accessing resources through AERO.
- Document sharing through either Brightspace or OneDrive.

To ensure the successful use of the software and equipment, several supports have been created and implemented. These include the *Computer Training* course for both staff and students and "How to" booklets that students and educators can access for review and support. An email is sent from the instructor to the classroom teacher and school Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT), which includes all the resources necessary to support the students with SEA equipment in their class. Additionally, Community of Practice meetings have been used to educate Special Education Resource Teachers on some of the accessibility tools and software that students with SEA equipment are trained on.

The training model was developed with the goal of providing effective student training and training resources. The model supports capacity building within our district for staff and students, while ensuring the continued successful use of the technology. This training model has been overwhelmingly successful pedagogically and financially. This method is highly efficient and effective for both staff and students.

[Special Equipment Amount Claims for 2023-24](#)

There have been 321 SEA claims processed and implemented during the 2023-24 SEA year. Of the 321 claims, 61 of them were equipment based (non-tech) claims. These claims include sensory equipment, hearing support equipment, vision support equipment, personal care support equipment and physical assist support equipment. The remaining 260 claims were computer-based claims for students with assistive technology requirements.

Training Services

All students who have their own SEA computer equipment receive both hardware and software training with their device. A variety of software applications and tools are used to meet the different needs and uses of assistive technology.

Application	Software Application Tool
Word processing	Microsoft Word
Meetings and video conferencing	Microsoft Teams
Learning management system	Desire2Learn Brightspace
File storage	Microsoft OneDrive
Text-to-speech	Microsoft Word, Microsoft Edge
Text-to-speech on the Web	Microsoft Edge
Speech-to-text	Microsoft Word, Window's Dictation tool
Word prediction	Window's 10 Text suggestions
Concept mapping/graphic organizer	SMART Ideas 5
Visual symbols and schedules	Boardmaker 7
Converting documents to an accessible format	OCR scanning on photocopier, opening the PDF in Word, opening PDF in the Edge browse, OCR tool in Adobe Pro
Reading and writing on a PDF file	Microsoft Word, Microsoft Edge, Adobe Reader, Adobe Pro
Vision supports	Microsoft Word, Zoom-Text, Immersive Reader (in Edge and Word)

This year 245 students and 4 Educational Assistants were trained on various software application tools.

SEA Training completed in 2023-24:

School	Students	Educational Assistants
Blessed Sacrament	14	0
Christ the King	8	0
Holy Cross	16	0
Holy Family	6	0
Madonna Della Libera	9	0
Notre Dame Brantford	12	0

Notre Dame Caledonia	0	0
Our Lady of Fatima	1	0
Our Lady of Providence	6	1
Resurrection	4	0
Sacred Heart Langton	5	0
Sacred Heart Paris	12	0
St. Basil	4	0
St. Bernard of Clairvaux	7	0
St. Cecilia's	3	1
St. Frances Cabrini	3	0
St. Gabriel	8	0
St. Joseph's	18	0
St. Leo	9	0
St. Mary's Hagersville	12	2
St. Michael's Dunnville	5	0
St. Michael's Walsh	4	0
St. Patrick Brantford	6	0
St. Patrick's Caledonia	3	0
St. Peter	6	0
St. Pius X	6	0
St. Stephen's	3	0
St. Theresa	4	0
Assumption College School	11	0
Holy Trinity Catholic High School	8	0
St. John's College	5	0
BHNCDSB Remote Catholic Elementary School	0	0
TOTAL	245	4

Professional Development and Staff Training

Through our Community of Practice meetings, Professional Development in SEA and technology training was provided to Special Education Resource Teachers on the following topics:

- The SEA Process document accessible to all in the SERT channel in Teams.
- The 2023-24 SEA training model including the SERTs role and responsibilities with the training.
- Using their Adobe Pro licenses to make document accessible for students.
- Process for repairing hearing equipment.
- Dictating in the Edge web browser.
- Differentiating between the Microsoft web and desktop apps.
- Artificial Intelligence – practical applications for educators.
- Replacing Word Q3 word prediction- using Windows 10 word prediction and text prediction in MS Word.
- How to access and use Smart Ideas 5.
- The new location of Boardmaker install files – Company Portal.
- Use of Board recommended assistive technology tools for EQAO.

Applied Behaviour Analysis

During the 2023-24 school year, there were three full-time Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Program Leads providing support to principals, teachers, support staff and families for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other special education needs. In April 2024 the ABA team expanded to four full-time ABA Program Leads.

Within the 2023-24 school year, the ABA Program Leads carried a combined caseload of 235 students with ASD, as well as 30 non-identified students.

The ABA team collaborated with school and system staff on a variety of topics including:

- Behaviour reduction.
- Self-regulation.
- Student Safety Plans.
- Communication.
- Social interaction.
- Functional skills.
- Strategies to promote independence and participation in school activities.
- Structured learning systems.
- Data collection systems.
- Organizational skills.
- Creation and use of visual supports.
- Ontario Autism Program (OAP) Services.

In addition, the ABA team collaborated with community providers and families involved in the OAP programs and services:

- Entry-to-School Program.
- Connections for Students Program.
- Urgent Response Services.
- Core Clinical Services.
- Family Foundational Services.
- Determination of Needs meetings.

ABA Program Leads provided a variety of other services. Some of which include:

- Observations to inform individualized recommendations on the topics listed above.
- Documentation of observations and recommendations.

- Staff training and support in the use of ABA-based strategies (including explanation and modelling of recommended strategies, providing feedback and coaching to staff on an on-going basis).
- Transition planning.
- Collaboration with school staff and community partners regarding additional services (i.e. Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Services, Behaviour and Mental Health Services, Family Service Coordination).
- Assisting with goal setting and tracking for Individual Education Plans and assisting with the development of safety plans for students.
- Support creating and using data collection systems.
- Development and planning for implementation of the Spectrum Abilities Program.

Blind and Low Vision

During the 2023-24 school year, individualized orientation and mobility programming was implemented for 40 students in 21 different schools. The primary role of the orientation and mobility instructor includes teaching students who are blind or partially sighted the necessary skills to travel safely, efficiently, gracefully, and independently, with or without the use of a mobility device, in any environment. To achieve this goal, instruction is provided in the following areas:

- Concept development.
- Motor development.
- Sensory development.
- Visual skills.
- Social skills.
- Techniques of orientation and mobility.
- Use of devices.

Further involvement of the orientation and mobility instructor during the 2023-24 school year includes:

- Observations, consultation with school staff, and goal setting for Individualized Education Plans.
- Direct one-on-one orientation and mobility training to students, educational assistants, early childhood educators, teachers, and administrators.
- Collaboration with school mental health professionals (Social Workers, Child Youth Workers).
- Providing additional resources for teachers, support staff, and parents including documents from CNIB, daily physical activity adaptations, individualized orientation and mobility family booklets, and an environmental accessibility checklist.
- Collaboration with school administrators and the Facilities Department to identify and remove barriers in schools. Implement physical changes in schools, such as marking stairs and addressing potential travel hazards, guided by the principles of universal accessible design.
- Liaison between school and community agencies such as Vision Loss Rehabilitation Ontario (VLRO).
- Supporting students transitioning into kindergarten and high school (attending System IPRC meetings and providing transition visits to students).
- Presentations introducing students to the sport of goalball.

The role of the orientation and mobility instructor also facilitates collaboration between service providers and schools. As a result, four new referrals to the W. Ross Macdonald School were submitted to complete a functional vision assessment. The objective of the assessment is to build teacher capacity when instructing students who are blind or partially sighted.

Elementary and Secondary Special Education Programs

System Special Education Consultants support students, staff, and families in elementary and secondary special education programs, aligning with the values and goals in the 2023-2027 BHNCD SB Strategic Plan, and focusing on student belonging, teaching & learning, and wellness. Students come to our special education programs with diverse strengths, needs, and learning styles. The System Special Education Consultants assist school staff in the development and implementation of individualized programs to ensure that all students reach their full potential and acquire the skills and knowledge needed for their secondary and post-secondary pathways.



Elementary Transition Classes

At the elementary level, Transition Classes exist at Notre Dame School, Brantford and St. Joseph’s School, Simcoe. To be eligible for this special education program, students must be in grades 6 to 8 and be identified through the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) in the category of Intellectual.

The following chart summarizes the total enrolment in each of the Elementary Transition Classes for the 2023-2024 school year.

Elementary Transition Class	Grade Level	Number of Students	Total Enrolment
Notre Dame	6	5	12
	7	4	
	8	3	
St. Joseph’s	6	5	10
	7	4	
	8	1	

Grade 8 Transition Class students had the opportunity to spend part of the school day in their respective secondary special education classrooms where they met new friends, participated in courses, and explored their high schools.

Secondary Special Education Classes

At the secondary level, classes exist at Assumption College School, Holy Trinity Catholic High School, and St. John’s College. Many of these learners have complex needs and are identified through the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) in one or more of the following categories: Intellectual, Physical, and Communication: Autism. To meet their educational needs, students access alternative courses, or a combination of alternative programming and modified expectations from the Ontario Curriculum. Some students earn credits toward the Ontario Secondary School Certificate or the Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

We are excited to announce the expansion of special education programs at St. John’s College to include separate Personal Active Learning (PAL) and Community Living Programs for the 2024-2025 school year.



The following chart summarizes the total enrolment in each of the secondary special education programs for the 2023-2024 school year.

	St. John’s College	Holy Trinity	Assumption College
Personal Active Learning (PAL)	7 (combined program for 2023-2024)	6	8
Community Living		11	13
Job Skills	25	18	39

Alternative Courses (non-credit) are offered in all our special education programs. The *Secondary K Course Alternative Frameworks* continue to be used by our special class teachers to ensure that learning is meaningful, developmentally appropriate, and prepares students for their post-secondary pathways. Each course framework consists of pedagogical ideas, student learning competencies, assessment checklists, and supplementary resources.

Members of the System Special Education team build capacity by offering professional development and training to Special Education Classroom Teachers, Educational Assistants, Elective Teachers, and Special Education Department Heads. During the 2023-2024 school year, support was offered on the following topics: alternative and modified curriculum, IEP writing, navigating PowerSchool SpecEd software, assessment tools, preparing for Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) meetings, and evaluating learning expectations for report writing on the Alternative Report Card or Provincial Report Card. Secondary Educational Assistants were also provided a professional development opportunity, visiting the *Community Integration through Co-operative Education* (CICE) program at Conestoga College and *Crossing All Bridges*, a community day program for young adults with developmental disabilities.

Secondary special education programs provide students the opportunity to learn and practise essential employability and life skills. This year, students participated in a number of community and in-school work experiences. Some community work experiences included Canadian Tire, Sobeys, Farm Boy, daycare centres, pet stores, and garden stores. In-school experiences included practise with employability kits, working in the school cafeteria, preparing and serving the Breakfast Program, and assisting custodial staff. Skills learned from these experiences are essential for success in many post-secondary pathways (e.g., employment, continuing education, and for independent/assisted living).



During the 2023-2024 school year, emphasis was placed on helping families make informed decisions about secondary special education programs and transitions to post-secondary opportunities by:

- Meeting with families and arranging in-person tours.
- Providing informational documents to help families differentiate between the special education programs offered (PAL, Community Living, and Job Skills), and their graduation outcomes.
- Hosting an information night for families of grade 8 students considering the Job Skills program, to highlight key aspects of the program, including options for non-credit and credit bearing courses, preparation for entering the world of work (e.g., resume writing, interview skills) and opportunities for work experience.
- Connecting families with community agencies to support the transition to various post-secondary pathways.

Speech and Language

Speech & Language Services has provided a variety of supports to students and staff in the Board during the 2023-24 school year. The school year was filled with a myriad of exciting initiatives and the creation of new guidelines and procedures by Speech & Language Services.

Together with Kindergarten educators, *Story Champs®* was delivered in 18 classrooms across the board. This job-embedded professional development project continued from a pilot project last year. This collaborative partnership focused on capacity building and critical thinking through the use of narratives to support oral language development as a foundation to literacy success. Further details are provided in Professional Developmental portion of the report.

Educators were invited to collaborate with the S-LPs to bring the Board's Essential Practices to life. To support the goal of "knowing the learner", the educators were provided with a screening tool that measured some critical dimensions of oral language and the foundations of literacy. The S-LPs offered training on how to administer the screener, and educators were provided with a release day should they wish to complete it. Following the screening, teachers were offered additional release time to support interpretation of the screen results. They worked collaboratively with the S-LP to identify individual and whole-class strengths and needs and discussed how to build the foundation for learning in the classroom.



To enhance the learning experience, the Teacher and the Early Childhood Educator (if applicable) were provided professional development through a gradual release model. The Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs) were invited to join this year to support differentiated instruction. This comprehensive project implemented a multi-tiered approach starting with whole-class lessons to benefit the entire group. This was followed by targeted intervention delivered by the supporting S-LP for select students identified as at-risk for oral language delays by the class team. The classrooms received two six-week cycles of support, with the first cycle emphasizing the inclusion of various story grammar components (e.g., character, setting, feeling, action), while the second cycle focused on enhancing students' ability to utilize more complex sentence structures. The project incorporated multi-sensory teaching and differentiated instruction to effectively nurture skill development among the educators and students.

Speech & Language Services developed a structured pathway for comprehensive assessments to ensure a seamless flow of students through the tiers of intervention. Initially, school-level meetings are encouraged to review concerns and strategies already in place. If appropriate, students may be referred for a consultation with the S-LP, where recommendations can be provided. Educators are then encouraged to review and implement strategies and supports to evaluate their effectiveness. A detailed document was created to help educators navigate these discussions, providing a bank of possible strategies and interventions. Once foundational classroom and school level supports were in place, the S-LP conducted a comprehensive assessment, if deemed necessary.

To support the rapidly increasing number of complex communicators within the school Board, Speech & Language services grew their augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device loaner pool. The pool of devices could be accessed and used under S-LP direction in order to provide a communication system to help these students access the curriculum. This process was formalized by Speech & Language Services to ensure equitable supports for the Board's most complex communicators. During this process, multiple mid-tech and high-tech devices were acquired to support students' communication needs. While students have access to these communication devices, they participate in dynamic assessment and consultative support through the assigned school board S-LP. This occurs while they wait for a more comprehensive assessment through community partners.

As Speech & Language Services continue to evolve and adapt, the processes of our community partners have evolved as well. Within the current school year, Preschool Speech and Language (PSL) Services adjusted their support model and began phasing out services to children upon school entry. To ensure that our youngest learners continue to receive the necessary speech and language supports, our School Board S-LPs began to include Kindergarten Year 1 students in their caseloads. As a result of this shift, additional services have been allocated to support communication development. Please see Speech and Language Screening under Continuity of Support for Summer Learning and Transition.

The following student-directed services were provided this school year:

- **Comprehensive assessments** (i.e., full language evaluation with/without speech/literacy) were conducted for **9 students**, with follow-up consultation services provided.
- **Targeted assessments** (i.e., supporting one area of communication such as speech sound production, voice, fluency, narrative language, or phonological awareness) were conducted for **224 students**.
- **Consultation services** were offered to **121 students** with *complex communication needs*, including non/minimally speaking students. This involved individualized support, implementation of communication systems, and collaboration with educators and other professionals.
- **Consultation services** were provided to **90 students** with reduced understanding and/or expression of language, early literacy difficulties, and/or speech challenges. This included educating the school team on the students' communication profile, developing home and school programming, IEP development (e.g., goals and accommodations), and collaboration with all team members.
- **Targeted intervention** (i.e., through narrative language pilot program, *Story Champs*®) was provided for **63 students** who were identified by their classroom educators as at-risk of developing oral language difficulties.
- Transitioned service for **129 students** from preschool to school board Speech & Language Services
- Collaborated with schools, families and/or community partners to support the transition for **50 students** with complex communication needs entering the school system.
- Referred **113 students** to School Based Rehabilitation Services for speech support and **11 students** to the Technology Access Clinic for augmentative and alternative communication support.



Speech & Language Services actively sought out and engaged in valuable professional development opportunities throughout the academic year, including capacity building through the self-paced *Meaningful Speech™ Course*. This course provided the opportunity to learn how to identify, assess and work with gestalt language processors (GLPs) of all ages regardless of diagnosis. Additionally, Speech & Language Services participated in the *Meaningful Speech™: AAC for Gestalt Language Processors* course, which further taught how to identify, evaluate, and support GLPs who currently communicate or would benefit from using AAC. Both courses highlighted research-based strategies to help support these complex communicators. Speech & Language Services also actively engaged in *Shape Coding™ System, Part 1* training, which is a visual way to teach spoken and written grammar. This helped S-LPs enhance their repertoire of tools to support students with word and sentence level needs.

Ongoing collaboration was also fostered with diverse S-LPs across Ontario, facilitated by active involvement in the Association of Chief Speech-Language, as well as the S-LPs for Complex Communication Needs/Augmentative and Alternative Communication (CCN/AAC) in Ontario School Boards. Speech & Language Services were also invited to share about the board-wide *Story Champs*® project within the school board as well as multiple other school boards in the province.

Gifted Education
Gifted Programming

Gifted Programming should promote the following skills: higher-level critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, communication, leadership, and creativity. During the 2023-24 academic year, Gifted Supplementary Modules were offered in terms 1 and 2 through Special Education Services to provide enrichment opportunities and challenges to extend learning and leadership skills to students identified in the area of Intellectual: Giftedness. Students from grades 4 to 8 were brought together in person to experience extended learning on a variety of topics. Thirty-one students participated in the 2023-24 Supplementary Gifted Modules. There were 16 schools represented across the board. The students were divided into two groups, grades 4-6 and grades 7-8.

BRANT HALDIMAND NORFOLK
CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Composition of the Program



Participation from Brant	Participation from Haldimand	Participation from Norfolk
10 Schools 71%	2 Schools 10%	4 Schools 19%
Grade 4s: 6	Grade 4s: 0	Grade 4s: 3
Grade 5s: 4	Grade 5s: 1	Grade 5s: 0
Grade 6s: 4	Grade 6s: 1	Grade 6s: 0
Grade 7s: 5	Grade 7s: 1	Grade 7s: 2
Grade 8s: 3	Grade 8s: 0	Grade 8s: 1

Supplementary Gifted Dates 2023-2024 TERM 1

Grade 4 – 6 Modules		Location of Module	
Stratford Film Festival, A Wrinkle in Time	Tuesday, October 17, 2023	9:00 am to 5:00 pm	Avon Theatre, Stratford*
Junk Drawer Races: Cardboard Car Race, Paper Glider	Monday, October 23, Wednesday, November 1 and Tuesday, November 14, 2023	9:00 am to 3:00 pm	St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre (SMCLC)*
Film Camp in a Box	Tuesday, October 24, 2023 (virtual pre-meeting) 10:00 am Tuesday, November 7, 2023	10:00 am Virtual Arrive at SMCLC 9:00am	Virtual – from home school St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre*
McMaster Venture Academy: Making Waves	Monday, December 4, 2023	9:00 am to 3:00 pm	St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre*
Math Activity Day	Tuesday, January 16, 2024	9:00 am to 3:00 pm	St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre*
* All drop offs and pick-ups will be at St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre, 455 Colborne Street East, Brantford, Ontario *			
Grade 7-8 Modules		Location of Module	
Stratford Film Festival, A Wrinkle in Time	Tuesday, October 17, 2023	9:00 am to 5:00 pm	Avon Theatre, Stratford*
Junk Drawer Races: Hydraulic Cranes	Tuesday, October 24, Wednesday, November 15, and Tuesday, November 21, 2023	9:00 am to 3:00 pm	St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre*
Film Camp in a Box	Tuesday, October 24, 2023 (virtual pre-meeting) 10:00 am Tuesday, November 7, 2023	10:00 am Virtual Arrive at SMCLC 9:00am	Virtual – from St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre*
University of Waterloo CEMC Real World Math Workshop	Wednesday, November 15, 2023	9:00 am to 3:00 pm	St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre*
McMaster Venture Academy: Lacrosse the Sky!	Tuesday, December 5, 2023	9:00 am to 3:00 pm	St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre*
Math Activity Day	Tuesday, January 23, 2024	9:00 am to 3:00 pm	St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre*
* All drop offs and pick-ups will be at St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre, 455 Colborne Street East, Brantford, Ontario *			

Supplementary Gifted Dates 2023-2024 TERM 2

Grade 4 – 6 Modules		Location of Module	
Mad Science	Tuesday, February 27, 2024	9:00 am to 5:00 pm	St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre*
Scientists in School (Virtual)	Tuesday, March 5, 2024	9:00 am to 3:00 pm	St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre*
Film Camp in a Box	Thursday, March 21, 2024 (virtual pre-meeting) 9:30 am	9:30 am – 10:00 am Virtual	Virtual – from home school
Film Camp in a Box	Thursday, April 11, 2024	9:00am – 3:00 pm	St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre*
STEM	Friday, April 12, 2024	9:00 am to 3:00 pm	Our Lady of Providence School, 55 Kent Road, Brantford**
Math/STEM Activity Day	Tuesday, May 7, 2024	9:00 am to 3:00 pm	St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre*
Brock University	Wednesday, May 22, 2024	7:30 am – 4:00 pm	St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre*
* All drop offs and pick-ups will be at St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre, 455 Colborne Street East, Brantford, Ontario * **Friday April 12, students will be dropped off and picked up at Our Lady of Providence School, 55 Kent Road, Brantford **			
Grade 7-8 Modules		Location of Module	
Scientists in School	Tuesday, March 19, 2024	9:00 am to 3:00 pm	St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre*
Film Camp in a Box	Thursday, March 21, 2024 (virtual pre-meeting) 9:30 am	9:30 am – 10:00 am Virtual	Virtual – from home school
Film Camp in a Box	Thursday, April 11, 2024	9:00am – 3:00 pm	St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre*
STEM	Friday, April 12, 2024	9:00 am to 3:00 pm	Our Lady of Providence School, 55 Kent Road, Brantford**
Math Activity Day	Thursday, May 2, 2024	9:00 am to 3:00 pm	St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre*
Skilled Trades: Tigercat Ind. Organized KAOS	Monday, May 13, 2024	9:00 am – 11:30 am 12:00 pm – 3:00 pm	St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre***
Brock University	Wednesday, May 22, 2024	7:30 am – 4:00 pm	St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre*
* All drop offs and pick-ups will be at St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre, 455 Colborne Street East, Brantford, Ontario * **Friday April 12, students will be dropped off and picked up at Our Lady of Providence School, 55 Kent Road, Brantford ** ***Monday, May 13, students will start at SMCLC and finish the day and be picked up at Organized Kaos, 399 West St, Brantford, ON N3L 3E3 ***			

In total 22 modules were hosted. The 4-6 group attended 13 modules and the 7-8 group attended 14 modules. The entire group attended 5 modules together.

The year started with a full group outing to The Stratford Festival. Students attended and participated in a workshop with the actors before watching a performance of *A Wrinkle in Time*.

Each group spent 2 full days working on projects for Junk Drawer Races, a competition held by Skills Ontario. Students worked on creating Cardboard Car racers (4/5s), Paper Gliders (6) and Hydraulic Cranes (7/8s). All students spent a day in November and again in April working with Film Camp in a Box to create short films and a news broadcast. The day included: storytelling, story structure, script format and script writing, pitching, filmmaking equipment and crew positions, scene coverage, set etiquette, multi-camera film shooting, editing, and industry insight.

In early December, the grade 4-6 group participated in the McMaster Venture Academy Virtual workshop and created a basic proximity circuit to alert for a tsunami and explored other aspects of circuits and technology. Their next module in January was a day of Math activities that focused on problem solving and working together to explore different solutions.

The grade 7-8 group engaged in Real World Math activities with a University of Waterloo professor and explored Math problems and a variety of solutions during a Math Day at SMCLC.

The grade 4-6 group spent two days exploring Science with Mad Science virtual modules and Scientists in the Classroom. They were lab detectives when they explored owl pellets to determine what small animals they eat and explored chemical reactions. The grade 7/8 group explored engineering and created 3 different structures. They built up to new heights with a tower challenge; built out to explore cantilevers; and built across while learning about the wonders of suspension bridges.

Both groups spent a day with the BHNCDSB STEM Team. They spent the day designing an item using a computer program that they would later print on the 3D printer.

The entire group headed to Brock University in May. The students engaged in four activities. They learned in the Physics activity how to create a simple thermos and used mirrors to create a laser reflection box. During the Electrifying Science activity, they explored plasma energy and worked in groups to create circuits. Working on plasticine brains, students used ultra-violet blue light to find beads hidden in the brain and carefully extract them. The final, and most exciting activity was bottle rocket launchers.

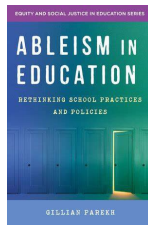
The final module for the grade 7/8 group was a morning field trip to Tigercat Industries in Paris. Students were introduced to an assembly facility 100% Canadian owned. They were able to see how a large piece of forestry equipment was assembled and all had the opportunity to operate one of these machines under the guidance of a trained instructor. They learned about the many different job opportunities that are available in this type of a facility. The afternoon was spent building a toolbox with Organized Kaos and learning about different tools and skilled trades.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Community of Practice Meetings

The 2023-24 academic school year offered Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs) and Secondary Special Education Department Heads professional development through six virtual and three in-person Community of Practice (CoP) meetings to enhance teacher practice and further support student achievement.



The meetings provided professional development and support to SERTs in key areas such as:

- PowerSchool and PowerSchool SpecEd – updates, curriculum changes, onSIS reporting, review of Ministry and Board standards, accessing current and new documents in PowerSchool SpecEd.
- Individual Education Plan (IEP) – development, writing, reporting, and Jordan's Principle component.
- Ableism in Education – sharing the research.
- Identification Placement Review Committee (IPRC) – process and required paperwork; 8 to 9 transitions, mainstream vs. special class considerations.
- EQAO – accommodations, exemptions and the IEP.
- Lexia – continued support and program updates for Core5 Reading and PowerUp Literacy; sharing of student success stories, usage tracking, referral process and criteria for success.
- Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Services – shared relevant/new information regarding the Ontario Autism Program (OAP) and Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA), ASSDP – social skills and functional play, Student Safety Plans and Data Collection methods, escalation plans.
- Special Equipment Amount (SEA) – updates, student training process, SEA on the IEP.
- Stability and Transportation Funding – information and updates.
- Speech and Language Services – continued implementation of Story Champs, referrals, complex communicators, Board services, TAC, Private Services, SBRS, and changes to PSL program, Fly Leaf resources (decodable books).
- Learning Disabilities – dyslexia diagnosis and implications for learning.
- Math Modifications and IEP Audit.
- Key Math – training, administration, IEPs, progress monitoring, guidelines.
- Orientation and Mobility – updates, O&M instructor role and referral process, W. Ross MacDonald referral process, demonstration of visual impairments/eye conditions, accessibility considerations, presentation on Cortical Vision Impairment, Deafblind awareness kits.
- Gifted Program – resources to support and program for gifted learners, information and updates about virtual gifted modules.
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services – equipment distribution, SEA claim updates, roles, repairs and troubleshooting guide.
- Secondary Special Programs – process, programs, student candidate criteria, classroom tours and program inquiries.
- Elementary Transition Classroom closure and FSL exemptions for 2024-2025.
- Have A Go – consent process, eligibility, and event details.
- Sacramental Retreats – resources and activities provided to students receiving Sacraments of Reconciliation, First Eucharist, or Confirmation.
- Student Support and Mental Health Services – referral process, CYW and Social Worker location assignments, Pathways to Care, Student Support Plan.
- Medical Care Plans, Plans of Care, and Essential Highlight Forms.
- Personal Protective Equipment – resources, tracking, memorandum, and reminders.
- Entry to School Case Conferences – school vs. system-level, process, protocol, reminders, and purpose.

- Community partner updates (Lansdowne and Haldimand Norfolk Reach).
- Ontario Student Records.
- Math work stations – resources and sample activities.
- Case Conferences – process, documentation, responsibilities, and minute taking.
- Modified Days – memorandum, process, and considerations.
- EA Lending Library – updates, new technology, resources.
- French Exemptions – policy and forms for initial requests and renewals.
- Nelson Psychological Assessment Reports – acquiring assessments, report shares and next steps.
- Kneer Psychological Assessment Team – considerations for cognitive testing, responsibilities, referral, process, report shares, next steps.
- Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Achievement – administration tips and reminders.
- Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test (CCAT) – digital for grade 4 in 2024.
- Adaptive Behaviour Assessment System (ABAS) – usage, criteria, process, and domains measured.
- School Based Rehabilitation Services – referral process for occupational therapy, physiotherapy, and speech-language services.
- Student Achievement Team – math action plan and literacy action plan, screeners, resources, priority schools and foci, roles of coaches and facilitators, understanding and implementing Fly Leaf.
- Early Years Presentation – partnering with before and after school providers.
- Amethyst Demonstration School – programs, facility, process, and eligibility.
- Dr. Todd Cunningham – practical application for educators on Artificial Intelligence.
- Self-regulation resources, literacy, and numeracy resources provided.
- Lansdowne Children’s Centre Occupational Therapy Support Model and processes.
- Word Prediction and Smart Ideas demonstration.
- Adobe Pro Licenses.
- Academic Planner updates.
- NVCI – Incident Reporting.
- Principal/Vice-Principal Special Education Channel and access to resources.
- Empower Reading Program from Sick Kids – training, information, updates, success stories, assessment tracking, consents.
- Specialized Transportation Database – reminders to update current student data as needed in web-based database; create and/or update data for upcoming school year, importance of including pertinent plans for bus drivers.
- Spectrum Abilities Program – criteria, eligibility and goals.
- Learning Strategies Class – criteria, eligibility, and goals.
- After School Skills Development Program – continued focus on Ministry initiative for students with Autism within the context of a summer program plan; resources/totes provided to target social skills and functional play.
- Entry-to-School Case Conferences – process and scheduling of system- and school-level case conferences.
- EA Allocation Process – process, meetings, student support rubrics, and criteria for advocacy.
- Best practices for SERT and EA scheduling.
- Best Practices in Supporting Students– sharing opportunities; “What is working in your practice to support students?”; presentations on Empower, Complex Communicators, Key Math, and Reward Systems.

District priorities were shared with SERTs and included:

- **Board Spiritual Theme – We Are Called to Love** – supporting the faith formation of students and staff by emphasizing that transformation through service is a call to put our faith into action. The work of social justice, of breaking down barriers and supporting overcoming obstacles of those in need, is ongoing. We are called to be part of the solution by walking alongside others on the journey by doing what we can.
- **Katie Barron Presentation on Ableism Research** – Critical Reflections on Special Education Systems, understanding disability, enabling vs. disabling systems, streaming, implications of special education programming and modifications from an early age, ableism, flaws in assessment tools and practices, and the disproportionality of marginalized groups.
- **The Empower Reading: Decoding and Spelling Program** was implemented in 13 schools by 11 instructors during the 2023-2024 school year. This Tier 3 program is designed to address the academic challenges faced by children who have, or are at risk of having a reading disability. It is a multi-component intervention program designed by SickKids that teaches struggling readers effective strategies for decoding, spelling words, and understanding text, equipping them to build confidence in their reading skills, expand their levels of independence, and empower them to become active readers.
- **Lexia:** Built on the science of reading, Lexia® Core5® Reading is a research-proven program that accelerates the development of literacy skills for students of all abilities, helping them make the critical shift from learning to read to reading to learn. 250 licenses continue to be implemented and monitored across the district for students in grades 2 to 6 with demonstrated needs in the area of reading by ensuring they are meeting usage targets daily and acquiring growth through the implementation of supplemental lessons and interventions.
- **Partnership with Bartimaeus Incorporated:** Partnering with outside behaviour specialists has enabled us to support students in reaching their full potential by addressing dysregulation and complex behaviours that interfere with learning and achievement. These behaviour specialists have supported school teams in situations that require interventions with students experiencing moderate to extreme behavioural, emotional, psychological and developmental challenges both in the school and in the community. With their support, we have been able to continue to create and maintain safe and positive school environments.
- **Story Champs:** *Story Champs®* is an evidence-based program that uses a systematic and explicit approach to promote the development of oral language skills, such as vocabulary, sentence structure and oral narratives. Strong oral language skills are an essential component to later reading and writing success. Story Champs is currently in Year 1 of a 3-Year phase roll out across the district. For a total of twelve weeks, Board Speech-Language Pathologists work alongside Kindergarten educators through a gradual release model (i.e., I Do – We Do – You Do) to provide whole classroom support as well as targeted small group intervention to target oral language through storytelling.
- **KeyMath-3:** KeyMath is a diagnostic assessment tool that assesses a full spectrum of essential math concepts and skills, including a comprehensive math instruction and intervention program for students in grade 3 to 12. KeyMath-3 resources have been provided to every school in our board and Special Education Resource Teachers have received formal training on how to administer the assessment, interpret results, plan and deliver intervention lessons to fill in gaps and monitor progress. Students eligible to receive this diagnostic assessment must have significant difficulty acquiring age-appropriate numeracy skills, despite receiving differentiated instruction and universal design for learning in the classroom as well as tiered supports. The KeyMath-3 assessment has also been administered to determine the appropriateness and precision of the modified programming for students on an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and to adjust the expectations on the IEP as required.

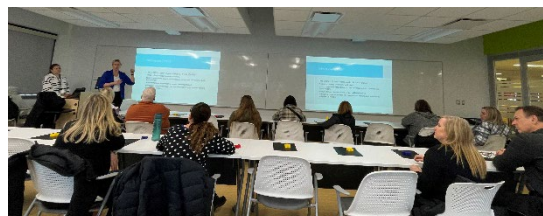
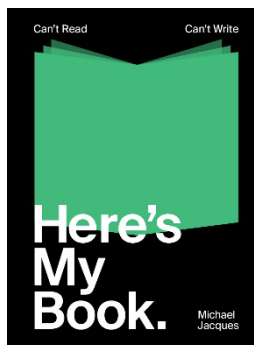
- **Math Modification Process:** Our department conducted an internal ‘math modifications audit’ of all Individual Education Plans with modifications in mathematics to support our learning around special education decision making and the implications of math modifications for learners. The goal was to ensure that our practices are standardized, aligned, consistent, justified, based on solid data collection and assessment, and implemented only after considerable time, interventions, and evidence-based practices have been in place so that students have the opportunity to reach their academic potential. The audit resulted in resource teachers using KeyMath-3 to improve gap closing and precision in IEP expectation writing. Furthermore, it operationalized the need to have all future math modifications approved by the Superintendent of Education after a thorough analysis of tiered supports and interventions over time.
- **Transition Classroom Closures:** A thorough analysis of the trajectory of elementary students (Grades 6 to 8) enrolled in transition classes called for the need to collapse such programs due to restricted access and opportunities in acquiring an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.
- **Self-Contained Classes: Primary Learning Strategies Class (Pilot):** A Primary Learning Strategies Class will open to support students with an identification of Behaviour by allowing them to participate in a one-year program focused on developing skills in self-regulation, social skills, communication skills, independence skills, and academic skills. After one year, students will transition back to their homeschool where the student will be able to apply and generalize their new learning skills (in the areas of coping, stress management, resiliency, self-advocacy, independence, executive functioning, and self-regulation) to their usual mainstream classroom environment.
- **Self-Contained Classes: Spectrum Abilities Program:** A Junior Spectrum Abilities Class will begin in the fall in order to support students with an identification of Communication: Autism by allowing them to learn in a highly specialized learning environment. These students will have opportunities to develop their academic skills, social skills, communication skills, self-regulation skills, independence skills, and other goals outlined in their Individual Education Plan through explicit instruction around emotion and behaviour regulation and a modified learning environment routed in ABA principles. The classroom is designed to provide a higher level of structured monitoring, individual attention, and planning around their particular learning style and modifications to the environment including specialized resources and supports.

New SERT Training Program

This professional development opportunity focuses on providing new Special Education Resource Teachers with in-depth training and knowledge around the role and responsibilities of a school-level Special Education Resource Teacher. Professional development was provided to four SERTs who were new to the role in the 2023-24 school year. Training included four full-day in-person sessions, one of which included training in the administration of the Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Achievement. Teacher practice was enhanced through formal training, opportunities for small-group activities and discussions, and 1:1 mentorship that focused on writing an Individual Education Plan. The following topics were covered through in-person discussion and training, and/or were addressed through resources, guidelines and materials that were included in a SERT reference binder:

- Individual Education Plan and Transition Plan development process.
- IPRC process (Initial and Review; system and school level).
- Special Equipment Amount (SEA) claims.
- Developing SERT and EA schedules.
- PowerSchool and PowerSchool SpecEd.
- Structured Learning.
- Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Achievement training.
- Scoring the “Writing Samples” subtest of the WJ-IV Tests of Achievement.
- HELP (Hawaii Early Learning Profile) alternative curriculum and assessment tool.

- Updating student information forms (Safety/Seizure/Medical Plans, Essential Highlights forms).
- Locating resources in the SERT channel in Teams.
- Best practices for the Ontario Student Record (OSR).
- Updating assessment data on IEPs.
- Accurate recording of student data in the Ontario Student Information System.



Educational Assistants Professional Development

Based on the direction provided by the Ministry of Education and based on needs across the system, some newly designed workshops were created to further support the work of Educational Assistants. Additionally, Educational Assistants also participated in board-wide professional development day training which focused on the following key topics.

System Faith Day

This site-based day was an opportunity for staffs to come together to engage in social justice, community outreach, and faith in action activities for our respective communities. All staff had an opportunity to learn from Father Toby Collins about faith in action and his ministry in the city of Waterloo with Tiny Home Takeout. The day was designed to lay the foundation of our new spiritual theme for the year: *Called to Love*.

Student Achievement Planning, Curriculum, Assessment, and Evaluation

Educational Assistants had an opportunity to join their respective grade band to determine needs, set goals, and identify instructional strategies and ways of monitoring to support learners. Staff had an opportunity to revisit essential practices, school climate survey data, assessment data, and one another's feedback to provide input on urgent learning needs.

Keynote Speakers

Elementary Educational Assistants had an opportunity to hear public speaker, activist, and self-published author, Michael Jacques share his story and educational journey. EAs learned about his inspiring journey with Autism and an Intellectual Disability. Michael Jacques' messaging was centered around the importance of acceptance, belonging, diversity, and inclusion.

Elementary Educational Assistants also had an opportunity to learn from Nelson Mota of *Bartimaeus Rehabilitation Services Incorporated* about his organization and how his behaviour specialists support students experiencing behavioural, social, emotional, and psychiatric difficulties. He addressed stress behaviour and how we can be proactive in meeting the needs of our dysregulated students.

Secondary Educational Assistants engaged in a presentation with the Community Integration Through Cooperative Education (CICE) program at Conestoga College in Kitchener to learn more about how their daily

work and interactions foster skills and independence that allow students to be successful in post-secondary school.

Secondary Educational Assistants visited Crossing All Bridges to learn from Executive Director, Michelle Drake about the adult day program opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Equity Action Plan

Educational Assistants explored and reviewed BHNCDsB's Equity Action Plan to ensure inclusive, equitable, and welcoming spaces by using the Equity Continuum: Action for Critical Transformation in Schools and Classrooms to develop strategies and tools that will increase the chances that equity-focused work is embedded and monitored in each school. EAs had an opportunity to join their staffs in conducting an equity audit in their respective schools.

Suicide Prevention Training

Educational Assistants learned about the Board's protocol for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. They had an opportunity to develop an understanding of suicide prevention at school and the role all school staff play in keeping students safe.

Staff Mental Health Literacy – Trauma Informed Leadership

Educational Assistants learned about the critical elements of leading a trauma-sensitive approach when dealing with students through a series of 6 modules.

Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness

Educational Assistants participated in a session to support mental health and well-being with guest speaker, Angela Rolleman to study optimal human functioning and the conditions that lead to it. Participants learned how to increase happiness and fulfillment in their personal lives by studying factors that determine one's level of happiness, the five pillars of psychological well-being and happiness, the positivity ratio, happiness in the workplace, and scientifically proven strategies and habits that lead to increased happiness, resilience, fulfillment, and well-being.

Self-Directed Tasks

Educational Assistants have engaged in opportunities to create materials, supports and plans for the students they serve with respect to visual schedules, structured learning tasks and work tasks, Boardmaker activities, PECS, essential highlight forms, self-regulation resources, executive functioning supports, student data collection and tracking, and social story development.

Nonviolent Crisis Intervention

The Nonviolent Crisis Intervention training program is considered the worldwide standard for crisis prevention and intervention training. The program provides educators with the proactive strategies and skills to safely and effectively respond and handle difficult situations. The core of the program is learning how to provide for the *care, welfare, safety, and security* of all those who are involved in a crisis situation. Preventive strategies, de-escalation skills and communication skills are taught along with learning the physical interventions, including disengagement, and holding skills, to be implemented as a last resort, when a person is engaging in unsafe behaviour.

Health & Safety

Occupational Health and Safety presentation reviewing a variety of Health and Safety Awareness topics mandated through the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

[Apply to Education Training](#)

Educational Assistants had an opportunity to learn more about Apply to Education and how it operates.

[Virtual Presentations](#)

Educational Assistants had an opportunity to join topics of interest which included:

IEPs 101: Exploring the Individual Education Plan as it relates to the role of Educational Assistant. Relevant sections of the IEP were highlighted as well as a discussion on how to interpret and integrate the IEP into their work with students.

SMoRRRES: Getting 'Some More' Out of Communication Partners: This professional development focused on how to empower EAs to build language in everyday interactions. Effective communication partner strategies to support students who use Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) Systems was shared.

'Unlocking Potential: Microsoft's Suite of Accessibility Tools for Student Independence': This presentation demonstrated the powerful accessibility tools offered through the Microsoft Suite to empower students with diverse learning needs so that they can become more independent. The following tools were highlighted: Immersive Reader, Dictation and Read Aloud.

Understanding Cortical Vision Impairment: EAs had an opportunity to learn about the world of cortical vision impairment (CVI) and how vision is processed in a student with CVI through the Educational Coordinator and Consultant for Vision Resource Services and Outreach Programs at W. Ross Macdonald School. EAs learned how students understand their visual world as well as how to create individualized and meaningful tasks to support their learning.

Supporting Students with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD): Participants received current information about FASD and the effects that alcohol has on all areas of development through the FASD Coordinators at Contact Brant. EAs received a repertoire of evidence-based strategies to use with students from K to 12 who have a confirmed or suspected diagnosis of FASD.

Elopement: Why do they wander? Why do they run? How do I stop them?: This workshop expanded the EAs knowledge around students who elope. They learned how to identify and use appropriate proactive strategies and function-based interventions to support the safety of their students.

Understanding the Difference Between Incident Reports: This interactive presentation led by the Board's Health and Safety Coordinator provided a brief overview of Safe Schools Incident Reporting. EAs learned about legislation, the difference between safe schools and violent incident reports, and how these submissions are addressed.

[Educational Assistants' Lending Library](#)

The Educational Assistants' Lending Library provides the opportunity for Educational Assistants (EAs) to borrow materials which may not be available at their school. There are currently more than 400 items available, with items ranging from professional reading to children's books, toys and games, to sensory and cause-and-effect materials. New resources are purchased based on needs arising from areas of system focus, and on suggestions from EAs. It is exciting to note that in the 2023-2024 school year we fully digitized the library 'catalogue', by use Insignia (the same system that school libraries use to track loans).

By implementing the new system, EAs will be able to view and request items online. Most materials are now reflected in the database

SPECIAL PROJECTS/EVENTS

Inclusionary Practices

Transition to School

Transition into School (Kindergarten)

We recognize how critical the transition into kindergarten is for many of our young students who have specific needs. The partnership between parents and agencies can assist with getting to 'know our learners' and further promote a seamless transition. This process was enhanced by the following initiatives:

Information Sharing by Community Agencies for Entry into School

'Entry into School' meetings were held with Haldimand Norfolk REACH personnel beginning in February 2024, where students with various needs were presented. The Student Achievement Lead for Special Education and System Special Education Consultants attended and dialogued about each student to gain a better understanding of their profiles and to initiate transition planning. Lansdowne Children's Centre, Brantford, presented students with various needs through written communication and phone conversations with System Special Education Consultants. With parental consent, both agencies provided valuable information regarding incoming Year One and Two Kindergarten students currently receiving agency support. The agency resource consultants provided student background, strengths and needs, agency involvement (i.e., speech, occupational therapy, physiotherapy), any diagnoses (if applicable), and a report containing a summary of helpful information and agency contacts.

'Parents as Partners' – Community Connections

The Parents as Partners committee is designed to support families with the transition into the Early Learning Kindergarten Program. The committee includes both Haldimand-Norfolk REACH and Lansdowne Children's Centre families and is made up of representatives from the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board, Grand Erie District School Board, Lansdowne Children's Centre, and Haldimand-Norfolk REACH.

The committee is in the process of finalizing a publication that will be made available to families with special needs children in the Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk areas in order to provide them with pertinent information as they transition their child to elementary school.

The publication will include the following topics: Preparing for Kindergarten, Communicating for Success, How Kindergarten Programs Support Students with Special Needs, and the Role of a Parent in supporting their child's education.

Parent Resources

To build capacity and develop parental trust, a 'Special Education Guide for Parents' was created and mailed to families prior to the system level case conference. The guide outlined what to expect when preparing for a case conference, tips for parents as their child transitions into school, roles and responsibilities, community contacts and ways to further promote speech-language and fine motor skills.

In addition to the parent guide, an 'All About Me' booklet was also mailed to parents prior to the case conference. This booklet gives parents the opportunity to share personal information (e.g., names of people in their family, pets), likes, dislikes, preferred method of communication, etc. Parents were asked to fill out this booklet and return it to the classroom teacher in September as part of the transition process.

System Level 'Entry into School' Case Conferences – The Multi-Disciplinary Team

Case Conferences, held in April, May and June of 2024, were attended by parents, Student Achievement Leader: Special Education, members of the System Special Education Team, home school team, agencies and daycare providers. At this meeting, the student was introduced, and information was gathered and shared

with the school. It was also an opportunity for parents to share information and to meet with the school team. This year we hosted all of the system level case conferences virtually. There were 48 meetings held for the Brant, Haldimand, and Norfolk schools.

Supporting Our Faith Journey

Supplementary Activities/ Resources

Special Education Services remain committed to nurturing the faith journey of all students. Our retreats are tailored to meet the unique learning needs of our exceptional learners.

The retreats are designed to provide differentiated instruction that enriches the understanding of the sacraments. Through accommodations and guided mentorship, we empower students to actively engage in their faith, fostering a connection with Christ.

The retreats offer an array of hands-on activities, games, songs, prayers, storytelling, baking, and fellowship. These activities allow students to immerse themselves in the rituals of the sacraments, through meaningful activities, visual aids, and direct instruction. Together we cultivate and deepen the students' faith experience. This year, three students attended the Reconciliation and First Communion retreats.

We extended the learning environment beyond the classroom with a visit to St. Mary's Catholic Church, conducted by a member of the church community, thereby bridging connections with our valued community helpers.



Elementary 'Have a Go'

'Have a Go' is a modified track and field meet for students with a physical, intellectual or communication disability. The focus of this meet is on participation, interaction, and friendship.

'Have a Go' Philosophy

The Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board believes that all students have far more commonalities than differences. It is the responsibility of every individual to fully contribute to a Christian environment which promotes understanding and appreciation for one's strengths and capabilities. It is through authentic interaction with one another those safe opportunities to measure personal achievement develop and connect all community members.

'Have a Go' Principles

To promote an understanding of one's capabilities through the spirit of equality and team unity, the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board organizes "Have a Go" – Promoting Participation, Interaction and Friendship to foster:

- A welcoming setting with physical experiences accessible for everyone.
- Continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness and enjoy personal athletic achievement.
- Development of new friendships.
- Participation, dedication, effort and spirit.
- Self-confidence, positive self-image and personal worth.

The Athletes

This event is for students in grades 4 to 8, who have an intellectual disability, physical disability, or are on the autism spectrum disorder. Each school is invited to send a team recommended by the principal and the special education resource teacher. Each athlete may have a buddy from his/her school attend Have a Go with them to support and encourage the athlete's involvement in the events.

The Events

Athletes participate in 11 adapted track and field events. The events are adapted from the regular track and field Board meet. A rest station was also included where freezies were provided.

2024 'Have a Go'

The Elementary Have a Go was held on Tuesday, June 4, 2024, at the Burford Arena. Twenty schools sent a team. Eighty-eight athletes, along with a buddy of their choice attended. The day began with the procession of athletes onto the field followed by the opening ceremonies which included the singing of the national anthem, a prayer, land acknowledgement and a warm-up activity. Athletes then rotated through 11 fun filled events where they had the opportunity to enjoy personal athletic achievement. The athletes received a ribbon for each successful event they participated in and a medal in recognition of their achievements. To commemorate the event, each athlete received a special T-shirt that they wore during the event to celebrate and recognize their participation and achievements throughout the day.



Secondary Tri-High Games and Try – High Spring Fling



Secondary students in the Personal Active Learning (PAL), Community Living, and Job Skills programs at St. John's College, Holy Trinity Catholic High School, and Assumption College School came together for a fun-filled day of team sporting events and friendship! The Leadership and Fitness/ Recreation students and teachers at St. John's College did an amazing job with creating the activities and hosting the 2024 Tri-High Games event. There were twelve different events; and while the teams created a sense of fun competition, high-fives and cheering could be seen and heard!

Tri-High Spring Fling



Melissa Lancaster and the Leadership and Fitness/ Recreation students at Assumption College School organized a Spring Fling dinner and dance for students in self-contained special education programs from all three high schools. The theme was the Roaring 20s and many students were outfitted in beautiful dresses and suits. Students enjoyed a sit-down meal, photo booth, dance, fancy drink station, and even a cruise night!

Interventions

LEXIA

Lexia Core5® Reading and *PowerUp® Literacy* are personalized web-based reading curriculums for students from Kindergarten through Grade 12. Students learn, practice, and consolidate fundamental literacy skills by

interacting with the online, adaptive program, receiving teacher-led Lexia Lessons, and by completing independent, paper-based activities using Lexia Skill Builders. Student data is captured through reports that help teachers make informed instructional decisions that help students achieve grade-level benchmarks.

Lexia Core5 is intended to be used by students from kindergarten to Grade 5. The online activities support and build on the classroom curriculum while developing reading skills in phonological awareness, phonics, structural analysis, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Online activities should be used for a daily maximum of 20 minutes.

Lexia PowerUp is intended to be used by students in Grade 6 and higher. The online activities support and build on the classroom curriculum, developing literacy skills in word study, grammar, and comprehension. Online activities should be used for a daily maximum of 30 minutes.

The system special education team recognizes the need for an intensive literacy intervention program that addresses learning difficulties associated with reading and decoding text.

Criteria

Newly updated criteria, developed by System Special Education Consultants and the Student Achievement Lead, Special Education, were used to determine which students would be assigned a Lexia license:

Students in grades 2-6, with demonstrated needs in the area of reading, and who met at least one of the following additional criteria:

- identified with a Learning Disability or Mild Intellectual Disability.
- on a non-identified IEP to address reading needs.
- not identified (no IEP), but with demonstrated needs in the area of reading.

Due to the intensive supports already being provided, students in an elementary Transition classroom or involved with Empower were not considered.

School teams were asked to consider a student's attendance record in their selection process. A student is required to work on Lexia approximately 20 minutes every day to fully benefit from all that the program has to offer - regular attendance is fundamental for this to happen.

Selection Process - 2023-2024

Step 1

Elementary school SERTs reviewed their current Lexia roster and additional candidates with their school team to determine which students would be considered for a license. Factors considered included student attendance and motivation, usage history and progress, student needs and other interventions, which program is most appropriate (Core5 or PowerUp), SERT and classroom schedules, and total number of licenses being requested (ensuring there is protected time to support students accessing the program and to deliver Lexia Lessons (intervention) as required).

Step 2

Elementary school SERTs shared student profiles with their System Special Education Consultant to confirm that a student met criteria and was a suitable candidate. Elementary student profiles included a current diagnostic reading assessment, intervention history, report card grades and comments, and Woodcock-Johnson IV Tests of Achievement assessment (if applicable).

Step 3

Available Lexia licenses were assigned by the Lexia District Administrator. SERTs were informed of the student candidates who were added to the Lexia license waitlist.

Step 4

All students were required to complete the auto-placement activity at the beginning of the school year. Monthly progress monitoring of student minutes and levels occurred. At the end of the year, **all** licenses will be reviewed, and students with consistent usage and gains of at least 3 levels will be considered for an additional year on the program if the school team wishes.

As of April 30, 2024...

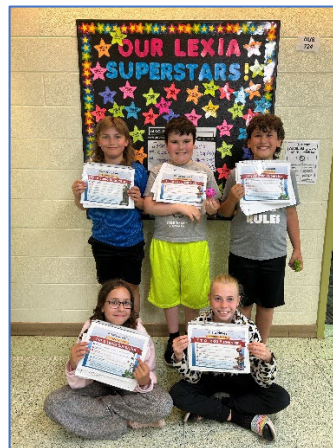
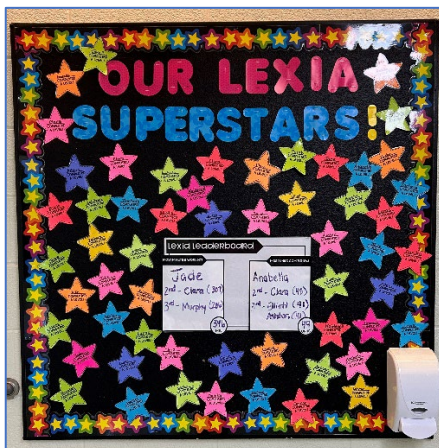
- 249 elementary and one secondary mainstream student(s) were accessing a Lexia license.
- 27 elementary schools and 1 secondary school had students on Lexia.
- Student gains were on track to meet the goal of at least 3 levels of progress:
 - 40% of students had achieved gains of 3+ levels.
 - 50% of students had achieved 1-2 levels with a target of 3 levels by June 2024.
 - 10% of students were still in their starting level.

Tracking Student Progress

Elementary school SERTs and the Lexia District Administrator monitored student progress throughout the time students worked on Lexia. Student progress was measured by analyzing the data provided in Lexia reports, specifically looking at the number of Lexia levels completed, as well as the overall usage minutes and units completed during a school year. A student must demonstrate proficiency in each unit in order to progress to the next unit or skill. When an error is made, the program provides scaffolded support and instruction on that specific skill. Students who demonstrate mastery progress through units and onto more advanced skills and continue in this way until a Lexia Level is completed. A Lexia Level takes approximately 4-6 weeks to successfully complete.

Student Success Stories

Lexia reports provide information about a student's progress in mastering literacy skills. Gains in reading and literacy skills have been documented by SERTs, teachers and parents in anecdotal success stories that are shared with the system team. Lexia has been life-changing for our struggling readers, the evidence for which is documented in improved diagnostic scores, increased confidence and class participation, and greater classroom success and interest in reading.



CONTINUITY OF SUPPORT FOR SUMMER LEARNING AND TRANSITION

The following supports will be offered again throughout July and August 2024 to support students with special needs and/or mental health needs.

Professional Learning, Training, and Capacity Building

- Training from the LDAO.
- Training through the Geneva Centre for Autism for staff leading the Spectrum Abilities Program.
- Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training for interested casual educational assistants.
- Summer NTIP session for new educators.

Closing Gaps and Mitigating Learning Loss

- Scheduled Psychoeducational/Cognitive assessments for students currently on a waitlist.
- Scheduled Articulation Screens for select primary students.
- Review of assessment results for program planning and transition.
- Scheduled daycare visits for incoming Kindergarten students with complex needs.
- Collaborate with school teams to help identify students who would benefit from attending Camp Blast (a virtual, faith-based literacy program for students in grades 1 & 2).
- Bartimaeus supports for select students throughout the summer months to support behaviour challenges (TBD).

Summer Transition Support Programs

- Identifying students with complex special education needs and mental health/disengagement concerns at each school and designing and implementing individualized and precise transition sessions for identified students with complex special education needs and/or mental health concerns.
- Creation of visuals, videos and other resources (e.g. social stories) for class/school and specific individuals to assist students, families and staff in understanding what classrooms will look like; changes, modification, routines and expectations for the learning environment.
- ABA Leads and other specialists provide staff training on appropriate strategies for transition, social skill building, transitioning from home to school and to a new learning environment, safety and self-regulation.

Speech and Language Screening

- In the summer of 2024, speech and language screening will be provided to incoming year 1 kindergartners. Year 2 kindergartners and potentially grade 1 students, will also be offered a speech and language screening assessment if:
 - Parents identified speech and language concerns via the registration
 - School staff have identified concerns for which a screening has not yet taken place
 - Student belongs to a school identified via the Early Development Instrument (EDI) as being at risk in this area
- Board Speech-Language Pathologists and Contracted Speech-Language Pathologists will be stationed in all 3 counties on select days to conduct the screener for interested families. Parent questionnaires, student assessments, and parent report will all be conducted on site.
- Eligible families will receive parent resources to take home after the assessment based on their child's presenting concerns.
- Students presenting with articulation concerns will be referred to the local community agency for supports and services prior to September 2024.

