# Report to Toronto District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee

From SEAC Chair David Lepofsky for the September 11, 2017 TDSB SEAC Meeting

Date: August 26, 2017

By: David Lepofsky, CM. O.Ont,

Chair

Toronto District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee

## 1. Introduction

I hope one and all had a good summer. I drew heavily on a number of requests and suggestions from SEAC members, especially those towards the end of our June 2017 meeting, to design the agenda for the upcoming September SEAC meeting.

As a result, I am proposing to defer to October a few important items that we have in progress from our May and June 2017 SEAC meetings, including such outstanding issues as on recommendations 3(a)(inclusion of students with disabilities ) and 7(congregated sites), both found In SEAC's Motion #5 - Inclusion Strategy. I will also defer to October the draft Motion #6 (refusal to admit students to school) and the issue of SEPRC's. We will get back to those in October.

## 2. Setting Priorities for SEAC's Work Over the Next year

The start of the new school year gives SEAC a great chance to set our priorities for the next year of SEAC meetings. I am proposing that a good part of our September 11, 2017 SEAC meeting be devoted to starting a discussion of this. This builds on recommendations from various SEAC members at the end of our June 2017 SEAC meeting.

Two years ago, at our September 2015 meeting, SEAC adopted a series of priorities, arising out of a thorough discussion at earlier SEAC meetings. Those priorities very effectively guided our work over the past two years.

Those priorities that we collectively approved gave us significant focus and direction. They resulted in the adoption of our first four major motions in June 2016, and most of our Motion #5 this past spring. There remains a short list of items for us to finish off, such as those listed in the introduction to this Report.

On this "priority setting" agenda item at our September SEAC meeting, I propose to go around the table and invite SEAC members to identify any issues they would like SEAC to consider addressing over the next months. Please feel free to exchange ideas on this in advance of our meeting, via email, if you wish. From this collection of ideas we can distill our priorities that will drive our agenda over the next school year.

I will then take back all the ideas raised at our meeting, and synthesize them into a proposed list or approach for the rest of the year. I will bring that back to SEAC for a discussion, paralleling how we arrived at our priorities two years ago.

To assist, I set out below some helpful information from the Provincial Parent Association Advisory Committee on Special Education Advisory Committees (PAAC on SEAC). It is a committee of community organizations with representation on SEACs around Ontario,

PAAC on SEAC has developed suggestions for SEACs around Ontario. This is set out below. A key part of that proposal is a helpful series of requests for information over the year that we can request of TDSB.

Trustee Brown asked TDSB staff to look at this PAAC on SEAC proposal, and map out how TDSB staff might provide us over the next year the information that PAAC on SEAC requests.

We appreciate TDSB staff taking the time to work up a proposal based on that request. After the PAAC on SEAC proposal, I set out below the TDSB staff proposal that was based on it.

When it comes to planning our upcoming meetings, we are, of course, not bound to follow either the original PAAC on SEAC proposal, or the TDSB staff recommendations that build on it. I think all the requests for information of TDSB that PAAC on SEAC proposes are helpful, though the timing of their delivery does not in all cases work for our needs.

For my part, I offer these comments:

First and foremost, whatever priorities we may eventually set for our work over the next year, I would ask TDSB to provide us with the items of information that are listed in the PAAC on SEAC proposal. We can work with TDSB staff on the timing for receiving this information.

Second, at our September meeting, I want us to hear from all SEAC members on the concrete issues regarding students with special education needs that they want SEAC to consider as priorities. A focus on the front-line needs of these students should drive our priorities. It is the fact that we have taken over the setting of our own agenda over the past 18 months that has substantially improved our work. I have heard from other SEACs that where they let the school board set their SEAC's agendas, rather than the SEAC setting its own agenda (as we now do), this has impeded the SEAC from being effective.

Third, I myself am less excited about some of the topics for SEAC agenda items in the PAAC on SEAC proposal, and their timing. Some of the items listed there are in some cases more focused on high-level administrative items. These can feel to some (including me) to be far too removed from the frontline classroom experiences of the students for whom we advocate.

For example, the PAAC on SEAC document is in no small part driven by a large focus on the TDSB Special Education Plan. In contrast, I feel that we should not devote extensive time to that Plan. There appears to me to be little correlation between what the Plan says and what happens in the classroom. On our advice, TDSB could write the most beautiful Special Education Plan, without it changing anything for our students. This is not to question the good faith efforts of those at TDSB who work on the Plan. Rather, as one SEAC member wisely pointed out last spring, the "Special Education Plan" is in reality an after-the-fact report to the Ontario Government on what has already gone on at TDSB. It is not a plan of future action that drives changes in the real world, on the ground at TDSB.

Fourth, where the proposals set out below can be the most helpful can be in the way SEAC could get a chance for real input into the TDSB budgeting process. This input needs to begin months *before* the budget is finalized and placed before the TDSB trustees for a final vote. We need to receive budget information from TDSB *many months before* the final budget is worked up, finalized, submitted to TDSB trustees for approval, and then rolled out. The time lines in the PAAC on SEAC proposal don't fit for us, in this area.

In any event, I encourage you to offer your ideas on what specific issues we should consider as priorities, whether or not they are reflected in the PAAC on SEAC proposal and/or the staff document set out at the end of this report.

*See Appendix A for PAAC on SEAC Calendar suggestions and Appendix B for the TDSB staff suggestions.*

## 3. Staff Item on SEAC's Agenda

TDSB staff asked at our June meeting to place an item on SEAC's meeting agenda for our September 2017 meeting, to get our input. As of the time of writing this report, I do not know what topic staff wish us to address. Whatever it is, it would be great if staff can send us a short report in advance, so that we can spend our time at our meeting offering our input. Watch for the meeting agenda for more details.

## 4. A Chance to Ask TDSB Staff About Issues on Your Mind

At SEAC's June 2017 meeting, some members expressed a desire to have more of an opportunity than we were able to have at recent meetings to ask TDSB staff about issues on their minds regarding education for students with special education needs at TDSB. To that end, I also propose to allot a chunk of time at our September 2017 SEAC meeting for this opportunity.

If you want a fulsome answer to your questions, I strongly encourage you to email Uton Robinson as far in advance of our SEAC meeting as possible to let him know what the question is. If he is asked a question for the first time at our meeting for which he does not have a readily-available answer, I would propose to invite him to bring his answer forward to us at a future meeting, or via email.

## 5. TDSB Plans for Canvassing Students and Families About Accessibility Barriers in Ontario's School System

As I reported to you last June, in late May, the Ontario Government launched an online survey to get information from the public on the disability accessibility barriers that students with disabilities face in Ontario's education system. The Ontario Government also urged educational organizations like TDSB to hold public forums or other events to get feedback from the public on the disability accessibility barriers they face in Ontario's education system, including at TDSB.

Initially the Ontario Government set mid-July as the deadline for input. That provincial deadline was totally unrealistic and unworkable for organizations like TDSB, since schools are closed over the summer. In my capacity with the AODA Alliance I led the campaign to get this deadline extended into the fall.

Happily, the Ontario Government has extended the deadline for feedback to October 16, 2017. It would therefore be very helpful for TDSB to take these important steps:

1. For TDSB to publicize the Ontario Government's online survey to all families and students at TDSB, and to encourage them to fill out the Ontario Government's online survey;

2. For TDSB to organize public forums to gather information from the community on disability accessibility barriers in Ontario's education system, in order to pass this feedback on to the Ontario Government. This would also help TDSB identify disability accessibility barriers in its own schools and programs, so this is a win win strategy.

3. For TDSB to ensure this September that in all its classes and schools, all students are given some curriculum on the disability accessibility barriers in education, and the importance of inclusion for students with disabilities . Students could be invited to take part in a "barrier scavenger hunt", as a learning exercise. This would also help to take action on items SEAC recommended to TDSB in Motion #5. Feedback should be shared with the Ontario Government.

4. TDSB should consult SEAC on the feedback it plans to submit to the Ontario Government on this subject. TDSB should incorporate into its feedback to the Ontario Government, the feedback we have given on this topic, for example the contents of our Motions #1 through 5 that have been passed to date, and the results of SEAC's parents' survey.

If time permits, I aim to include this on our September 11, 2017 meeting agenda, because it is time sensitive. To save time for the other agenda items, I am asking by this report for TDSB staff to report to us in advance in its staff report, on what TDSB is already doing in relation to the Ontario Government invitation for feedback on disability accessibility barriers in Ontario's education system. It would be great if that could include the recommendations for action that I offered above. If any SEAC members have ideas or recommendations for TDSB, don't wait for our September 11, 2017 meeting. Feel free to also share them on our email list now.

For more background on this, visit

<http://www.aodaalliance.org/strong-effective-aoda/07112017.asp>

## 6. TDSB Bussing Plans for this Fall for Students with Special Education Needs

You will recall that last September saw very serious problems with bussing services at TDSB. The burden resulting from this fell unfairly and disproportionately on students with special education needs. Despite the important focus at our September 2017 meeting on discussing priorities for the future, both I and our vice chair, Trustee Alexander Brown, believe it is important for SEAC to learn what TDSB is doing now to ensure that those bussing problems are not repeated. TDSB has had a year to plan for this. We need to know what practical action is going to take place, including what monitoring, as school begins. It is not enough to know what TDSB policy is regarding bussing. As we all know, great policies don't necessarily turn into sufficient action.

I am therefore asking TDSB staff to provide a short written report to SEAC in advance of our meeting on this topic, and to have available a senior staff member accountable and responsible for ensuring effective bussing for TDSB students.

## Appendix A

## PAAC on SEAC – Recommended SEAC Calendar *(from 2016-17)*

Originally posted at: <https://www.paac-seac.ca/annual-calendar/>

**September**

* Confirm Special Education Report Checklist submitted to Regional Office in July
* Review ODA Accessibility Plans (due Sept. 30)
* Develop or review SEAC annual agenda/goals

Request information on:

* BIPSA special education goals and performance indicators for 16-17
* PD Day plans for 16-17 related to special education

**October**

* Develop process for review of 2017-18 Special Education Plan
* Request update on last EQAO results: including deferrals, exemptions, participation rates, accommodations provided for students on an IEP and achievement levels.

**November**

* October Report (OnSIS) Data: Request numbers of exceptional students, placement data, suspensions expulsions data
* IEP Update: Request confirmation that all first term IEP reviews are completed
* Check the EduGains website to see all of the IEP Samples.

**December**

* Special Education Programs and Services receive information on any changes being considered for 2017-18 and the process for review of Special Education Plan

**January**

* Financial Update: Re: 2016-17 special education grants, expenditures and reserve, fund amount and 2017-18 budget process

**February**

* Review proposed changes to special education programs and services in Special Education Plan
* Request an IEP Update
* Review parent resources to ensure they are user friendly and easy to understand

**March**

* Continue discussion of special education programs and services
* Request an update on the BIPSA process

**April**

* Request preliminary budget for special education
* Request data reported to OnSIS in March
* Monitor and participate in public consultations on Special Education Plan

**May**

* Information update and discussion re. special Education Plan/Report Checklist and budget
* Monitor and participate in public consultations on Special Education Budget

**June**

* SEAC recommendations regarding special Education Plan/Report Checklist and budget
* Request Special Education data (including IEP and IPRC) for September meeting
* Develop draft SEAC annual agenda and goals
* Make recommendations to Trustees on the 2017-18 Special Education Plan and budget
* Develop a plan for SEAC activities in 2016-17

**Appendix B**

**DRAFT Calendar of SEAC Business – 2017- 2018 from TDSB Staff**

(Based on Proposal from PAAC on SEAC)

**September** **Information to Assist in Planning SEAC Business and Choice of Annual Goals**

***PAAC on SEAC Suggestions****:*

1. Confirm 2017-2018 Special Education Report Check List *(Margo)*

2. Review Special Education Goals and Performance Indicators for 2017-2018 *(Uton)*

3. Review Plans for Professional Learning Related to Special Education *Special Education Staff)*

4. Review ODA Accessibility Plans and provide input *(Chris Broadbent)*

5. Develop SEAC annual goals – SEAC spoke about developing a monthly calendar of business.

*The suggestion is to identify a manageable number of goals for the year and finalize a schedule of topics for the year, for reviewing information and providing input into the 2018 Special Education Budget and Special Education Plan. This would likely relate to:*

* + - *Programs*
    - *Services*
    - *Staff Allocation*
    - *Processes and Procedures (such as IEP; IST/SST; IPRC, etc.)*
    - *Other issues possibly identified in the Parent Survey*

***Other possibilities:***

1. Review work of summer work group and complete unfinished business

2. Review updated results of the Parent Survey to identify stakeholder concerns

**October** **Begin a Process for Review and Input into the 2018 Special Education Plan**

***PAAC on SEAC Suggestions:***

1. Develop process for review of and input into the annual Special Education Plan

2. Review EQAO Results – To assist in identifying system issues related to achievement of students on IEPs, including:

* Deferrals, Exemptions and Participation Rates
* Accommodations provided for students on IEP
* Achievement levels

***Other possibilities:***

1. Update on Refusal to Admit Procedure *(Ted Libera)*

2. Planning input into the Parents as Partners Conference

**November Possible Topic: Individual Education Plans**

***PAAC on SEAC Suggestions:***

1. Review data from October Report (On SIS), including:

* Numbers of exceptional students
* Placement data
* Suspension/expulsion rates

2. IEP Update – The department could report on completion of first term IEP review and development *(Special Education Staff)*

3. Check the EduGains website to see IEP samples

***Other possibilities:***

**December Possible Topic: Special Education Programs and Services**

***PAAC on SEAC Suggestions:***

1. Special Education Programs and Services – receive information on any changes being considered for 2018-2019 and the process for review of the Special Education Plan

***Other possibilities:***

1. SEAC Organizational Meeting

**January Possible Topic: Special Education Budget**

***PAAC on SEAC Suggestions:***

1. Financial Update – re 2018-2019 special education grants, expenditures, reserve, fund amount and 2018-2019 budget process *(Craig Snider)*

***Other possibilities:***

**February Possible Topic: Staff Allocation**

***PAAC on SEAC Suggestions:***

1. Review proposed changes to Special Education programs and services in the Special Education Plan *(Uton)*

2. Request an IEP Update *(Special Education Staff)*

3. Review parent resources to ensure they are friendly and easy to understand *(Communication Staff)*

***Other possibilities:***

1. Update on staff allocation *(Uton)*

**March Possible Topic: Special Education Plan – Focus on Secondary**

***PAAC on SEAC Suggestions:***

1. Continue discussion of special education programs and services (with a focus on secondary allocation, programs and services linked to Collective Agreement deadlines) *(Uton)*

2. Request an update on Special Education Goals and Performance Indicators process *(Uton)*

***Other possibilities:***

1. Update on Coordinated Service Planning (as new process is contracted to commence) *(Rae Roebuck and Terri Hewitt)*

**April Possible Topic: Special Education Budget**

***PAAC on SEAC Suggestions:***

1. Request preliminary budget for special education *(Craig Snider)*

2. Monitor and participate in public consultations on Special Education Plan

3. Make recommendations to Trustees on the 2018-2019 Special Education Plan and Budget

***Other possibilities:***

**May Possible Topic: Special Education Plan – Focus on Elementary**

***PAAC on SEAC Suggestions:***

1. Information update and discussion re: Special Education Plan/Report Checklist and Budget

2. Monitor and participate in public consultations on Special Education Budget

***Other possibilities:***

1. Continue discussion of special education programs and services (with a focus on elementary allocation, programs and services.)

2. Review public input into the Special Education Plan collected from consultations through the year

**June Possible Topic: Review of Annual Special Education Data**

***PAAC on SEAC Suggestions:***

1. SEAC recommendations regarding Special Education Plan/Report Checklist and Budget

2. Request Special Education data (including IEP and IPRC) for September meeting *(Lori)*

3. Develop draft SEAC annual agenda and goals

4. *(The PAAC suggestion was moved to April as number 3)*

5. Develop a plan for SEAC activities for next year

***Other possibilities:***

1. Completion of self-evaluation *(required by board for all CACs)*

2. Review of SEAC Annual Report to the Board *(required by board for all CACs)*