# Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

MEETING NOTICE – Monday, February 5, 2018 at 7:00 pm

Association for Bright Children (ABC) Melissa Rosen

Autism Society of Ontario – Toronto Lisa Kness

Brain Injury Society of Toronto (BIST) Cynthia Sprigings

Community Living Toronto *vacancy*

Down Syndrome Association of Toronto Richard Carter

Easter Seals Ontario Deborah Fletcher

Epilepsy Toronto Steven Lynette

Integrated Action for Inclusion (IAI) regrets

Learning Disabilities Association Toronto *vacancy*

VIEWS for the Visually Impaired David Lepofsky

VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children Paul Cross *by phone*

TDSB North East Community Aline Chan Jean Paul Ngana

TDSB North West Community Jordan Glass

TDSB South East Community Diane Montgomery Dick Winter

TDSB South West Community Paula Boutis Nora Green

TDSB Trustees Abdul Patel Alex Brown Alexandra Lulka

Regrets: Diana Avon (ABC), Melissa Vigar (BIST), Margarita Isakov (I.A.I), Rick Strutt (NE Community Alt), Olga Ingrahm (SE Community Rep)

TDSB Staff Present: Uton Robinson, Executive Superintendent, Special Education and Section Programs

Anne Seymour, Superintendent of Education, Learning Centre 3, Learning Network 20

Lori Moore, Centrally Assigned Principal for Special Education, Trustee Chris Glover

Susan Moulton, Centrally Assigned Principal, Learning Centre

Lianne Dixon, SEAC Liaison

Minutes by: Lianne Dixon

**MINUTES (DRAFT)**

*(All notes included in these minutes are paraphrased by the recorder.)*

1. **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. **Declaration of Possible Conflicts of Interest**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

1. **Approval of the Minutes for SEAC Meeting of Monday, January 15, 2018**

An emailed request was made to amend the minutes, adding a paragraph to the Director’s response to David Lepofsky’s question. This change was approved and the minutes of January 15, 2018 were approved as amended. The revised minutes have been posted on the SEAC website.

1. **Guest Speaker – Osmond Chen**

Trustee Glover introduced Osmond Chen, a TDSB student with special needs. Osmond presented a slide show that described his work experience with the Youth at Work program at Holland Bloorview. With assistance from his father, Osmond described his responsibilities and experiences in his work placement. His occupational therapist, Laura, from Holland Bloorview, described the Youth at Work program and how it is developed with a focus on life skills, and building awareness of strengths and what types of jobs individual students would like to do. Students in this program receive support to have job experience within the hospital. Capital One has sponsored Youth at Work in the summer for the last eleven years. The rest of the funding comes from Holland Bloorview. The program takes place every July for students in the special education stream at school and in August for students in the applied and academic stream. They take students from 13 to 26 years of age. For Osmond, they developed a job that was customized to his strengths and interests. Other jobs include working in the kitchen, with the maintenance department, food handling, cafeteria work, office work. All jobs take place at Holland Bloorview. She explained that there are job coaches and in Osmond’s case, he brought a one to one worker with him to support him in his physical care. All of the students in the program have the services of a job coach. Osmond’s dad explained how important the job experience has been for him and how it has helped him plan for what he will do after high school.

The Chair thanked Osmond for his presentation and thanked Julia and Holland Bloorview for their work providing support and experiences for students.

1. **Staff Updates and Requests for SEAC Input**

Executive Superintendent Robinson shared highlights from his Report and answered questions/received feedback from SEAC members.

**IEP/IPRC Statistics**

Executive Superintendent Robinson presented some special education statistics and offered to have Research Coordinator, Rob Brown, come to the March meeting if members were interested to give more detailed information. He stated that approximately 20% of TDSB students with special needs have an Individual Education Plan, and approximately half of that number (9%) have gone through the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process. It is anticipated that as we move to a deeper understanding of Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Programming, there will be greater opportunities for teachers and support staff to ensure that learning conditions are in place and are not necessarily predicated by students needing an IEP.

**Epilepsy Section Classroom**

Executive Superintendent Robinson highlighted the Epilepsy classroom – a Section 23 program that is run in collaboration with SickKids Hospital. He suggested that SEAC members share information about the program with their colleagues.

**Renaming Section 23**

In his Report, Executive Superintendent Robinson had shared two possible suggestions for renaming Section 23 programs and referred to a concern from a SEAC member about the proposal. Two names had come forward to be considered. There is an internal group looking at rebranding the program so there are not stereotypical or have negative connotations. This group has suggested renaming after two individuals who have been recognized internationally for their work. He offered an opportunity to SEAC to come up with additional possible names for Section 23 Programs for the internal group to consider. A SEAC member suggested “Steps to Success” as a possible name.

**SPEEL**

Executive Superintendent Robinson referred to the information in his report about the TDSB Special Education Experiential Learning Program (SPEEL). He pointed out that we always want to improve opportunities for experiential learning and appreciated the feedback and recommendations that had come forward through SEAC members. Over the last little while there have been over 110 students participating and benefitting from the program. We want to create more of those opportunities for students. The board has increased job coaches by 50 percent.

He referred to questions that have arisen about determining readiness and how subjective that appraisal might be. Executive Superintendent Robinson explained that we don’t want to use readiness as way of restricting access, but we need to make sure that the student and the staff are in a safe place. The intention is to look at the issue of readiness and participation and come back to SEAC for input. These important opportunities that students have in the course of their time in TDSB will impact their next steps post-21. Although we are not funded for post- 21, we do have a responsibility leading up to that time to provide experiences to help prepare students for work world life

Feedback/questions from SEAC Membership on SPEEL included:

* when job developers assess readiness, it can be very subjective and the timelines are usually quick
* There is a readiness tool - Functional Independent Skills Handbook (FISH) which is an assessment booklet – the link will be shared with SEAC members
* There is also an industrial curriculum for different types of placements that can also be shared in order to help us build resources.
* Regarding Safety – depending on the corporation, they are asked to cover certain types of insurance so that the job coach and the participant are covered. This might be something that TDSB may want to look into
* Concerns were expressed about the quality and value of some of the tasks that students in congregated sites are being asked to do – mainly cleaning and caretaking tasks – not meaningful
* A caution was expressed about having teachers create generic lists of things that they think are appropriate – not based on student interests - we need to ask those outside school to start working on creating experiential tasks for students – need to look at student passion and interest
* SPEEL is always looking for places to put students. We need to look to the community to give opportunities for these students. With a group like SEAC there are other places where students can find a meaningful step towards finding placements

**Professional Learning**

Executive Superintendent Robinson referred to the Directors Response to the Enhancing Equity Task Force (EETF) around Professional Learning. Building capacity and making sure staff are able to work with students with special needs in an effective way is the foundation of everything we talk about. There will be upcoming mandatory learning on the IEP, and the IPRC process. There is lots of work to be done, but we have put together a script that we are monitoring and auditing to ensure parents are coming away with a positive experience.

Lori Moore, Centrally Assigned Principal – Special Education, outlined the plan for Professional Learning. In the initial sessions (February/March), a minimum of one teacher per school will participate. There will be follow up sessions at the end of April/beginning of May. It will be in the form of an embedded inquiry where teachers will try new strategies, see what works, what challenges they face and then come back and debrief at the next meeting. There will be online opportunities to share ideas. The focus will be on Universal Design for Learning and also an overview of Assistive Technologies. Principals and Superintendents will be following up on the training and it will become a necessary part of conversations that are taking place in the schools. The Department is looking to have a final session to share successes, to sustain and then extend it next year by involving the Learning Centre coaches and bringing teams together.

Feedback from SEAC Members on Professional Learning included:

* How do we ensure that teachers know how to differentiate if training is not mandatory? There is mandatory training for Vice Principals and Principals, but not for teachers? The suggestion was made that at least two people from each school attend professional learning for capacity building
* Training should be done as a ratio based on how large the staff is, with more trained teachers for larger schools. A team rather than a single person would be more effective**.**
* Around special education training – is it mandatory? How many hours? When will it happen, how will be delivered?
* The most successful determining factor is teacher attitude – more than training or anything else – as the board is doing equity education - ability and ablism needs to be addressed along with racism and faithism

**Home School Program**

Executive Superintendent Robinson described the changes in Home School Program (HSP) next year. These programs will only have students at the junior level (grades 4 – 8); there will not be primary students in HSP classes. In some situations, there may be a need for additional staff and for some it will mean teachers and support staff will need to differentiate so students will experience success. Many schools have already taken on a more inclusive approach and are not withdrawing students 50% of the day. Executive Superintendent Robinson emphasized that as a result of this change, staffing will not be taken away. The allocation for resource as well as for HSP will remain as it presently is. Staffing might go up or down depending on enrolment at the school, but there is a base allocation that all schools will have and there are no reductions going forward.

**Refusal to Admit**

Executive Superintendent Robinson shared information about Refusal to Admit. Ted Libra from Caring and Safe Schools is working to create a procedure. Executive Superintendent Robinson suggested that if aspects of Refusal to Admit don’t align with what was shared before, that there would be an opportunity to ask questions.

SEAC members had several questions about the Refusal to Admit information. Executive Superintendent Robinson was asked if it was a separate policy or if it was going to be built into the Caring and Safe School Policy and when it would be coming to the Governance Policy Committee? He offered to get clarification around these questions and the timeline. Trustee Brown reminded SEAC members that when the Policy is presented to the Policy Committee, members of the public or SEAC members can attend the meeting and depute if they wish to.

Feedback/questions from SEAC Members around Refusal to Admit included:

* The test for when to issue a Refusal to Admit is too soft, providing Principals with too much “wiggle room” because the term “risk” is weak – this was a repeated concern when SEAC developed Motion #6
* The risk that the language that connotes a Refusal to Admit may be used to facilitate a police investigation - that is not a reason to Refuse to Admit and is not a proper use of this power. A Refusal to Admit is to protect students.
* Draft procedures conflict with the SEAC motion around the issue of a reduced school day. Students have an entitlement to come to school and reducing their day is a Refusal to Admit
* It is not clear in this draft if Refusal to Admit includes when the principal calls and suggests that parents take the kid home. lt has to involve any circumstance when a child is excluded from school.
* Refusal to Admit can’t be a “back door discipline”. Schools need to use discipline power because it includes procedural protections for students
* Concerns were once again raised about the lack of supply EA’s and SNA’s and the fact this is causing a safety issue, and potentially forcing a Refusal to Admit, and/or resulting in students who are bored and not engaged because staff is missing. (Executive Superintendent Robinson referred the member to the Minutes from January 15th where the question had been addressed and offered to arrange for a report or someone from Employee Services to come to address the issue if that was requested)

1. **Trustee Update**

Trustee Brown made the following points in his Report.

**Special Education Funding**

The Auditor General for the Province of Ontario recommended an external review of Education funding. The Report found that the funding is out of date and is not based on actual needs. It reported that almost 80 percent of boards spent far more on Special Education than the funding provided. He requested that the SEAC Chair write the Ministry and demand that they do an independent report on special education funding.

He is also bringing a Motion for the Chair of the Board to write a similar request in March.

**Planning and Priorities Meeting Jan 31**

There were many deputations to the Directors response to EETF. In the Report under Special Education - under suspensions and expulsions, Trustee Brown asked a few questions and emphasized that we need to have clear standards on record keeping for expulsions and suspensions. He added that now exclusions are included in the report. He disagreed with the use of the wording “inappropriate behavior “as one of the reasons for suspensions and expulsions and it is now changed to reflect the need to understand the reasons why certain behaviors occur. In addition, student voice will be important and enhanced in regards to suspensions and expulsions an a student protocol will be put in place.

He asked that if SEAC members have comments, questions or additions to the Response to the EETF report, they should email them to him will take it to the board meeting with trustees when the report will be discussed again

The question was asked about how the comments and suggestions from delegations are tracked, and how do we see if they are accepted or not? Trustee Brown explained that the comments are written down by the executives around the table and they are looked at and discussed to see if they can be incorporated. If not, they can be brought up again. He reminded members that the Response is a working document and trustees can always go back to the Director and follow up. The document has already been revised and is listed under the Jan. 31 meeting on the TDSB website. Trustee Brown will ask the Director for an update.

1. **Motion – Trustee Glover**

Trustee Glover thanked SEAC for having him coming to speak and for inviting Osmond. He gave the background for his motion and his focus on both getting the students with special needs ready for the workplace, as well as getting the workplaces ready for the student with special needs. He described several local and international companies, their commitment to hiring adults with special needs, and the positive results that they have had.

He outlined the points below from his Motion

* Need to have an exit survey for all students – we need to know where are they going – need to create a baseline of where our students are going (especially from congregated sites)
* Need to have staff training – it’s a struggle for all to expand our sense of the potential of people with special needs – we need to provide supportive employment – giving people the support they need to be successful
* TDSB should be hiring more people with disabilities following the philosophy that our staff should reflect our students - that should include people with disabilities
* We need to connect with employers – the work SPEEL is doing is good work - we need more staff
* Looking forward to working with a SEAC working group

The following input was provided by SEAC members:

* We need to extend this to all students – not just those in congregated sites. SEAC made recommendations last April in Motion 5 - it specifically focusses on experiential learning – we have to get experiential learning for all our students.
* Homework as suggested for the next meeting. Find out what does your agency and community do for your members to provide employment opportunities.

The suggestion was made that SEAC put forward a motion to create a working group to add to and support Trustee Brown’s Motion.

Aline Chan put forth a motion to create a working group and an addendum to Trustee Brown’s Motion, seconded by Jean Paul Ngana. The motion carried.

Volunteers for this work group were requested. Paula (coordinating), Aline, Lisa, Deborah, Jordan, Nora, and Cynthia volunteered. Trustee Glover asked to be included in correspondence**.**

**8. Motion -** David Lepofsky’s Motion was deferred until the March 5th meeting due to time constraints**.**

1. **Priority Setting –** deferred to March 5 meeting due to time constraints

* SEAC Liaison will circulate the recent (fall 2017) list of priorities for consideration at the next meeting. Members are asked to look at the list and add/remove/reorder items. If members have completed the form that was sent out, these priorities will be included in the discussion next meeting.

1. **Setting the agenda for next meeting**

The Chair suggested the following agenda for March 5th and requested feedback.

* Budget
* Priorities
* EETF
* David Lepofsky’s Motion

Discussion around the budget item on the agenda included the following points:

* The budget discussion should be not telling us what is being spent already. TDSB should come to SEAC and consult about what the budget should be – not what has already been decided upon. SEAC in the past has just been given the budget for information, not consultation purposes.
* Is there a way to get an idea of how much is being spent in local schools versus in contained classes? Is it possible to get it a breakdown by exceptionality?
* How will EETF be impacted by the budget and how will it impact the budget?
* What is the business plan and where does the budget fit into it?
* Can we get numbers in advance?
* Who is the person who goes to the Ministry and asks for funding that is needed for special education?

Executive Superintendent Robinson offered that if SEAC members could tell him the kind of information that they wanted, he would ask Craig Snider to try to break it down.

A Motion was put forward by Melissa Rosen for a working budget group, seconded by Paula Boutis. The motion carried.

Volunteers for a budget working group were: Jordan, Paula, Melissa, Jean Paul, Richard, Trustee Brown,

Trustee Brown offered to set up a conference call and get more feedback about what they would like and take it to Craig Snider.

**Association Reports**

Abilities Fair (Jan 19 – 21) - at the International centre. BIST was a participant. It was very well attended with lots of exhibitors and vendors. There were lots of new innovations, assistive devices and information workshops. It was highly recommended for members agencies to attend or participate.

Next one is April 5 to 7, 2019

1. **Other Business**

Jean Paul offered to attend the African Heritage Month Workshop for parents on February 8th.

1. **Adjournmen**t – A motion to adjourn the meeting by Paul Cross at 9:11pm

**Next Meeting Date is March 5th at 7:00 pm**