BRANT HALDIMAND NORFOLK
Catholic District School Board

Agenda

Catholic Education Centre
322 Fairview Drive
Brantford, ON N3R 2X6

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Tuesday, November 24, 2026 – 1:00pm
Catholic Education Centre or Microsoft Teams
(Link to join meeting via Teams here)

Members: Dennis Blake (Trustee), Melanie Caldwell (Contact Brant), Michelle Drake (Crossing All Bridges), Simon Jennions (Community Living Brant), Shannon Korber (Child and Family Services of Grand Erie), Judy McCaffrey (Lansdowne Children's Centre), Patti Mitchell (Parent, County of Brant), Lauren Moulton (Woodview Mental Health and Autism Services), Sandy Defaria (Autism Ontario), Tammy West (Haldimand Norfolk REACH)

Resources: Sandra DeDominicis (Vice-Principal of Inclusive and Special Education), Mark Finochio (Principal, Elementary), Michael Lawlor (Superintendent of Education), Kerri Lomax (Principal, Elementary)

Guests: Laura Klinck (ABA Program Lead)

1. **Opening Business**
   - **1.1** Welcome and Opening Remarks
     Lauren Moulton
   - **1.2** Land Acknowledgement
     Michael Lawlor
   - **1.3** Opening Prayer
     Sandra DeDominicis
   - **1.4** Introductions
     Lauren Moulton
   - **1.5** Approval of Agenda – November 24, 2026
     Lauren Moulton
   - **1.6** Approval of the Minutes – October 27, 2026 — Pages 3 - 5
     Lauren Moulton
   - **1.7** Correspondence — Pages 6 - 8
     Lauren Moulton
2. **Presentation: F.I.R.S.T Camp**
   Laura Klinck
3. **Updates**
   - **3.1** SEAC Members
   - **3.2** Sandra De Dominicis and Michael Lawlor

4. **Closing Remarks/Adjournment**

   Lauren Moulton

Next meeting: Tuesday, December 15, 2026, 1:00p.m.- Catholic Education Centre

BRANT HALDIMAND NORFOLK
Catholic District School Board

Minutes

Catholic Education Centre
322 Fairview Drive
Brantford, ON N3R 2X6

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Tuesday, October 27, 2026 – 1:00 pm
Catholic Education Centre or Microsoft Teams

Members: Dennis Blake (Trustee), Michelle Drake (Crossing All Bridges), Mark Finochio (Principal, Elementary), Shannon Korber (Child and Family Services of Grand Erie), Mischa Dinsmore (alternate for Judy McCaffrey - Lansdowne Children's Centre), Lauren Moulton (Woodview Mental Health and Autism Services), Marilyn Noi (Autism Ontario), Tammy West (Haldimand Norfolk REACH)

Regrets: Melanie Caldwell (Contact Brant), Simon Jennions (Community Living Brant), Kerri Lomax (Principal, Elementary), Patti Mitchell (Parent, County of Brant)

Resources: Sandra DeDominicis (Vice-Principal of Inclusive and Special Education) and Michael Lawlor (Superintendent of Education)

Guests: Mary Hanhan, Speech-Language Pathologist, and Jenelle Nickman, Speech-Language Pathologist

1. **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

   Lauren Moulton welcomed the committee.

2. **Land Acknowledgement**

   Superintendent Lawlor read the board's land acknowledgement.

3. **Opening Prayer**

   Sandra DeDominicis shared an opening prayer.

4. **Introductions**

   All Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) members introduced themselves to the committee.

5. **Approval of Agenda**

   Moved by: Dennis Blake
   Seconded by: Shannon Korber
   THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approves the agenda of the October 27, 2026, meeting.

   Carried

6. **Approval of the Minutes**

   Moved by: Tammy West
   Seconded by: Dennis Blake

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approves the minutes of the September 22, 2026, meeting.

Carried

7. Correspondence – Nil

8. AAC, Communication Boards, and Inclusive Practices

The Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) introduced an initiative to enhance communication accessibility for all students, building upon the *Complex Communicator Guidebook*.

Each school has received a playground communication board featuring vocabulary specific to playground activities and interactions. These boards are intended to supplement, rather than replace, students' personal communication devices. The boards use colour coding based on the Fitzgerald Key, with colours representing different word types. They are designed to support sentence formation, receptive and expressive language development, and motor planning. Communication partners play an important role in modelling the use of the boards.

Four additional indoor communication boards were presented, each designed to support communication in different school environments:

- **Core Vocabulary Board:** Features commonly used words that can be applied across various settings and situations.
- **Gym Board:** Includes vocabulary related to common gym equipment, activities, and actions.
- **Sensory Interaction Board:** Supports communication during sensory activities and interactions.
- **Library Board:** Features vocabulary and verbs specific to library activities while reinforcing motor

These boards provide additional communication opportunities for students, particularly when their personal devices are unavailable.

Principals and Vice-Principals will receive training on the use of the communication boards during the November AAC presentation. The boards will also be incorporated into the Virtues Project being developed by Kevin Greco's team.

Community partners have expressed strong interest in using these boards within their own spaces.

9. Community Agency Updates

Shannon Korber

Child and Family Services of Grand Erie updated that Gabe Minor joined the organization as Executive Director in July 2026 and has been meeting with staff and attending team meetings to gain insight into their work. Preparations are also underway for the holiday season, including the Season of Sharing initiative, which relies on community donations to support approximately 1,000 children.

Michelle Drake

Crossing All Bridges shared updates on a variety of programs and activities, including dance parties, gardening programs, social clubs and ladies' nights, with a focus on socialization and peer relationship development. Social media remains the best source for information on upcoming events and activities.

Mischa Dinsmore (alternate for Judy McCaffrey)

Lansdowne Children's Centre updated that two new Family Support Workers have joined their team. The Centre will be hosting its annual holiday party on December 6, as well as the Halls of Halloween event, which provides children with a safe and inclusive trick-or-treating experience while encouraging the use of their communication devices.

10. Vice-Principal of Inclusive and Special Education and the Superintendent of Education

The Special Education Department provided the following updates:

- Legal counsel provided professional development to principals on education law, human rights legislation, the Education Act, relevant case law and accommodation requirements, with an emphasis on practical applications in schools. Further training is scheduled for December.
- Ongoing professional development for Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs) has focused on writing effective and measurable Individual Education Plans (IEPs), Woodcock-Johnson assessments, alternative programming, ONSIS and Empower training. The SERT pool has also expanded to include educators with extensive classroom teaching experience.
- CogAT training has commenced for educators to support a consistent approach to identifying student strengths and learning needs. All IEPs have been distributed.
- Equity training and Community of Practice meetings continue to support professional learning and collaboration across the system.
- A Parent Engagement Night was well attended, with strong participation from community partners. A virtual Gifted Information Night was also held for families of recently identified students.
- The Coaching to Inclusion Conference focused on supporting students in accessing grade-level curriculum wherever possible. Melissa Lancaster was recognized with the Coaching to Inclusion Award.
- Retired educators continue to assist with staffing needs in Special Education. The Education Assistant allocation process is ongoing, with adjustments to placements and levels of support to meet student needs.
- Sandra continues to participate in joint Identification, Placement, Review Committee (IPRC) meetings, and the Educational Assistant Training & Induction Program (ETIP) onboarding process is being supported through a flexible hybrid approach.
- The department continues to review practices related to the storage, management and retention of student information.
- A Regional Special Education Counsel meeting is scheduled for October 29 and 30, 2026.

11. Closing Remarks/Adjournment

Lauren Moulton thanked everyone. The meeting adjourned at 2:24 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 24, 2026.

DURHAM CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
Learning and Living in Faith

October 29, 2026

Hon. Paul Calandra, Minister of Education
Ministry of Education
15th Floor, 438 University Ave.
Toronto, Ontario M5G 2K8

Dear Minister Calandra,

Re: Timing of Release of Core Education and Other Funding Documents to School Boards

On behalf of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) for the Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB), we are writing a follow-up letter regarding the timing of the release of Core Education and other funding documents to school boards.

As we mentioned this time last year, SEACs across the Province try to follow the calendar set out by PAaC on SEAC. This calendar indicates that Core Education Funding is typically released in March, which allows for a draft budget to be presented to SEAC for consultation. This timing ensures that SEACs can provide meaningful consultation on actual funding allocations and participate in a fulsome way in public consultations.

Unfortunately, this deadline has not been met for DCDSB since 2022 when the Ministry released funding announcements for Core Education, Responsive Education Programs (TPA) and Summer Special Education Program Funding on February 17th of that year. Since that date the funding announcements have been significantly delayed with announcements released as late as April for 2023 and 2024 and May for 2025. For 2026, while Core Education was released slightly earlier than in 2025 (May 13th), further delays occurred with the announcements for Summer Special Education Program Funding (May 29th) and Responsive Education Programs (TPA) (July 17th).

Delaying these funding announcements by three to up to five months has had several direct and negative impacts on the DCDSB community. For example, this delay does not allow our SEAC the opportunity to provide accurate and meaningful consultation on our board's draft budget nor participate in a full and constructive manner at public consultations. A robust and inclusive consultation process allows and creates transparency, collaboration and trust with our school board, government and the community we serve. It also aligns with the Ministry's PPM 170 which promotes transparency by ensuring that families receive timely, accurate and consistent information related to school board budgets.

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In addition, these lengthy delays make it extremely challenging for our and other school boards to create and implement effective and fiscally-responsible plans and programs. More time is required to allow school boards to plan internally and then consult externally to ensure that they are spending those funds in a way that best supports the students, families and staff that they serve. When funding announcements are made near the end, or even after the school year has ended, these consultations are rushed or unable to occur at all. It can also make it more difficult and/or less economical for school boards to order materials and other supplies within that shorter timeline in order to implement these plans and programs. Delays in funding can mean delays in letting families know about different programs and supports that the school board can offer. For example, when Summer Special Education Program Funding announcements are delayed, school boards cannot give students and families the advanced notice they require to apply for or access these programs. This creates unnecessary stress and uncertainty for families who need to coordinate other summer activities for their children such as childcare or camps earlier in the year. A student that would greatly benefit from a particular Summer Special Education Program may not be able to access it because it could not be announced in a timely manner due to funding uncertainty.

Going forward, we request that the Ministry of Education return to the PAaC on SEAC schedule for the release of Core Education Funding and other funding documents in March to allow SEACs to return to providing school boards with meaningful and fulsome consultation on the actual draft budgets as opposed to providing a presentation on what we hope to see the board continue to fund. This will also allow school boards to plan more effectively and in a more fiscally-responsible manner for their upcoming summer and school year programs which, in turn, provides more stability, transparency and access for the students and families that they serve.

Sincerely,

Valerie Adamo

Valerie Adamo
SEAC Chair, Durham Catholic District School Board

cc: Chairs of Ontario Special Education Advisory Committees

CERTIFICATE *of* SIGNATURE

REF. NUMBER
WKXUE-P78AZ-F36NH-PQJEL

DOCUMENT COMPLETED BY ALL PARTIES ON
05 NOV 2026 23:37:35 UTC

SIGNER	TIMESTAMP	SIGNATURE
VALERIE ADAMO EMAIL VALERIEADAMO@SYMPATICO.CA	SENT 05 NOV 2026 14:50:35 VIEWED 05 NOV 2026 23:37:19 SIGNED 05 NOV 2026 23:37:35	 IP ADDRESS 208.181.6.6 LOCATION RICHMOND, CANADA

RECIPIENT VERIFICATION

EMAIL VERIFIED
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