A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee was convened at 7:05 p.m. on Monday, January 16, 2012, in the Boardroom, 5050 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario, with Steven Lynette presiding.

The following committee members were present: Yama Arianfar, Diana Avon, Heather Breckenridge, Richard Carter, Paul Cross, Dr. Robert Gates, Clovis Grant, Nora Green, Debra Hayden, Olga Ingrahm, Gal Koren, Steven Lynette, Dayib Nur, Tammy Simon, Nancy Ann Turner Wright, and Trustees John Hastings and Howard Kaplan.

Regrets were received from Christina Buczek, Ginny Pearce and Jean-Paul Ngana.

The following staff members were present: Cindy Burley, David Johnston, Elizabeth Mayhew and Denise Joseph-Dowers.

1. Approval of the Agenda

Richard Carter moved: That the agenda be approved.

The motion was carried.

2. Declarations of Possible Conflict of Interest

Phillip Sargent declared a possible conflict of interest with regard to the matter of Accessible School Buses as he is employed by a school bus company.

3. Confirmation of the Minutes of December 5, 2011

Paul Cross moved: That the minutes of the SEAC meeting held on December 5, 2011 be confirmed. The motion was carried.

4. Delegations and/or Presentations

(a) Fast ForWord

SEAC received a presentation (see page 5) from Angie Scarano-Iuorio presenting a report on the instructional program Fast ForWord.

Staff undertook to do further analysis of the two pilot projects on Fast ForWord and Empower and present findings at a future meeting.

(b) SEA Survey

SEAC received a presentation from Angie Scarano-Iuorio presenting a report on the SEA survey, which was conducted last spring.
5. Business Arising from the Minutes of December 5, 2011

(a) Membership Changes and Additions [Page 2, Item 6 (a)]
The Chair notified that Anita Nielsen has submitted her resignation from SEAC.Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada will nominate a replacement for Board approval.

Giselle Romanino, who was appointed as an alternate community representative has tendered her resignation as her child now attends school in the Toronto Catholic District School Board.

(b) Direct Link to Special Education on the Board’s Web Site

On November 16, 2011, the Board approved SEAC’s request that an icon providing a direct link to the Special Education department be placed on the main page of the Board’s website.

Staff provided a breakdown of activity re special education on the Board’s external web site (see page 27) for the period January 1, 2011 to January 1, 2012.

6. Accessible School Buses

On motion of Nora Green, SEAC RECOMMENDS:

Whereas, parents of children with disabilities have expressed concern that their children are not able to participate fully in class field trips and excursions where transportation by school bus is required; and

Whereas, children with disabilities who require the use of wheelchairs or other similar assistive devices and who are in non-congregated classes are not able to travel on field trips and excursions on a school bus with their peers; and

Whereas, these children must be transported using alternative methods and therefore do benefit from the complete field trip experience; and

Whereas, it is reasonable that the Board make every effort to ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to participate fully in the field trip or excursion experience in a similar way to that which the majority of children participate; and

Whereas, parents of children with disabilities believe that all school buses should be equipped to accommodate sufficient wheelchairs for children requiring the use of wheelchairs or other assistive devices alongside their able-bodied peers;

Therefore be it resolved:

(a) That a review of school bus transportation services be conducted to identify methods to ensure that whenever a bus is chartered, it should be accessible to students requiring the use of wheelchairs or other assistive devices;

(b) That every effort be made to incorporate the review findings into the Board’s internal transportation fleet so as to ensure that for charter purposes, sufficient buses used by able-bodied students are also accessible to students requiring the use of wheelchairs and other assistive devices;
(c) That the findings of the review be incorporated into the next Request for Proposal process for school bus service and that where permitted by the RFP process, a requirement be included that all bidders ensure that they are able to provide for charter purposes, sufficient accessible school buses which can accommodate both able-bodied students and those who require the use of wheelchairs and other assistive devices on the same bus.

7. Individual Education Plans

Nora Green moved:

Whereas, “classroom teachers need to be aware of the instructional, environmental, and assessment accommodations that are recorded in the student’s IEP” and “the classroom teacher and support personnel are directly responsible for implementing the program and services outlined in a student’s IEP” (Ministry of Education, IEP Resource Guide 2004); and

Whereas, it is the opinion of a significant number of parents that teachers are not clearly familiar with the IEP and its contents and are not implementing the IEP appropriately; and

Whereas, the goal of the IEP process is to create a collaborative process in which parents, guardians and educators effectively implement the requirements of the IEP; and

Whereas, the Board is aware of models of best practice at specific schools, such best practices having been found to be methods to reach their staff in an effective and comprehensive way, preserving the legal requirements governing IEPs and presenting the accommodations and their implementations in a clear way to their staff; and

Whereas, these best practices are seen as beneficial by staff, students and parents;

Therefore be it resolved:

(a) That a trial program be developed at certain schools at the secondary level to test the implementation of such practices;

(b) That a determination be made as to whether such a trial can be effectively implemented at the middle school level, and if appropriate, implement such a trial program;

(c) That the information regarding, and subsequent results of the trial program(s) be presented to SEAC and through trustees to the community for input; and

(d) That staff work with SEAC to determine the appropriate subsequent course of action.

Following discussion, on motion of Paul Cross, amended by Diana Avon, SEAC decided that consideration of the matter be deferred pending receipt of information from the Board’s Legal Department on the legal requirements of principals re compliance with regard to IEPs and the legal recourse available for parents.
8. Trustees’ Report

Trustee Kaplan reported that the Chair of the Board held a meeting with the Minister of Education on matters affecting the Board.

Trustee Kaplan also reported he has a conflict with the SEAC meetings scheduled for April 2, May 7, and November 5, 2012 and meetings of the Planning and Priorities Committee, also scheduled for those dates.

On motion of Trustee Kaplan, SEAC decided that the meeting scheduled for April 2, 2012 be moved to Tuesday, April 3, 2012. SEAC also decided that a decision about the meetings scheduled for May 7 and November 5, 2012 will be made at a later date.

9. Reports/Updates from Representatives on TDSB and other Committees

(a) Communications Subcommittee
The subcommittee has not yet met. An email to arrange a meeting will go out shortly.

(b) Facilitator Subcommittee
Clovis Grant reported that the subcommittee met via teleconference. Karen Forbes will present a report on the recommendations made at the meeting.

10. Correspondence received by the Chair
- Email dated January 8, 2012 from Clovis Grant re upcoming conference on Autism
- Email dated January 8, 2012 from Ginny Pearce re RDSP summary

11. Senior Superintendent’s Report
Cindy Burley presented a report on behalf of Karen Forbes (see page 29) to the Committee.

12. System Superintendent’s Report
Cindy Burley presented a report (see page 30) to the Committee.

13. Professional Support Services Report
Dave Johnston presented a report (see page 32) to the Committee.

14. Local SEAC Association Reports
(a) Down Syndrome Association of Toronto
The Association’s newsletter will be shared with all members.

15. Adjournment
At 9:14 p.m. Debra Hayden moved: That the meeting be adjourned.
The motion was carried.

Steven Lynette
Chair of the Committee
Fast ForWord™

Program Update to SEAC
Monday, January 16, 2012

Prepared by Jan O’Reilly, Research & Information Services,
Toronto District School Board

5
Background and History

- In January 2006, SEAC recommended staff undertake a review of programs identified as being of potential benefit to students with special needs.
- Staff reviewed five programs and submitted a report to SEAC.
- In May 2009, SEAC requested staff report back on the feasibility of piloting two of the programs (Empower™ Reading and Fast ForWord™) in the 2010-2011 school year.
Fast ForWord™ Product Overview

A family of reading intervention products:

- **Language Products**: Sound and word exercises that work together to help develop the understanding of basic speech sounds as well as the fundamental cognitive skills essential for learning and reading.

- **Reading Products**: Exercise areas of the brain to help students process information and learn more efficiently.
Goal of Fast ForWord™

- To develop and strengthen the cognitive skills essential for learning and reading success
  - Memory
  - Attention
  - Processing rate
  - Sequencing
Fast ForWord™ Language Products

- **Language Basics** – helps to build a skill foundation that prepares students to be successful with Language v2 (e.g., builds ability to click and drag objects, to identify chronological order of sounds and associate these with different pictures, and builds ability for sustained and focused attention)

- **Language v2** - develops listening accuracy, phonological awareness, and language structures and moves elementary students who are reading below grade level toward grade level reading skills

- **Language to Reading v2** - emphasizes the link between spoken and written language to guide young students to become proficient grade level readers
Adaptive exercises that develop critical brain processing efficiency in four key areas

**Language v2**
- Improves **memory** by having the student hold a statement or question in working memory while retrieving picture-concept associations from long-term memory
- Improves **attention** by developing the ability to focus on multiple tasks and ignore distractions
- Strengthens **auditory and linguistic processing** rates so that students can distinguish sounds quickly enough to discriminate individual phonemes and understand words and sentences
- Develops **sequencing** skills through exercises that require the use of a logical word order to comprehend simple and complex instructions and organize a response that follows the specified sequence of actions

**Language to Reading v2**
- Builds **memory** through exercises that task both working and long-term memory
- Improves **attention** by developing the ability to focus on tasks and ignore distractions
- Develops **auditory, visual, and linguistic processing** of orally presented words, sentences, and stories for meaning and comprehension
- Develops **sequencing** skills through exercises that require the use of word order to comprehend complex statements, follow multi-step instructions, and form appropriate responses to a specified sequence of actions
The TDSB 2010-2011 Pilot

- Four schools chosen
  - Four Junior LD classes – one per school
  - One school per quadrant
  - 47 students in total in the pilot
Focus of Evaluation

- Fast ForWord™ is a research-based program with demonstrated effectiveness and as such did not need to evaluate program effectiveness.

- Evaluation focus:
  - Assess student outcomes in the real world settings of TDSB classrooms.
  - Examine implementation issues to see if program is a good fit for TDSB.
Program Update

- The four pilot schools did not request a license renewal for this school year (2011-2012)
- One pilot school has continued to use the program with some students from the pilot year *
- Four of the teachers have moved to other schools/teaching assignments
- Teacher feedback and student outcome data was assessed

 *without license teacher has limited access to all features of the software e.g. Progress Tracker
What We Can Tell You

- Share teacher feedback
- Effort was made to examine the student data collected by the software program to triangulate with teacher perceptions
- Due to implementation issues, many students did not complete the first product (i.e., Language v2) and therefore have no outcome data
Teacher Feedback
Ease of Implementation

- Most of the teachers (4) said the program was easily adapted within their classroom setting (2 teachers felt it was not)

- When asked how the ease of use compared to other programs, half (3 of 6) felt it was better than other programs, while one teacher felt it was on par with other programs and 2 teachers felt it was not as good as other programs
Implementation Challenges

- Computer access issues
  - Program requires installation on fairly new computers in order to run at appropriate speed
  - Some teachers had limited access to viable computers
Implementation Challenges

- **Lack of quiet environment**
  - Most teachers lacked a quiet, dedicated space for the program making it difficult for some students to stay engaged

- **Student receptiveness**
  - Students complained of missing lessons they enjoyed – one teacher commented that students were quick to give up their time on the program in order to stay with the rest of their class
  - Some students were keen and then their interest waned, while others initially refused to participate

- **Timetabling restrictions**
  - Resulted in a wide variety of time commitments teachers could make over the week
Implementation Challenges

- Technical support required
  - Some teachers noted that undertaking the program required a great deal of time over and above what they felt was consistently manageable
  - Greater technical support needed in order to ensure they had time to familiarize themselves with all aspects of the program - particularly assessment and student tracking
  - One teacher noted that good computer skills and a certain amount of technical savvy is required on the part of teachers implementing this program
Implementation Supports

- Teachers noted that the professional development offered at the beginning of the year was very helpful in supporting their understanding of the program.
- However, many teachers felt that more training was needed.
- Aside from the available web and phone support, some teachers felt they needed greater support to familiarize themselves with other parts of the program, e.g. online assessment.
- One teacher mentioned that visiting a model classroom had been beneficial.
Student Receptiveness

- Four teachers said students were moderately receptive, while 1 said students were very receptive and 1 said students were not very receptive.

- Teachers said receptiveness varied over time – they noted:
  - Some initial reluctance from some students because of the change from their regular programming.
  - Some students became less receptive as time went on.
  - Some students became more frustrated with the program over time.
  - Students that had difficulty with one or more of the tasks began to avoid them and required more teacher support to become more receptive to the program.
Impact on Student Learning

- Despite clear implementation and support concerns, teachers offered positive reviews of the program’s impact on student learning.

- Teachers said:
  - The program targeted essential skills.
  - They liked how the program was “self-managing” and offered students immediate feedback.
  - Students’ reading and oral language skills improved.
  - Students’ behaviour improved.
  - Students were able to focus, attend and concentrate for longer periods of time in the classroom as a result of the program.
Student Attitudes and Skills

- Most teachers either agreed or strongly agreed (5 of 6) that students were more enthusiastic about reading.
- Most teachers either agreed or strongly agreed (5 of 6) that students had learned more reading skills/strategies and that the quality of students’ reading had improved.
- Teachers were divided about the impact on students’ confidence – 3 teachers agreed or strongly agreed that students were more confident in their reading, while 2 teachers were uncertain, and 1 teacher disagreed.
Program Effectiveness

- When asked how effective the program was in meeting the reading and language needs of their students, 4 teachers reported that the program was moderately effective and 2 reported that it was very effective.

- Compared to other programs in terms of its effectiveness on student learning, 4 teachers said it was better than other programs, while 2 felt it was on par with other programs.

- All teachers said they would recommend this program to other teachers.
Student Success Stories

“Since the program worked at the students’ levels, there was a significant improvement in overall reading scores (including comprehension), as well as oral language skills”.

“I had huge gains. One student jumped almost 20 DRA reading levels in the months he was on Fast ForWord. Another student drastically improved his behaviour. Previously, this student was very confrontational, behavioural, and distractable, but after Fast ForWord this kid really became more focused and considerate of others. Fast ForWord was essentially training him to stay focused and pay attention to details other than his own voice. As a result, he listened more to teachers and peers and created substantially less disruptions”.

“Kids commented to me on what they were learning from certain parts of the program. I could see that they felt some personal improvement. They did calm down after they used the program and settled into language work quite easily”.

“I find that the ability of my students to focus has improved. They can attend for longer periods of time in the classroom”.

“The biggest benefit was having the students understand that they need to listen to the instructions the first time because you only get one chance to answer. This has helped with concentration in the classroom”.

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Next Steps

- A Final Report on both Empower™ Reading and Fast ForWord™ will be prepared by the end of school year 2011-2012*

- Examine available student outcomes and implementation issues to see which program is a better fit for TDSB

- *when Empower students complete the program hours this school year, all student data will be examined for both programs
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Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP)

At the SEAC meeting of December 5, 2011, staff undertook to distribute a brochure on the RDSP to the trustees. SEAC requested that trustees make this information available to participants of their ward councils and/or any other network that might benefit from this information. On December 9th, a briefing note was sent to trustees explaining your request and outlining highlights of the plan. The brochure was also provided for them to distribute.

Facilitator: Special Education Position

As you know, the decision of the Human Resources and Professional Learning Committee (HRPLC) to not accept the staff recommendation to develop and implement a facilitator position was turned back to the Committee by the Board at their meeting of November 16, 2011. The Facilitator Subcommittee of SEAC convened a teleconference. The committee recommended that SEAC continue to support a role/position that would provide support to parents as they navigate the system and considered three options:

1. Develop the position of a parent guide
2. Create a position that could provide information about special education and connect parents to appropriate support through phone and email
3. Assign current staff the rotating responsibility of staffing an information line/email through which to support parents

A description of these three options will come back to SEAC at the February meeting for their recommendation to be forwarded to the HRPL committee.
Special Education Advisory Committee
System Superintendent’s Report
January 16, 2012
Submitted by Cindy Burley

Alternative Report Card for Students in DD (ISP) Classes

As you may recall, we have been piloting an addendum to the Provincial Report Card that addresses the alternative curriculum in our classes for students with developmental disabilities. The pilot has been responded to very positively by parents and staff alike. As a result, we are now implementing this alternative curriculum addendum board-wide to all of our DD (ISP) classes, both elementary and secondary. All schools will be using this report by the end of June 2012. On January 11, we held a session for the administrators of these schools to give an overview of the report card and to explain next steps. Professional learning will be available to all of the new schools.

Special Education Department: Speaker Series

Four additional Special Education Speaker Series evenings have been scheduled. Topics include ADHD (Scarborough Hospital ADHD Clinic staff), Barrier Free Education for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students (Canadian Hearing Society) and a presentation of the latest research in Autism (Surrey Place Centre).

Professional Learning for Special Education Department Staff

On January 11, central special education staff participated in a session that focused on understanding the elements of effective professional learning within the structure of a PLC and how to foster professional growth and learning within a PLC though differentiated coaching.

TDSB System Standards for Professional Learning and Training – School Based and Central Staff versions

These documents are the result of the collaborative efforts of the Professional Learning Training and Leadership Development Unit and representatives from several TDSB departments, including Special Education. These Standards bring coherence and a suggested framework to TDSB’s approach to designing and delivering quality professional learning. The companion document, Effective Practices for Providers of Professional Learning and Training, brings clarity to the elements of impactful professional learning and training. The plan for board wide implementation of these 2 documents is currently being finalized.

Staff Allocation

The staff allocation process has begun with central principals and coordinators. At our first meeting, we reviewed standards of support staff across the system. Staff looked at the ISP trends across the system for the last five years and programs were reviewed for viability. Emphasis was placed on ensuring that if programs were closed that there must be minimum impact on students. Clustering remains a significant driver so that students experience as few transitions as possible. This year we have also added a driver about Facility/Program Alignment that focuses on the need to align both existing and new facilities to the special needs of the various Intensive Support Program requirements, in order to maximize access to appropriate facilities that promote student success.
Board Improvement Plan

On January 13, all central special education staff participated in a professional learning session that continued to focus on the Special Education Components of the Board Improvement Plan. Staff were engaged in compiling and analyzing information submitted by schools on the Target Ten/Focus Five EQAO templates. When the analysis is complete, trends and best practices (EQAO preparation, mitigating anxiety, developing self-advocacy, use of assistive technology, parent, support staff and PSS staff involvement etc.) will be shared with the system.

Parent Information Evenings

On January 24, our Special Education Department Staff will present their twice annual Parent Information Nights focused on the topic of IEPs and IPRCs. These nights are well-attended and offer parents an opportunity to ask key questions about these processes.

TDSB Partnership with Surrey Place Centre

Through the TDSB partnership with the School Support Program, Surrey Place Centre, Professional Learning sessions continue to be planned for staff. These sessions are arranged at Surrey Place Centre, at individual schools and at larger central locations. On January 27, six sessions are available for Educational Assistants. The topic is, “Supporting Students with Asperger’s Syndrome in the Classroom.”

Assistive Technology Differentiated Instruction and Lesson Development Professional Learning

In addition to training sessions for a variety of assistive technology hardware and software programs, the Assistive Technology (AT) Team also provides professional learning sessions focusing on the use of assistive technology to differentiate learning and to enhance lesson delivery. The upcoming assistive technology professional learning sessions include the following:

Using the Interactive White Board to Meet the Needs of Special Education Students (Next Steps)
Using Read and Write Gold to Support the Research Process (Next Steps)
Using the Interactive White Board to Support Students with Autism (Next Steps)
Guidelines for the use of Assistive Technology in Provincial Testing

Teaching Awareness through Puppetry

TAP is very excited to be launching their new and improved program which is the evolution of 30 years of learning from the Kids on the Block-Toronto program. Teaching Awareness through Puppetry is now a Canadian based interactive disability awareness program, offering new and specialized performances geared to students in grades 1-3 and 4-6. The content reflects Ontario curriculum requirements in an educational and fun way. There is also a unique program for girls only (grades 6-8) about “Healthy Bodies and Healthy Choices”. There is no cost to schools but the number of bookings is extremely limited. On average, 2 schools per family of schools will be chosen.
Paediatric Clinics
During the last school year, the Model Schools Paediatric Health Initiative (MSPHI) began in 2 clusters of schools. The first clinic was established in Sprucecourt Junior Public School and reflected a partnership with St. Michael’s Hospital and the Toronto Foundation for Student Success. Now in its 2nd year, the service is expanding to include the presence of Paediatricians at School Support Team (SST) meetings at 7 schools in the area. Attending an SST will help Paediatricians to get a better idea of problems facing school staff and will help them to develop criteria that will enable school staff to more effectively utilize Paediatric services and initiate earlier interventions.

The second clinic was established at George Webster Elementary School, and is named the Paul Steinhauer Clinic in honour of Dr. Paul Steinhauer, who was a leading Child Psychiatrist in Toronto. This clinic is a partnership with Access Alliance Community Health Centre and Toronto East General Hospital.

In November 2011, a third clinic opened at Brookview Middle School in partnership with Black Creek Community Health Centre. A second clinic in that area has recently begun operating one Saturday a month at Gosford Public School.

Discussions are currently underway with Caring and Safe Schools as well as with a TDSB high school for clinics to be established in those settings.

Telepsychiatry
In 2011, contact was initiated with the Hospital for Sick Children, Telepsychiatry program to explore the possibility of a partnership with TDSB. We are now nearing the completion of a partnership agreement that will allow TDSB staff to access the 42 Child Psychiatrists and other mental health staff including Psychologists and Social Workers through the use of a videoconferencing format. The services that we will be able to access includes: clinical consultation; professional consultation; program consultation; and, training.

Six sites across the TDSB will be equipped with videoconferencing equipment that will permit access to this service. There are 4 school sites (Queen Alexandra Middle School, Chester Le Junior Public School, George Webster Elementary School, John Polanyi Collegiate Institute), and 2 Board sites (140 Borough Drive and 1 Civic Centre Court) that have been identified to receive this equipment. This partnership has been made possible due to funds allocated through the Student Support Leadership Initiative (SSLI). This meets the SSLI goal of engaging the Health Sector in addressing the mental health needs of students in a cross-sectoral way. As a result, it is a joint project with the Hospital for Sick Children, the Toronto Catholic District School Board and TDSB.

Professional Support Services Inventory of Programs and Services
Over 300 Professional Support Services (PSS) staff have completed an on-line questionnaire through Survey Monkey. They were asked to identify services that they provide that are not reflected in the statistical summary that is submitted each month. As the information is being
compiled by each Professional Support Service, the information will be presented to SEAC in order to provide an overview of the range of services delivered by PSS staff. Although not comprehensive, it does offer a look at the breadth and depth of PSS services in schools and across the system. It will describe the groups, services and programs delivered by PSS staff as well as the presentations, workshops, and training that has been given to education staff, community and parent groups.

### Services Statistics

**December 2011**

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