

# HWDSB

PIC Meeting  
 April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026  
 Minutes

**Members Present (19):** Adriana Baker, Kristina Collier, Kailey Crowther, Andrea Hamilton-Coulson, Mohamed Khamis, Heather Lambert-Hillen, Amanda Levesque, Amanda Lloyd, Tim Louks, Amanda Neale-Robinson, Heidi Oglesby, Mike Palma, Michele Quinn, Christine Sandor, Danielle Schwalm, Emma Simpson, Cindy Stranak, Leigh Ann Sutherland, and Terry-Ann Virtue. Trustees Kathy Archer, Amanda Fehrman and Abby Zaitley.

**Regrets (11):** Matthew Adams, Mani Bhandari, Kruti Desai, Cheryl Hue, Sue-Anne MacQuarrie, Meghana Oza, Vanessa Ozer, Leora Sas Van Der Linden, Meagan Shanahan, Damian Kalu Ude and Lisa Veloce.

| Agenda Item   | Decision/Action Taken   | Person(s) Responsible  |
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| Call to Order   | The meeting was called to order at 6:36 PM.   | Amanda Lloyd   |
| Land Acknowledgment   |   | Paul Denomme   |
| Approval of the Agenda  | <p>The Chair acknowledged the Days of Significance: Yom HaShoah / Holocaust Remembrance Day (Judaism) and Vaisakhi / Khalsa Day (Sikhi).</p> <p>Amanda Levesque/Tim Louks moved that the agenda to be approved.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>CARRIED.</b></p>   | Heidi Oglesby  |
| Declaration of conflict of interest   | None.   | Amanda Lloyd   |
| Sharon Stephanian, Superintendent of Special Education, Inclusion and Equity and Julie Anderson- System Principal- Special Education, Inclusion and Equity- An Overview of Specialized Services | <p>Sharon Stephanian began the presentation by acknowledging the leadership team and the partnership members. The Superintendent provided an overview of the students served by Special Education, Inclusion and Equity Department:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students with an Individual Education (IEP) who require special education supports and services account for 15% of the total student population across the Board.</li> <li>• Students with a Behaviour Support Plan and/or a Safe Intervention Plan.</li> <li>• Collaboration with other departments (e.g., Program, Facilities, Transportation, Safe Schools, ESL, and Social Work) to support students.</li> <li>• Students who have an identification and IEP (Communication, Intellectual, Physical, Behaviour and Multiple).</li> <li>• Students who have a non-exceptional IEP.</li> </ul> | Sharon Stephanian, Julie Anderson and the guest Judy Colantino, SEAC Chair |

- Students who have a BSP (identified or non-identified).
- Students who have a SIP (identified or non-identified).
- Students with complex medical needs
- Students with externalizing behaviour who access AIM and ExSL.

The Superintendent spoke about how the Special Education, Inclusion and Equity Department serves students. This work is guided by dignity, full inclusion, and individualization, with a focus on providing accessible education for students with disabilities. Key principles include:

- Centering students with disabilities
- Alignment with the HWDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan
- Use of disproportionality data to inform practice
- Respect for dignity
- Individualized accommodations
- Inclusion and full participation
- Support for each school through a multidisciplinary team (MDT) of professionals, including K–12 Consultants, Child and Youth Care Practitioners, Designated Early Childhood Educators, Speech and Language Pathologists, Principals etc.
- Support for all students who access special education
- Student and parent voice
- Responsive and collaborative practices
- Direct services to students
- The Special Education team supports students from Kindergarten to age 21

Principal Anderson spoke about planning for students entering Kindergarten and the process of supporting their transition to school. Key elements discussed included:

- The entry-to-school process, including an information night held in January and February.
- Partnerships with Ron Joyce and the Ontario AtHome initiative

Special Education classes are accessed through the IPRC process and a placement decision made with family support.

Information can be accessed through the following sources:

- Your child’s school
- The HWDSB website under Special Education
- The Special Education Department
- SEAC (Special Education Advisory Committee)
- Elected officials of the Board
- Local association voting members

**Some of the questions/suggestions/comments:**

Abbreviation clarification for the following:

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|  | <p><b>CYCP:</b> Child and Youth Care Practitioner<br/> <b>ASL:</b> American Sign Language<br/> <b>SEAC:</b> Special Education Advisory Committee<br/> <b>IPRC:</b> Identification, Placement, and Review Committee.</p> <p><b>Access Athletics</b> for elementary and secondary students at Nora Frances Henderson Secondary School will take place in late May to celebrate students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and to promote inclusion, and school community engagement.</p> <p><b>The Autism Carnival</b> is a free, inclusive community event held annually and will take place on April 25, 2026, at 20 Education Court.</p> <p><b>The Community Transition Network (CTN)</b> is a collaborative partnership that supports students with special education needs and their families. One of CTN's key initiatives is the annual <i>Pathways to Transition</i> event, held on April 30, 2026, at Nora Frances Henderson Secondary School.</p> <p>Q: Does the Board support transition to postsecondary education?</p> <p>Yes. Learning Resource Teachers, in collaboration with guidance counsellors or special class teachers, develop transition plans that identify goals, family aspirations, and community-based supports. Planning focuses on student hopes and future pathways, including work experiences for students approaching age 21. Supports also include the Community Transition Network (CTN) and a Ministry-funded transition navigation role that works with postsecondary institutions such as Mohawk College and McMaster University to support students with disabilities during the transition process.</p> <p><b>Q: How often are Special Education class locations reviewed?</b></p> <p>A: Class locations are reviewed annually through the IPRC process.</p> |   |
| <p>Allison Reynolds, Senior Manager, Communications &amp; Community Engagement and Carly Holmstead-Calder, Communications Officer-The New Website Launch</p> | <p>Manager Reynolds and Carly Holmstead-Calder provided an overview and a sneak peek of the new HWDSB website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with a Canadian vendor on this major project over the past year.</li> </ul>   | <p>Alison Reynolds and Carly Holmstead-Calder</p> |

- Gathering feedback from parents, staff, principals and vice-principals, and trustees on what they are looking for in the new website.
- Old vs. New Website
- The old Board website had many options, colors, widgets, and content areas, making it challenging to navigate. The new website offers a more organized and reliable user experience, with improved whitespace, accessibility, contrast ratios, and a cleaner, modern design.
- The platform creates a more cohesive and predictable experience across schools, the Board, and departments, benefiting families, staff, and students. All elementary and secondary schools will share the same top-level structure and applications.
- Key features include timely information boxes (e.g., commencement details), customizable school-level content, calendars, news, announcements, stories, and standard footers. Office administrators can schedule news and announcements. The site is more mobile-friendly, supports easy language switching, and includes an enhanced search function.
- Providing training to administrators, principals, and vice-principals on how to update the new website.
- The software launches at the end of the month, followed by a firm launch in late April to inform families and the community.

**Some of the questions/suggestions/comments:**

**Q: How many ad boxes per page?**

There can be up to four.

**Q: How will website maintenance work at the school level?**

The new website is very user-friendly. A help widget on the side of the screen allows users to search questions and provides step-by-step guidance for adding content. Some schools may use a shared Excel document that staff populate weekly. There is also an option to schedule posts and set expiration dates.

**Q: Will the school calendar change on the new website?**

The calendar will remain in the same location and will include filtering options.

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|                                   | <p><b>Q: Does the new website connect to School Messenger?</b><br/>No, they are two separate systems.</p> <p><b>Q: Who is the intended audience for the website?</b><br/>Families and communities.</p> <p><b>Q: If I am subscribed now, will I still be subscribed when it goes live?</b><br/>Approximately 37,000 subscribers will receive communication asking them to confirm whether they would like to move over, giving them the option to agree or opt out.</p> <p><b>Q: Will the new website include social media?</b><br/>There will be links to social media channels in the footer, but no live feeds.</p> <p><b>Q: Will PIC have a standalone site?</b><br/>Yes.</p>  |              |
| Approval of Minutes               | <p>Adriana Baker/Tim Louks moved that the PIC Minutes from March 10, 2026, be approved.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>CARRIED.</b></p>   | Amanda Lloyd |
| Business Arising from the Minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bylaw Review Subcommittee</b><br/>The Chair to provide a list to Karolina of members who volunteered to serve on the Bylaw Review Subcommittee.</li> <li>• <b>Membership Committee Formation</b><br/>The Chair advised that only one person has volunteered so far. Anyone interested is encouraged to email the PIC email address. The committee will meet virtually in the evening for approximately two hours to review applications.</li> <li>• <b>Reapplication Requirement</b><br/>The Chair has emailed and spoken with members who need to reapply for membership. Members who do not reapply will not be eligible to serve on a subcommittee due to a conflict of interest. Applications will remain open until the end of May. Communication will be sent to principals this week to share this information. Membership is a two-year commitment, and the Membership Committee will review applications with a focus on equal ward representation.</li> </ul> | Amanda Lloyd |
| Reports                           | <p>A) <u>Trustees- Trustee Fehrman and Zaitley</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Student Trustees for 2026-2027</b></li> </ul>  |              |

Cristian Farrugia, Westmount Secondary (Student Trustee)  
Caitlyn Gong, Ancaster High (Student Trustee)  
Charlise Hillen, Sherwood (Shakowennakarátats)

- **Prom Project 2025/2026**  
A great success, helping approximately 500 students.
- **Bill 101**  
Putting Students' Achievement First, was announced by the Ministry of Education. Families are encouraged to review the proposed legislation to understand its potential impact on public schools.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**  
At the last Board meeting, a motion was passed to begin the scoping phase for developing an artificial intelligence policy.
- **The HWDSB Student Leadership Summit**  
The summit held on April 17, 2026, brought together students from across the Board to engage in leadership development, collaboration, and student voice.

B) Hamilton-Wentworth Council of Home & School Associations

The President, Heather Lambert-Hillen provided the following updates:

- Next meeting on April 16, 2026
- **Resolutions to OFHSA**  
Resolutions will be brought forward to the Ontario Federation of Home & School Associations (OFHSA) to support upcoming changes, not only from the Ministry but also those identified within the school communities. These resolutions will proceed through the Annual General Meeting, taking place on May 3, 2026, during the annual conference. At that time, a new Board of Directors will be elected, and we are hopeful to see Hamilton-Wentworth Home & School representation, reflecting the communities we serve.
- **Advocacy and Nutrition Programs**  
The HWCHSA supports many school communities seeking changes following federal announcements related to school nutrition programs. Many Home & School members volunteer within these programs, and HWCHSA continues year-round advocacy.
- **Website Transition**  
HWCHSA recognizes the transition to the new

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|             | website and is ensuring that the organization is appropriately represented.   |              |
| Reminders   | <b>PIC Meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May 12, 2026, 6:30-8:30 pm</li><li>• Education Centre/MS Teams</li></ul> | Amanda Lloyd |
| Adjournment | Heidi Oglesby/Amanda Levesque moved that the meeting be adjourned.<br><b>CARRIED.</b><br>The meeting adjourned at 8:37 PM.          | Amanda Lloyd |