

SEAC Meeting
Wednesday, May 27, 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
Tammy Adjoudj, Nipissing Down Syndrome Society
Chris Guillemette, Community Living North Bay
Kimberly Gignac, Special Education Coordinator – North Region
Caroline Labrecque, Nipissing First Nation
Chair Candy St. Onge, Almaguin Highlands Community Living
Vice-Chair Leigh Armstrong, Community Living Parry Sound
Laura Hansman, Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children (OPVIC)

Guests

Emily Samual, Principal of Safe Schools, Early Years and Leadership Development
Seija Van Haesendonck, Superintendent of Business
Kim Jenkins, Special Education Coordinator (Temporary)

Regrets:

Lisa Paradis, Special Education Coordinator – East & West Regions
Caroline Couillard, Nipissing Special Education

Land Acknowledgement presented by Principal Clarke

Called to Order at 1:02 pm

Agenda Approval

Motioned by Caroline Labrecque, seconded by Chris Guillemette. *Carried.*

Approval of the Minutes of the April 22, 2026 meeting.

Motioned by Caroline Labrecque, seconded by Tammy Adjoudj. *Carried.*

Roll Call

Committee members took this opportunity to introduce themselves and the organizations that they represent.

NEW BUSINESS

Budget Presentation by Seija Van Haesendonck, Superintendent of Business

Please see the attached document to review the presentation that Seija Van Haesendonck, Superintendent of Business delivered.

Discussion:

- Vice-Chair Leigh Armstrong noted that it was encouraging to see the change towards permanent funding within Special Education.

Safe Schools Presentation by Principal of Safe Schools, Early Years and Leadership Development

Please see the attached document to review the presentation that Principal Emily Samuel delivered.

Discussion:

- Chris Guillemette asked if the data within suspensions and expulsions is differentiated between students with exceptionalities and students without.
 - Principal Samuel confirmed that the data is tracked by NNDSB, and the Ministry also tracks exclusion data. Furthermore, exceptionalities are factored into behavior management plans prior to suspension or expulsion. Principal Samuel noted that the media trend of increased exclusions due to causes such as lack of staff in special education classrooms is not seen within NNDSB.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Special Education Plan 2026-27

Principal Clarke began by thanking the committee for their time on completing the survey, from which feedback is used to update and amend the 2026-2027 Special Education Plan.

Feedback from the survey included the following:

Feedback #1

Special Education Plan Reference:

“NNDSB recognizes that external agency partnerships are collaborative arrangements that support publicly funded and/or government-mandated services for students. Agencies may

provide services, including assessments, only as approved by NNDSB, and only for specific students or programs for which referral and consent requirements have been met.”

Feedback:

- This statement you are referring to is within the school property?
- Parents can still make decisions to have external agencies involved without NNDSB approval?

Action Item(s) Resulting from Feedback #1:

Principal Clarke recommended that explicit wording be included to indicate that partnership protocol agreements are put in place to allow outside agency personnel to enter and work within NNDSB schools.

Special Education Plan Reference:

"Private practitioners' access to NNDSB schools is not the preferred model and will be considered only in rare and exceptional circumstances, where no reasonable alternative exists and where NNDSB and the parent/guardian agree necessity has been demonstrated. Any approval is discretionary, time-limited, supervised, nonprecedential, and revocable at any time."

"Classroom observations by external agencies or private practitioners are generally not permitted. In lieu of direct observation, NNDSB Principals can facilitate the completion of objective measures, such as rating scales and checklists, provided by external agency or private practitioner. Where observations are required to inform programming, they may be conducted in collaboration with NNDSB staff at the discretion of the Principal"

Feedback:

- The two above statements - is there a why behind these two statements, as it is noted in several places throughout the documents about collaboration with community agencies/practitioners?
- It is mentioned also about feedback from parents around concerns or issues can be done on the SEAC website.
- Also feedback on the Education Plan, which is brought back to SEAC.
- Has this been done in the past? I don't recall hearing or seeing anything being brought forward.

Additional Action Item(s) Resulting from Feedback #1:

Principal Clarke recommended that the NNDSB SEAC have an avenue for feedback from the parent/school community. This model is in place within other boards and would allow for valuable input from further sources.

Feedback #2

- The link below is a Special Education Guide that has been put together by Community Living Ontario. Not sure if you have seen this guide, it has been really well organized for parents/guardians to access. (Home - Community Living Ontario)
- Also in the Special Education Plan Draft Revised May 2027 the following statement is found; **The Near North District School Board is committed to a philosophy of integration while providing a range of options to meet the needs of exceptional students.** Under General Model for Special Education
- This feels like a very passive statement. Is there an opportunity to look at something stronger and more committed? More about what the board will do versus what it believes. The word “Philosophy” can be interpreted as non-action. I am not familiar with the appropriate terminology used within the school system or by the board, but reviewing the statement or word “philosophy” would be appreciated if that is of interest to other members of SEAC and the board.
- Suggested wording: **The Near North District School Board is committed to providing inclusive learning environments for students with exceptionalities. The Board supports the integration of students into regular classroom settings whenever such placements effectively meet their educational needs. A continuum of programs, services, and specialized placements is maintained to ensure that each student receives the level of support required for their individual learning needs. Placement decisions are made in collaboration with parents/guardians and are based on the best interests of the student, consistent with provincial legislation and Board procedures.**

Action Item(s) Resulting from Feedback #2:

Principal Clarke was in support of the new, modernized language and thanked the member for the draft. She suggested that the draft better aligned with the SEAC stance on inclusive learning environments. When prompted, the majority of the committee was in agreement to adopt the suggested wording within the special education plan.

Motion: Be it resolved that the Special Education Plan updates are approved as amended and forwarded to the Near North District School Board with recommendation for approval.

Motioned by Tammy Adjoudj, seconded by Caroline Labrecque. *Carried.*

Additional Discussion:

- SO Graves explained the intention behind the Special Education Parent Guide and the Special Education Plan. There is a Ministry requirement tied to the special education plan, and this document must follow templates as directed by the Ministry. The Parent Guide is intended to be updated and revised to ensure language is used to best engage with the parent audience.
- Director MacJanet commented that this update is in line with creating a culture of transparency. Parent feedback and engagement are essential, and updating the Parent Guide is a good avenue to obtain additional feedback and further engage with parents. He also announced that the Student and Parent Support Office for the Board will be in place by June and that this is yet another option for parents to engage and provide feedback.

Motion: That the SEAC recommends updating The Parent Guide (to include language geared to the parent audience).

Motioned by Chris Guillemette, seconded by Tammy Adjoudj. *Carried.*

STANDING ITEMS

Community Partner Updates

- Community Living Almaguin- Candy St. Onge shared that a magic show is scheduled for this evening for Community Living Month. The show is free for families that want to participate. There is also a golf tournament scheduled for June 7th.
- Community Living North Bay- Chris Guillemette shared that Community Living Month is May. A Family Fun Night is scheduled on May 29th from 4:30 to 7:30 at the Wallace Site. Everyone is welcome to participate.
- Nipissing Down Syndrome Society – no updates
- OPVIC- no updates
- Nipissing First Nation- no updates

Correspondence Received

Correspondence received - N/A

REPORTS

Director's Remarks

- Director MacJanet announced that many important changes are happening within NNDSB. Notably, SO Graves is retiring in the fall.
- Emily Samuel has been appointed to the role of Superintendent of Human Resources and Gillian Kajganich has also been appointed as a Superintendent and has excellent student achievement experience gained from her years as a principal.
- Superintendent Kim Pauli will be taking on SEAC within her portfolio and is passionate about her work with Special Education.
- Additionally, NNDSB is in the process of hiring support staff, teaching and learning coaches, and began additional work with the special education department to develop a succinct and routine process when children are struggling academically, behaviorally or mentally.
- More detailed plans will be shared in the first week of June.
- The new Parry Sound High School is set to open June 8, 2026, and the Director is excited to welcome secondary students, with elementary students following along in September.
- White Woods is also undergoing restructure wherein the grade seven and eight students will be joining Northern Secondary. An info night is scheduled for June 17th.

Special Education Report

- Principal Clarke began by sharing that the Special Education Department has been preparing the NNDSB final list of Specialized Equipment Allocation (SEA) purchases for the 2025-26 school year. This information was due to the Ministry of Education via an electronic submission process before May 22, 2026. NNDSB's submission is complete. Principal Clarke recognized all the work that goes into this process by various members of the Special Education team, including the coordinators, admin support and principal) and noted that to create an accurate report requires team communication, collaboration and coordination.
- Summer learning program funding details are expected to be shared with school boards soon.
- A new vacant position exists within our Speech Language Team. A 1.0 FTE temporary Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) position is currently posted.
- Woodland Public School will be sharing a virtual tour of the Skills for Early Learning Class at the June SEAC meeting,

SEAC Chair Report

- Community Living Parry Sound- Vice-Chair Leigh Armstrong shared that she has observed lot of happiness in the community surrounding the long-awaited opening of the new Parry Sound High School building.

- Additionally, a yard sale is scheduled for May 30, 2026 for Community Living Month.
- A new employee was hired in April, and the organization is pleased with the additional staff.

Next meeting: June 10, 2026

Motion to Adjourn at 2:19 pm

Motioned by Candy St. Onge, seconded by Tammy Adjoudj. *Carried.*