

Approved Minutes

**Name of Committee:** Special Education Advisory Committee

**Meeting Date:** October 16, 2023from 7:06 p.m.– 9:14 p.m. (Hybrid)

**Chair:** Jean-Paul Ngana

**Vice-Chair:** Michelle Aarts

A meeting of the Special Education Community Advisory Committee convened on October 16, 2023, from 7:06 p.m. to 9:14 p.m. at 5050 Yonge Street, with Jean-Paul Ngana presiding.

**Attendance:**

**Members**:

Melissa Rosen Association for Bright Children (ABC)

Julie Diamond Autism Society of Ontario (Toronto Chapter)

Leo Lagnado (Alternate) Autism Society of Ontario (Toronto Chapter)

Richard Carter Down Syndrome Association of Toronto (DSAT)

Aliza Chaqpar Easter Seals Ontario

Steven Lynette Epilepsy Toronto

Nora Green Integration Action for Inclusion in Education and Community

Diane Montgomery (Alternate) Integration Action for Inclusion in Education and Community

Guilia Barbuto Learning Disabilities Association Toronto District

Aline Chan (Alternate), Community Living

David Lepofsky Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children (OPVIC)

Dana Chapman (Alternate) Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children (OPVIC)

Bronwen Alsop VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

Stephany Ragany (Alternate) VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

Beth Dangerfield CADDAC – Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada

Nerissa Hutchinson Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support

Trustee Michelle Aarts (Ward 16) – Vice Chair

Saira Chhibber (LC1)

Jean-Paul Ngana (LC2) - Chair

Jordan Glass (LC2)

Kirsten Doyle (LC3)

Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof (LC4)

Jana Girdauskas (LC4)

Tracey O'Regan Community Living Toronto

Stephanie Ragany

Trustee Zakir Patel (Ward 19)

Trustee Liban Hassan (Ward 6)

**Regrets**

Andrea Roach, Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education

**Staff**

Louise Sirisko, Associate Director, Innovation and Equitable Outcomes

Nandy Palmer, System Superintendent, Special Education and Inclusion

Alison Board, Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education

Effie Stathopoulos, Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education

Katia Palumbo. Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education

Susan Moulton, Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education

Wendy Terro, Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education

Mun Shu Wong (Audio/Video); Erin Pallet (Audio/Video Assistant)

Elizabeth Chalmers, Administrative Liaison (SOE)

Lianne Dixon. TDSB SEAC Liaison

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| Item | Discussion | Action Items/Recommendation |
| Land Acknowledgement | Chair/Vice Chair | The Vice Chair read the land acknowledgment. |
| Approval of Agenda | The Chair asked Members if there were any new items to be added to the agenda.  | Moved to approve by Steven Lynette Seconded by Leo LagnadoApproved |
| Conflicts of interest | The Chair asked Members if there were any conflicts of interest to be declared | No conflicts of interest were declared |
| Approval of Minutes from September SEAC Meeting |  | Moved to approve by Melissa RosenSeconded by Nora GreenApproved |
| 1. Action Log Update
 | The Chair requested that staff update/review items on the Action Log | SEAC (All members) Google drive had been shared with SEAC members prior to the meeting. The Action Log was shared and reviewed. |
| 1. Autism Ontario – Member Update
 | Leo Lagnado had previously brought forward a discussion about the movement of students in ISPs. He shared that staff from Special Education and Inclusion, and System Superintendent Nandy Palmer, were able to answer questions and provide guidance on how to respond to parent questions. He shared that the conversations were very collaborative, and thanked staff and System Superintendent Nandy Palmer. | No further action needed. |
| 1. Developing Action Plan - Facilitated Discussion

Leadership Report  | **Developing SEAC Action Plan**Associate Director Sirisko thanked members for adding information to the google doc. She shared highlights from associations, including:* Parental involvement, educator training (application of professional learning), IEPS and how they are written and how they support the program of a student, exclusion or access for learning and ensuring there is a standard level of care and service from one school/class to another.

**Leadership Report**Discussion took place around SEPRC, Staff Development Goals, PA Day Professional Learning, Assistive Technology, Removing Barriers for Students with Disabilities Ministry Grants, ONSIS Data, IPRC and Psychological Services Data, and Accessibility of Google. October was recognized as ADHD Awareness Month and Learning Disabilities Month.System Superintendent Nandy Palmer discussed the purpose of highlighting points from the Leadership Report, noting that the meeting is live streamed, and members of the public do not have access to all of the information sent to members by email. It is the Board's obligation to present a summary of the Leadership Report. Key points need to be highlighted at the meeting for the public. System Superintendent Nandy Palmer shared the PowerPoint presentation about the topics listed above. | **Action Item:** Members of SEAC were asked to complete the google doc over the next week. **Action Item:** Associate Director Sirisko recommended that a small AD HOC (short term) Working Group be formed to provide suggestions from associations and come up with 3 detailed points that would serve as the focus areas for SEAC’s work for the current year. |
| 4.Trustee Report | A request for consultation around the GSN was sent to all members. | Information was shared by email**Action Item**:. SEAC members can share their feedback via email with Trustee Aarts by October 20th   |
| 5.SEAC Letter to the Ministry on SIP Funding | Member Nora Green is working with Vice Chair Trustee Aarts to draft a letter to the Ministry to outline the underfunding for SIP. It will be shared with SEAC members once completed.. | **Action Item:** Draft copy of the letter to the ministry from the working group will be presented to SEAC members |
| 6. Exclusions/Refusal to AdmitOverview and System ExpectationsMember Discussion  | System Superintendent Nandy Palmer reviewed information about Exclusions/Refusal to Admit and what Ministry expectations are and what this looks like in the TDSB.Refusal to admit to school or classroom is based on the principal’s judgment around the physical and mental well-being of the student, staff members or other students.Ensuring the health and safety of everyone is the priority. Communication and consultation, especially with parents/guardians/caregivers is key.A number of steps have to be followed before a Refusal to Admit can be issued. Refusal to Admit is used as a last resort.Exclusion is a safety mechanism and the goal is to focus on the student and return of the student to school as quickly as possible.The TDSB has Procedure 724; many boards do not have a policy around exclusions/refusal to admit. SEAC was thanked for advocating for this procedure to be created in years past. Data for Exclusion and Refusal to Admit falls under Caring and Safe Schools. From 2018-2019 to 2021-2022, the numbers were very low and suppressed to protect the identities of students. 2022-2023 - Total of 31 Refusals to Admit across the TDSBThe following Associations raised concerns and questions around Refusals to Admit:* Integration Action for Inclusion in Education
* Down Syndrome Association of Toronto
* Autism Ontario
* Voice for Deaf Kids,
* Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children
* Epilepsy Ontario
* Community Representative (LC4)

The following points were discussed:* The numbers presented are a vast misreporting and underestimate of real numbers and do not reflect students who do not fall under the strict Refusal to Admit criteria (students sent home for a day, shortened day, not permitted on field trips, staff absence, modified day, etc.)
* With regards to data not shared (below 10), members cited that privacy should not be a concern as there is no way to determine specific children’s identity from this data. Have parents been asked to share details?
* The process needs to be widened to include informal refusals as described above. There needs to be a way to collect these numbers.
* Questions were asked about a connection between teacher training and refusals to admit. Are students being sent home because of staffing issues?
* Sending students home and refusing to admit them contravenes the Education Act
 | **Action Item:** Time to be allotted at the November meeting for staff to respond to SEAC member concerns around Exclusions/Refusal to Admit  |
| 7. Round TableAssociation and Community UpdatesWorking Group Updates (on request) | * **K-12 Group**
* Working on what the TDSB can do to effectively inform parents of options available and where to go to advocate.
* Next meeting is the November 3rd zoom meeting.
* **Effective Practices**
* The results of last spring’s survey were shared with members along with a motion to approve suggestions from the survey.
* **Special Education Plan**
* Members were encouraged to join this working group
* Feedback form was shared
* **Budget Working Group**
* Members are invited to join. They are hoping to have a meeting before the October 20th deadline for feedback around GSN.
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| **Other Business**CorrespondenceAdjournment | **Parent & caregivers as Partners Conference**Richard Carter will be representing SEAC at this conference happening this weekend. Richard asked that SEAC members attend and provide feedback.No correspondence | Motion to AdjournApproved by David Lepofsky and seconded by Leo Lagnato at 9:14 p.m.**Next Meeting**   November 13, 2023  |