# Report to Toronto District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee

# from SEAC Chair David Lepofsky for the March 20, 2017 TDSB SEAC Meeting

Date: March 15, 2017

## 1. Plans to Discuss Motion #5 – TDSB Inclusion Strategy

As earlier announced, I aim to devote the majority of our March 20, 2017 meeting to discussing the recommendations in our proposed Motion #5 on inclusion strategies. I aim for us to vote on this, if possible, at our April 2017 meeting.

Our timing of this motion is very helpful. If passed, it will go not only to TDSB trustees and staff, but also to the TDSB Integrated Equity Task Force. That task force will be very important for us. It will make recommendations on equity generally, including inclusion, to TDSB this November. We will benefit by getting a motion to them by April if possible, so it can be seriously considered in the task force's work.

Here is what I have done to help this along. I have done a major revision. I have numbered the documents in the order you may wish to read them.

I have done my best to balance and incorporate as much as possible of the feedback at SEAC meetings over the past months, and via email and direct conversations. I believe it reflects the range of views voiced, and offers a common ground position. As you can imagine, it took quite a lot of time to do.

a) I have written a 3rd draft of Motion #5. It builds on prior drafts with changes and additions based on your feedback.

b) I have taken out of this motion the longer "background" document, and replaced it with a 2-page introduction. It gives core points. It echoes discussions we have had. Because it is much, much shorter, it does not include a lot of the detail that was in the earlier background section.

c) Yet that longer background document, and your input into it, is certainly not lost. I have created a separate document, called a "Backgrounder to Motion #5. In it, I have done my best to incorporate in its discussion your feedback on the earlier draft. I have tried to balance it with positive comments, to give it a more balanced tone, while still pointing out major areas where improvement is needed.

I am proposing a modified approach to this Backgrounder document. On an important topic like this, each of our 22 members may have a range of perspectives, or different points they consider most important. It would be very difficult and would take a long time to go through it line by line, and ensure that it says everything that everyone wants said, exactly as they'd like it said.

Therefore, I am proposing to offer this document under my own signature, as SEAC's chair. I am also proposing to invite SEAC members to vote on this "backgrounder" in April for approval "in principle". I would ask SEAC to vote on whether it agrees with the substance of it, while recognizing that everyone might add or modify a line or two, or words here and there, if they were writing it themselves. Please read it with that in mind.

In the meantime, I encourage you to review these two documents before our Monday, March 20, 2017 meeting. Please feel free to email me any feedback before then, and to raise any feedback at our meeting. I plan to go through the Motion itself at our meeting first, in detail. You might find it helpful to mark it with anything you like or strongly dislike, if anything, or any additions you have not seen included that you might consider important.

Even if the Backgrounder goes out under my name as SEAC chair, and even if we are going to invite SEAC in April to vote on it in principle, feel free to share with me any feedback on it as well. I am hoping that by our April meeting, we will be ready for a vote, so that we can get our Motion before the Equity Task Force in a timely way.

## 2. Proposed Motion #6 TDSB Policy and Practices Regarding Exclusion of Students from School

At our February 6, 2017 SEAC meeting, we had an excellent presentation from Rob Lattanzio, Executive Director of the ARCH Disability law Centre. He raised important issues regarding the exclusion of students, including students with special education needs, from school, without following procedures for suspension or expulsion. I have prepared for your consideration a draft Motion #6 to address this important issue. It derives from Robert Lattanzio's presentation, and is included in your meeting materials. I am putting this on our March 20, 2017 meeting agenda, for your discussion. Again, I don't propose a vote on this at our March meeting.

It will be important to afford TDSB staff a chance to offer us their feedback on this issue, in response to Robert Lattanzio's earlier presentation, and this draft motion. TDSB staff is not in a position to address this at our March meeting. I am therefore asking staff to circulate a written report/response before our April meeting, and to address it in person at that meeting. It would be helpful to have present at our April meeting senior TDSB staff with authority in this area, as well as TDSB legal counsel, to explain TDSB's position on its mandate in this area.

In advance, it would be helpful if TDSB could provide us with the following:

a) Any information it has on how often exclusions occur;

b) Any written policies, procedures or directions to principals, teacher or other TDSB staff on when a student may be excluded from school, and on what terms, apart from the process for suspension or expulsion, and

c) The written policies or directions on procedures that TDSB expects its principals or teachers to follow when excluding a student from school.

## 3. TDSB Consultation with SEAC on its Upcoming Special Education Plan

Uton Robinson has requested time on our March 20, 2017 meeting agenda to consult on the upcoming TDSB Special Education Plan. We look forward to receiving, if possible, something on which we can comment. As well, it will be helpful to know what actions are to be included in the Special Education Plan in response to our four motions passed on June 13, 2016, and on the content of our Motion #5 which we have been discussing for several months. Those together will form a core part of SEAC's feedback on the Special Education Plan.

**4. Request for Input Regarding Provincial Strategy to Improve Services for Children and Youth with Special Needs in Ontario**

In an email earlier this week, TDSB circulated a draft agenda that I had not yet seen, for our March 20, 2017 SEAC meeting. It included a proposed update or consult regarding the provincial strategy to improve services for children and youth with special needs in Ontario.

This will not be on our March 20, 2017 meeting agenda. I have spoken to the person with whom TDSB had had contact to explore the appropriateness of it for our agenda.

As a result, the individual who reached out to TDSB will prepare a short document for SEAC members, which we will circulate when we get it. It will include the key points for an update, and will set out the questions, if any, on which our feedback was sought. From the discussion I had, it was not evident that there was a clear question on which our input was being sought.