

SEAC meeting

Thursday, June 19, 2025

Via Zoom and North Bay Board Room

Present:

Tim Graves, Superintendent of Education
Alison Clarke, Acting Principal of Special Education
Chantal Phillips, Trustee and SEAC Chair
Louise Sargent, Trustee
Lisa Paradis, Spec Ed Coordinator – East & West Regions
Kimberly Gignac, Special Ed Coordinator – North Region
Candy St. Onge, Almaguin Highlands Community Living

Guests

Christopher Walkling – Principal of K-12 Student Achievement and Well-Being
Alison Herst-Jackson- Principal, Silver Birches
Lucia Marut – Teacher, Silver Birches
Géraldeana Goulais, Nipissing First Nation

Regrets:

Leigh Armstrong, Community Living Parry Sound
Carol Couillard, Nipissing Secondary
Chris Guillemette (Vice Chair), Community Living North Bay
Ashley St. Pierre, Board Chair
Tammy Adjoudj, Nipissing Down Syndrome Society
Laura Hansman, Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children (OPVIC)

Land Acknowledgement presented by Lisa Paradis

Called to Order at 1:00 pm

Agenda Approval

Quorum not present. Notes to be taken. Agenda consensus acquired.

Approval of the Minutes of the March 20, 2025 meeting. Deferred. No issues were identified.

Approval of the Notes of the April 17, 2025 meeting. Deferred. No issues were identified.

Approval of the Notes of the May 22, 2025 meeting. Deferred. No issues were identified.

Elections for Chair and Vice-Chair

Discussion regarding elections- Louise Sargeant put name forward to serve as chair at future meetings if needed.

Business Arising from the Minutes

Presentation of Special Education Classrooms within NNDSB by central Special Education Team (presentation included the September SEAC Package)

See the attached document with the presentation that the central special education coordinators provided.

- Trustee Sargeant inquired about transitions for students affected by the new Parry Sound build. Lisa Paradis explained transitions vary by student profile. SO Graves further added that from a system perspective, the current pathways of transition remain unaffected.
- Candy St Onge inquired as to whether there were plans to open additional Skills for Early Learning (SEL) classrooms, noting the Almaguin region in particular. SO Graves said there are no plans to open additional system classrooms in September. In order to do so, SO Graves noted that discussions could begin with SEAC. Chair Phillips noted that this could be included on the agenda for September. Candy St Onge also noted that she appreciated seeing how students learn with each other.
- Silver Birches invited meeting participants to attend the classroom in person if they wanted to see more of what was shared with the committee. Trustee Sargeant enjoyed the classroom visits but also appreciated the value in presentations as they can provide a better representation of a longer time period than a short in person visit. SO Graves recognized the dedication of Alison Herst-Jackson and Silver Birches staff.
- Chair Phillips noted that she would like to see the video shared more broadly.
- Trustee Sargeant suggested that the video could be shared with prospective families.

Student Achievement Plan Presentation by Principal Christopher Walkling

(presentation included in the September SEAC package)

- Chair Phillips noted that youth anxiety is an element of school attendance.

SEAC Quorum (Strategies to Improving SEAC Committee Attendance)

Principal Clarke highlighted attendance challenges which are resulting in difficulty attaining quorum for SEAC meetings. She suggested the committee implement a survey, as one strategy, to gain feedback from committee members to identify attendance barriers.

- Trustee Sargeant suggested that a different day of the week could be considered.
- Principal Clarke pointed out that the meetings have changed from time-to-time throughout the year and perhaps that is a barrier to attendance.
- Chair Phillips said she loved the presentations and put forward that there may be a benefit in uploading videos ahead of time to reduce meeting time and that the overall length of meeting time may be prohibiting attendance.
- SO Graves confirmed that the regulations applicable to SEAC detail that the board shall not appoint more than 12 representatives and noted that quorum has not been attained for several

months and this is of concern. A named alternate, approved in advance, may be a way to enhance attendance.

- Chair Phillips indicated that input from members and guests is valued.
- Trustee Sargeant noted that the option of allowing simultaneous hybrid (online and in-person attendance) should be promoted.
- Principal Clarke offered to draft an attendance survey and will bring the draft survey to September's meeting for review and consideration.
- Trustee Sargent inquired about the number of trustees able to sit on SEAC. SO Graves noted that there are specific considerations relating to membership.
 - Candy St. Onge asked how committee members are recruited. SO Graves would encourage interest in committee membership and noted that Principal Clarke or himself could be contacted as a first step.
 - In summary; Chair Phillips asked Principal Clarke to design a survey and asked for clarification from SO Graves as per the applicable regulations. SO Graves indicated that in the September meeting Trustee Sargeant will chair and bring a motion to move this forward.

Special Education Parent/Guardian One-page Guide

- Principal Clarke confirmed that the One-page Parent/Guardian Pamphlet will be finalized and provided online soon. She also noted that the Special Education website videos are currently being updated and will be released upon completion. They will be accessible for viewing online.

Standing Items

SEAC Agenda and Goals for 2025/26

- Principal Clarke presented the 2024/25 SEAC Annual Agenda for consideration by the committee and the committee engaged in a brief discussion about prospective agenda items for the 2025/26 school year. This discussion will continue in September in order to draft the 2025/26 annual agenda.

Community Partner Updates

- Candy St Onge said that they have a new transitions program starting at Almaguin Highlands Community Living. Children are now able to participate in the program in a more streamlined process.
- The annual golf tournament was a successful fundraiser for project lifesaver.

Correspondence Received

- "Promises Unfilled – Addressing the Special Education Crisis in Ontario Executive Summary" by the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario.
 - SEAC committee accepted the report

Letter dated January 21, 2025 from Chair of Algoma District School Board SEAC re: concerns related to teacher training in special education facilities at faculties of education across Ontario.

- Chair Phillips shared the response from Nipissing University. Chair Phillips asked if any member wanted to take action. Trustee Sargeant suggested that this could be tabled to the next meeting.

Reports

Board Report (oral) – (Board Trustees)

Trustee Sargeant said that with regret the board accepted the resignation of two trustees. She commented that there are many ongoing graduation celebrations and as a trustee she finds them rewarding to attend and encouraged the attendance of others. She noted that there is a board budget meeting in July. She thanked everyone and wished an enjoyable summer.

Special Education Report- Principal Clarke

- Principal Clarke let the committee know that summer learning funding for students with special education needs was released since our last SEAC meeting. NNDSB will be moving forward to provide DLRT and EA support to both elementary and secondary students enrolled in summer learning programs. As well, LEARNstyle will offer summer camps in virtual format during July and August transition supports will also be available to schools wherein teachers, EAs and PSSP staff offer time and support to students requiring in-school transition activities in preparation for school start.
- Principal Clarke was able to confirm that the current temporary special education coordinator has successfully attained the Math Lead Teacher role for next year and will be working alongside Assistant SO Kim Pauli and her team. Also, for the fall of 2025, the team will be welcoming back one of our permanent Speech Language Pathologists.
- Principal Clarke indicated that funding for professional assessments exists now within the core education fund and that the Special Education Department will be in a hiring position for the funding for transition supports for students with special education needs.
- Principal Clarke recognized Chair Phillips for her guidance and support throughout her time with the NNDSB and presented Phillips with a parting gift of a 7 Grandfather Teachings hoodie and maple syrup purchased from Wasauksing First Nation.

SEAC Chair Report

In reference to her resignation and relocation, Chair Phillips warmly reflected on the enjoyable experience she had while her children were within the NNDSB school system. She remarked that the NNDSB has been transformative for both of her children. Her son, in particular, has had excellent experiences throughout his time as a student with NNDSB.

New Business

Next meeting: September 18, 2025.

Adjournment at 2:58 pm

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