

**Approved Minutes**

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

**Meeting Date:** June 12, 2023,from 7:00 p.m.– 9:50 p.m. (Hybrid)

**Chair:**                                Jean-Paul Ngana

**Vice-Chair:**                       Michelle Aarts

A meeting of the Special Education Community Advisory Committee convened on June 12, 2023, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:50 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)

**Regrets**

Tracey O'Regan Community Living Toronto

Trustee Liban Hassan (Ward 6)

 Trustee Zakir Patel (Ward 19)

**Staff**

Louise Sirisko, Associate Director, Innovation and Equitable Outcomes

Nandy Palmer, System Superintendent, Special Education and Inclusion

Alison Board, Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education

Andrea Roach, 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)

Elizabeth Chalmers, Administrative Liaison (SOE)

Lianne Dixon. TDSB SEAC Liaison

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 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. A request was made to add Working Group updates from the Special Education Plan and Effective Practices Working Group to the agenda.  It was agreed that they would be added during the SEPRC item (Spec Ed Plan) and during Other Business (EPWG).  It was clarified that Working Groups are added to the agenda upon request prior to the agenda being set.  The suggestion was made to have an orientation for new and returning members in the fall. | On Motion by Steven Lynette, the agenda was approved as amended.  Seconded by Aline Chan |
| 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 April and May SEAC Meeting | April minutes have been amended with additional information about PAAC on SEAC calendar item. | April minutes were approved as amended.  May minutes were approved. |
| Action Log Update | The Chair requested that Staff update items on the Action Log | Action Log was updated and sent to members following the meeting. |
| Multi Year Strategic Plan Renewal  Elizabeth Addo - System Superintendent  Tana Turner - Turner Consultant Group  Angel Woodside - Administrative Liaison | Elizabeth Addo shared the Five Pillars of the MYSP and gathered input from SEAC members on each pillar, requesting feedback on the current pillars, and asking if there is anything missing from them.  Suggestions/Input included:  -       Removing and preventing all barriers impeding students with disabilities should be an implicit statement  -       Include oral language and fine arts  -       Transition planning is important  -       Equity of access should be equal access  -       More concrete language needed  -       Should Special Education be a Pillar?  -       Special Education needs to be part of each Pillar  -       Inclusion should be included  -       Post 21 outcomes are missing  -   Anti-ableism needs to be addressed | Action Item:  SEAC members were asked to provide input for each pillar – if they agree that it is still a priority, and whether anything is missing.  Input was sought through the Zoom Chat and through an opportunity to share input in the boardroom. |
| Trustee | TDSB Board Bylaws have been reviewed and revised including the delegation process. CAC’s have been updated as well.  Delegations can be requested by individuals or CACs.  Committees come to the board a different way. The chair is always welcome to delegate or present a report or recommendation to the relevant committee. The chair can nominate a representative to speak on behalf of the committee.  Staff directs the recommendation to the correct committee.  The chair can only speak to the matter/recommendation that is in front of the Committee.  This committee requires Terms of Reference – it has been started and, in the fall, a Working Group may be established to develop and formalize the Terms of Reference. | Information was shared by email |
| SEPRC | Staff met with the Special Education Plan working group and committed to doing a full review of SEPRC in the fall. This review will be in-depth and look at the TDSB process and what other boards are doing.  The SEPRC process was brought up by the Special Education Plan working group. Originally, SEPRC was for students with complex medical needs.  It became used for all special education students who are new arrivals to TDSB (whose parents request it) but now has reverted to the original mandate.  Concerns were raised that the SEPRC process promotes intensive support settings and does not support inclusion and placement in the least restricted environment.  SEPRC is not a Ministry process.  Some parents want this process. Those who don’t want the process and want their students to start in a regular program can do so.  The original motion was brought forward last month. The motion to reduce restrictions to the SEPRC process was put on the table and was passed by SEAC. (Appendix A)  It was additionally suggested that TDSB take the question of SEPRC to the Ministry for input. | The motion was moved by Melissa Rosen, and seconded by Izabella Pruska-Oldenof  The motion passed. |
| Special Education Plan Working Group Update | It was requested that additional members join and that they take advantage of the opportunity to provide feedback on the plan.  Next year, the working group will present key items at meetings for group input. – it was recommended to be an ongoing agenda item as each month a different topic will be addressed. |  |
| Leadership Report | Associate Director Louise Sirisko thanked SEAC members for their input during information drop-in sessions with her,  Recommendations coming out of those meetings included: an updated SEAC handbook, orientation sessions, and Terms of Reference. A Google form will be sent out for those who were not able to attend to add their input.  The Leadership report was shared with SEAC prior to the meeting.  Guide to Special Education for Parents and Caregivers was revised in June 2023 and has been posted on the public website (in print and audio format). Translated and braille versions will be available soon. |  |
| Budget Update | Budget staff has visited SEAC throughout the winter.  Delegations were heard today, and town halls and community meetings have been taking place.  Staff came with options to balance the budget, most are departmental and central changes rather than from individual program areas.  The committee meeting to vote on a budget to recommend to the board takes place on June 20th and the special board meeting to decide on the budget is on June 22nd.  The budget needs to be sent to the Ministry by the end of June.  An extension was received for submission of a Special Education grant for SIP (Special Incidence Portion) to August 31st, and based on the number projected, TDSB will be receiving ten million dollars  The board is facing a deficit of 61-million-dollar deficit and has to present a balanced budget.  Budget working group needs to know what exactly is being cut, and what is the impact to special education students.  The Budget working group needs new members to join in the fall.  **Impacts on Budget**  There is a decline in the number of special education students and SEAC needs to know the impact of this decline.  Staff prepared a report for the working group that linked key reports.  The number of students with IEPs has declined and the general population has also declined.  One of the reasons for the decline in the number of IEP:s is that the board is not always writing IEP’s for primary students initially, and Individual Learning Plans are implemented first to meet the student’s needs so that they do not need to have an IEP.  Funding is based on enrolment, not the number of IEPS. The ministry does not want school boards to develop IEP’s in order to generate funding.  Boards do not need to create IEPs to get funding.  There is an understanding that a percentage of students will require support and that support is funded through GSN. The ministry does not want to incentivize IEP development.  Pandemic Recovery Funding is no longer available  **Balancing the Budget**  To achieve compliance, there are three central reductions in special education.  : Part of the recovery plan is to reduce the special education budget by ten million dollars.- five million dollars this year and five million dollars next year.  ·         1.5 million in the restructuring of consultants/coordinators  ·         2.6 million in reduction of elementary SERT (Special education resource teachers) (23.5 FTE)  ·         1.5 million in a reduction in secondary SERTs (13.5 FTE)  These reductions are commensurate with the reduction in the number of students receiving support, butt would be cascaded across the system.  How can we be sure that outcomes for students will not be affected?  The SEAC working group is going to the board tomorrow to express concerns about these reductions and to give advice to trustees.  Staff prepared a report for the SEAC working group that linked key reports that contained data about special education.  There are concerns about how cuts to special education will impact vulnerable students.  SEAC needs to know what the reductions are, and how will they affect student/teacher ratios.  A motion was brought forward for presentation to trustees.  Appendix B  “SEAC recommends that the board provide SEAC with a detailed of all planned cuts to the special education budget and their impact on the delivery of special education services and the implication for students with special education needs and hence, how they will instead support these students and meet their legal obligations.” | The motion was moved by Richard Carter, and seconded by Melissa Rosen.  The vote passed unanimously. |
| **Other Business**  Adjournment  **Next Meeting: September 18, 2023** | Effective Practices Working Group  A survey was sent out to members with recommendations from the Effective Practices Working Group.  Feedback was supportive of the recommendations.  The survey is still open so members were requested to complete it – and the complete findings will be presented at the beginning of the next school year.  The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 pm | Motion to adjourn was made by Nora Green, seconded by Melissa Rosen. |

Appendix A

SEPRC Draft Motion – SEAC – June 12, 2023

WHEREAS a Special Education Placement Review Committee meeting and process (“SEPRC”) was established in or before 2012 as a process to allow concerned parents of special education students not yet attending TDSB, to initiate a meeting with TDSB staff to pre-arrange special education supports, conditional identification, and/or placement for students newly moving into TDSB from another city, school board, or homeschooling;

AND WHEREAS SEPRCs since at least 2012 have arranged to provide thousands of special education students with placements and other special education supports in advance of their first day of school in their new school board;

AND WHEREAS the advance process of SEPRCs has proven to be significantly more efficient and pedagogically effective compared to later identification, support, and placement, while also minimizing work, stress, and disruption to families, staff, the education system, the students, their classmates, and teachers;

AND WHEREAS SEAC passed a motion in March 2022 (copied below), strongly recommending and advising that the SEPRC Process continue, so that parents of all students

with special education needs who intend to enrol in TDSB, can initiate and utilize the SEPRC Process without any predetermined bias, limitations, or restrictions on access;

NOW THEREFORE IT IS RESOLVED THAT:

1) The “WHEREAS” statements above are incorporated as part of this motion.

2) SEAC strongly recommends 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.

3) SEAC further recommends that the SEPRC section of the Special Education Plan be appropriately amended to reflect the changes set out above; and

4) 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.

Appendix B

“SEAC recommends that the board provide SEAC with a detailed of all planned cuts to the special education budget and their impact on the delivery of special education services and the implication for students with special education needs and hence, how they will instead support these students and meet their legal obligations.”