

SEAC Meeting

September 24, 2025

Via Zoom and North Bay Board Room

Present:

Tim Graves, Superintendent of Education
Alison Clarke, Principal of Special Education
Stephanie Norrie, Executive Assistant
Louise Sargent, Trustee
Lisa Paradis, Spec Ed Coordinator – East & West Regions
Laura Hansman, Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children (OPVIC) (left at 2:15pm)
Kimberly Gignac, Special Education Coordinator – North Region
Chris Guillemette, Community Living North Bay (left at 2pm)
Leigh Armstrong, Community Living Parry Sound
Caroline Labreque, Nipissing First Nation (arrived at 1:33 pm)

Guests

Lana St. Louis, Mental Health Lead, NNDSB

Regrets:

Candy St. Onge, Almaguin Highlands Community Living
Tammy Adjoudj, Nipissing Down Syndrome Society

Land Acknowledgement presented by Alison Clarke

Called to Order at 1:04 pm

Agenda Approval

Motioned by Chris Guillemette, seconded by Leigh Armstrong. *Carried.*

Approval of the Minutes of the March 20, 2025, meeting.

Motioned by Chris Guillemette, seconded by Leigh Armstrong. *Carried.*

SO Graves commented on agenda items 6 and 7. These items refer to meeting notes, and notes do not need motions to approve. Discussion had taken place previously, so these items do not necessarily need to be on the agenda, though revisions would still be accepted.

Approval of the Notes of the June 19, 2025, meeting.

Motioned by Laura Hansman, seconded by Chris Guillemette. *Carried.*

Elections for Chair and Vice-Chair

Discussion regarding elections.

Elections for Chair

Call for nominations - Trustee Sargent declared an expression of interest from Candy St Onge; however, Candy had to send her regrets for this meeting. Principal Clarke explained that a committee member may nominate Candy in her absence.

Motion: That nominations be closed. Candy St. Onge is willing to take on the position of Chair.

Moved by Leigh Armstrong, seconded by Laura Hansman. *Carried.*

Announcement of the Chair

Motion: That Candy St. Onge be acclaimed as the Chair of SEAC for a one-year term, effective immediately and ending in June 2026.

Moved by Laura Hansman, seconded by Leigh Armstrong. *Carried.*

Elections for Vice-Chair

Call for nominations - Leigh Armstrong offered to be nominated for the position of Vice-Chair.

Motion: That nominations be closed indicating that Leigh Armstrong would like the position.

Moved by Laura Hansman, seconded by Chris Guillemette. *Carried*

Announcement of the Vice-Chair

Motion: That Leigh Armstrong be acclaimed as the Vice-Chair of SEAC for a one-year term, effective immediately and ending in June 2026.

Moved by Laura Hansman, seconded by Chris Guillemette. *Carried.*

Destruction of ballots – both positions were acclaimed, and there was no need for the use of ballots.

Business Arising from the Minutes

SEAC Engagement Survey

- Principal Clarke was tasked to create an engagement survey to gain feedback on how to increase SEAC committee engagement. An overview of the survey was presented, and feedback was welcomed. Chris Guillemette noted that she has found attendance challenging and would be interested in having the survey shared among participants. Trustee Sargent suggested that the survey could be redesigned so that members could instead select when they would be unavailable as opposed to when they are available. Trustee Sargent noted that it may be useful to gain attendance feedback annually. Principal Clarke noted that the meetings are preplanned and posted online so that more members can participate using the standing meetings.
- Action item: The SEAC Engagement Survey will be sent to the committee before the next meeting.

Standing Items

Community Partner updates

- Chris Guillemette shared that Community Living North Bay was notified by the District of Nipissing Social Service Administration Board that the DNSSAB would be taking over the

inclusion support program. CLNB staff laid off nine staff members, however five were rehired by the DNSSAB and will be transitioned by October 20, 2025.

- Leigh Armstrong shared that CLPS has been working with local schools, assisting with students' transitions to various new school configurations in Parry Sound.
- Laura Hansman – OPVIC has not held a meeting yet so there are no updates.

Correspondence received

- Letter dated January 21, 2025, from the Chair of Algoma District School Board SEAC re: concerns related to teacher training in special education facilities at faculties of education across Ontario.
- Principal Clarke said that the letter was received quite some time ago and recapped the response Chair Phillips received from Nipissing University, prompting the committee to discuss and consider a response. Trustee Sargent suggested that typically the SEAC committee does not typically send a reply to each piece of communication, but that the letter could be kept on file in the event that a direct request for a response was requested in the future. The committee has discussed the letter and decided to keep the letter on file, responding in the future as necessary, as suggested.

Reports

Board Report (oral) – (Board Trustee)

- There are three new trustees, John Arkwright, Jay Aspin and Krista Messenger. The Indigenous student trustee, Riley Trudeau has returned for a second term. Student trustee, Dev Bassi of Chippewa Secondary School, is also a new board member. The Parry Sound Build is still ongoing, and Trustee Sargent was pleased to confirm that students are in-person and looking forward to the 2025-2026 school year. Trustee Sargent will ask the board of Trustees if there is interest among the trustees in joining the SEAC committee.

Special Education Report- Alison Clarke

- NNDSB was able to provide summer learning support through Ministry funds for summer learning programming offered in coordination with the board's program team, Virtual Summer learning camps. Five programs were offered for students with special education needs, and in-person August transition supports to support successful transitions for students with special education needs. The camps covered subjects such as;
 - Social Coding (1)
 - Highschool Transitions (2)
 - Math (1)
 - Literacy (1)
- The mandate for the LearnStyle virtual summer camps is to remove barriers for students. 18 students participated from grades 3 to 10. Three secondary students participated, and 15 elementary students participated with regular attendance. LearnStyle surveys parents and recently highlighted some positive feedback, including parents noting that their children felt like they belonged during the groups, that they felt safe and that they made some new friends.

- Fifteen elementary and five secondary schools participated in August summer back to school transition support during the last two weeks in August, leading into September.
- On September 23, 2025, a fall Differentiated Learning Resource Teacher (DLRT) meeting was held wherein DLRTs and Administrators alongside members of the central special education team came together and participated in presentations on the following topics;
 - Speech and Language Referral Model in partnership with One Kids Place,
 - Supports for students with diagnoses transitioning to post-secondary school,
 - Assessments for placement purposes within a specialized class,
 - Mental health referrals,
 - Supporting student transitions using the transition plan within the IEP
 - Additional items essential for DLRTs to engage in their roles.
- Professional Development for Educational Assistants:
- This year, the Special Education Services team, through our multi-year strategic planning efforts, is eager to support learning centered around Individual Education Plans (IEPs), such as goal setting, more precise transition planning, modified and alternative programming. The team looks forward to continuing to use RISE, the student profile system, to a greater extent and contribute to some updates processes regarding NNDSB and Outside Agency partnership agreements. As well, the Special Education Department plans to support the system by promoting inclusion and barrier-free environments for our students with special education needs.

SEAC Chair Report

- Trustee Sargent thanked everyone for their participation and looked forward to Candy and Leigh's contributions as Chair and Vice-Chair going forward.

New Business

Sharing of PD Day Plans

- Principal Clarke gave an overview of Educational Assistants Professional Development Plans for September 26 and noted exciting new items such customized presentations developed specifically for this group on topics such as;
 - Universal Design for Learning Communication Strategies for All,
 - Demystifying Oppositional Behaviour,
 - Best Practices to Support Inclusion
 - Strategies and Supports for Students with Vision and Hearing Needs
- In these regional sessions, Educational Assistants will also participate in Behaviour Management Systems Re-Certification Training and learn targeted strategies developed to further support students with a wide variety of needs.

SEAC Schedule, Annual Agenda and Goals 2025-26

- Principal Clarke reviewed the annual agenda and welcomed feedback.
- Trustee Sargent pointed out the January agenda item of elections conflicts with the practice of holding elections in September.

- SO Graves clarified that there may have been an error in the wording of today's election motions with reference to the term and that elections normally correspond with the board's organization meeting. Options going forward would be
 1. to make a future motion to extend the term of chair and vice-chair,
 2. elections can be redone in January,
 3. leave the elections as they are, hold elections in September.
- Trustee Sargent suggested that it would make sense to change the elections to September to align with the school year. SO Graves agreed that the annual agenda could be changed to reflect moving elections to September.
- Trustee Sargent commented that the special education classroom virtual tour presentation that was presented last June was highly valued, and she would encourage seeing it as a standing item on the annual agenda.
- Action item: Principal Clarke will add the classroom virtual tour presentation to the May 2026 meeting agenda.

Partnership Protocol Discussion

- Principal Clarke reviewed the protocol of NNDSB entering into partnership agreements with outside agencies. Existing agreements are reviewed and renewed annually. Special Education coordinators play a fundamental role in facilitating the agreements and acting as a liaison between the external organizations and NNDSB. Lana St. Louis also acts as a liaison between the NNDSB and external agencies and has joined today's meeting to add perspective on the topic.
- Within the last couple of years, there has been an increase in private agencies seeking partnership agreements. However, challenges have occurred, such as finding space in schools, logistical concerns, privacy issues, administration, and communication protocols.
- SO Graves clarified that this conversation was not about partnerships with Not-For-Profit/Community Agencies or First Nations. There is a growing demand for NNDSB to provide space in schools to allow private practitioners to provide services and there is concern for the following;
 - Collective agreements for unionized employees need to be considered when outsourced work is also occurring within schools,
 - There have been inconsistencies noted in relation to professional conduct,
 - Increased pressure on administrators and staff to facilitate meetings,
 - The capacity does not exist to evaluate whether private practitioners are meeting necessary criteria to treat students.
- Lana St. Louis added that unlike agencies who have standard supervision and management policies in place, there is no way to screen private agencies in terms of their in-house management policies.
- Leigh Armstrong appreciated the concerns the board may have and weighed it against waitlists in the community. Families tend to move to private practitioners to seek treatment quicker. As a parent of NNDSB students, she appreciates the board keeping the safety of students as a priority.
- Lana St. Louis described the difference between not-for-profit and for-profit criteria from a mental health standpoint. What a student may experience therapeutically in a provider's office may not be appropriate for a school setting.

- Lisa Paradis noted that consistency and predictability may not transfer in terms of behavioral issues. Collaboration was also noted. For example, when a private assessment is completed and a need identified, there is no guarantee that NNDSB resources will automatically meet that need.
- Trustee Sargent asked if there is a protocol in place or if a new protocol needs to be put in place. She also brought additional privacy concerns forward.
- Principal Clarke shared that there is currently an agreement in place and put it to the committee to discuss what an improved agreement might be revised to include.
- Trustee Sargent suggested that the partnership protocol agreement be a standing item so that it can be revisited more frequently.
- Trustee Sargent requested the current protocol be shared with the committee and that Partnership Protocol Discussion return as a standing item for the next meeting.

Next meeting: October 22, 2025.

Adjournment at 2:33 but due to participants staggering exits, quorum was not met to call an adjournment motion.