



**BRANT HALDIMAND NORFOLK
Catholic District School Board**

Minutes

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

**SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Tuesday, April 21, 2026 – 1:00 pm
Catholic Education Centre or Microsoft Teams**

Members: Dennis Blake (Trustee), Melanie Caldwell (Contact Brant), Judy McCaffrey (Lansdowne Children's Centre), Tammy West (Haldimand Norfolk REACH)

Regrets: Michelle Drake (Crossing All Bridges), Simon Jennions (Community Living Brant), Shannon Korber (Child and Family Services of Grand Erie), Kerri Lomax (Principal, Elementary), Patti Mitchell (Parent, County of Brant), Lauren Moulton (Woodview Mental Health and Autism Services), Marilyn Noi (Autism Ontario), Jennifer Rudyk (Principal, Elementary)

Resources: Sandra DeDominicis (Vice-Principal of Inclusive and Special Education) and Phil Wilson (Superintendent of Education)

Guests: Stephanie Bergman (Speech-Language Pathologist) and Tracie Witteveen (Special Education Consultant)

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Superintendent Wilson welcomed the committee.

2. Land Acknowledgement

Superintendent Wilson read the board's land acknowledgement.

3. Opening Prayer

Sandra DeDominicis shared an opening prayer.

4. Approval of Agenda

Moved by: Dennis Blake

Seconded by: Tammy West

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approves the agenda of the April 21, 2026, meeting.

Carried

5. Approval of the Minutes

Moved by: Dennis Blake

Seconded by: Melanie Caldwell

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approves the minutes of the March 24, 2026, meeting.

Carried

6. Correspondence

The Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs) from the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board, Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, and Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board expressed concern regarding the provincial proposal to replace elected trustees with provincially appointed supervisors, citing potential negative impacts on local democratic governance, accountability, and community voice. The letters emphasized that locally elected trustees play a critical role in advocating for students, particularly those with special education needs, and ensuring decisions reflect local context, partnerships, and community needs. Concerns were also raised regarding reduced transparency, diminished family engagement, and potential increased costs under a supervisory model. Collectively, the SEACs urged the Ministry to reconsider the proposal and instead strengthen local governance, consultation, and community-informed decision-making in support of student success.

7. Readtopia

Tracie Witteveen and Stephanie Bergman shared the journey of implementing Readtopia, an evidence-based, comprehensive literacy program designed specifically for students with complex communication and learning profiles, across our self-contained classrooms in both elementary and secondary settings. Grounded in the recommendations of the Right to Read Report, this work reflects a shift toward a more consistent, equitable, and developmentally appropriate approach to literacy instruction, one that integrates phonics, comprehension, communication, and writing while honouring the dignity and potential of every learner. Through professional learning, collaboration, and ongoing reflection, staff are building confidence and coherence in practice, ensuring that all students have meaningful access to literacy as a fundamental human right and a pathway to communication, independence, and lifelong learning.

8. Community Agency Updates

Melanie Caldwell

Contact Brant updated Extensive Needs funding has been annualized to support the Multi-Disciplinary and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder team.

Tammy West

Haldimand and Norfolk REACH updated a focus on recognizing volunteers, particularly student nutrition program volunteers, and noted participation in the Smile Cookie campaign. Additional initiatives include Healthy Habitats programming (May–August) and Pollinator Pals, which are connected to children's mental health programming.

Judy McCaffrey

Lansdowne Children's Centre updated that camp registration has opened and highlighted participation in the Smile Cookie campaign at the end of April, and the annual charity motorcycle ride to be held July 4, 2026.

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

The Special Education Department updated the ongoing system initiatives, including completion of the final Empower training session and continuation of Entry to School case conferences for incoming students. Educational Assistant allocation is underway across schools, alongside continued monitoring of Individual Education Plan modifications and EQAO exemptions to support equity and accountability.

Program updates included the successful Spectrum Abilities information night and continued

planning for specialized classes, as well as strong participation in the Foundations for Independence transition camp. Professional learning initiatives including Readtopia and Non-Violet Crisis Intervention, and system collaboration through Community of Practice meetings are ongoing. Recruitment for consultant roles is also in progress.

10. Closing Remarks/Adjournment

Superintendent Wilson thanked everyone. The meeting adjourned at 1:54 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 19, 2026.