



DURHAM DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

NOTICE OF MEETING

EDUCATION FINANCE COMMITTEE PUBLIC SESSION

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

Chair: Carolyn Morton

Vice-Chair: Donna Edwards

Recording Secretary: Kristin Talbot

DATE: Tuesday, April 15, 2025

TIME: 6:30 p.m.

LOCATION: Board Room with Virtual/Hybrid Option

ATTACHMENTS: Agenda

Copies to:

All Trustees

Director of Education

All Superintendents



Durham District School Board
Education Finance Committee Meeting
PUBLIC AGENDA

Tuesday, April 15, 2025
6:30 p.m.
Board Room with Virtual/Hybrid Option

	<u>Presented By</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Call to Order	Chair Morton	Verbal
2. Land Acknowledgement	Chair Morton	Verbal
3. Declarations of Interest	Chair Morton	Verbal
4. Motion to Approve the Agenda	Chair Morton	Verbal
5. Motion to Approve the June 5, 2024 Education Finance Committee Public Meeting Minutes	Chair Morton	1 - 2
6. Public Deputations		
a. Carrie Boisvert and Kristine Brown Representing CUPE 218		3 - 14
b. Tara Culley and Jessica Wells Representing Special Education Advisory Committee		15 - 21
7. Written Submissions		
a. Shane Stagg and Kristen Bennett Representing Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation, D13		22 - 24
8. Draft Budget Process	David Wright	Verbal
9. Other Business	Chair Morton	
10. Next Public Meeting – May 13, 2025		
11. Adjournment	Chair Morton	



Durham District School Board

Education Finance Committee Meeting

DRAFT MINUTES

A public meeting of the Education Finance Committee was held on Wednesday, June 5, 2024.

1. Call to Order

Chair Morton called the meeting to order at approximately 7:01 p.m.

Committee Members Present:	Trustees - Michelle Arseneault, Tracy Brown, Emma Cunningham, Donna Edwards, Stephen Linton, Kelly Miller, Carolyn Morton, Shailene Panylo (virtual), Christine Thatcher, Student Trustee - Ben Cameron, Kayla Hoare (virtual)
Committee Member Regrets/Absence:	Trustees - Deb Oldfield, Jill Thompson, Student Trustee Neha Kasoju
Officials Present:	Director Camille Williams-Taylor; Associate Directors Jim Markovski and David Wright; Superintendents Georgette Davis, Erin Elmhurst, Mohamed Hamid, Margaret Lazarus (virtual), Andrea McAuley, Heather Mundy, Stephen Nevills (virtual), Martine Robinson, Kandis Thompson, General Counsel Patrick Cotter (virtual), Human Rights and Equity Advisor Devika Mathur (virtual)
Staff Present:	Lisa Bianca, Head of Facilities Services Melissa Durward, Senior Manager of Finance Jennifer Machin, Senior Manager of Finance
Recording Secretary:	Kristin Talbot, Executive Assistant

2. Land Acknowledgement

The Durham District School Board acknowledges that many Indigenous Nations have longstanding relationships, both historic and modern, with the territories upon which our school board and schools are located. Today, this area is home to many Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island (North America). We acknowledge that the Durham Region forms a part of the traditional and treaty territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, the Mississauga Peoples and the treaty territory of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation. It is on these ancestral and treaty lands that we teach, learn and live.

3. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

4. Approval of the Agenda

MOVED by Donna Edwards

That the agenda be approved as presented.

CARRIED

5. Approval of the May 27, 2024 Education Finance Committee PUBLIC Meeting Minutes

MOVED by Michelle Arsenault

That the minutes be approved as presented.

CARRIED

6. Consideration of the 2024-2025 Draft Budget

Director Williams-Taylor noted Appendix B to the report is to provide further information and clarification to Trustees on questions that were raised at the May 27, 2024 Education Finance Committee meeting.

Associate Director Wright reviewed the information in Appendix B to the report.

A discussion ensued and questions were responded to.

MOVED by Donna Edwards

SECONDED by Christine Thatcher

It is recommended that the Education Finance Committee recommend to the Board of Trustees that the 2024-2025 draft budget containing total revenues of \$1,220,903,513 and total expenses of \$1,220,903,513 be approved as presented.

CARRIED

Chair Morton expressed her appreciation to Associate Director Wright, Superintendent McAuley, Jennifer Machin, Melissa Durward, Lisa Bianca and to all others for their contributions in drafting the 2024-2025 budget.

7. Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Carolyn Morton
Chair of the Committee

Care For³ Newcomer Children (CNC)

For more than 30 years, CNC child care has provided a reputable, high-quality, child-centered environment that fosters each child's holistic development and supports family settlement. We ensure every child has equal opportunities to grow and learn in a safe, healthy space. Through diverse multilingual and multicultural activities, we nurture each child's passion for learning.

CNC is funded by Immigration,
Refugees & Citizenship Canada
(IRCC)



"Building a better future would not have been possible without the CNC program"

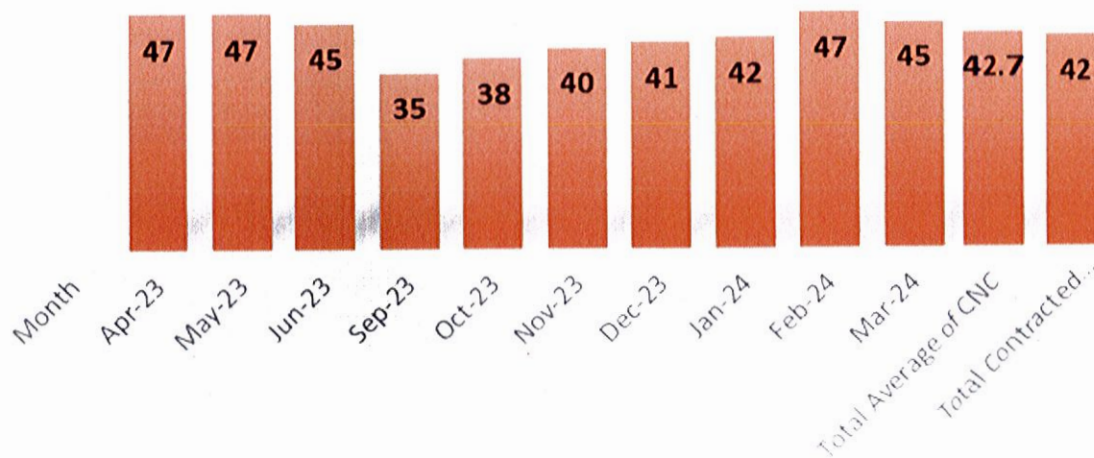
Parent Engagement

We support families in their settlement journey by encouraging active parent involvement in family literacy activities, preschool graduations, Mother's Day celebrations, and circle activities. This helps them navigate challenges such as language barriers, separation anxiety, culture shock, and cultural differences.

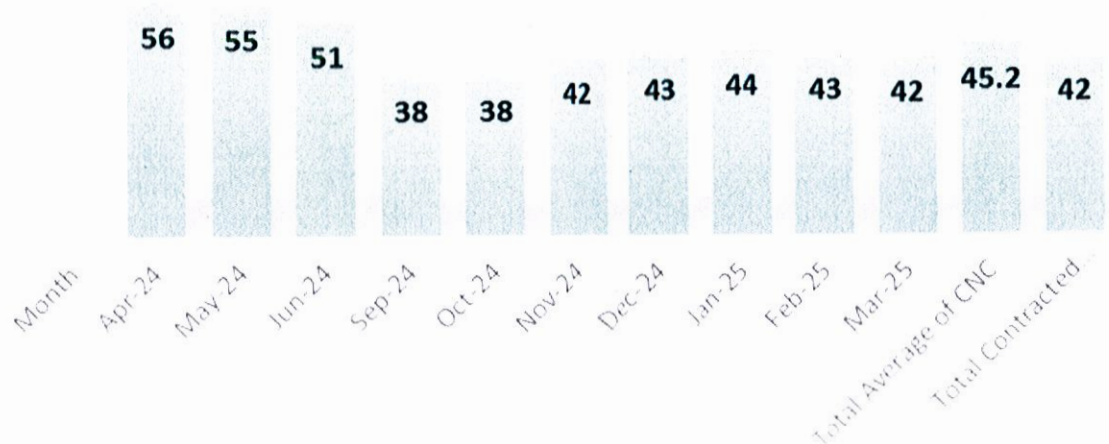
Care For⁴ Newcomer Children (CNC)

The Oshawa program has historically had higher enrollment, a trend that has remained evident in recent years. For the past two years, enrollment has not only maxed out but even exceeded the contracted capacity. At the start of this school year, Oshawa reached full capacity, and it has maintained a waitlist for most, if not the entire, year.

Total Registered Children/Oshawa
2023/2024



Total Registered Children/Oshawa
2024/2025



Care For Newcomer Children (CNC)

Care for Newcomer Children is vital for the Durham District School Board to support, as it aids immigrant families' integration, enables parents to join the workforce, and gives children a strong foundation for future success—ultimately benefiting the Canadian economy and society.



IRCC aims to remove barriers to accessing settlement services by providing support services, such as CNC child care.

Supporting Separation Anxiety

Separation from a parent can be especially emotional and even traumatic for an immigrant or refugee child. Our onsite CNC program offers a gradual transition, helping children adjust in a supportive environment.

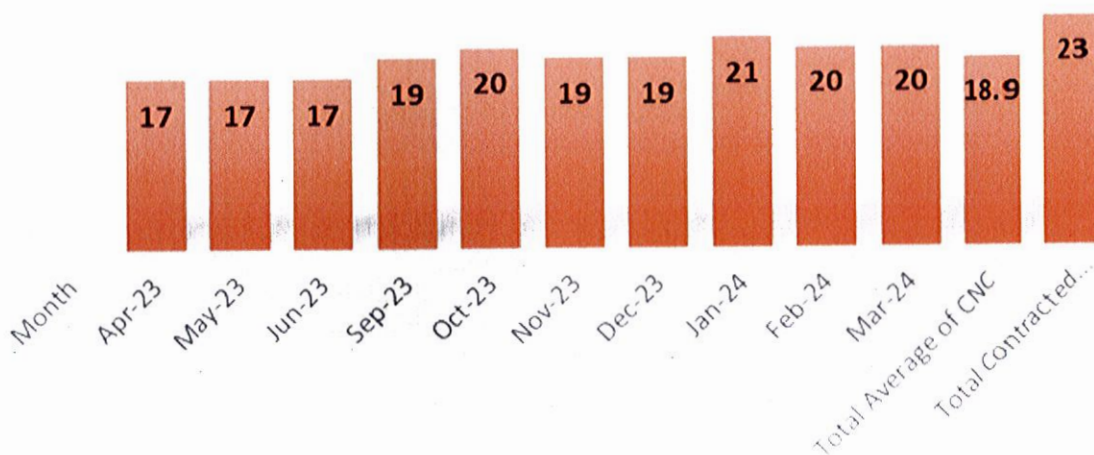


For many immigrants, the settlement journey begins with English classes—a daunting step made even harder by leaving their child with someone unfamiliar for the first time. Providing care at the same location offers reassurance, allowing parents to focus on learning while staying connected to their children.

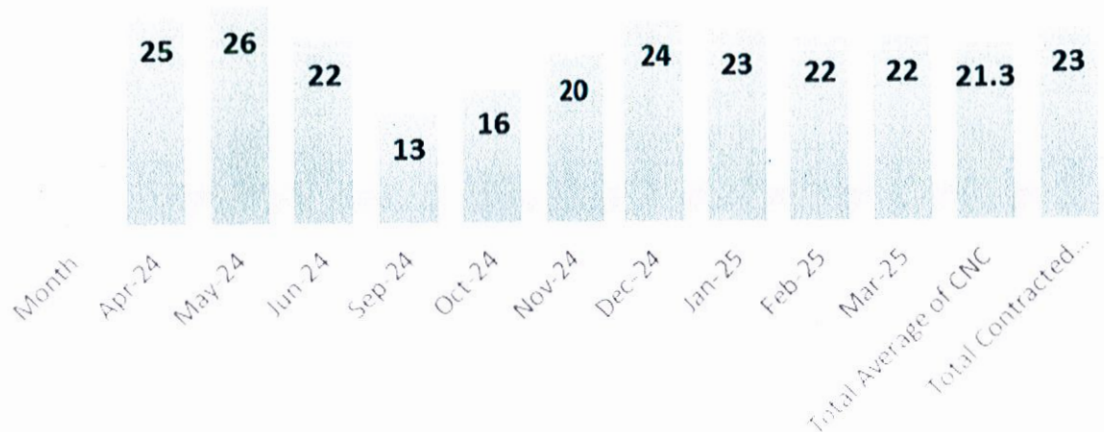
Care For⁶ Newcomer Children (CNC)

The Pickering location may have experienced lower enrollment immediately after COVID, however it has seen a steady increase in registered numbers over the past few years, ultimately reaching its maximum contracted capacity by the end of this fiscal year.

Total Registered Children/Pickering
2023/2024



Total Registered Children/Pickering
2024/2025



Care For⁷Newcomer Children (CNC)

The positive effects of the CNC program are undeniable!



“without this program, many of our students will face significant barriers to attending school, as they simply cannot afford traditional child care and do not have family to rely on for support”.

(LINC Instructor)

“By maintaining this vital program, we are not only supporting education but also fostering inclusion, empowerment, and economic stability for families who are working hard to build a better future.”

(CNC staff)

“CNC has been an absolute lifeline for me and my children”

Eliminating the CNC program will create hardships & barriers.



Supporting English Language Learners



To Whom it may concern,

My name is Kristine Brown, and I have been working within the Care for Newcomer Children (CNC) program since 2000. As a Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE), I entered this role feeling confident in my ability to understand and support the needs of young children. I had a good foundation of child development, program planning as well as providing a safe, supportive learning environment for children of diverse backgrounds. However, shortly after I started, I realized that much of what I had practiced as an RECE within traditional child care settings didn't directly translate to the newcomer context.

It was a humbling experience—one filled with challenges, trial, error, reflection and personal growth. I clearly remember the day that I reached the turning point- an AHA moment that reshaped my entire ECE approach. I realized, but more importantly, I understood that the CNC program is not just about childcare, it is truly unique. It is about building trusting relationships with the entire family, understanding that each family comes with diverse cultural backgrounds and beliefs, families carry the weight of trauma, culture shock, separation anxiety and the uncertainty of being in a different place. It is imperative that unique care is provided to support their individual settlement journey. It became clear to me that supporting newcomer children required me to have a different lens- one rooted in cultural sensitivity, flexibility and deep empathy.

I am confident that the CNC program provides children with opportunities to grow and learn at their own pace. The program meets the children exactly where they are—emotionally, developmentally, and linguistically—while also providing a welcoming inclusive environment that supports their potential. Over the years, I have witnessed firsthand how much a child has developed and grown through the CNC program, and the essential skills they have gained to support a smooth transition into the junior kindergarten stream. These successes don't happen overnight- they are the direct result of the specialized care and culturally sensitive approach that CNC provides.

It is disheartening that the decision to eliminate this program was made without any consultation with frontline CNC staff- those of us who know the children, their families, and their diverse needs. The lack of consultation about how the program could continue, even on a smaller scale, undermines the unique support services that only CNC-trained staff can provide.



Kristine Brown <kristine.brown@cupe218.ca>

Concerns About the Closure of the Childcare Program for Newcomers

TAIBA MOHIBZADA [REDACTED]
To: KRISTINE BROWN <kristine.brown@cupe218.ca>

Good morning Kristine,

I hope this e-mail finds you well. I am writing to express my deep concern about the recent decision to close the childcare program for newcomers, which has been an invaluable resource for both the families and the community at large.

The closure of the childcare program for newcomers is a significant concern for both families and the wider community. As a childminder worker, I had the privilege of looking after the children of newcomers while their parents, particularly mothers, focused on learning English and settling into their new lives. It was truly fulfilling to be part of these children's early years, ensuring their safety, happiness, and engagement while their parents worked hard to build a better future.

The closure of the program means a crucial support system will be lost. Women who depended on this childcare service will no longer be able to attend language classes or pursue education and integration efforts. Without this vital support, many mothers will face a difficult decision: stay home to care for their children or leave them in less-than-ideal conditions to study. This will create a barrier to their personal growth and hinder their full integration into the community. Learning English is essential for better job opportunities, accessing social services, and participating in community life. However, without childcare assistance, these goals will be much harder to achieve.

In addition, the closure of the childcare program highlights a broader issue faced by many newcomer families—the challenge of balancing family responsibilities with personal and professional development. Removing this program poses a significant impact on these families.

As someone who has been involved in the process, it's hard to imagine the negative impacts this decision will have on these families, especially on the women who are working hard to create a better life for themselves and their children. It is crucial that we acknowledge the importance of these programs and strive to guarantee their continuity in supporting newcomer families on their path to integration and success.

I would appreciate it if the Union could consider advocating for the continuation of this program or finding alternative solutions to support these families.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I look forward to hearing from you and hope we can find a way to continue offering this essential service to our community.

Taiba



Kristine Brown <kristine.brown@cupe218.ca>

My testimonial, I hope it's not too long.

agnieszka.slabosz@cupe218.ca <agnieszka.slabosz@cupe218.ca>
To: kristine.brown@cupe218.ca

Sat, Feb 22, 2025 at 7:51 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm very sad that the LINC CNC childcare will be cancelled. Surely mothers of very young children deserve a chance to attend school and learn a new language. It will help their children transition into the school system better. That for sure was my experience.

My name is Agnes and I want to share my experience as a former student of the LINC program and as mother of a child of its childcare program. When we came to Canada, my and my daughter's English was limited. It was a bit scary to think about how we could build a life here without being able to communicate with other people. The immigration service informed us to take a language assessment. This suggestion is how our journey began. My husband and I started language classes and our daughter had access to childcare on school premises. We felt safe. We felt hopeful. We made long lasting friendships. I began working in CNC childcare and earned my ECE diploma. My daughter as an adult is working as a high school teacher. We pay our taxes and vote. We have good jobs and actively contribute to Canadian society. We call Canada our home. I strongly believe that our ability to contribute to Canadian society is connected to our ability to access the LINC program. We couldn't have accessed it without the childcare program.

It is concerning to think about the lack of language support for incoming immigrants, especially when Canada's immigrant population is growing. Learning English is the first step for new immigrants to become integrated into Canadian society. I think all immigrants should have the same access to the LINC program so that they could be comfortable in being active participants of Canadian life. Should childcare not be provided, I can't help but wonder what will happen to all those families who rely on childcare to attend these English classes. Learning English is the first step in allowing immigrants to contribute to Canada's society. This contribution is very important to maintaining Canada's political, economic and cultural future. I hope that you understand this importance, too.

Sincerely,
Agnes Slabosz



Kristine Brown <kristine.brown@cupe218.ca>

Testimonial

mahalakshmi.balasundaram@cupe218.ca <mahalakshmi.balasundaram@cupe218.ca>

Tue, Feb 18, 2025 at
4:05 PM

To: kristine.brown@cupe218.ca

Hi Kristine, here is my testimonial.
Thanks for your support.

My name is Maha Bala, and I have had the privilege of serving as a dedicated employee at CNC for 15 years. Throughout my time here, I have passionately worked in the education sector, assisting kindergarten children in their educational journey, helping them learn, grow, and thrive. I've also supported immigrant families by caring for their children, ensuring they felt welcomed and supported during challenging transitions.

It is deeply disheartening and unfair that the continuing education program is being permanently shut down after all these years of service. The impact this program has had on both the children and the community has been immeasurable, and to see it come to an abrupt end is truly unfortunate.

This program has been more than just a job for me; it has been a calling. Over the years, I have seen firsthand the positive changes it brought to families, especially those new to this country. The relationships built and the support given were invaluable.

To see this chapter close after 15 years of dedication feels like a huge loss, not just for me personally but for the entire community that relied on this program for the education and care of their children. It is my hope that decision-makers take into account the positive, long-lasting influence this program has had and reconsider the closure, allowing it to continue supporting future generations.

Sincerely,
Maha Bala



Kristine Brown <kristine.brown@cupe218.ca>

Testimonial

1 message

Rajitha Soori <rajethasoori@outlook.com>

Wed, Mar 12, 2025 at 2:39 PM

To: "kristine.brown@cupe218.ca" <kristine.brown@cupe218.ca>

Dear DDSB Trustees,

I'm writing to share my experience with the LINC daycare and to ask you to reconsider closing it. This daycare has been an absolute lifeline for me and my children. Without it, I honestly don't know how I would have been able to attend my LINC classes and work towards a better future for my family.

From day one, the staff made my children feel safe, cared for, and supported. They didn't just watch the kids, they taught them, nurtured them, and helped them grow. My children has learned so much in this daycare, from social skills to early learning that set them up for success in school. Knowing my children was in a loving and educational environment gave me the peace of mind I needed to focus on learning English and adjusting to life in Canada.

Losing this daycare isn't just an inconvenience, it's devastating. Parents like me rely on it to be able to study, improve our language skills, and work towards building a stable life here. Without it, many of us will have no choice but to put our education on hold or stop

Arisa Tierney

69 Barchester Cres., Brooklin ON L1M 2L6

(905) 999-3792

arisa.tierney@ddsb.ca

February 26, 2025

Board of Trustees

Durham District School Board

400 Taunton Rd. E., Whitby ON L1R 2K6

Subject: LINC Daycare (CNC) Closure

Dear Ms. Carolyn Morton, Ms. Christine Thatcher, Ms. Deb Oldfield, Ms. Emma Cunningham, Ms. Kelly Miller, Ms. Linda Stone, Mr. Mark Jacula, Ms. Michelle Arseneault, Ms. Shallene Panylo, Mr. Stephen Linton, Ms. Tracy Brown,

My name is Arisa Tierney, and I have been a LINC/ESL Instructor at Durham Continuing Education since 2016. I am writing this letter to inform you of the importance of the daycare (CNC program) for the LINC program from an instructor's point of view. I have many reasons to prove the CNC program provides valuable services and plays an important role in the LINC program.

Firstly, I would like to mention that the majority of our students are immigrants from Asia and the Middle East. Especially for those students, Canadian culture is very different from those of the countries where they are from. As an instructor, I teach them basic Canadian lifestyle, including Canadian holidays, celebration, values and manners. I always emphasise that different ethnic groups, languages and cultures coexist in Canada, and people must respect each other. In order to maintain peaceful coexistence, it is important to understand what people in Canada do. This helps people have a good relationship with neighbours, friends and teachers at children's school. It is significantly important for parents with school-aged children to have this understanding *before* their children start school, so that they would know what is expected at schools in Canada. I would also like to mention that having the knowledge of Canadian culture helps everyone from elementary school teachers to EAs tremendously. An EA friend of mine told me that it is a challenge to make the immigrant parents understand Canadian culture if the parents had never learned or experienced it. In my LINC classroom, students read and learn about the history and customs of Canadian culture. Through the CNC program, parents can *experience* Canadian culture. For example, children can dress up for Halloween or enjoy art and crafts for Thanksgiving. In this way, the CNC program provides precious and meaningful cultural experiences for new immigrants and their families.

Secondly, immigrants need English education especially when their children are young. Many parents know how often children get sick and need to see a doctor. Parents need to know how to make a medical appointment, describe symptoms, and obtain and provide medication accurately. Parents with young

CNC Testimonial for closure

March 19th, 2024

To whom it may concern,

I think there are some significant differences between the newcomer who had experience in CNC and who doesn't have any previous experience.

They have a better understanding of following directions and regulations of the classroom.

They showed more social skills than those who didn't have any experiences. They performed well in tracing and writing their names and letter sounds. They practised fine motor skills which help them to complete the activities in kindergarten. As CNC programs have age appropriate physical, social, literacy and numeracy activities in their program, the children who had experience in this program can show better performance.

Thanks

Shanaz Azad

RECE

Seneca Trail Public School

Oshawa

DDSB

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)



Deputation to
DDSB Education Finance Committee

April 15, 2025

Guiding Principles



All Students Can Succeed

- The Education Act on Special Education and Regulations made under the Act require school boards to provide exceptional pupils with special education programs and services that are appropriate in highlighting their strengths and support for their needs.
- The Durham District School Board including the Board of Trustees has an obligation to ensure our most vulnerable students receive the necessary services and supports to lead them to opportunities for joy, choices and success.
- The Ontario Human Rights Commission requires that we acknowledge, honour, respect and value each student within the system including honouring neurodiversity, differing abilities, disabilities and intersecting identities, to provide equitable opportunities to succeed through inclusive practices, individualized plans and accessible resources.

2025-2026 Funding



- There are currently 13 127 students within the DDSB that are supported through an Individual Education Plan with many different needs. This number grows when including those receiving specialized services, for example through DDSB regulated health teams, aligned with service commitments that are embedded in Ministry expectations and reflected in the DDSB Inclusive Student Services Special Education Plan.
- Ministry of Education funding: The Special Education Statistical Prediction Model (SESPM) is being updated with 2021 census data, slowly phasing out the use of 2006 census data over a 5-year period (This calendar year will be year 2 of 5).
- While SEAC is hopeful this will help to better reflect the population and demographics of our students in the Durham region, we also recognize that over the 5-year period, it is expected that the predicted growth in Durham will continue to outpace the data being used within the funding model, leaving us in the same relative position as before. The DDSB has been declared the fastest growing district in the province and this has us concerned about funding keeping pace with student needs.

On-Going Work to Support Inclusion



Concerns for 2025-2026

- SEAC wishes to highlight that systemic ableism and other forms of discrimination are deeply embedded within the education system and structures.
- This discriminates against, disadvantages, and causes harm to students with neurodivergence, different abilities, disabilities and other intersecting identities (for example, based on ancestry, race, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, creed/religion, socioeconomic status, etc.).
- We must continue to strive for a truly inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students and staff.
- We must also recognize that equity does NOT mean all students are treated the same. We must also continue to allow for all students to access learning through multiple pathways that play to each student's strengths and provide support for their individual needs through differentiation of instruction and learning techniques

2025-2026 Core Education Funding



Concerns

- **Transportation Funding:** There is continued stress on our transportation system and the amount of funding provided is not sufficient for student needs. Access to transportation services, where required, is an essential service for our students and supports a student's fundamental right to be able to access school. We cannot allow the lack of transportation to become a barrier for students.
- **Maintenance of small class placements:** We must continue to support our students who cannot succeed in a mainstream classroom environment and strive to provide alternate placements so that every student can reach their true potential.



SEAC's Commitment

SEAC does and will continue to :

- Advise and make recommendations to the Board and Trustees on any matters affecting programs and services of exceptional students.
- Acknowledge the importance of working collaboratively with parents/caregivers, educators and community partners to create effective support systems for students with accommodation requirements.
- Request its members work with their respective provincial organizations to lobby the government to affect positive change.
- Advocate on behalf of exceptional students by providing timely feedback to the Ministry of Education, MPPs, and the Ministry Advisory Committee for Special Education (MACSE) on funding and policy concerns.
- Remain committed to supporting and advocating for an inclusive educational experience where all students, regardless of their individual challenges, can be successful



Thank You

On behalf of SEAC, we thank the Trustees and Board for their consistent efforts to find innovative approaches throughout the organization and working together with SEAC to support students & their families.

Association for Bright Children – Eva Kyriakides – Current SEAC Chair

Autism Ontario (Durham Chapter) – sensaRAneb Burrell

Durham Down Syndrome Association – Tara Culley

Easter Seals Ontario – Dr. Allyson Eamer

Grandview Family Advisory Committee – Seana Haley

Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region – Rowin Jarvis

OPVIC Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children – Charmaine Brown

Sawubana Africentric Circle of Support – Jennifer McLaughlin

Early Years Consortium – Vera Mercier/Jody Chapman

Members at Large – Jessica Wells & Elizabeth Daniel

Education Finance Committee Meeting Submission

Who We Are

We are writing this submission on behalf of OSSTF Professional Student Services Personnel union. PSSP is comprised of the board's social workers, child and youth support workers, psychological services staff, speech-language pathologists, interpreters, and intervenors. Our roles involve supporting elementary and high school staff and students in a variety of different ways which include, but are not limited to, consultation and collaboration with school teams, direct instruction, supporting families, in addition to having many other responsibilities.

Rationale

The volume of students with complex developmental, behavioural, communication, and mental health needs in our school system is increasing rapidly. There are currently many challenges that we face in trying to support our schools and students, much of which is beyond our and the schools' control. One of the main barriers we face is that it is increasingly impossible for educators to implement the evidence-based strategies and interventions recommended by professional staff due to the complexity and volume of student needs, lack of training for working with students with a variety of needs, and lack of adequate staffing. Schools are struggling to maintain consistent staffing due to the stressful conditions and burnout teachers and EAs are experiencing, work-related injuries while responding to students in crisis, not having enough SERT and educational assistant positions, and supply shortages. These factors compound the challenges educators face in implementing strategies that have been recommended. Many EAs are moving from one student to another throughout the school to respond to student escalations, without resolving the crisis to which they were originally attending, not to mention having enough time to support the implementation of evidence-based antecedent and skill building recommendations from the school team (PSSP staff). The lack of funding is making it increasingly difficult to support our schools and students.

Students who require augmentative communication support often demonstrate behaviour as a means of communication. Educator modelling of augmentative communication systems is required throughout the day in order for these students to learn to use their systems to communicate effectively. In the current educational system, mainstream educators are unable to provide the amount of individualized support required to honour

these students' human right to communicate. We feel strongly that inclusion without adequate support is negligence.

A consequence of the failure to provide adequate support to meet student needs is an increase in escalated behavior. These conditions have an impact on staff and students and negatively affect the learning environment, along with student and staff safety. Escalated behaviour is the product of the anxiety experienced by students with different needs and their engagement in those behaviours impacts on their dignity and mental health, which often leads to social isolation and exclusion. We are concerned that exceedingly dysregulated behaviour is being normalized in classrooms across our system. We echo the sentiments expressed in ETFO's recently released document titled "Promises Unfulfilled". "Our students deserve better, and it is incumbent upon our governments and education systems to ensure that all children in Ontario are provided with every tool and opportunity to thrive."

Student supports offered through agencies outside the school system is limited and there are often long waitlists for the therapeutic and counselling services that do exist. Some parents do not have access to these resources due to financial barriers. This reality causes further strain on our educational system.

Additionally, educators are not afforded adequate training opportunities that would better prepare them to program for and teach the students with more complex profiles in their classrooms. Occasional teachers and EAs are often not able to access training that is available to permanent staff.

Due to the current ISS funding levels, small class placements at the junior, intermediate, and high school levels are prioritized. Given that research shows that communication skills, including oral and written language, behavioural supports, stabilize in the primary grades, small class offerings need to be expanded to provide early intervention of foundational skills for a greater number of primary students. Transportation for students attending small class placements also needs to be guaranteed to ensure that students can access these placements.

Our Recommendation

We acknowledge that the current crisis related to special education in our public schools across Ontario is due to inadequate funding from the provincial government. In the 2024-2025 DDSB Budget document, it states that, "... it's crucial to recognize the substantial

funding gaps that exist, which could potentially affect student achievement and well-being within the district.”

We are urging the Education Finance Committee to review the budget judiciously to find efficiencies that will allow for the allocation of the maximum funding possible for ISS staffing and supports in all schools to ensure that classroom environments are conducive to fostering DDSB’s strategic priorities, including student learning, connection, and well-being. Funding for special education, given the current crisis, should take priority over funding for capital projects and board initiatives that are not required urgently.

Furthermore, we encourage the DDSB, in its budget document, to provide a narrative including the special education funding it receives, the amount that it spends, and an estimated cost of what would be required to provide adequate service to students.

Supporting information

Promises Unfulfilled: Addressing the Special Education Crisis in Ontario,

ETFO document from March 2025

https://www.etfo.ca/news-publications/publications/promisesunfulfilled_addressingthespecialeducationcrisisontario

Article about Principals’ Concerns about Mental Health Crisis

<https://peopleforeducation.ca/principals-sound-the-alarm-about-students-mental-health/>