

SEAC Meeting
Wednesday, March 25, 2026
Via Teams and North Bay Boardroom

Present:

Jay MacJanet, Director
Tim Graves, Executive Superintendent
Alison Clarke, Principal of Special Education
Stephanie Norrie, Executive Assistant
Chair Candy St. Onge, Almaguin Highlands Community Living
Vice-Chair Leigh Armstrong, Community Living Parry Sound
Kimberly Gignac, Special Education Coordinator – North Region
Lisa Paradis, Special Education Coordinator – East & West Regions
Laura Hansman, Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children (OPVIC)
Tammy Adjoudj, Nipissing Down Syndrome Society
Caroline Labrecque, Nipissing First Nation

Guests

Kim Jenkins, Special Education Coordinator (Temporary)
Principal Christopher Walkling, K-12 Student Achievement and Well-Being Principal

Regrets:

Chris Guillemette, Community Living North Bay
Caroline Couillard, Nipissing Special Education

Land Acknowledgement presented by Lisa Paradis

Called to Order at 1:05 pm

Agenda Approval

Motioned by Leigh Armstrong, seconded by Tammy Adjoudj. *Carried.*

Approval of the Minutes of the February 25, 2025, meeting.

Motioned by Leigh Armstrong, seconded by Jay MacJanet. *Carried.*

NEW BUSINESS

EQAO Presentation by Principal Christopher Walkling, K-12 Student Achievement and Well-Being Principal

Please see the attached document to review the presentation that Principal Christopher Walkling delivered.

Discussion:

Principal Walkling asked SEAC if when a student is in a modified program, several grades away from the grade level assessment, what expectations might the SEAC have? Should the Board consider exemptions to the assessment?

- Chair St. Onge asked if lower scores result in more funding. SO Graves explained that funding is based on a complex formula and that he would not expect an increase or decrease in participation by 5% to significantly impact funding.
- Chair St. Onge is in support of everyone participating and if there is an exemption, it should be considered with a high standard of qualifying students for the exemption based on a policy specifically created for this purpose. Director MacJanet said that it would also need to be based on a conversation with parents.
- Director MacJanet added that if the Board had shown that they are not meeting expectations, the Ministry may provide additional funding support to help with facilitating testing. Furthermore, he feels that the Board should be proud of the student participation rates for EQAO within the most recent years.
- Leigh Armstrong noted that the benefit of writing the test should be balanced with the emotional impact for the student and that exemption should be granted if writing may have a strong negative impact. The reason for exemption may be beneficial to have included in the data to best represent the students within the Board.
- Tammy Adjoudj added that it would be interesting to know more information regarding reasons for student exemption.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Budget Recommendations for 2026-2027 School Year

Be it resolved that the Near North District School Board SEAC makes the following budget recommendations to the Near North District School Board.

Motioned by Tammy Adjoudj seconded by Leigh Armstrong. *Carried.*

- Recommendation 1- The SEAC for the NNDSB supports increasing staffing levels for employee groups that have specialized qualifications to directly support students with special education needs (including, EAs and DLRTs). The SEAC also supports, at least, maintaining central staffing support personnel as aligned with the tiered model of support.
- Recommendation 2- The SEAC for the NNDSB supports additional funds be allocated to provide a consistent multi-disciplinary model and approach within schools, so that internal collaboration occurs formally within schools and so that external community agencies/partners have various opportunities to collaborate with school teams.
- Recommendation 3- The SEAC for the NNDSB supports having Differentiated Learning Resource Teachers in all schools in order to support school level needs.
- Recommendation 4 – The SEAC for the NNDSB supports the best possible allocation of central staff to support early and timely intervention, testing, professional assessments and specialized services (speech and language, hearing, sight, behaviour, Applied Behaviour Analysis) with equitable access across the regions.
- Recommendation 5 - The SEAC for the NNDSB supports increasing staffing levels, where possible, for Education Assistants, through retention and recruitment strategies across the Board to enable equitable and inclusionary practices.
- Recommendation 6 - The SEAC for the NNDSB supports the continued use of the model of Flexible Education Assistants in all regions to best reflect the changing and evolving needs of students.
- Recommendation 7 - The SEAC for the NNDSB supports innovative and evidence-based professional development of all staff and recognizes the importance of professional development topics, such as but not limited to social-emotional learning, neurodiversity and transition planning.
- Recommendation 8 - The SEAC for the NNDSB supports the acquisition of additional resources for secondary student programming in recognition of student learning losses and learning gaps.

STANDING ITEMS

Community Partner Updates

Nipissing Down Syndrome Society - Tammy Adjoudj shared that World Down Syndrome Day was March 21 and the association was able to effortlessly raise over \$3000 while hosting a large

event at One Kids Place. She thanked the Board for its support on behalf of the Nipissing Down Syndrome Society.

Community Living Parry Sound- a new staff member has recently been hired to help with the Family and Youth Services Worker. She continues to monitor the new JK-12 school developments in Parry Sound. Lastly, Leigh shared that she has also noticed an increase in the level of calls related to families seeking support for a multitude of reasons.

Correspondence Received

Correspondence received - Recurring Unmet Needs of K-12 Students with Disabilities/Special Education Needs Letter from Toronto District School Board SEAC Chair, David Lepofsky

- The members reviewed the letter and there was no further discussion.

REPORTS

Director's Remarks

The window for EQAO is open and teachers and principals are working to ensure students are as prepared as possible. The test is a snapshot of student learning and contributes to the story that represents daily learning in schools.

The minister is very adamant that the new JK-12 Building in Parry Sound will be ready for September. Work is ongoing, and a contractor is supervising daily work.

The Alouette Transportation strike is ongoing and negotiations continue. He added that some schools are significantly impacted by the strike and NNDSB is working to meet the needs of students via alternate methods while the strike continues.

Special Education Report

- Principal Clarke shared that the central Special Education team is currently engaging in the SEA (Specialized Equipment Allocation) and SIP (Special Incidence Portion) review and monitoring process with the Ministry of Education (MOE). One virtual session (March 10, 2026) occurred to date. The school visit sessions and the final virtual session are scheduled to occur on April 9 and 21, 2026, respectively. Compliance monitoring is occurring for all school boards for the Special Incidence Portion (SIP) and Specialized Equipment Allocation (SEA) over a four-year period. This has resulted in patterns and trends identified within the region, such as the noted increase in number of students with complex special education needs that require technology support, high needs equipment and additional human resources to ensure they are successful at school. The monitoring process has also provided an opportunity to communicate the needs of the Board, such

as increased access to or more flexibility to acquire specialized equipment from local vendors for students and the challenge of meeting SIP eligible students' needs given the current funding model.

- The central Special Education department hosted a virtual System Special Education Meeting on March 3, 2026 wherein administrators, resource teachers and special education classroom teachers joined to engage on various topics, including IEP and IPRC process and timelines, student transition plans within IEPs and updates from our Speech Language Pathology and Psychology teams. These meetings provide an opportunity to engage in PD with resource teachers, special education classroom teachers and administrators, so that a common understanding can continuously be developed in support of students and so that school teams are consistently engaging families in the process of IEP development, the IPRC process, etc. in accordance with MOE guidelines.
- The principal of Special Education has been connecting with school principals of schools that have special education classrooms regarding sharing a classroom presentation at the June SEAC meeting. There is interest in showcasing our programs, and we look forward to that June celebration item.

SEAC Chair Report

Chair St. Onge shared the employee who was hired recently had to take another position but looks forward to interviewing many new candidates.

Next meeting: April 22, 2026

Motion to Adjourn at 1:55 pm

Motioned by Leigh Armstrong, seconded by Tammy Adjoudj. *Carried.*