

Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting

October 16, 2023

Leadership Report

Learning Innovation and Equitable Outcomes

Louise Sirisko, Associate Director, Learning Innovation and Equitable Outcomes
Nandy Palmer, System Superintendent, Special Education & Inclusion

Special Education and Inclusion Goals for the 2023-2024 School Year - Staff Development

Staff engage in several types of professional learning opportunities throughout the school year to help them better serve students with special education needs. These learning opportunities include compliance training such as the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), Supporting Children with Prevalent Medical Conditions, and mandatory learning such as the Individual Education Plan (IEP) Strategy and Chairing Identification and Placement Review Committee (IPRC) Meetings. Other professional learning opportunities are school-specific, based on the goals of the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

Over the next two years, staff will focus on the following four areas for professional learning:

1. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples(UNDRIP)
2. Inclusion (anti-ableism), Equity (anti-oppression) and Well-Being;
3. Learning Conditions; and
4. Universal Design for Learning, Differentiated Instruction and Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy.

The Special Education and Inclusion Department will continue to create coherence and alignment of special education and inclusion practices, programs and structures across the TDSB to foster more inclusive environments for students with special education needs by focusing on the following areas:

- Challenging and Dismantling Oppressive Structures;
- Capacity Building;
- Changing Mindsets; and
- Communication and Engagement.

These focus areas are interconnected and reflect the need for shared responsibility and shared accountability in serving students with special education needs, and indeed all students.

Professional Learning

To support coherence and alignment and consistency of special education and inclusion practices, and to build capacity, a number of professional learning opportunities have been offered to staff at all levels since the start of the 2023-2024 school year.

The following sessions, which align with the Professional Learning section of TDSB Special Education Plan were specifically offered to school and system leaders:

- **Special Education for Newly Appointed Administrators** – This session was held in August for all newly appointed Vice Principal and Principals and provided an overview of Special Education and Inclusion practices.
- **Coordinators, Consultants and Central Team Welcome to 2023-2024** – To launch the school year, central special education staff continued their learning focused on critical reflective practice as it relates to their roles in special education and supporting the system.
- **Drop-in Office Hours for Administrators** – Learning Centre Special Education Centrally Assigned Principals will continue to hold monthly drop-in hours for Administrators to answer any questions they may have on leading special education at their school. Each month will also feature a micro learning opportunity on a specific topic.
- **School-based IPRC Principal Chair and Committee Member Training** – This annual training took place on October 11 and 12 and provided principal Chairs with an understanding of their role and responsibility in leading school-based IPRCs.
- **PA Day Professional Learning Opportunities for Support Staff** – Sessions were offered to Support Staff to develop skills in supporting students with special education needs such as: *ABCs of ABA: Using Basic ABA Strategies in the Classroom; Positive Reinforcement; Structuring Unstructured Time; Behaviour Prevention and Supporting De-Escalation; and Effective Strategies to Support Students Who Have an Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) Device.*

Assistive Technology

Students and educators have access to a wide variety of assistive technology programs to support students in accessing learning. Programs can be accessed by any web-enabled device without the need for software installation, and can easily be used at home and at school. Accessing programs this way also supports students with special education needs who are accessing the 1:1 Student Device Program. Some examples of assistive technology programs available across the TDSB include Read & Write which has built in features to help support students with increasing speed and productivity of writing. Orbinote has tools that can help create accessible materials and can support comprehension and fluency. WeVideo can support students with tools to demonstrate their understanding in a variety of ways using video and audio. Mindomo can support students with organizing their thoughts and ideas using mind maps and other built-in multimedia tools.

Please see the [TDSB Assistive Technology](#) website designed for TDSB families, students and staff for more information on these assistive technology programs.

Removing Barriers for Students with Disabilities Ministry Grants

Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy (OT/PT) Services, in collaboration with Special Education and Inclusion, were successful in being awarded two ministry grants through their “Removing Barriers for Students with Disabilities” funding opportunity for the 2023-24 school year.

Grant 1: UDL in MID Intensive Support Programs

The initiative is intended to support students enrolled in Intensive Support Programs (ISPs) with Mild Intellectual Disabilities (MID). These classrooms have received limited Tier 1 and 2 supports from OT/PT Services due to human resource limitations. However, their urgent concerns pertaining to safety/accessibility and/or significant sensory/regulation challenges have received timely and comprehensive Tier 3 supports from the OT/PT team to ensure ongoing equitable and inclusive services for students with disabilities throughout the Board. This proposed initiative will provide MID ISP educators with:

- Professional development on best practices to promote an inclusive, neurodiversity-affirming educational experience that bolsters mental health and well-being, a sense of belonging, and accessible inclusion;
- Strategies to modify the environment, pedagogy, and educator understanding bolstering a neurodiverse affirming school experience;
- Delivery of education through the OT/PT team who possess long-standing subject-matter knowledge in supporting, understanding, and conceptualizing functional and practical programming for students with intellectual disabilities; and
- Provision of funds for physical resources to be implemented in the classroom/school space to foster and support the implementation of a transformed neurodiverse-affirming, accessible, and inclusive school experience.

Grant 2: This is How I Roll – Pilot Project

This pilot will serve to initiate inquiry and identify needs that would substantiate and inform the work for the next steps within a larger project. Students with disabilities are frequently advised to self-advocate, but are seldom provided with the knowledge base, education, and opportunities to practice said skills. This pilot will focus on:

- Assessing the needs of students with disabilities by centring their voices and soliciting their input and feedback;
- Introducing participating students to the ideas and concepts of disability pride in efforts to bolster their own understanding of their personal priorities, goals, and needs;
- Centring student voice to identify gaps within their educational experiences that preclude their self-advocacy skills;

- Intimately support student participants in meeting their needs in bolstering self-advocacy through collaborative support from TDSB OT/PT services, other professional support services (i.e. child and youth services, psychology, social work, speech language pathology), and Special Education and Inclusion; and
- Leverage learnings from student voice to inform further development of resources to support educators in ensuring programming is comprehensive and supportive in bolstering self-advocacy skills for students with disabilities through the Board.

ONSIS Data (Attachments)

ONSIS data from the 2022-2023 school year (October 2022) for elementary and secondary students has been included in the attachments to this report.

Update on SEAC Motion

SEPRC (Special Education Program Recommendation Committee)

At the Regular Meeting of the Board on September 27, 2023, the Board passed a resolution that the SEAC motion around SEPRC be referred to staff to communicate with SEAC the Board's plan for reviewing the Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC) process and the direction of the TDSB with regard to this process upon completion of the review.

The SEAC motion was as follows:

- 1) That the Board ask the Director of Education to eliminate recent restrictions on access to SEPRCs, which currently limit SEPRC availability only to students with extremely complex medical needs, so that instead parents of students with any special education needs who wish to utilize the SEPRC Process before their child's enrollment in TDSB will be allowed to do so, to enable them to arrange for necessary special education supports, identification, and/or placement to be in place for their child's first day of school in TDSB.
- 2) SEAC further recommends that the SEPRC section of the Special Education Plan be appropriately amended to reflect the changes set out above; and
- 3) SEAC further recommends that the Board ask the Director of Education to promptly process any outstanding SEPRC requests, and, if necessary, for families seeking the SEPRC Process, to expedite SEPRC/IPRC processing before, on, or very shortly after the first day of school in September..



October is Learning Disabilities Month

The Learning Disabilities Associations of Ontario will be marking Learning Disability (LD) Awareness month throughout the month of October. 1 in 10 people in Ontario are impacted by Learning Disabilities (LDs), where 35% of students with LDs will drop out of school and 62% of all students with LDs will be unemployed at least a year following graduation. The goal of the campaign is to raise awareness and reduce stigma to allow individuals with LDs to get the support they need to reach their potential.

For more information, please visit the [Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario website](#).

October is ADHD Awareness Month


ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder affecting both children and adults. It is described as a “persistent” or ongoing pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that gets in the way of daily life or typical development. Individuals with ADHD may also have difficulties with maintaining attention, executive function (the brain’s ability to begin an activity, organize itself and manage tasks), and working memory. The mission of ADHD Awareness Month is to educate the public about ADHD by disseminating reliable information based on the evidence of science and peer-reviewed research.

For more information, please visit the [ADHD Awareness Month website](#).



IPRC Data - September 2023

September IPRCs	
Learning Centre 1	14
Learning Centre 2	19
Learning Centre 3	17
Learning Centre 4	14
IPRCs Completed	64
IPRC Cumulative since August 2023	
IPRC Cumulative since August 2023	106

 Psychological Services Assessment Statistics					
September 2023					
Month-By-Month	LC1	LC2	LC3	LC4	Total
Completed	6	18	18	28	70
Cumulative					
Completed	6	18	18	28	70
In Progress	88	104	99	119	410
Waiting*	177	65	191	270	703
Removed	5	7	12	14	38
Total Referrals**	276	194	320	431	1221

*99% of total waitlist are comprehensive/DK assessments, and 1% are gifted assessments

**98% of total referrals are for comprehensive/DK assessments, and 2% are gifted assessments