



**Alternative Schools Advisory Committee  
Minutes  
Date: Thursday, April 19, 2012  
Location: Subway Academy II  
Time: 7:00 –9:00 p.m.**

**Present:** Teresa Van Neste (Co-Chair, Elementary); Sarah O’Leary (SEED); Amelia Santos (SEED); Sandy Best (Manager, Alt Schools); Liam Rodrigues (SEED); T.J. Goertz (Communications Coordinator); Nancy White (AS East & Year-Round); Mark Fischer (The Student School); Jason Smit (Subway Academy II); Vivian Meyer (Contact AS); Louise Azzarello (Oasis AS); Tricia Green (Da Vinci AS); Steph Carrier (Hawthorne II); David Fletcher (Subway Academy I); Don Hedrick (East York AS); Ryan Duggin (Da Vinci AS); Elizabeth Pasternak (Da Vinci AS); Bonnie Whitehall (Subway Academy I); Grace Valentini (SEED); Joanne Blanchette (Da Vinci AS); Liz Codallo (Da Vinci AS); Dennis de Jonge (Da Vinci AS); Jse-Che Lam (Subway Academy II); Anna Gemmiti (Subway Academy II)

**Absent:** Marina Deluca-Howard (Co-Chair, Secondary); Rajiv Sivanesan (Delphi AS); Stephen Cooper (Alpha AS); Ravi Negi (Inglenook CS); Daniel Wesser (Student Co-Chair, Alpha II AS); John Atherton (Alpha II); Jenna Lech (NEYRAC); Andre Lopez (The Student School); Luke Edwards (Inglenook CS); Tane Akamatsu (Inglenook CS); Sylvia Kraus (Inglenook CS)

**Guests:** Karen Forbes (Special Education and Section Programs)

**Recorder:** Amanda Tiberio

Item	Information/Discussion	Action/ Recommendation
<b>Call to order: Welcome and Introductions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m.</li> <li>• All attendees were welcomed and round table introductions were made.</li> </ul>	
<b>Approval of Quorum</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quorum was approved</li> </ul>	
<b>Approval of Agenda/Minutes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The agenda was approved with amendments. The following additions were made:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OSSTF Meeting Update</li> <li>• Alternative Schools Prom</li> <li>• FUTURES Conference</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Minutes of January 19, 2012 were approved as written.</li> </ul>	Amanda will update website with last meeting’s minutes.
<b>Business Arising: Special Education – Karen Forbes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is the second year the special education program has been in alternative schools. They have met with principals for their perspectives about what is working well and what is not.</li> <li>• Karen gave a brief overview of how Spec Ed. allocations were given to alternative schools and noted that in the past alternative schools, as schools of choice, didn’t get this support. However, a couple of years ago a group of elementary parents brought the issues forward as a human rights issue. The Board decided to extend Spec Ed support to alternative elementary schools and the following year they extended it to alternative secondary schools.</li> <li>• Karen also indicated that, this year, the population of alternative schools has been included in determining the allocation of educational assistants, and they will be added in to the mix.</li> <li>• A question was asked about why special education teachers in alternative secondary schools will have to reapply for their positions for next year. Karen explained that this was because as this was the first year of the spec. ed. rollout for alt. schools, they weren’t sure what was going to work or whether they needed to refine the process further and so the jobs were posted for 1-year terms. Teachers who want to reapply at the same school will definitely be considered for next year. The next round of postings</li> </ul>	

Item	Information/Discussion	Action/Recommendation
	<p>will be for 3-year terms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A comment was made that it is an issue for secondary alternative schools that itinerant special needs teachers do not get enough time in the schools. Because the schools now have this limited support they are expected to admit students with spec ed needs regardless of the extent of that need and often they do not have enough Spec Ed. help to meet these needs. Parents believe the schools have support but the reality is that they don't. It would be better to explain exactly what the schools have to offer before parents make their choices</li> <li>• Karen indicated that if a student requires more support there are other options within the TDSB.</li> <li>• A comment was made that often the ability to work independently is required in an alt school if a student cannot work within the alt. school program, it is not for them. They can give the support but if the student can't do the work on their own, it's not the right choice. They can only tell them exactly what they can offer but the student needs to be able to work independently.</li> <li>• Alternative schools can apply for SNAs if safety/medical issues are significant enough that they need somebody for part of a day.</li> <li>• There are few students with IEPs in alt. schools. As they get more, they will get more support.</li> <li>• A comment was made that most times, in secondary schools, attending an alternative school is up to the student, not the parent. There is not much private space in the schools, and it may be seen as "uncool" to meet with a spec. ed. teacher.</li> <li>• A comment was made that many students should have laptops/assistive technology which has been requested but yet to arrive. Karen is to follow up re this issue and encouraged anyone with concerns to email her at (<a href="mailto:karen.forbes@tdsb.on.ca">karen.forbes@tdsb.on.ca</a>).</li> <li>• A comment was made that when students move from grade 8 to grade 9, only 45% move from spec. ed. to spec. ed. - most go into a regular program. More special needs students are ending up in classrooms with a teacher that is not trained for special needs.</li> <li>• A comment was made that when students arrive from other school boards, an IEP may be checked off on the application, but students often having multiple exceptionalities and schools boards don't share this information. Students often move school boards so they can get a fresh start, so they are unlikely to give those principals permission to share that information.</li> <li>• A question was made about whether there has been any discussion or consultation with alternative schools teachers about the model of special education in the schools? They would like reconsideration for more support, as many students who need the support are not recognized. Karen indicated that the process is still new, and this is only the beginning of the discussion. Teachers can only be allocated as half or full, and right now there are not enough students in most alternative schools with IEPs to generate more support.</li> <li>• A comment was made that if a special ed. teacher was allocated to a school, he or she would be more accountable to the follow the mandate of the school. Itinerant teachers have other responsibilities.</li> <li>• A comment was made that if the model was different, and special ed. teachers would be part of a team of teachers that are engaged and are committed to finding out what exactly students need, to deliver the right kind of help. If you have someone as part of that entity its better.</li> <li>• A comment was made that there is miscommunication between special ed. teachers and school leaders. Principals are not in the schools every day. Curriculum leaders don't get an opportunity to tell special ed. teachers how they would be best utilized. They show up for a few hours but there are other students who would be well served by the special ed. teachers and because of timing, they have never been able to talk to them.</li> <li>• A suggestion was made to meet with principals, curriculum leaders and special ed. teachers to find out which model of staffing will work. If the data isn't sufficient, they must find other ways to ensure the special education staff are available and work well for the students.</li> <li>• A problem with itinerant teachers is that the school has to work around them, for example to schedule meetings only when the spec. ed. teacher is available. Many students are more transient, and move from school to school looking for different things.</li> <li>• Special ed. teachers have to write up IEPs and because of the itinerant nature, they don't have the time to do that. Some students go on to college or university and they need that information for their applications. A suggestion was made to have extra staff</li> </ul>	

Item	Information/Discussion	Action/Recommendation
<p><b>Update – Alt Schools Conference - Teresa van Neste</b></p> <p><b>Update – Marketing - Sandra Best</b></p> <p><b>New Business: Staff Reduction – Student School</b></p>	<p>available at certain times of the year to help with the paper work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A question was asked about whether teachers are personally liable if their students’ special needs are not addressed. The principal that signs the IEP is in more of a position of responsibility than the teacher. There are ways to appeal if a parent doesn’t think things are going as they should. Issues are usually handled between teachers and principals, but teachers aren’t personally liable.</li> <li>• A general question was asked about whether a document can be created that gives parents and teachers flags or markers that would indicate that a student needs more help. To create such a document would be difficult – often, learning challenges do not become apparent until grade 10 or 11, and all students are different</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a meeting at the end of April. They are working on creating a survey about key issues, interests, and what people would like to see happening at the conference. The conference is being planned for November 2012.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materials have been distributed to all libraries. An email will be going out to all secondary schools from Barbara Brown, and they have sent copies of posters to display around the schools. The webpage should be live very soon. Alternative schools will all get materials such as postcards, posters, and bookmarks.</li> <li>• Phase 2 is focused on elementary schools. The webpage will have parent and student testimonials, and it will contain links to individual school websites.</li> <li>• A question was asked about whether there are primary feeder schools for secondary alternative schools. There is no bridge for alternative schools. Most secondary alternative schools do not offer grade 9 unless they are reintegration services.</li> <li>• A suggestion was made for a proposal for a grade 7-10 program. Contact Sandy Best for further information about how to do this.</li> <li>• A comment was made that a newer alternative schools has low kindergarten enrolment and some parents have been turned away. TDSB has already allocated the staff for next year. It is the parents’ responsibility to generate interest in a school recruit more students. In the past, some parents have held picnics, open houses, and sent flyers to grab the attention of new parents.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Student School has seen a reduction from 8 to 7 teachers. The recommendation at the April meeting last year did not get passed by the Board. This will have a huge impact on the school.</li> <li>• At Runnymede there have been staff reductions although they have seen a 30% increase in enrolment.</li> <li>• Last year, Inglenook lost staff but got some back. If staffing by formula is high enough it may be bumped to the next highest number of staff. Alternative schools do their own administration, which isn’t taken into account.</li> <li>• The staffing process should be consultative and transparent. Parents should direct advocacy to Trustees and the Director to find out what other schools have lost. Alternative schools aren’t being recognized as distinct from regular schools.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>MOTION:</u></b>  <i>Be it resolved that,  Whereas the TDSB has instituted staffing cuts to alternative schools, and  Whereas cutting one teacher at an alternative school amounts to 20% staff cut, and  Whereas alternative schools are often the last resort for students who have been unable to function in mainstream schools, and  Whereas this will seriously impact the ability of the schools to deliver quality programs and will negatively affect student outcomes,  The Alternative School Advisory Committee urges the Toronto District School Board to reconsider any staff reductions in alternative</i></p>	

Item	Information/Discussion	Action/Recommendation
<p><b>Opting out of EQAO – Elem</b></p> <p><b>Africentric School – Bussing</b></p> <p><b>Scheduling Future Meetings</b></p> <p><b>Location for Formal Meetings</b></p> <p><b>Update – All Schools</b></p> <p><b>OSSTF Meeting Update</b></p> <p><b>Alternative Schools Prom</b></p> <p><b>Alternative Amazing Race</b></p> <p><b>FUTURES Conference</b></p>	<p><i>schools and restore the customary staffing as soon as possible. Moreover, ASAC urges the TDSB to ensure that any such future staffing reductions will engage the affected school(s) and ASAC in a consultation process.</i></p> <p>Moved by Mark Fischer; seconded by David Fletcher. Motion carried.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Item was deferred due to time constraints.</li> <li>• The Africentric School wants bussing for their school. Bussing isn't provided for alternative schools.</li> <li>• The next informal elementary meeting will be held on Thursday, May 24 2012 at da Vinci.</li> <li>• The next formal meeting, if necessary, will be held on June 5, 2012 at 5050 Yonge St.</li> <li>• Future formal meetings will be held at 5050 Yonge Street.</li> <li>• Item was deferred due to time constraints.</li> <li>• OSSTF's Ad Hoc Committee has pulled out of the Provincial Discussion Table and launched a suit against Dalton McGuinty. There will be a rally Saturday, April 21 at 2:30 at Queens Park.</li> <li>• The prom will be held at Atlantis Pavilion (995 Lakeshore Boulevard West) from 6 p.m. to 1 a.m. It will include a buffet dinner. They need 150 people to confirm attendance before they sign a contract for the venue.</li> <li>• The Amazing Race is being held at Subway Academy II on May 15, 2012.</li> <li>• There are no volunteers to host a table for ASAC at the FUTURES Conference on Saturday, May 5, 2012.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Adjournment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The meeting was adjourned at 9:00</li> </ul>	

**Next Meeting:** Tentatively June 5, 2012 @ 7:00 p.m. – 5050 Yonge Street, Boardroom