



**Committee Name:** Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

**Date:** Monday, November 2, 2015

**Time:** 7:00 p.m.

**Present:** Diana Avon, Alexander Brown, Richard Carter, Aline Chan, Paul Cross, Tiffany Ford, Jordan Glass, Clovis Grant, Nora Green, Howard Kaplan, Lisa Kness, David Lapofsky, Steven Lynette, Michelle McDonald, Diane Montgomery, Jean-Paul Ngana, Phillip Sargent, Cynthia Sprigings, Dick Winters

**Regrets:** Paula Boutis, Deborah Fletcher, Olga Ingrahm, Mark Kovats, Ken Stein

**Staff:** Uton Robinson, Jeff Hainbuch, Ian Allison, Margo Ratsep

**Guests:** Craig Snider, TDSB Comptroller, Budget, Revenue and Financial Reporting; Maria LoBianco, Supervising Principal, Special Education for West Region; Lori Moore, Supervising Principal for Special Education, East Region

**Recorder:** Margo Ratsep

ITEM	DISCUSSION / RECOMMENDATIONS / MOTIONS	DECISIONS
1. Call to Order/Quorum	A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee was convened at 7:03 pm on Monday, November 2nd, 2015 in the Board Room, 5050 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario with Steven Lynette presiding as Chair.	
2. Approval of Agenda	<b>Motion:</b> Jean-Paul Ngana moved that the agenda be approved as amended, postponing the Member Presentation from Epilepsy Toronto to the December meeting. The motion carried.	Agenda approved
3. Declaration of Possible Conflicts of Interest	None noted.	
4. Confirmation of Minutes	<b>Motion:</b> Clovis Grant moved that the Minutes of the October 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2015 meeting be approved. The motion carried.	Minutes approved
5. Presentations/Delegations	<p><b>Presentations/Delegations/Consultations</b></p> <p><b>Consultation on the 2015-2016 Special Education Budget</b></p> <p>At the start of the budget presentation, VIEWS representative David Lepofsky voiced his concern about SEAC's late receipt of advance information from staff in preparation for the Budget Consultation. At its last meeting, SEAC requested the provision of this information in an accessible format and well in advance of the meeting. Instead, the presentation document was sent out on the afternoon of the meeting. The document was 26 pages long, linked to other documents and inaccessible to those with vision impairment. He described this as not only unrealistic but disrespectful to SEAC members and counter to TDSB's obligation to provide SEAC with the opportunity to be involved in the Budget consultation process. He gave notice of a motion he proposed to make during the meeting and asked SEAC Liaison Margo Ratsep to read the motion out loud on his behalf. SEAC Chair, Steven Lynette spoke in favour of the motion. VOICE</p>	

**5. Presentations/Delegations  
(continued)**

Representative, Paul Cross proposed a friendly amendment to remove names from the motion. The amendment was accepted as friendly, with the provision that the presence of the Comptroller be requested at the proposed meeting outlined in recommendation 2 of the motion. The amended motion read:

**\*\*\*Motion to the Board, moved by David Lepofsky, seconded by Jordan Glass:**

***Whereas Regulation 464/97 entitles the Special Education Advisory Committee to take part in the TDSB budget process;***

***And whereas SEAC presented questions to TDSB on important budget issues in early May 2015;***

***And whereas TDSB staff was scheduled to respond to these issues in September 2015, at the regular SEAC meeting;***

***And whereas neither the expected staff nor a replacement was available to present at that meeting, to provide answers to the questions on budget that SEAC had submitted, and that had not previously been answered;***

***And whereas SEAC scheduled a staff representative to appear at its regular meeting on November 2, 2015;***

***And whereas senior TDSB officials were alerted at the regular SEAC meeting in October 2015 that it was important that TDSB provide budget information well in advance of the November SEAC meeting, in an accessible format;***

***And whereas it is known by staff that one member of SEAC is totally blind, and does not read printed material on paper or on a PowerPoint screen;***

***And whereas TDSB staff did not provide any financial or budgetary information to SEAC up to three hours before the November 2, 2015 SEAC meeting;***

***And whereas around 4:30 pm on November 2, 2015, SEAC members were sent a detailed 26 page budget document purporting to respond to SEAC's inquiries, which was not in an accessible format for a blind person to read;***

***And whereas it is unreasonable to expect SEAC members, especially community members who are volunteers, to digest 26 pages of financial information and prepare for an important opportunity to ask questions about it, when they must also in the 3 and a half hours available get home, eat dinner, and then get to the 7 pm SEAC meeting;***

***SEAC therefore recommends that:***

- 1. The Toronto District School Board direct senior TDSB officials to provide a detailed written explanation to SEAC, the TDSB and the public, for their failure to provide SEAC with proper budget information on a timely basis and in an accessible format;***
- 2. TDSB's chair and executive committee hold a public meeting with a delegation***

	<p><b><i>from SEAC, and with senior TDSB officials including the TDSB Comptroller, to discuss steps that TDSB officials will take to ensure the provision of full, timely and accessible information on special education budget to SEAC.</i></b></p> <p>Before a vote was taken, Mr. Snider apologized for not being able to provide the budget presentation information to SEAC in the time requested. He explained that his time has been monopolized throughout the fall by additional responsibilities brought about through staff absences. A consensus was reached to table the motion until Mr. Snider completed his presentation.</p> <p>During his presentation, Mr. Snider spoke in reference to the emailed document. He explained that the information presented in the distributed document was drafted to respond to SEAC's list of questions. He highlighted a number of points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The chart provided on page 3 of the document outlines the projected budget, which may change, dependent on enrolment.</li> <li>• October 31 and March 31 are the enrolment report dates. Based on projections, TDSB is seeing a greater decline in elementary student numbers than expected. Secondary has come close to projection.</li> <li>• While overall enrolments are dropping, TDSB is not seeing a proportional decline in special education.</li> <li>• TDSB is losing funding because we have fewer students in the system.</li> <li>• Year to year changes in staff allocation is dynamic, based on the student needs in the schools and staffing is adjusted based on the needs that arise.</li> <li>• Unlike the regular classroom, staff allocation in special education is based on student needs and required supports, not on total numbers of students in a class.</li> <li>• 94.1% of costs are labour costs.</li> <li>• Transportation, utilities, maintenance and caretaking is not charged to the special education budget.</li> <li>• SEA Equipment grants must be used for SEA equipment.</li> <li>• At a recent Regional meeting of school boards, Ministry officials stressed there is no new money coming from the Ministry through Grants – asking boards to focus instead on how better to support students with what boards already receive.</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussion and SEAC Input/Recommendations:</b></p> <p>A request was made for TDSB Finance and Special Education staff to find a way to make SEAC part of the TDSB Budget Consultation process.</p> <p><b>Follow-Up Actions:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mr. Snider undertook to have funding information about other education program (EPO) grants emailed to SEAC members. Some of the grants have audits within them, ensuring compliance</li> </ol>	
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	<p>and requiring sign-off.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. If available for the next meeting or possibly January, Mr. Snider will present information to SEAC about the TDSB report on the three year forecast regarding GSN. His ability to provide this information is dependent on the meeting schedule of the board Budget Committee, which has to approve the report for public release before it can be shared.</li> <li>3. Mr. Snider will contact the Ministry of Education for clarification about their GSN consultation process and have Margo Ratsep forward the information to SEAC members. In the meantime, SEAC might consider the question: “If we have to look for savings across the system, in what areas would you recommend TDSB make reductions?”</li> <li>4. In response to a SEAC request, Uton Robinson undertook to provide a breakdown of support staff (EA/SNA) to provide a picture of what reductions in staffing look like and how the decisions are made.</li> </ol> <p>David Lepofsky called for a vote on the motion.</p> <p>The vote was taken, with 14 in favour, 3 opposed and 2 abstentions</p>	<p>The motion carried</p>
<p><b>6. SEAC Business &amp; Open Discussion</b></p>	<p><b>SEAC Business &amp; Open Discussion</b></p> <p><b>Staff Presentation and Open Discussion on SEAC Priority 1</b></p> <p>The focus for Priority 1 is “How can TDSB improve its process for deciding what educational services and supports a child with special needs will receive?” The topics to be covered in the staff presentation are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In-School Team/School Support Team (IST/SST)</li> <li>2. Individual Education Plan (IEP)</li> <li>3. Identification Placement Review Committee (IPRC) Process</li> </ol> <p>The first topic (IST/SST) was addressed at this meeting. Supervising Principals Maria Lo Bianco (West Region) and Lori Moore (East Region) spoke to the slide presentation provided to SEAC members in advance. In response to SEAC questions, the following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The IST/SST process includes parents being kept informed and invited to meetings. There is an expectation that conversations take place between teachers and parents throughout the IST/SST process, about teacher concerns and available options.</li> <li>• The IST process was designed to formalize the kinds of initial or early stage conversations that have normally happened among school staff, to discuss concerns and share helpful strategies to make sure the program is moving a student forward.</li> <li>• The SST process was designed to provide school staff and parents with access to the expertise of professional support staff, for helpful teaching strategies to support students and for specific professional services for students when needed.</li> </ul>	

- Parent invitation to attend an IST meeting is not formal policy at this time, while parent invitation to the SST meeting is expected. The department is looking at procedures to better facilitate parents and schools working together.
- If a parent disagrees with the decision of the Principal – the TDSB “Parent Concern Protocol” outlines how parents are to address the situation.
- Throughout the IST/SST process, information is documented in an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) which is stored in the OSR.

In response to questions about the processes and system accountability, Uton Robinson provided the following information:

- TDSB outlines consistent messaging across the system, at leadership meetings with Superintendents and school administrators. SEAC members were referred to the Special Education Checklist forwarded to them in the November meeting mail out, which is reviewed with the system superintendents and principals.
- Superintendent, principal and school staff network with special education consultants and coordinators, spreading learning among schools about the good things that are happening around the system. Mentorship is also provided through targeted “Exploration classrooms”.
- The onus for communication with parents around IST/SST falls on the school principal.
- Information sharing between schools and outside agencies is facilitated by the parents using a permission form called “Consent to Release Confidential Information”.

**Follow-Up Actions:**

1. Uton Robinson undertook to provide to SEAC more information on the policy/procedures followed by staff in the IST/SST process.
2. Margo Ratsep undertook to forward a copy of the Parent Concern Protocol to SEAC members.

Lisa Kness moved that the meeting continue past 9:00 p.m. The motion carried.

**Discussion and SEAC Input/Recommendations:**

SEAC gave the following recommendations:

- That this presentation be placed on the TDSB website. The presenters explained that the presentation has been used in public evening presentations across the system. It is being reviewed for inclusion on the website. SEAC members were asked not to distribute it yet, and were invited to provide feedback for improving it.
- To include the Parent Concern Protocol as part of the presentation.
- That board policy address improved practice in long-term planning for students. For example, pathways should be more clearly described in long-term planning for students – especially for students who may not be diploma bound.
- That more attention needs to be paid in schools during transition planning over the long term, especially around requirements for psychological assessment for DSO applications

<p><b>7. Business Arising from the September Minutes</b></p>	<p><b>Advocacy re: HNA Funding as per Upper Canada DSB Letter (Trustee Brown)</b></p> <p>Uton Robinson undertook to consult with the Finance department to provide the specific High Needs Amounts (HNA) given by the Ministry of Education to TDSB, as per the Upper Canada DSB letter received in September.</p>	
<p><b>8. Trustee Reports &amp; Follow-Up on Previous Action Items</b></p>	<p>Trustee Brown reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All TDSB staff will be receiving accessibility training, a process which has already begun.</li> <li>• The board received a response from the Ministry to the letter about changing SEAC membership requirements so that citizenship is not required. The response indicated the Ministry is taking the request under advisement but is refusing to make a change to the regulation.</li> </ul> <p>Trustee Kaplan reported that the Ministry and OPSBA announced a Memorandum of Agreement with the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) and CUPE who provide support for the schools. The labour actions of those two groups have ended for the time being. Terms and Conditions of Employment are still under negotiation with the board.</p>	
<p><b>9. Reports/Updates from Active SEAC Subcommittees</b></p>	<p>None reported</p>	
<p><b>10. Special Education Department Updates</b></p>	<p>Since meeting time was running short, Uton Robinson, Jeff Hainbuch and Ian Allison volunteered to postpone their updates to the December meeting. This suggestion was adopted.</p>	
<p><b>11. Correspondence</b></p>	<p>The following correspondence was received:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Email dated 15 October 2015 from Michelle Munroe, Central Coordinator, TDSB Parent and Community Engagement Office re: Meeting with Co-chairs of Community Advisory Committees</li> <li>2. Forwarded email dated 26 October 2015 from Sandra Gatti, Senior Advisor, Strategy and Planning re: SEAC representation at focus group session on Monday, November 30, 2015 for feedback on policies and procedures concerning Pupil Accommodation Reviews and Community Planning and Partnerships</li> </ol>	
<p><b>12. Member Announcements</b></p>	<p>Clovis Grant highlighted a brochure developed by Community Living about “<i>Benefits of Inclusion</i>”. SEAC members were invited to share it with others. It communicates the importance of inclusion and recognizes educational staff who has demonstrated excellence with inclusion.</p> <p>Richard Carter reminded members of National Down Syndrome Awareness Week – from November 1 to 7.</p>	
<p><b>13. New Business/Business Arising from Correspondence</b></p>	<p><b>Correspondence Item 2 – SEAC Representation in Focus Group</b></p> <p>Interested members were asked to inform Margo Ratsep. Nora Green volunteered, leaving one additional spot.</p>	

<p><b>14. Agenda Setting</b></p>	<p><b>Agenda Setting for Future Meetings</b> <b>December 14, 2015</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Member presentation – Epilepsy Toronto</li> <li>• Budget Consultation (if possible) – TDSB submission to the province and the TDSB forecast</li> <li>• Priority 1 Staff Presentation (continued)</li> </ul> <p><b>January 11, 2016</b> (Meeting date to be confirmed)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEAC Election of Chair/Vice Chair</li> </ul> <p><b>Presentation/Consultation Topics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TDSB Assistive Technology Strategy</li> <li>• Sense of Belonging Research</li> <li>• Special Education Support Staff</li> <li>• Refusal to Admit, Suspensions and Expulsions</li> <li>• Mental Health Strategy</li> <li>• Executive Summary – results from the PPM 140 Survey (Jan Fukumoto, Central Coordinator for ASD Programs)</li> <li>• Census Data</li> <li>• Invite TDSB award recipients (from Winchester and Vanier) to speak to SEAC</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2. Adjournment</b></p>	<p>Trustee Kaplan moved adjournment at 9:30 pm. The motion carried.</p>	<p>Adjournment</p>

**Up-Coming Meetings:** January 11 (To be confirmed)