1.  **Special Education and Section 23 Department Update**

Executive Superintendent Uton Robinson

SEAC Meeting of Thursday, December 7, 2017

# Universal Design for Learning

Helpful documents and their website link have been shared with staff, as part of an introduction to Universal Design for Learning. The resources are from the National Center for Universal Design for Learning, available at: <http://www.udlcenter.org/>.  While Professional Learning Sessions have been running on a smaller scale since February 2017, there will be many more opportunities available in 2018.  In these sessions, participants will learn about the set of three primary principles (i.e., representation, expression, and engagement) that guide planning and delivery of instruction. These will also include assessment strategies to support all learners and how they apply to a variety of learning environments.

# 2. After School Leisure Program

Following up on the November Update, the following letter is being distributed to parents/guardians of students in Junior and Intermediate grades who are identified with Autism Spectrum Disorder, informing them about the new Ministry-funded after school program being offered by TDSB starting in January:

“Welcome to an exciting opportunity to participate in a newly funded after school program for students grades 6-8 with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) called ***Doing* *What I Love: At Home, At School and In the Community!*** This is a Ministry funded after school program that offers an opportunity for students to develop, build and enhance their skills through leisure activities.

A key component of the program is to learn individualized leisure/recreation activities based on the child’s interest. Activities will be co-taught by “experts” in the leisure activities supported by qualified teachers who will reinforce Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Instructional Methods throughout the sessions with students. The program offers simultaneous sessions for parents/guardians that include instruction in leisure activities and strategies being taught to the child in order to practice these leisure activities at home and in the community. Parents will also be provided with information regarding the benefits of leisure activities and how it supports their child’s strengths and challenges (e.g., reducing anxiety, overall health benefits, increasing opportunity for engagement in community etc.).

One of the great things about this program is that parents/guardians have the opportunity to participate alongside their child. Parent/Guardian and child can participate in one hour sessions, once a week for 6 weeks. We invite school aged siblings to attend to provide an opportunity for this to be a family event. In addition, child care will be provided for non-school aged children. The program will run for 6 weeks from January 17 to February 21, 2018 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the locations listed below.

Participants are invited to sign up for only **one location**.

* Learning Center 1 – Hollycrest Middle School – 630 Renforth Drive, Etobicoke
* Learning Center 2 – Charles H Best Middle School – 285 Wilmington Avenue, North York
* Learning Center 3 – Buchanan Public School – 4 Buchanan Road, Scarborough
* Learning Center 4 – Nelson Mandela Park Public School – 440 Shuter Street, Toronto

Unfortunately **transportation cannot be provided**, so we ask for your commitment to bring your child and attend all sessions with them. Families will have a unique opportunity to access a Leisure Coach to bridge the gap between after school, home and community.

If you are interested, please fill out the attached application and return it to your child’s school or teacher by **XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX**. Depending on the number of responses received, students may be selected through a lottery process. This program provides your child with an excellent opportunity to get involved in leisure activities at the school and in the community. The first session will begin on Wednesday, January 17, 2018.”

# 3. Rebranding of Section 23 Programs – Inclusion and Anti-Oppression

Section 23 students experience institutionalized oppression. To effect change in attitudes, planning is underway to offer three years of mandatory training to TDSB leadership (similar to that conducted by the Aboriginal Education Centre). These training sessions would include:

* Student voice of lived experiences
* Process of consent for students to participate in a student forum, live or on video.
* Safety and respect – how to keep these in balance.

Plans have focused on anti-oppression and ending stigma.

**Year 1 Educational**

* Presenting to Superintendents and Principals. at each Learning Centre in a 2-part series, as part of meetings that are already happening
* Hosting an event during Mental Health Week, in collaboration with TDSB Social Workers
* Producing an online video for use in administration compliance training
* Ongoing submissions to System Leaders’ Weekly and Direct Line about Section 23, the benefits and the routes for student access.

**Year 2 Experiential**

* Experiential and including students’ voice throughout
* Program tours
* Include administrators in agency sponsored training sessions

**Year 3 Sharing**

Sharing the positive experiences – Providing articles for TDSB good news stories, incorporating rebranding and positive publicity

# 4. Individual Education Plan Consultation Letter

The 2015 Individual Education Plan consultation letter accompanies this Department Update. Staff is asking SEAC to review it and provide suggestions for improvement.

# 5. Parent Brochures

One of SEAC’s recommendations was to improve communication with parents, providing important information about Special Education in accessible formats and in jargon-free, plain language. The department previously created a number of information brochures on special education topics and received feedback from SEAC and others about their content being too complex and full of educational jargon. Included with this Department Update are revised drafts of the content planned for the creation of new and hopefully more parent-friendly brochures, on the following topics:

* Individual Education Plan
* Identification Placement and Review Committee
* In-School Team and School Support Team
* Parent Concern Protocol

Before we proceed further, SEAC members are invited to their provide input for ensuring the brochures are parent-friendly, easily understood and contain the information that answers parental questions. This can form a topic for conversation at a SEAC meeting or SEAC input can be submitted through email and collated by the SEAC Liaison.