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

**Date:** Monday, June 1, 2015

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

**Present:** Diana Avon, Paula Boutis, Alexander Brown, Richard Carter, Paul Cross, Catherine Drillis, Deborah Fletcher, Tiffany Ford, Jordan Glass, Nora Green, Olga Ingrahm, Margarita Isakov, Howard Kaplan, Lisa Kness, Mark Kovats, David Lapofsky, Steven Lynette, Jean-Paul Ngana, Phillip Sargent, Cynthia Sprigings, Ken Stein

**Regrets:** Adebukola Adenowo-Akpan, Aline Chan, Clovis Grant, Michelle McDonald

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

**Guests:** Erin Sheldon, Assistive Technology Consultant, Community Living Rep and SEAC co-chair, Limestone DSB and Vice-President of Integration Action for Inclusion.

**Recorder:** Margo Ratsep

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **ITEM** | **DISCUSSION** | **RECOMMENDATION/MOTION** |
| 1. **Call to Order/Quorum**
 | A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee was convened at 7:03 pm on Monday, June 1, 2015 in the Board Room, 5050 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario with Steven Lynette presiding as Chair.  |  |
| 1. **Approval of Agenda**
 | **Motion:** Paul Cross moved that the agenda be approved. All in favour.A request was made to prioritize SEAC’s setting of priorities.  | Motion carried.  |
| 1. **Declaration of Possible Conflicts of Interest**
 | None noted.  |  |
| 1. **Confirmation of Minutes**
 | **Motion:** Trustee Kaplan moved that the Minutes of the May 4, 2015 meeting be approved.All in favour.  | Motion carried |
| 1. **Presentations/Delegations**
 | Guest Erin Sheldon gave a presentation on Inclusive Programming in Special Education, with a focus on the personal experience of her child with Angelman Syndrome. The presentation documented how inclusive practices in her daughter’s classroom worked to enrich the learning experience for all children in the classroom. The strategies outlined were based on guiding principles for preparing all children for life and allowing all individuals to exceed expectations – by presuming competence, removing barriers and creating new learning opportunities for developing interpersonal skills, understanding and accepting differences and creating a frame of reference that values the kinds of positive contributions arising from those differences. |  |
| 1. **SEAC Business & Open Discussion**
 | **1 Provincial SEAC Conference Report (Paula Boutis)**Paula Boutis reported that notes and the link for the Provincial SEAC Conference have been emailed to everyone. A suggestion to form a subcommittee to investigate best SEAC practices was deferred to the discussion about SEAC priorities.**2 SEAC Priority Setting for 2015-2016** David Lepofsky reviewed SEAC’s mandate – to provide advice to the TDSB on exceptionalities and programming for special needs. Citing the limited time scheduled for SEAC meetings, he proposed that SEAC create priorities on which to focus its energies. Members were invited to speak to their own priorities for how TDSB could better meet the needs of students Following this discussion, David recommended that SEAC establish a summer working group to develop a draft set of priorities and related plan for providing advice to TDSB. This draft plan would come to the September meeting for decision on how to move forward. The overall goal would be to work positively with staff and utilize the experience and expertise of SEAC members in creating recommendations for improvement to the board. The plan would include: 1. Identification of areas of interest;
2. Identification of and request for information needed, to be provided in advance;
3. Collective brainstorming of possible actions

***\*\*\*Motion – On motion of David Lepofsky:*** ***That SEAC establish a summer working group to develop a priorities action plan based on the discussion points. The action plan would include a draft list of priorities and options for moving forward with those priorities, to be shared with all members prior to, and decided at the September meeting. All in favour***David Lepofsky volunteered to chair the working group and invited interested members to join. The following members volunteered:Paula Boutis, Jordan Glass, Cynthia Sprigings, Deborah Fletcher, Steven Lynette Trustee Howard Kaplan expressed his interest in participating if meeting dates permit  | Motion carried |
| 1. **Business Arising**
 | **SEAC Code of Conduct** – In light of time constraints Paula Boutis suggested that this item be deferred to the September meeting. |  |
| 1. **Trustee Reports & Follow-Up on Previous Action Items**
 | Trustee Brown:* Commended SEAC members on their sharing of views for establishing priorities and suggested that recommendations could also to the Ministry, especially through the Ministry’s Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) MACSE has 3 meetings a year (Feb, June, Oct). It is suggested that SEAC consider submitting recommendations to the Ministry through MACSE in June 2016.
* Acknowledged concern from other CACs that there isn’t enough staff time to support their ability to advise the board. Further assessment will be made by School Services Committee on this issue
* Reported on revisions to the Code of Conduct (called Board Members’ Code of Conduct) and the establishment of an Integrity Commissioner. Once passed, By-Laws will be amended and there will be a new Complaints Protocol, which will cover complaints from public, staff and trustees. The goal is good governance, better oversight and to increase public confidence.
* Undertook to forward a copy of the revised Code to Margo Ratsep for distribution to members.

Trustee Kaplan: * Reported that the board is discussing the possibility of setting up an ombudsman’s office. Under consideration is possible use of the City’s Ombudsman’s office.
* Commented on citizenship requirement for membership on SEAC, the only advisory committee that has this requirement. He has proposed a motion to the June 17th board meeting to petition the Ministry to address this issue.
* Undertook to forward a copy of the motion to members.

Trustee Ford* Expressed appreciation for tonight’s discussion, commenting that 70% of her calls have to do with special education.
* Commented on her personal priorities around suspensions and expulsions, based on involvement sitting as a trustee at Hearings and from meetings with Caring and Safe Schools staff to learn more about the issues.

***Action:******Phillip Sargent requested that discussion about this last topic be tabled for discussion by the priorities work group. David Lepofsky noted it as a potential priority for SEAC consideration.*** |  |
| 1. **Reports/Updates from Active SEAC Subcommittees**
 | **Special Education Plan Subcommittee**This subcommittee met prior to the SEAC meeting, with Uton Robinson in attendance. David Lepofsky reported that a number of concerns were discussed, and suggestions made for possible revisions to information provided in the Special Education Plan. One substantive issue related to the section of the Special Education Plan providing descriptions of the different Intensive Support Programs (ISPs). The information provided does not accurately represent the make-up of some ISP programs. The subcommittee has requested that this and a number of other points requiring clarification be reviewed for possible revision to more accurately describe how supports and services are delivered. Trustee Kaplan reported that demographic information on students currently in spec ed shows nearing 20% of the school population with needs, so there is a need to rethink labels, and this is being discussed at Ministry levels with Barry Findley and Tom Adams. ***Actions:**** ***Margo Ratsep undertook to forward any revisions to subcommittee members for review*** ***in June and facilitate conference calls if needed.***
* ***Margo Ratsep undertook to record recommendations for areas of needed improvement in service/support delivery, for consideration during consultation discussions next year.***
 |  |
| 1. **Special Education Department Updates**
 | Uton Robinson and Ian Allison provided department updates and responded to questions (See page 6)Uton also distributed a four page handout “Who Are Our Students With Special Needs in the TDSB – A Descriptive Overview 2013-2014” ***Action:******In response to questions about the guidelines for IPRC Chairs, Uton Robinson undertook to provide this information to SEAC.***Phillip Sargent moved to extend the meeting by 15 minutes. During follow-up discussion, ABC Rep Diana Avon pointed out that many gifted children may not rate high in some areas, and one cannot assume all gifted students are also high achievers. There may need to be another path in than paper and pencil testing.  | Motion carried |
| 1. **Correspondence**
 | 1. Copy of letter dated April 8, 2015 from Carrie Proudfoot, SEAC Chair, Upper Grand DSB to Michael Barrett, President, Ontario Public School Boards Association (OPSBA) re support for Thames Valley DSB request that OPSBA lobby for a provincial strategy on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.
2. Email dated May 20, 2015 forwarded on behalf of Roula Anastasakos, TDSB Executive Superintendent, Board, Policy, Research and Information Services re invitation for SEAC input to revision of policy PO66 Open Communication, renamed Whistleblower Policy.
3. Email dated May 14, 2015 from James and Bettina Hoar to three SEAC members and related email dated May 19, 2015 to Trustees Brown, Ford and Kaplan from SEAC Chair Steven Lynette regarding Regulation 464/97 requirement of Canadian citizenship for membership on SEAC.
4. Email dated May 25, 2015 from Toronto Family Network re Message from Interim Chief Commissioner Ruth Goba - Global Accessibility Awareness Day
5. Email dated May 25, 2015 from the Equity Policy Advisory Committee inviting SEAC participation in their May 30th “Equity Conversation Café”.
 |  |
| 1. **Member Announcements**
 | BIST Rep Cynthia Sprigings reminded members that June is Brain Injury Awareness MonthSEAC Chair and Epilepsy Toronto Rep, Steven Lynette invited all to enjoy “Buskerfest” in August, in support of Epilepsy Awareness |  |
| 1. **New Business**
 | 1. Trustee Brown spoke briefly to about Correspondence Item 11.2 inviting input to the new Whistleblower Policy
2. Response to Correspondence Item 11.3 (Regulation 464/97 requirement) Trustee Kaplan spoke to his motion going to the board on this issue as part of his Trustee report.
3. Confirmation of December SEAC Meeting Date – At least one member is unable to attend a December 14th meeting and requested consideration for a new date.

***Action:*** ***Margo Ratsep undertook to investigate reserving the boardroom for December 2nd, 2015 and to hold Dec 14th, 2015 in reserve.*** ***Steven Lynette asked members to communicate their availability for a December 2nd meeting by email and the date will be finalized in September.*** |  |
| 1. **Agenda Setting**
 | **September 21, 2015**1. Special Education Budget (Craig Snider, TDSB Comptroller)
2. Executive Summary – results from the PPM 140 Survey (Jan Fukumoto, Central Coordinator for ASD Programs)
3. SEAC Code of Conduct (Paula Boutis)
4. SEAC Priority Setting

**Presentation/Consultation Topics:*** Assistive Technology Strategy
* Sense of Belonging Research
* Special Education Support Staff
* Refusal to Admit
* Mental Health Strategy
 |  |
| 1. **Adjournment**
 | Lisa Kness moved adjournment at 9:25 | Motion carried |

**Future Meeting Dates:** September 21, October 5, November 2**,** December 2 or 14 (To Be Confirmed)

**SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT UPDATES**

**Executive Superintendent Uton Robinson**

***Opening, Moving and Closing Intensive Support Programs (ISP’s) in a School***

During the annual staff allocation process, time is taken to determine when an ISP program will be opened, moved or closed. The primary reason for opening a program is to serve a number of students who live close to the school who require the program. Programs move when there are no longer enough students requiring an ISP in a school area to sustain the program and programs are closed when there are no students or only one or two students who require the program.

Over the last few years, there has been a general decrease in the number of ISP classes that are being opened. At this time, when we compare the number of ISP classes for 2015-16 with the number of ISP classes from this current year we will have 33 fewer classes. It is important to note, however, that two additional ISP Gifted classes and two Diagnostic Kindergarten classes are being opened to respond to student need. This is a dynamic process that results in changes that may occur up until June.

As stated in the *Special Education Plan*, “the teachers and support staff who taught in the closed program are staff members who are assigned to the school. The decision as to whether the staff who taught in the program will stay in the school, depends on whether the same number of staff is required for the following year and the seniority of the staff in question” (P.110).

***Accessibility Sites***

A list of TDSB accessibility sites was distributed to SEAC members. The Board continues to slowly upgrade facilities for barrier free access because of the high costs of such upgrades and the limited funding. When situations are brought forward, staff work with parents/guardians to find solutions in support of the student’s learning environment.

***Inclusion Update***

During the 2015-2016 school year, students in Grades 4-8 with Mild Intellectual Disabilities, Learning Disabilities and Behaviour Identification will be intentionally reviewed at their annual IPRC meeting to determine if they would benefit from continuing their education in a regular class setting. There are approximately 1,600 students in Grades 4-8 with these designations. Strategies and approaches to inclusion in the regular classroom are important in developing a high quality inclusive experience for students with Special Education needs. Generally, strategies are not geared towards students with specific needs but are instead designed to be implemented across all exceptionality categories by using the principles of Universal Design, differentiated and tiered approaches in classroom practices of instruction and assessment and an environment of high expectation for all students.

We want to ensure that the IPRC meetings are a positive experience for all parents. An updated IPRC Script has been drafted in support of a consistent process. Time will be taken to go over the IPRC meeting expectations with the principals who will be chairing these important meetings. A copy of the revised Inclusion IPRC Script is attached. The guidelines are available in the Special Education Plan.

**Coordinating Superintendent Ian Allison**

***Review of Boundaries for Secondary Gifted Programs***

A review of attendance boundaries for all Gifted programs is being carried out to ensure equity of access to Gifted Programs across the system and to address accommodation pressures at some sites. A number of evening public consultation meetings were organized for different regions of the city and over 5000 invitation letters were issued to parents of students identified with a Gifted exceptionality. SEAC members have received a copy of this system letter sent to Parents of students identified as Gifted, which contains consultation dates and locations. SEAC members are welcome to attend any of the sessions or to respond more directly to Uton, Jeff or me.

***Review of Gifted Screening Process***

There is currently no universal screening process being used for TDSB for Gifted identification. The present process involves parent or teacher nomination as the first step and if the School Support Team (SST) is in agreement, then the student goes forward for assessment. Programming typically starts in Grade 4. Past results have indicated that approximately 48% of referrals using this teacher/parent nomination process are actually identified when compared to other boards who achieve higher rates. Other boards have reported a 74% accuracy rate using a screening tool. Many boards have introduced screening tools that assess individuals and look at a wide variety of information. There is a need for TDSB to align with what other boards are doing. We are looking at using a screening tool that will also provide TDSB with valuable information on student learning. It will help us to profile student learning styles and identify need, which will support program planning for the whole class, as well as for students with identified exceptionalities.

We are also looking at addressing the need for equitable access to programming for students identified with a Gifted exceptionality across the city. Data suggests that student nomination for assessment is disproportionate across the city, with high concentrations in some parts of the city and less in other parts. Universal screening of students could address this. We are investigating using the Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test, 4th Edition (CCAT 4), along with use of a teacher-based assessment tool. If an individual meets specified criteria on both, that student would be put forward for individual psychological assessment. We are looking at Sept/Oct for the initial screening implementation for all Gr 3 students but are also mindful of the current status of the labour situation when considering timelines. The Ministry of Education is still looking at the whole definition of Giftedness and this may impact on TDSB programming moving forward. One other key piece – a letter will go home to parents in order to provide them with the opportunity to choose whether or not to participate in the universal screening process.