BRANT HALDIMAND NORFOLK
Catholic District School Board

Minutes

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

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Tuesday, September 22, 2026 – 1:00 pm
Catholic Education Centre or Microsoft Teams

Members: Dennis Blake (Trustee), Melanie Caldwell (Contact Brant), Michelle Drake (Crossing All Bridges), Mark Finochio (Principal, Elementary), Shannon Korber (Child and Family Services of Grand Erie), Kerri Lomax (Principal, Elementary), Judy McCaffrey (Lansdowne Children's Centre), Patti Mitchell (Parent, County of Brant), Lauren Moulton (Woodview Mental Health and Autism Services), Tammy West (Haldimand Norfolk REACH)

Regrets: Simon Jennions (Community Living Brant), Marilyn Noi (Autism Ontario)

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

1. **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

   Superintendent Lawlor welcomed the committee and emphasized the Special Education Goals for 2026-2027.

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: Lauren Moulton
   Seconded by: Dennis Blake
   THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approves the agenda of the September 22, 2026, meeting.

   Carried

6. **Approval of the Minutes**

   Moved by: Tammy West
   Seconded by: Patti Mitchell
   THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approves the minutes of the June 15, 2026, meeting.

   Carried

7. **Orientation and Election of Chairs**

Superintendent Lawlor reviewed the terms of reference of the committee. Lauren Moulton was elected as the chair and Shannon Korber as the vice-chair of SEAC.

8. **Correspondence – Nil**

9. **Community Agency Updates**

Melanie Caldwell

Contact Brant shared that its Annual General Meeting (AGM) was scheduled for September 22, 2026. It was also noted that no new applications had been received since the introduction of the ENS program.

Patti Mitchell

Patti Mitchell shared that 180 Special Olympic athletes had registered for sports programs.

Lauren Moulton

Woodview Mental Health and Autism Services shared that it had received a Trillium grant, which supported the completion of a new natural outdoor space. Brantford Autism Services was also once again offering Pantastic Chefs, a parent-child cooking program designed to help parents develop strategies to support their children in the kitchen.

Tammy West

Haldimand Norfolk REACH shared that it's before and after-school program had expanded to St. Frances Cabrini and was currently at capacity. The organization had also partnered with Delhi Public School and launched an Entry to School program for children with autism at its Townsend location. An additional Autism Supervisor had been hired to support the expansion of services. The organization continued to focus on meaningful inclusion, building educator capacity, and developing sustainable supports.

Michelle Drake

Crossing all Bridges updated that several after-hours programs were being offered for individuals in Grade 9 and above, including the Roots gardening program, monthly Friday dance parties, and a social club that provided opportunities for social connections.

Kerri Lomax/Mark Finochio

BHNCDSB shared that the current focus was on supporting student transitions, establishing routines, developing Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and gathering information to identify appropriate student supports. Board-level supports continued to be provided across schools, while Meet the Teacher events helped strengthen relationships with students and families.

Judy McCaffrey

Lansdowne Children's Centre shared that its Heroes Walk and Roll event was taking place at Brant Park that weekend. The organization had also been nominated for a Hamilton Readers' Choice Award for speech services. Families were encouraged to connect with the Family Engagement Coordinator through Coffee and Chat sessions. Lansdowne had also partnered with EarlyON at the T.B. Costain Centre and arranged for a mobile cancer screening bus to visit for the day. Two groups had transitioned from the Entry to School program, and children who were new to school transportation had been given an opportunity to practise riding the school

bus over the summer.

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

The Special Education Department provided the following updates:

- The Special Education Plan is available on the BHNCDSB website.
- Taryn O'Neil was welcomed to the Department in her new role as Special Education Consultant.
- Special Education Consultants and specialists continue to review student needs and gather information to reassess Educational Assistant (EA) allocations established in June.
- Special assignments are being implemented to address individual student needs and ensure appropriate allocation of EA supports.
- A total of 208 Educational Assistants are supporting students across the Board.
- All schools were allocated a minimum of 0.5 Child and Youth Worker (CYW) support, with Bartimaeus services provided at six locations.
- Entry to School case conferences continue to take place to support successful student transitions.
- The Department is undertaking several initiatives, including the system-wide implementation of Story Champs in all Kindergarten classrooms.
- The Empower Reading program continues to expand across the Board.
- Readtopia professional learning was scheduled for September.
- Special Education Consultants are providing Individual Education Plan (IEP) training to secondary educators.
- The BHNCDSB has changed its provider for crisis intervention training to Safe Management Group. Under this new agreement, Safe Management Group will provide trainers to train BHNCDSB staff over the course of the school year.
- Special Education-specific training modules are available through Vector Solutions and could be assigned to staff to support ongoing professional learning.
- Professional learning and orientation opportunities for new Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs) continue.
- PowerSchool training for SERTs and new educators was scheduled for September 21, 2026.
- A Parent Engagement Information Night is scheduled for October 7, 2026, at St. Patrick School in Brantford.
- All three Specialized Autism Program (SAP) classrooms were operational, and one additional student had been enrolled in the PALS program.
- The Educational Assistant Induction Program (ETIP) provides professional learning opportunities, mentorship, and virtual resources to Educational Assistants in their first year of a permanent or qualifying long-term occasional (LTO) assignment.
- Preparation for Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) training is being finalized for Grade 4 educators who were new to administering the assessment.
- Two professional learning sessions facilitated by legal counsel are being arranged for school administrators.
- The Academic Planner has been submitted for printing and is expected to be distributed shortly.
- A Community of Practice (COP) session for all Special Education Resource Teachers is scheduled for September 29, 2026.
- In accordance with Ministry requirements, a half-day professional development session dedicated to Special Education was delivered during the September Professional Development Day.

11. Closing Remarks/Adjournment

Michael Lawlor thanked everyone. The meeting adjourned at 2:11 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 27, 2026.