

# YORK CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

*Guided by Gospel Values and Catholic Virtues, in partnership with home and Church, we educate and inspire all students to reach their full potential in a safe and caring environment.*

## AGENDA

### SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

April 7, 2025

#### Hybrid Meeting

CEC: 320 Bloomington Rd W Aurora Ontario  
Board Room

7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

#### Questions?

Please complete this [form](https://forms.gle/o7CuzGWqg82DL6SE7) to submit any questions

Link:

<https://forms.gle/o7CuzGWqg82DL6SE7>

#### Live Stream Link:

<http://bit.ly/YCDSB-TV>

#### LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

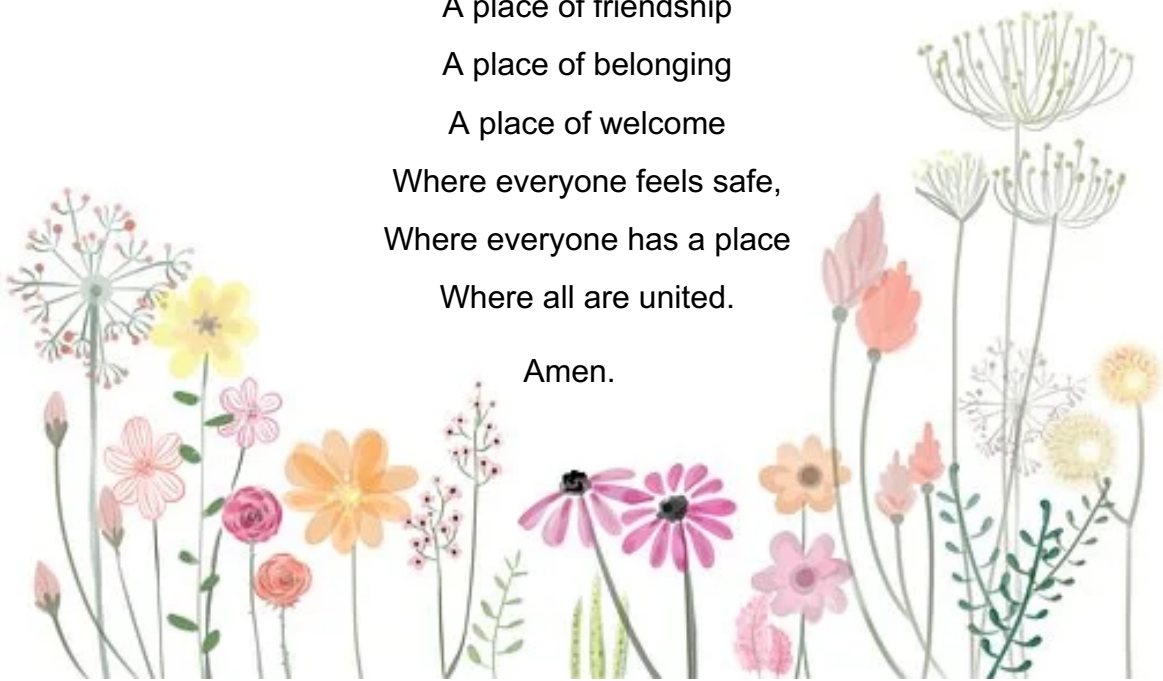
*We are gathered on the ancestral lands and waters of all Indigenous Peoples, who have left their footprints on Mother Earth before us. We respectfully acknowledge those who have walked on it, those who walk on it now, and future generations who have yet to walk on it. We pray to the Creator for strength and wisdom that all may continue to serve as stewards of the earth.*

	Time	Item	Resource	Page
1.0	7:00	OPENING PRAYER / LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	A. Grella/ D. Legris	
2.0	7:05	ROLL CALL	A. Grella	
3.0	7:07	APPROVAL OF NEW MATERIAL	A. Grella	
4.0	7:09	APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA – April 7, 2025	A. Grella	
5.0	7:11	APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES – March 3, 2025	A. Grella	4
6.0	7:12	BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES - NIL	A. Grella	
7.0	7:15	SEAC REPORT TO BOARD Report 2025:04 – March 2025	A. Grella	7
8.0	7:20	MOMENT OF INSPIRATION All about Oliver – Presentation by St David Student STEM at Guardian Angels CES	O. Guedes, C. Weber M. Marcello	
9.0	7:30	PRESENTATIONS 9.1 Enhancing Voices, Empowering Success: Communication for Every Student 9.2 Red Shirt Day 9.3 Special Education Plan – Review 9.4 Student Services Hubs 9.5 Student Services Monthly update	J. Duff J. Man J. Powers J. Powers J. Powers	8
10.0	8:30	ACTION ITEM(S)	A. Grella	
11.0	8:33	DISCUSSIONS ITEM(S)	A. Grella	
12.0	8:35	INFORMATION ITEM(S) 12.1 SEAC Meeting dates 2024-2025 12.2 Proposed SEAC Meeting dates 2025-2026 12.3 Response to Dyslexia Canada – Impact of Cutting Reading Intervention 12.4 Association News • Easter Seals: Red Shirt Day – information attached • LDAYS: LDAO SEAC Circular, LDAYS Report – information attached	A. Grella A. Grella J. Powers SEAC Representatives Easter Seals LDAYS	14 15 16
13.0	8:40	NOTICE OF MOTION	A. Grella	
14.0	8:55	FUTURE ITEM(S) Special Education Plan- Finalize Budget Update	A. Grella	
15.0	8:58	Next Meeting: May 5, 2025	A. Grella	
16.0	9:00	ADJOURNMENT	A. Grella	

God of harmony and unity,  
You want us all to work together to  
build your kingdom.  
May our ears hear your voice clearly  
May our eyes see your beauty in all  
May our understanding break down walls  
of fear and prejudice.

May we make our world  
A place of friendship  
A place of belonging  
A place of welcome  
Where everyone feels safe,  
Where everyone has a place  
Where all are united.

Amen.



# Land Acknowledgement

We are gathered on the ancestral lands and waters of all Indigenous Peoples,

who have left their footprints on Mother Earth before us .

We respectfully acknowledge those who have walked on it , those who walk

on it now , and future generations who have yet to walk upon it .

We pray to the Creator for strength and wisdom that all may continue to serve

as stewards of the Earth .

Land Acknowledgement by YCDSB's First Nations, Métis and Inuit Steering Committee adapted with PCS by Alana Miraglia and Elaine Marshal in collaboration with SLP Department

# YORK CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

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## MINUTES of the SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A regular meeting was held in a hybrid format in person at CEC, 320 Bloomington Rd. W and virtually over Google Meet on **March 3, 2025** at **7:00 p.m.**

### PRESENT:

Committee Members: N. Byrne\*, A. Carter\*, C. Chan\*, A. Connolly\*, A. Grella, M. Iafrate\*,  
S. Leckey\*, J. Man\*, N. Welch\*, J. Wigston, M. Xue\*, Y. Zhou  
Association Representatives: J. Akleh\*, E. DiFalco  
Administration: A.Cabraja\*, L.Lausic\*, J. Powers, E. Strano  
Regrets: D. Legris  
Recording: C. Mong\*  
Guest Presenters: L. Ianes, Secondary Programs Consultant, YCDSB

\*Denotes virtual attendance

### CALL TO ORDER / ATTENDANCE

#### 1.0 Prayer and Land Acknowledgement

#### 2.0 Roll Call

#### 3.0 Approval of New Material NIL

#### 4.0 Approval of Agenda March 3, 2024 **Motion**– Agenda approved (Byrne / Wigston)

#### 5.0 Approval of the Previous Minutes **Motion** - Minutes approved (Byrne / Welch)

#### 6.0 Business Arising from Previous Minutes NIL

#### 7.0 SEAC Report to Board **Motion** – Report Received (Byrne / Welch)

#### 8.0 Moment of Inspiration

*This moment of inspiration highlights the Valentine's Day Celebration with secondary students across YCDSB's Best Buddies program. This event was a huge success due to the generous support of the Senior Team, Trustees and OECTA. Everyone deserves a friend.*

#### 9.0 Presentations / Discussions

##### 9.1 Bocce Tournament

- YCDSB is celebrating 18 years of bocce play. Under the supervision of Special Education Teachers and Education workers, teams from all YCDSB high schools participated in the sport. This year approximately 180 YCDSB students participated in an east and a west tournament. The winning teams are advancing to the regional tournament in March. Save the date: March 21, 2025 from 9:30am – 12:30pm at the Amesbury Sports Complex. There will be 8 teams from YCDSB.

9.2 Student Services Monthly Update

- Superintendent Powers presented a recap of programs and services delivered by the Student Services department over the last month, see page 3.

**10.0 Action Item(s)**

Nil

**11.0 Discussion Item(s)**

Nil

**13.0 Information Item(s)**

**12.1 SEAC Meeting Dates**

**12.2 Dyslexia Canada – Impact of Cutting Reading Intervention**

Superintendent Powers will provide a response at an upcoming meeting.

**12.3 Association News**

Autism ON: Celebrate the Spectrum on April 2025, Report Card Project

Community Living: E- Connector

LDAYS: Upcoming Programs & Workshops

**Items Received** (Byrne / Welch)

**14.0 Future Item(s)**

Nil

**15.0 Next Meeting: Monday April 7, 2025 @ 7:00 p.m. in a hybrid format over Google Meet and at CEC Board office, 320 Bloomington Rd W Aurora ON.**

**16.0 Motion to adjourn at 7:47 p.m.**

Meeting adjourned (Byrne / Xue)

## 9.2 Student Services Monthly Update

### **Elementary Special Education:**

We continue to onboard RISE our special education platform and address the growing pains to ensure the process becomes seamless. Last week we trained additional educators and administrators new to their roles.

Special Education Program Consultants have been holding drop- in sessions twice a week to assist teachers with Special Education forms and Individual Education Plans.

The second stage of our PACE screening is almost complete and parents will be receiving reports after March break. Letters of Offer for students who meet criteria for the PACE program starting in September will be sent out shortly after the reports.

We look forward to welcoming new candidates and families at our Information Evening scheduled for April 2nd at each of our PACE Schools.

The after school Social Communication program Fall session is now completed. The program was provided to 76 students in both panels. We are now getting ready for the Spring session that will start at the end of March.

**YORK CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**  
**SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**REPORT NO. 2024: 04**

**To: Regular Board Meeting**

**March 25, 2025**

A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee was held on **March 3, 2025** in a hybrid format in person at the CEC, 320 Bloomington Rd. W and virtually over Google meet.

**PRESENT:**

Committee Members:	N. Byrne*, A. Carter*, C. Chan*, A. Connolly*, A. Grella, M. Iafrate*, S. Leckey*, J. Man*, N. Welch*, J. Wigston, M. Xue*, Y. Zhou
Association Representatives:	J. Akleh*, E. DiFalco
Administration:	A.Cabraja*, L.Lausic*, J. Powers, E. Strano
Regrets:	D. Legris
Recording	C. Mong*
Guests:	L. Ianes, <i>Secondary Programs Consultant, YCDSB</i>

*\*Denotes Virtual attendance*

**1. ACTION ITEM(S):** NIL

**2. CORRESPONDENCE:** NIL

**3. PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS/INFORMATION:**

- Bocce Tournament
- Student Services Monthly Update
- Dyslexia Canada – Impact of Cutting Reading Intervention

**4. ASSOCIATION REPORTS:**

- Autism ON: Celebrate the Spectrum, Report Card Project
- Community Living: E- Connector
- LDAYS: Upcoming programs and Workshops

**5. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDA:**

- Special Education Plan
- Budget Presentation

**6. NEXT MEETING:** April 7, 2025

A. GRELLA, CHAIR, SEAC

# Enhancing Voices & Empowering Success: Communication for Every Student

April 7, 2025



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Creative and Critical Thinkers | Socially Responsible Global Citizens

You may have already seen some of our work!



December 2022

December 2023



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Creative and Critical Thinkers | Socially Responsible Global Citizens

You may have already seen some of our work!



May 2024



December 2024

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## What is AAC?

AAC stands for Augmentative/Alternative Communication.

It includes:



Communication display or book



iPad with a communication app



Other 'talking' tools



Strategies

The goal is for the student to communicate in whatever modality is the easiest for them.

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Since September 2022, we have had the privilege of supporting student success, by enhancing:



Collaboration and Mentorship with Team Members and Families



Supporting Student AAC Needs At School



Optimizing ongoing use of existing tools

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This is just a snapshot of who we have supported since September 2024.

320

requests for direct student support

100+

tools for communication, literacy & independence

150+

educational workers in PA day training workshop

79

elementary and secondary schools

90+

special education teachers trained with interactive communication activities

11

high school classrooms in our pilot adapted literacy program

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Our programs and services are in support of:

Students



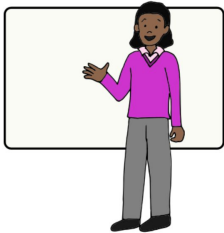
AAC tool trial

Peer awareness

Interactive AAC activities

Partner strategies

Educators and Parents



Adapted literacy

On-site training

Staff/parent education

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Meet Ravenna



Dancer



Loves cartoons



High schooler



Independent



Artist



AAC user

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## Access to communication through AAC enabled Ravenna's growth and success for:

### Independence during lessons



### Learning new concepts



### Self-advocacy to ask for what she needs or when she is misunderstood



## How we supported Ravenna in her communication journey:

Partner strategies

On-site training

Adapted literacy

Peer awareness

Communication tool trial

Interactive communication activities

Staff and parent education

Picture goes here

Joining our students during their  
regular school day to show  
teachers and other school staff  
how to incorporate AAC

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## How we supported Ravenna's communication journey:

Partner strategies

On-site training

Adapted literacy

Peer awareness

Communication tool trial

Interactive communication activities

Staff and parent education



Providing hands-on training for all  
school staff

## How we supported Ravenna's communication journey:

Partner strategies

On-site training

Adapted literacy

Peer awareness

Communication tool trial

Interactive communication activities

Staff and parent education

?? Jenny @ FBH next week?

Demonstrating how adapted books  
can be used to promote inclusive  
literacy development for every  
student's right to read

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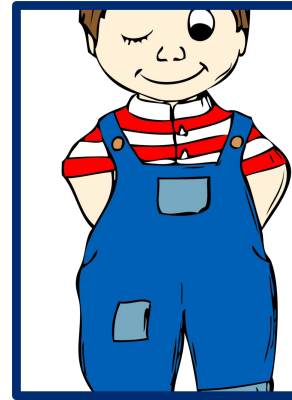
## How we supported Ravenna's communication journey:

- Partner strategies
- On-site training
- Adapted literacy
- Peer awareness
- Communication tool trial
- Interactive communication activities
- Staff and parent education



Collaborating with school teams to support inclusivity and awareness of the use of AAC in the classroom environment

## Meet L



Toys



Bean bag



Snack



Sand table



Playing pretend



Lego

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## L's communication app helps him to

Interact with others

Express what he thinks

Pretend play?

Old MacDonald

Eating?

## How we supported L's communication journey:

- Partner strategies
- On-site training
- Adapted literacy
- Peer awareness
- Communication tool trial
- Interactive communication activities
- Staff and parent education

**SMS LAURA'S STUDENTS PICTURE**

Collaborating with school teams to choose the best AAC tool to maximize student participation and engagement in the classroom

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## How we supported L's communication journey:

Partner strategies

On-site training

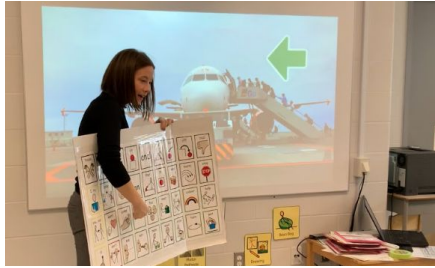
Adapted literacy

Peer awareness

Communication tool trial

Interactive communication activities

Staff and parent education



Showcasing programs intended to build expressive language skills in early communicators through play and classroom activities

## Additional supports

Partner strategies

On-site training

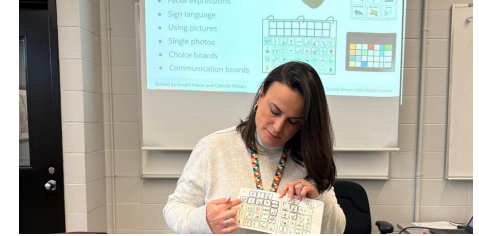
Adapted literacy

Peer awareness

Communication tool trial

Interactive communication activities

Staff and parent education



Building capacity in the YCDSB community to foster an inclusive environment for all communication and literacy skills at home and at school

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## Here are our plans for new initiatives next year



✓ **Access to literacy:** ongoing collaboration with secondary team to continue strengthening adapted literacy programming in high schools

✓ **Equity:** adapted literacy visuals for elementary students who require individualized support for their right to read

✓ **Inclusivity:** large core boards in elementary play yards or kindergarten pens for inclusive communication, including staff training

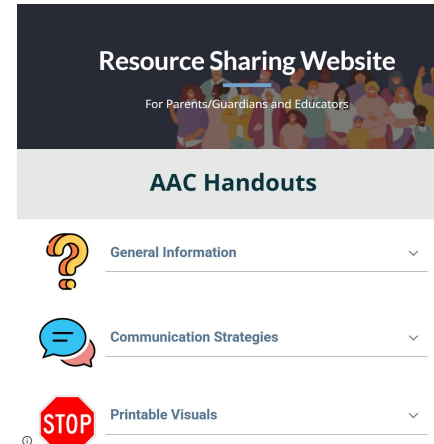
✓ **Parents as partners:** parent and school team workshops to encourage healthy communication partner strategies for AAC users, including continuing our 3-year educational worker training series



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## And check out our website with resources for parents and educators!



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# Thank you for your time!



# YCDSB SEAC Meeting Dates

## 2024-2025

September 16, 2024

October 21, 2024

November 11, 2024

December 16, 2024

January 13, 2025

February 10, 2025

March 3, 2025

April 7, 2025

May 5, 2025

June 9, 2025

*Meeting date changes made in red*



Learning Together in Christ  
Engaging, Enabling, Empowering



# YCDSB SEAC Meeting Dates (*PROPOSED*)

2025-2026

September 15, 2025

October 20, 2025

November 10, 2025

December 15, 2025

January 12, 2026

February 9, 2026

March 2, 2026

April 13, 2026

May 4, 2026

June 8, 2026

*Meeting date changes made in red*







# York Catholic District School Board

Catholic Education Centre, 320 Bloomington Road West, Aurora, Ontario L4G 0M1  
Tel: 905-713-1211, 416-221-5051, 1-800-363-2711  
Fax: 905-713-1272 • [www.ycdsb.ca](http://www.ycdsb.ca)

March 28, 2025

Sent Via Email: [alicia@dyslexiacanada.org](mailto:alicia@dyslexiacanada.org)

Dear Alicia Smith,

Thank you for your letter dated February 11, 2025. I would like to take this opportunity to clarify the work that the York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB) is doing to help our students succeed in reading.

The YCDSB will continue to offer tier 3 literacy interventions. YCDSB special education teachers currently deliver tier 3 interventions and the program is being used in every YCDSB elementary school. Our tier 3 intervention program is recommended by the Ontario Human Rights Commission and is included in the *Right to Read* report.

The YCDSB will continue to have Itinerant Reading Intervention Teachers (IRIT), which is a ministry-funded position, available for our students who need support. As part of the MYFRP process, the YCDSB must better align program spending with ministry funding and Itinerant Literacy Intervention Teachers (ILIT) is not a ministry-funded program.

In compliance with Ministry of Education guidelines, all students in Year 2 of Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2 are now screened for early reading using a ministry-approved diagnostic. This screening, along with other diagnostic assessments, allows YCDSB teachers to monitor progress and identify areas where additional support is needed.

To supplement the other supports described above, the YCDSB will make *Lexia* available to students in Grades 3-12 who are accessing special education support. *Lexia* offers data-driven literacy programs that align with Ontario's learning expectations and is used by multiple Ontario school boards as an additional layer of support for struggling readers. Like *Remediation Plus*, this is a learning resource and does not replace the teacher who is leading tier 3 supports in our schools.

If you would like to learn more about the work of the YCDSB's Student Services Department, you can read our [Special Education Plan](#) and our [Special Education Process](#).

Thank you again for your letter. We appreciate that you share our concern for the academic success of our students.

Yours in Catholic Education,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John De Faveri".

John De Faveri  
Director of Education, Foundation Chair and Secretary to the Board of Trustees



## Special Education Advisory Committee Association Update

**Association:** Easter Seals Ontario  
**Date:** April 2025

### Key Updates

- Easter Seals Ontario hosted a Pathways to Success in-person youth conference on March 29. Attendees between the ages of 15-20 with disabilities engaged in interactive and practical learning experiences on postsecondary education, the world of work, financial literacy and more.
- Red Shirt Day™ takes place on the Wednesday of National AccessAbility Week each year. In 2025, Red Shirt Day™ will take place on Wednesday, May 28 during National AccessAbility Week (Sunday, May 25 to Saturday, May 31).
- Red Shirt Day™ is a great opportunity for schools to join a larger movement to create a more inclusive and accessible society, and to teach students about accessibility and inclusion, encouraging them to be advocates for individuals with disabilities.
  - Please see attached resources to tell your family, friends and colleagues about Red Shirt Day™. Visit <https://redshirtday.org/resources/> for:
    - National AccessAbility Week Flag by Easter Seals Ontario
    - Red Shirt Day™ posters, cutouts, and pledge forms (English/French)
    - Informational video (English/French captions)
    - Red Shirt Day™ comic and colouring pages
    - Social media posts (English/French)
    - Resource guide, handouts, fundraising forms (English/ French)
    - Letter to parents (English/French)
    - Tips for principals and schools (English/French)
    - Red Shirt Day™ reading and movie lists
  - To support this initiative, there will be five, community-based Red Shirt Day™ Walks for Accessibility and Inclusion across Ontario. Please see below for details.

### Upcoming Events

- Red Shirt Day™ walks in Sudbury, Whitby, Orillia, London, and Kingston.

London	Camp Woodeden - 2311 Oxford St W, London, ON N6K 4P1	Sunday, May 25	<a href="https://redshirtday.org/walk/">https://redshirtday.org/walk/</a> .
Kingston	James R Henderson Public School	Sunday, May 25	

	Location	Date	How to Register
Sudbury	Adanac Ski Hill	Friday, May 23	For all walks, visit:
Whitby	Rotary Sunrise Lake Park	Saturday, May 24	
Orillia	J.B. Tudhope Memorial Park	Saturday, May 24	

## LDAO SEAC CIRCULAR

### April 2025

The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) SEAC Circular is published 5 times a year, usually in September, November, February, April, and June.

This circular highlights key topics for your SEAC to consider. Where applicable, action items, questions to ask, and/or recommendations for effective practices will be included under each topic.

Feel free to share any of this information and any attachments with other SEAC members. As always, if you plan to introduce a motion for the consideration of SEAC, it is particularly important that you share all relevant background materials with your fellow SEAC reps.

#### Topics covered by this SEAC Circular:

##### 1. Ministry of Education Updates:

- Special Education Budgets 2025-2026
- Special Education Plan

##### 2. Mental Health and Learning Disabilities

- Additional resource: [Myths and Facts](#)
- Additional resource: [School Mental Health Ontario - Resources for Parents](#)

##### 3. Key Takeaways: April 2025 SEAC Circular

#### List of Supplementary Materials:

1. [Technical Guides for School Boards - Budget Structure](#)
2. [PAAC on SEAC Resource Guide for Budgets 2024](#)
3. [The Right to Read - Year Two](#)
4. [Accessible Transitions for Students with Disabilities \(K-12\)](#)
5. [Development of Proposed K-12 Standards - Final Recommendations](#)

**Note:** You can access the [SEAC Circular](#), [LDAO SEAC Policies](#), [LDAO Policy Statement on Educational Inclusion](#), and [PAAC on SEAC Effective Practices Handbook](#).

You can access Ministry funding (B & SB) memos by date at: [Ministry Funding](#).

## 1. Ministry of Education Updates

### a) Special Education Budgets

#### Background and Context

SEAC plays a critical role in advising school boards on the development and allocation of special education funding. As part of this responsibility, SEAC members participate in budget planning and review to ensure that resources are directed toward supporting students with exceptionalities.

School boards will soon receive their 2025–2026 budget allocations, allowing them to plan accordingly. Under [Regulation 464/97](#), school boards must provide SEAC with the opportunity to:

- “participate in board’s annual budget process under section 231 of the Act, as that process relates to Special Education” (Section 12 (2))” and
- “review financial statements of the board, prepared under section 252 of the Act, as those statements relate to Special Education.” (Section 12 (3))”

Ontario school boards are actively moving through their budget processes in preparation for the 2025–2026 school year. While they await their **Core Education Funding** allocations—typically announced in the spring—they continue planning based on projected needs. Given demographic shifts, including an aging population and evolving immigration trends, school boards may need to assess how these factors influence enrollment and funding needs.

With the new government now in place following the recent election, funding announcements are expected to resume in the near future. Boards will adjust their budgets accordingly once the allocations are received.

#### Implications for Students with Special Education Needs

Budget decisions directly impact the availability and quality of special education services. A delay and/or decrease in funding allocations could:

- Affect the ability of boards to plan, hire, and retain specialized staff, including educational assistants (EAs), special education teachers, and resource staff.
- Delay decisions on Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention supports, which are critical for students with learning disabilities who require direct, specific instruction and/or intensive support.

- Influence the continuity of special education programs, as boards may face financial constraints that impact services.
- Result in potential shifts in staffing allocations, leading to uncertainty for families and students who rely on consistent support structures.

**Potential Action Items, Questions to Ask, and/or Recommendations:**

- SEAC members should monitor any changes to special education programs and advocate for a full continuum of supports to ensure that students with disabilities continue to receive appropriate services. If programs are being modified or removed, SEAC reps should inquire about:
  - What alternative supports are being put in place to address the needs previously met by the program.
  - How Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports are being provided to ensure students receive timely and effective interventions.
  - How staff, including specialized educators and support personnel, are being allocated to support significant changes and transitions in service delivery.
- SEAC should advocate for maintaining and enhancing special education staffing, including specialized educators, educational assistants (EAs), and support staff, to meet student needs effectively. Given anticipated funding constraints, SEAC should inquire whether staffing levels will be impacted and what steps are being taken to ensure continuity of support.
- SEAC members should be familiar with key findings from the Ontario Human Rights Commission's (OHRC) *Right to Read - Year Two Update*. While progress has been made in areas like curriculum revision and early screening, there are significant ongoing challenges, particularly in:
  - **Access to interventions:** Despite improvements, not all students have access to Tier 2 and Tier 3 evidence-based interventions. SEAC should inquire about how boards are ensuring equitable access to interventions across schools.
  - **Accommodations:** Many students are still relying on accommodations (e.g., assistive technology) rather than receiving early interventions. SEAC should ask whether schools are balancing accommodations with direct instruction in foundational literacy skills.
  - **Professional assessments:** Long wait times for assessments continue to be a barrier. SEAC should advocate for transparent criteria for prioritizing assessments and for timely intervention supports while students wait.

- **Teacher preparedness:** Many educators lack the necessary training to implement accommodations effectively. SEAC should ask how the board is supporting teachers with job-embedded professional learning to ensure they can implement structured literacy approaches.

## b) Special Education Plans

### Background and Context

Each Ontario school board is required to develop and maintain a Special Education Plan, outlining how special education programs and services will be delivered to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities. The Ministry of Education mandates an annual review of these plans to ensure they align with current policies, funding structures, and best practices.

SEAC plays a critical role in this process by advising, reviewing, and advocating to ensure that plans reflect the diverse needs of students receiving special education services. SEAC members should work to identify gaps, promote best practices, and advocate for resources that enhance student support.

SEAC's role includes:

- **Advising school boards** on the establishment, development and delivery of special education programs and services. This includes making recommendations to improve the services offered.
- **Participating in the annual review** to ensure that the plan is updated and aligned with student needs.
- **Advocating for transparency and accountability** in how special education services are provided. Advocacy is essential for students and families, and SEAC members play a vital role in ensuring their voices are heard, represented, and considered in decision-making.

### Implications for Students with Special Education Needs

A comprehensive and well-developed Special Education Plan ensures that students with disabilities receive:

- **Timely and appropriate interventions** that address their unique learning needs.
- **Access to a full continuum of supports**, including classroom accommodations, interventions, specialized programs, and assistive technology.

- **Consistent staffing and resources**, ensuring students receive support from trained professionals such as educational assistants (EAs), special education teachers, speech-language pathologists, and mental health professionals.
- **Structured transition planning**, whether between grades, schools, or into post-secondary education, ensuring that students move through the system with the necessary support.

#### Potential Action Items, Questions to Ask, and/or Recommendations

- Are Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention supports clearly outlined in the plan to ensure that students receive targeted and intensive support as needed?
- How is parent and student feedback incorporated into the development and revision of the plan?
- What data and outcome measures are being used to evaluate the effectiveness of special education programs?
- Are staffing levels and resources sufficient to implement the plan effectively, particularly given potential funding constraints?

## 2. Mental Health:

### Background and Context

School boards receive dedicated funding to support student mental health, enabling the implementation of the School Mental Health Initiative. This initiative includes:

- Professional resources and practical tools for educators.
- Ongoing professional learning to ensure staff can effectively support students.
- Collaboration with community partners to enhance mental health services.
- Additional funding to address emerging local concerns, such as cannabis use and body image issues.

Mental health support is critical for students with learning disabilities. Research indicates that over half of students with learning disabilities experience anxiety and depression. Without proper mental health interventions, these challenges can negatively impact academic performance, social development, and overall well-being.

SEAC members play a vital role in advocating for equitable and proactive mental health supports. Promoting positive mental health within schools helps to reduce stigma, foster

inclusivity, and support student achievement.

### Implications for Students with Special Needs

Students with exceptionalities, particularly those with learning disabilities, ADHD, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and other neurodiverse conditions, often face higher rates of mental health challenges. Without timely and accessible mental health support, these students may struggle with:

- **Increased Anxiety & Depression:** Many students with special education needs experience heightened academic stress, social anxiety, and low self-esteem.
- **Emotional Dysregulation:** Difficulty managing emotions can lead to behavioral challenges, school avoidance, or disengagement from learning.
- **Impact on Learning:** Mental health concerns can hinder focus, executive functioning, and motivation, making it harder to access and benefit from special education supports.
- **Barriers to Accessing Services:** Many families experience long wait times for mental health assessments and interventions, delaying critical support.
- **Intersection with Bullying & Stigma:** Students with exceptionalities are at higher risk of social exclusion, bullying, and feelings of isolation, which further impact their well-being.

### Potential Action Items, Questions to Ask, and/or Recommendations:

- How is the school board ensuring that mental health supports reach students with exceptionalities, particularly those with learning disabilities?
- What steps are being taken to ensure that school-based mental health initiatives are accessible, culturally responsive, and tailored to students with diverse needs?
- How is student and family feedback being incorporated into mental health program improvements?
- What data is being used to track the effectiveness of mental health supports for students with special education needs?
- What additional training is being provided to special education staff, including Educational Assistants (EAs) and Special Education Teachers, on mental health literacy and trauma-informed practices?

### 3. Transitions:

#### Background and Context

Transition planning is essential for students with learning disabilities and other exceptionalities. Transitions occur at multiple levels, from daily micro-transitions (e.g., moving between subjects and classrooms) to major educational shifts, such as: grade 8 to high school; high school to post-secondary education, employment, or apprenticeship programs.

A well-structured transition plan ensures that students move smoothly between educational environments, reducing anxiety and disruption. However, poorly planned transitions can create significant barriers to success.

Students with learning disabilities often experience heightened stress during transitions, making emotional support, self-advocacy skills, and tailored accommodations essential. SEAC members play a crucial role in advocating for individualized transition plans to support students with exceptionalities effectively.

The Ministry of Education has provided funding to support transition planning, and LDAO strongly advocates for the continuation and expansion of these resources.

#### Implications for Students with Special Needs

Transitions can have a profound impact on students with exceptionalities, particularly those who require structured routines, predictable environments, and specialized supports. Without proper transition planning, students may experience:

- **Disrupted Learning & Regression:** Sudden changes in environment, expectations, or support systems can lead to learning setbacks, especially for students who thrive on structure and consistency.
- **Increased Anxiety & Stress:** Uncertainty around new settings, peers, and expectations can trigger heightened anxiety, reluctance to engage, or school avoidance.
- **Lack of Appropriate Accommodations:** Transitioning without continuity in Individual Education Plans (IEPs), assistive technology, or support staff can jeopardize academic progress.
- **Social and Emotional Challenges:** Changes in social environments may cause feelings of isolation, particularly if students struggle with communication or self-advocacy.

- **Parental Involvement Gaps:** Families play a critical role in transitions, yet they are often left out of decision-making processes. Ensuring parental engagement leads to stronger, more effective transition plans.
- **Need for Educator Training:** Educators and support staff require ongoing professional development to ensure they can effectively support students through transitions.

#### Potential Action Items, Questions to Ask, and/or Recommendations:

- How is Ministry funding being used to support transition planning, and what measurable impact has it had at the student level?
- What plans are in place to strengthen transition work for the next school year?
- How is the effectiveness of transition planning being monitored, and what metrics are used to assess success?
- How are families involved in the transition process, and what steps are taken to ensure their concerns and insights are considered?
- What professional development opportunities are provided to educators and support staff to ensure they are well-equipped to implement effective transition plans?

#### 4. Key Takeaways: April 2025 SEAC Circular

- **Advocacy for Special Education Funding:** SEAC members play a vital role in ensuring that special education funding is used effectively. They should actively participate in budget discussions and advocate for a full continuum of supports to meet the diverse needs of students with exceptionalities.
- **Staffing & Specialized Support:** Maintaining and enhancing staffing levels for special education teachers, educational assistants (EAs), and support personnel is essential. SEAC members should inquire about staffing allocations and advocate for continuity in specialized support services.
- **Special Education Plans & Policy Oversight:** SEAC members should participate in the annual review of their board's Special Education Plan, ensuring that it aligns with evidence-based practices, student needs, and equity-focused approaches.
- **Mental Health & Well-being:** Positive mental health is essential for student success. SEAC should advocate for:
  - Increased access to mental health supports tailored to students with learning disabilities and other exceptionalities.
  - Professional learning opportunities for educators on mental health literacy and trauma-informed teaching.
  - Data-informed evaluations of the impact of mental health initiatives at the school board level.
- **Effective Transition Planning:** Students with learning disabilities require structured, well-supported transitions at all levels (e.g., grade-to-grade, high school to post-secondary/work). SEAC should:
  - Ensure individualized transition plans are in place for students with exceptionalities.
  - Advocate for early planning, educator training, and parental involvement in the transition process.
  - Monitor how school boards evaluate and improve transition supports to reduce anxiety and ensure continuity of services.

#### A Note to SEAC Representatives

LDAO SEAC Representatives are encouraged to share this resource with other SEAC members in their school board. By spreading awareness and building collective understanding, we can strengthen advocacy efforts and improve outcomes for students with learning disabilities across Ontario.

#### About the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO)

The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) has been a trusted voice for over 60 years, supporting individuals with learning disabilities and ADHD—as well as their families, educators, and communities. We provide expertly curated resources, advocate for systemic change, and promote equity in education and beyond.

Our signature initiatives—LD@school, TA@l'école, LD@home, and LD@work—reflect our commitment to supporting individuals across the lifespan, from early learning through to adulthood and employment.

Learn more at [www.LDAO.ca](http://www.LDAO.ca)

## **SEAC Reps - LDAYS Monthly Report - April 2025**

### **Upcoming Programs and Services: (Please see attached Flyer)**

#### **6th Annual LDA Parent Conference May 28th**

We're excited to invite you to our 6th LDA Annual Parent Conference. This event will offer practical tools and strategies to support parents of children with learning disabilities, focusing on their education and well-being across a range of relevant topics. The conference begins with an inspiring keynote session, followed by the chance to choose from a variety of 1-hour presentations on relevant topics, each concluding with a Q&A session.

#### **Presentation Topics:**

- Effective Use of Assistive Technology
- Empowering Parents to Support Children with Learning Disabilities: A Framework for Social Anxiety, Stigma
- Emotional Well-being and ADHD and Alternatives to Medication

**Date:** May 28th, 2025

**Time:** 6PM to 8PM

**Location:** Zoom

**Register** [Here](#)

*This conference is a collaboration between LDA Chapters*

#### **Free Online Workshop: Children's Mental Health: Its Connection to learning Disabilities and ADHD**

We are excited to announce our next FREE virtual presentation, which will focus on *Understanding Children's Mental Health: Its Connection to Learning Disabilities and ADHD*.

This presentation will explore the link between children's mental health and learning disabilities, as well as ADHD. It highlights how mental health challenges, such as anxiety and depression, can affect learning and focus, often overlapping with ADHD and learning disabilities. The session will answer frequently asked questions and suggest strategies for support in both home and educational settings. The goal is to equip parents, educators, and professionals with insights to help children succeed academically and emotionally. This informative session will be presented by Vicki Cochrane of Parents for Children's Mental Health (PCMH). We encourage everyone to join us for another impactful evening of learning and discussion!

**Date:** June 18th, 2025

**Time:** 7PM

**Location:** Zoom

**Register** [Here](#)

#### **Social Skills 6-Session Program- Richmond Hill**

Our Social Skills Program is designed to help children with Learning Disabilities (LD) and/or ADHD build essential social and emotional skills in a fun, engaging, and interactive environment. Facilitated by accredited social service workers and based on the proven PEERS® curriculum, this program focuses on improving communication,

conflict resolution, emotional regulation, and self-esteem. Children will also develop valuable skills like self-advocacy, stress management, and how to handle bullying. The program is for children ages 8-12 who may struggle with social interactions, self-confidence, or peer relationships. With small group sizes and a supportive, positive atmosphere, this program offers the perfect opportunity for your child to gain confidence, make friends, and thrive socially.

Spring:

**Date:** (Mondays) May 5th to June 16th, 2025 (No Session on May 19th)

**Time:** 6PM to 7PM

**Location:** 9030 Leslie Street, Unit 216, Richmond Hill

**Fee:** \$250 (Members) \$300 (Non-LDAYS Members) - Subsidies are available

**Register** [Here](#)

For more information contact Sara at (905) 884-7933 x 3 or email [sara.carnovale@ldays.org](mailto:sara.carnovale@ldays.org) or visit: <https://ldays.org/social-skills/>

#### **Summer Camp**

Get Ready for a Week of Adventure at Social Skills Camp!

In a safe, encouraging and positive environment, learning social skills has never been so much fun! Skills learned include introducing oneself, ways to make friends, responding to teasing, being a good winner and loser, dealing with emotions, problem-solving, relaxation, and self-esteem. Each week will feature a new theme packed with exciting activities to explore! Activities include nature walks, arts and crafts, sports, and even outdoor swimming, ensuring each day is full of fun and personal growth.

Please note: For children with a primary diagnosis of learning disabilities or ADHD. Maximum 14 children per session, with a caring staff-to-child ratio of 1:6. First-time participants must provide a copy of the child's psychoeducational assessment

#### **Locations\*:**

- Richmond Hill
- Newmarket
- Bradford
- Aurora (Supported by the Town of Aurora)

\*Exact dates and specific locations will be announced in May. Camps run from 9AM to 4PM

#### **Pricing:**

- Member fee - \$350 / week
- Non-member fee - \$400 / week
- Subsidies Available! Apply to see if you are eligible using this [link](#)

#### **Pre-Register** [Here](#)

Registration will close two weeks prior to the start date of each specific week.

For more information, please contact Sara Carnovale (905) 884-7933 ext. 3 [sara.carnovale@ldays.org](mailto:sara.carnovale@ldays.org)

#### **Homework & Beyond**

The first round of Homework & Beyond has been a great success, and we're excited to be able to offer the second round at a subsidized fee of only \$50. This **6-week program**

combines homework assistance with social skills development in a welcoming, drop-in format. Tailored to support students aged **10 to 12\***, the program fosters both academic progress and personal growth.

#### Why Homework & Beyond?

- **Individualized academic support** to help students excel in school.
- **Social skills enhancement** to build confidence and improve interactions.
- A **flexible and supportive environment** that meets the unique needs of each participant.

#### Program Details:

**Date:** (Wednesdays) May 7th to June 11th

**Time:** 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM

**Location:** 9030 Leslie St, Unit 216, Richmond Hill, ON

**Register** [Here](#)

\*Students outside the 10-12 age range are welcome to register! We will schedule an intake call to ensure the program is the right fit for their needs.

Spots are limited, so don't wait! Secure your child's place in Homework & Beyond by registering today.

For more information, please contact Alicia (905) 884-7933 ext. 6 or [alicia.carter@ldays.org](mailto:alicia.carter@ldays.org).

#### **Level Up Tutoring**

Our Level Up Tutoring Program offers personalized numeracy and literacy assistance, specifically designed for students in grade 3 to grade 7 with learning disabilities or ADHD. With one-on-one virtual sessions, our experienced tutors help your child build confidence, enhance study habits, and develop crucial academic skills in both math and reading. Sessions are tailored to meet your child's unique learning style, ensuring a more enjoyable and effective learning experience. Enroll now to secure a spot and let's make this school year the best one yet! Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

#### **Reading Rocks and Jump Math**

Our Reading Rocks and Jump Math are individualized virtual intervention programs designed for students aged 8-14 who are significantly behind in literacy or math due to diagnosed learning disabilities. **Reading Rocks** focuses on enhancing reading skills through tailored instruction and motivational tactics, while **Jump Math** emphasizes foundational math skills and confidence-building through 1-to-1 or small group sessions and engaging activities. Both programs run for eight weeks, meeting twice weekly, with a fee structure that includes options for subsidies. Click [here](#) for more information and to register for JUMP Math and Reading Rocks.

#### **SoAR- Richmond Hill In Office Dates!**

Starting May 6th, we are offering an in office session of the SoAR program for Grades 7-8 at our Richmond Hill office. The dates and times are as follows:

- Tuesday May 6th 5:30-6:30 pm

- Tuesday, May 13th 5:30-6:30 pm
- Tuesday, May 20th 5:30-6:30 pm
- Tuesday, May 27th 5:30-6:30 pm

Registration Link: <https://revenue-can.keela.co/grade-8-soar-in-office-group1>

The SoAR Program is designed for students in Grades 7-8 or Grades 11-12 diagnosed with Learning Disabilities and/or ADHD, helping them develop vital life skills for academic and vocational success. The program includes tailored sessions focusing on personal development, self-advocacy, stress management, study strategies, and essential job skills, empowering participants to navigate their transitions into high school and post-secondary education or the workforce. Through engaging discussions and activities, students enhance self-awareness and build practical skills to achieve their goals confidently.

The program can be facilitated in a group setting or one to one. Groups are held in class for 4 sessions with 6 participants per group.

- Click [here](#) for more information and to register for **SoAR Elementary**.
- Click [here](#) for more information and to register for **SoAR High School**.

**Thank you for your ongoing support, we appreciate all of the hard work you do!**