



# Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Meeting

## MINUTES

May 5, 2014, 7:00 p.m.  
5050 Yonge Street, Board Room

Members Present: Diana Avon, Michelle Brick, Aline Chan, Olga Ingrahm, Trustee Howard Kaplan, Steven Lynette, Jean-Paul Ngana, Ginny Pearce, Phillip Sargent, Cynthia Sprigings, Nancy Turner Wright

Alternates Present: Elaine Dodsworth-Lever, Deborah Fletcher, Nora Green, Margarita Isakov, Rebecca Rycroft, Najia Shafi,

Regrets: Heather Breckenridge, Christina Buczek, Richard Carter, Paul Cross, Clovis Grant, John Hastings, Debra Hayden, Sam Sotiropoulos

Staff Present: Uton Robinson, Anne Seymour, Cindy Burley, Margo Ratsep

Recorders: John Manalo and Margo Ratsep

Item	Business
1.	<p>Call to Order</p> <p>A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee was convened at 7:02 p.m. on Monday, May 5, 2014 in the Board Room, 5050 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario with Chair Michelle Brick presiding.</p>
2.	<p>Approval of the Agenda</p> <p><b>**Motion:</b> Steven Lynette requested an addition under New Business: Transitioning students to Post-Secondary. Jean-Paul Ngana moved that the Agenda be approved as amended. The motion carried.</p>
3.	<p>Declarations of Possible Conflicts of Interest</p> <p>No conflicts of interest were noted.</p>
4.	<p>Confirmation of Minutes of April 7, 2014</p> <p><b>**Motion:</b> Olga Ingrahm moved that the Minutes of April 7, 2014 be approved as amended. The motion carried.</p>
5.	<p>Member Presentation</p> <p>Catherine Drillis, President of the Toronto Chapter of the Association for Bright Children (ABC) and ABC SEAC Representative Diana Avon presented information about the work of ABC.</p>
6.	<p>Staff Presentation</p> <p>In response to a question posed at a previous meeting by SEAC, Dr. David Schwartzbein gave a presentation on the identification of Learning Disabilities (LD). The question raised was, "Can there be some plain language or a spectrum approach to LD to enable parents to better understand how to help their child?". Dr. Schwartzbein's response indicated this is not possible because the medical and legal definitions of Learning Disability vary and there are too many complexities involved in what must be considered on a case-by-case basis. Discussion also covered TDSB assessment processes and timelines. A handout provided during the presentation addressed the difference between medical diagnosis of LD and an IPRC determination of LD exceptionality. (See page 6)</p> <p><b>**Motion: Michelle Brick moved that it be noted in the minutes that SEAC finds the process used by the TDSB to screen for giftedness inequitable in comparison to other exceptionalities.</b></p> <p>The motion carried.</p>
7.	<p>SEAC Recommendations from Pre-Meeting Consultation on Inclusion</p>

	<p>Consensus held that more time is needed for SEAC to consider the Drivers and provide input.  <b>**Staff Undertaking: SEAC Liaison Margo Ratsep will collate the collective feedback from SEAC and provide it to members prior to the June meeting. Any additional comments can be forwarded to her.</b></p>
8.	<p>Open Discussion and Consultation</p> <p>1. SEAC Newsletter  Michelle Brick presented an Ottawa SEAC Newsletter for TDSB SEAC consideration as a possible future method of communication with parents. Discussion followed regarding the logistics of such an endeavour (responsibility, content, distribution). There was a general agreement that this could be explored by the Communications subcommittee.  Cynthia Sprigings and Margarita Isakov volunteered to join Clovis Grant as members on the subcommittee.</p> <p>2. Draft Communication Tracker  Nora Green volunteered to collate feedback on the Draft Communication Tracker. The deadline to submit feedback is monthly, with the first deadline prior to September 30, 2014 when parents start a new school year.  <b>**Staff Undertaking: The SEAC Liaison will send a monthly reminder to SEAC members to submit feedback.</b></p> <p>3. Working Group on Neglect/Abuse Policy  Michelle Brick reported on the board's working group reviewing the Neglect/Abuse Policy and suggested it would be helpful for someone from the Working Group present the Policy at a SEAC meeting.  <b>**Staff Undertaking: Uton Robinson will invite someone from the Working Group to address SEAC</b></p> <p>4. Police Records Checks  Nora Green provided responses she had obtained to SEAC questions about new TDSB proposals for Police Record Checks (PRC). She reported that Director Donna Quan had clarified to her that parents accompanying a child with a special need would not need a PRC because the parents would only be responsible for their own child. A request was made that SEAC be provided with an overview of the PRC before it is finalized.  <b>**Staff undertaking: Uton Robinson will invite someone to give a presentation on PRC policy before the policy is finalized.</b></p>
9.	<p>Business Arising from the Minutes</p> <p>Years of Action  Questions were raised about the expressed goal to reduce by 50% the numbers of students placed in congregated special education classes.  Uton Robinson explained that the 50% by 2017 is an ambitious goal and the timeline may have to be altered as we move forward. The intent behind the goal is to ensure the most enabling environment for students with special education needs. He stressed that this initiative is not a cost-saving measure. There was consensus among SEAC members that the word "inclusion" is too broad and that parents/guardians need a clearer understanding of what is meant by inclusion and what strategies will be used to reach the goal.  <b>**Staff undertaking: Recognizing that continued community input will help to guide the on-going process, Uton Robinson will endeavour to provide for SEAC at the September meeting, an outline of the beginning portion of a 'road map' for moving towards greater inclusion.</b></p>

10.	Trustee Reports and Follow-up on Previous Action Items No reports were forthcoming.
11.	<p>Reports/Updates from Active SEAC Subcommittees</p> <p>1. PIAC/SEAC Working Group (PSWG)</p> <p>As a staff representative on the PSWG, Margo Ratsep provided an update from the most recent meeting on April 28<sup>th</sup>. Planning for another PIAC/SEAC Parent Conference focusing on Special Education is currently on hold. Questions about funding and staff workload assignment must be addressed before a commitment can be made. A suggestion was made that SEAC consider applying for a Parent Reaching Out Grant to fund the conference. Discussion is on-going with Superintendent Jim Spyropoulos regarding staff time allocation to organize the conference.</p> <p><b>**Action Taken by SEAC: Michelle Brick volunteered to apply on SEAC’s behalf for a Parent Reaching Out Grant to support this conference. She also suggested that in addition to staffing information tables, SEAC Associations could volunteer to participate more actively, by offering presenters for workshops, such as those currently provided as part of their association services.</b></p> <p>Nora Green volunteered to represent SEAC on the PIAC/SEAC Working Group, replacing Yama Arianfar who has resigned from SEAC.</p> <p>2. Special Education Plan</p> <p>As a staff lead for the Special Education Plan, Margo Ratsep invited the SEAC Special Education Plan Subcommittee (and any interested new members) to a pre-meeting working session to review changes to the Special Education Plan for 2014-2015.</p> <p><b>**Action Taken by SEAC: Diana Avon and Nancy Turner-Wright volunteered to join the Special Education Plan subcommittee (which currently includes Paul Cross, Steven Lynette, Richard Carter, Jean-Paul Ngana and Ginny Pearce). The meeting will be held starting at 6:00 p.m. before the June 2<sup>nd</sup> SEAC meeting. Advance copies of changes will be provided to subcommittee members before the meeting.</b></p>
12.	<p>Special Education Department Updates</p> <p>1. Cindy Burley distributed copies of the revised board policy on Promotion, Transfer and Retention, Grade 1-8 and spoke about the amendments.</p> <p>This policy has been reworded to address concerns brought to the board by SEAC Chair Michelle Brick. In the past, students on a modified IEP were ‘transferred’ rather than promoted, on the year-end report card. The new policy is revised so that students on a modified IEP can be promoted when they are meeting the expectations of the IEP.</p> <p>2. Anne Seymour reviewed in brief the “Critical Path” in the Strategic Planning Process around inclusion in the classroom for vulnerable learners. This began with external input through the 2012 Town Hall Meetings and analysis of the responses. It has also included internal research into strengths and weaknesses, and the analysis of TDSB data to identify factors that arise from the data, such as possible inequities, but also potential opportunities. SEAC’s input into the Drivers is one valuable tool for examining the current picture and developing structures to support a plan.</p> <p>Michelle Brick recommended that when SEAC input is being invited, documents/information be distributed one week in advance to give sufficient time for review and feedback.</p>
13.	<p>Correspondence Received by the Chair</p> <p>1. Letter dated March 18, 2014 from Board Chair Kathy Burtnik and SEAC Chair Anna Racine of the Niagara Catholic DSB, to Minister of Education Liz Sandals (including copies of</p>

	<p>previously sent letters dated March 7, 2012 and May 3, 2011) regarding recommendation that Special Education Part 1 be a mandatory core element in the revised teacher education program</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Email dated April 7, 2014 from Gal Koren resigning as FASworld representative due to relocation, and seeking Association membership continuation while he seeks his replacement</li> <li>3. Email dated April 7, 2014 from Yama Arianfar resigning for personal reasons as SE Community Representative and nominating alternate Najia Shafi as his replacement</li> <li>4. Email dated April 23, 2014 from Valerie Martin, Executive Director of Learning Disabilities Association – Toronto nominating Mitchell Curci as SEAC Alternate Representative</li> <li>5. Undated letter received April 28, 2014 from PAAC on SEAC regarding invitation to SEAC members to participate in a survey</li> <li>6. Email dated May 1, 2014 from John Manalo regarding invitation from Roula Anastasakos, Executive Superintendent, Academic Research &amp; Information Services for two SEAC representatives to participate in Board consultation on a new Attendance Policy and Procedures.</li> </ol> <p>SEAC received the correspondence.</p> <p><b>***Motion to the Board: In response to Correspondence Items 2, 3 and 4 on membership changes, Phillip Sargent moved that:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SEAC recommend that the board accept the resignations of SEAC members Gal Koren (FASworld Representative) and Yama Arianfar (SE Community Representative);</li> <li>2. SEAC recommend that the board appoint Alternate Najia Shafi as SE Community Representative to replace Yama Arianfar;</li> <li>3. SEAC recommend that the board appoint Mitchell Curci to fill an existing vacancy as the Alternate Representative for the Learning Disabilities Association.</li> </ol> <p>The motion carried.</p> <p><b>**Action Taken by SEAC: In response to correspondence Item 6, Steven Lynette and Jean-Paul Ngana volunteered to represent SEAC in the board consultation on a new Attendance Policy and Procedures.</b></p>
14.	<p>New Business</p> <p>Steven Lynette: Transitioning students from TDSB high school to post-secondary. In the interest of time, this topic was postponed to the June meeting.</p> <p>Michelle Brick will be absent for the June SEAC meeting. Trustee Kaplan will chair the meeting.</p>
15.	<p>Agenda Setting for Future Meetings</p> <p>The following items have been requested:</p> <p>June: - Member Presentation (none)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff Presentations on Policy Reviews for Police Records Check; Abuse/Neglect</li> <li>- Staff Presentation: Secondary work on Executive Function Accommodations and Transition Planning</li> <li>- Transitioning students from TDSB high school to post-secondary (Steven Lynette)</li> <li>- Budget consultation</li> </ul> <p>September: - No member presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uton Robinson – Beginning Road Map towards Greater Inclusion</li> <li>- Invite a DSO Presentation</li> </ul>

	October: - Member Presentation: VOICE
16.	Adjournment ***Motion: Ginny Pearce moved that the meeting be adjourned. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

**Diagnosis versus Exceptionality**

**Diagnosis**

- A professional opinion relating to the cause of a student's problems.
- "Communication of a diagnosis" is legally restricted to regulated health practitioners from certain professional colleges, including the College of Psychologists of Ontario.
- Legislated by the Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA), 1991.

**Exceptionality**

- An identification by an IPRC that focuses on a student's educational need(s).
  - The IPRC considers information from many sources (i.e., school, parents, regulated professionals) to determine whether a student meets the criteria for a specific Ministry of Education exceptionality (see TDSB Special Education Report).
  - An exceptionality can only be determined by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) as regulated by the Education Act – Regulation 181/98.
- A Diagnosis and an Exceptionality are Independent**
- Although in some cases the terms used to denote a diagnosis and an exceptionality are the same or similar, they are not, in fact, the same.
  - In some cases, a diagnosis from a regulated health professional (i.e., evidence of cause) is not required for an IPRC to determine an exceptionality.
  - In other cases, a diagnosis is a necessary but not sufficient condition for identification, because sufficient need also has to be demonstrated.
  - An exceptionality is not required as a response to a professional diagnosis; a child with a diagnosis does not necessarily have to be identified as an exceptional student.

**POSSIBLE SITUATIONS at an IPRC**

**Diagnosis YES, Exceptionality YES:**

A student's profile meets criteria for a diagnosis: evidence of cause (e.g., a Learning Disability or Intellectual Developmental Disability) exists.

The student's profile meets criteria for one of the Special Education exceptionalities (e.g., Communications, Learning Disability [LD] or Mild Intellectual Disability [MID]); evidence of sufficient need exists.

**Diagnosis YES, Exceptionality NO:**

A student with a diagnosis may not meet criteria for a Special Education exceptionality.

*For example:*

**LD diagnosis:**

- Psychological assessment indicates average to above average intellectual abilities and average or slightly below average academic and processing skills.
- No evidence of sufficient need exists.

**ID diagnosis:**

- Several years ago a 7-year-old student was diagnosed with a Global Developmental Delay (now a formal DSM diagnosis), but she is currently functioning only slightly below grade level with an IEP.
- No evidence of sufficient (present) need exists.

**Diagnosis NO, Exceptionality YES:**

A student without a diagnosis may meet criteria for a Special Education exceptionality.

*For example :*

**Exceptionality: Communications, LD.**

- A 7-year-old student has come from a previously unstimulating environment.
- Psychological assessment and classroom performance show indicators of average intellectual development, phonological processing difficulties, and very low reading skills, but no diagnosis is given.
- Evidence of sufficient need exists.

**Exceptionality: Mild Intellectual Disability (MID)**

- A 12-year-old newcomer to Canada has been in the TDSB for 2 years. Developmental history is not known. The student reportedly had little previous schooling, and he has no basic literacy or numeracy skills. Psychological assessment scores suggest limited intellectual development and adaptive skills, but no diagnosis is given because of the student's recent arrival, lack of previous schooling, and unknown history.
- Evidence of sufficient need exists.

**Diagnosis NO, Exceptionality NO:**

*For example:*

- A student is experiencing some academic difficulties, but his psychological assessment and classroom performance do not show any factors which meet criteria for a diagnosis. Academic skills turn out to be delayed by less than a year.
- No evidence of cause or need exists.