



TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

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Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

MEETING NOTICE – Monday, January 15, 2018 at 7:00 pm

Association for Bright Children (ABC)	Diana Avon	Melissa Rosen
Autism Society of Ontario – Toronto	Lisa Kness	
Brain Injury Society of Toronto (BIST)	Cynthia Srigings	
Community Living Toronto	<i>vacancy</i>	
Down Syndrome Association of Toronto	Richard Carter	
Easter Seals Ontario	<i>regrets</i>	
Epilepsy Toronto	Steven Lynette	
Integrated Action for Inclusion (IAI)	Margarita Isakov	
Learning Disabilities Association Toronto	<i>vacancy</i>	
IEWS for the Visually Impaired	David Lepofsky	
VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children	Paul Cross	
TDSB North East Community	Aline Chan	Jean Paul Ngana
TDSB North West Community	Curtis Bulatovich	Jordan Glass
TDSB South East Community	Olga Ingrahm	Diane Montgomery
TDSB South West Community	Paula Boutis	Nora Green
TDSB Trustees	Abdul Patel (phone)	Alexander Brown

Regrets: Melissa Vigar (BIST), Deborah Fletcher (Easter Seals), Dick Winter (SE Alternate), Rick Strutt (NE Alternate), Trustee Alexandra Lulka,

TDSB Staff Present: Uton Robinson, Executive Superintendent, Special Education and Section Programs
Lynn Strangway Superintendent of Education, Learning Centre 2, Learning Network 13
Lori Moore, Centrally Assigned Principal for Special Education
Janine Small, Centrally Assigned Principal, Learning Centre
Lianne Dixon, SEAC Liaison

Minutes by: Lianne Dixon

MINUTES (DRAFT)

(All notes included in these minutes are paraphrased by the recorder.)

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:06.p.m. Trustee Patel attended the meeting via conference call.

2. Declaration of Possible Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. Approval of the Minutes for SEAC Meeting of Thursday, December 7, 2017

There was an error on the date of the draft minutes. This was amended and on motion by Curtis Bulatovich, the Minutes of December 7, 2017 were approved as amended.

4. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Executive Superintendent Robinson explained the process for election of SEAC Chair and Vice Chair. Current Chair David Lepofsky was prepared to serve as Chair for another term. Down Syndrome Association Representative Richard Carter was also nominated for the Chair position,

Brief speeches were made by both nominees. A vote was held with Trustee Patel voting by email to the Liaison. Upon tallying the votes, Richard Carter was elected Chair. Both Executive Superintendent Robinson and newly-elected Chair Richard Carter thanked David Lepofsky for his dedication and service as SEAC Chair.

There was a discussion about the bylaw that a Trustee is to be elected to the position of Vice Chair if a member is elected as Chair. Director of Education, Dr. John Malloy clarified that these were bylaws that had been passed by SEAC and the board and if a change was to be initiated, a request would have to go to the board to have it changed. Dr. Malloy explained that it was not part of the Education Act, it is a SEAC by-law approved by the board.

Executive Superintendent Robinson asked for nominations for Vice Chair. Trustee Brown was acclaimed as SEAC Vice Chair.

- 5. Dr. John Molloy, Director of Education, addressed SEAC offering gratitude for the service SEAC provides, the time that members give and the leadership they provide. He expressed that students and families need the perspective SEAC brings. He has had the pleasure of working with Chair David Lepofsky over the past two years and thanked him for his hard work and appreciated his leadership. He is looking forward to working with the new Chair Richard Carter.**

Dr. Malloy described how profoundly diverse and passionate the views around special needs students and how we serve them are in TDSB. He described the challenge of supporting the board to give direction to staff as to how to proceed when there is so much passion in reactions to how we serve students. He explained how there are differing opinions on inclusion and the importance of segregated settings that are expressed to him by families and by staff. Because TDSB has had so many more congregated sites than many other boards, it has become part of our delivery culture. Dr. Malloy described the struggle that exists around moving forward with students at the center. He addressed the kind of professional learning that needs to take place as we move forward with students in order to become the most inclusive board that we can be.

One of the things that Dr. Malloy has learned from the work from the Enhancing Equity Task Force (EETF) and the Report coming forward from staff as a response, is that placing parent voice at the center is a concrete proposal he can put on the table for us to consider. He explained that we need SEAC leadership to help TDSB see how to put parent voice at the center as it is impossible to do all things with a finite pot of resources.

He pointed out that the Special Education Plan does not demand that the board offer all different offerings and that in TDSB, we have an exceptionally large experience of diverse offerings. Emotions run high for both the groups that want congregated sites and those who are opposed to them.

The rich insights from the community and the large number of contributions around the Enhancing Equity Task Force (EETF) are greater than any consultation process that the Director has ever been involved in. He will be asking the board to give high level direction to staff's response to the Report at Committee on January 31st and at board on Feb 7th with the intention of taking what we have learned and making it the foundation of a multi-year plan. How we support special needs students and their families, and how we wrestle with the challenging diversity of views of how it should be done with a finite pot of funds is what he will be proposing as one of the major pillars moving forward. He explained that we need to educate our families about what is possible and ensure we can deliver supports in the most inclusive way, honoring what parents ask for.

Another thing that he has learned is that when we talk about appropriate support, there are strong and passionate views of what appropriate support looks like. We need to build trust about what those supports will look like. At every meeting with superintendents, principals, and teachers, we are asking the question "what does it mean to truly provide the most enabling environment for students?". He thanked SEAC for their assistance and proceeded to take a number of questions/respond to concerns from members.

Nora Green (South West Community Representative)

- If we know research is saying that kids who go to these programs have worse instruction, possibly worse outcomes, how are we measuring so that doesn't happen? What is the data that this board is going to collect to show that students have had growth, have benefitted from and maximized their potential regardless of where they were placed?
- Dr. Malloy responded that we have to start somewhere and right now the greatest starting point is that we have families who believe that they are being coerced into a placement that they don't want. For us to say we are going to minimize the number of classes, when if somebody wants it and can't get it, is not going to work. He agreed that some of our programs, when they look at the evidence, work better than others and they are examining that. He further explained that it is not appropriate for principals to say "I don't have a program here for your child", and will back it up with looking at how we support and build that into professional learning. What the Director will be proposing is that our work in special education, connected to our work in equity and inclusion and providing creative learning opportunities, is not a one size fits everyone approach. We will measure performance and outcomes for students with intellectual disabilities based upon achievement data, based on student and parent census data. Executive Superintendent Robinson added that the data that is collected for students with an intellectual disability is primarily based on

an alternative curriculum. Dr. Malloy offered to take the question back. He agreed that It is imperative that we figure out how we are defining success and communicating that definition widely. There is evidence to suggest what successful looks like and we need to hold that up.

Steve Lynette (Epilepsy Toronto)

- He expressed that he was glad that principals will be supported if they don't have the resources, to do whatever needs to be done to support the students in their school. They also must be held accountable for the inappropriate comments that they make to parents around not having resources. There has to be system for SEAC members and parents to track these responses and put those comments to someone. They have to be tracked on a principal to principal basis.
- Dr. Malloy explained that TDSB is looking at how to strengthen our Parent Concern Protocol and the superintendents who report through executives directly to him will have a role in hearing about those issues as they emerge. Similar to the work that is being done in equity, he explained, we need to ask the questions "what are your biases, what are those biases doing to create barriers?" This is true not just in special education, but connected to everything we do.

Jean Paul Ngana (North East Community Representative)

- Expressed a concern about the use of the word "political" in the Director's presentation and about making sure that student needs are met and student voice is heard.
- Dr. Malloy responded that we have to focus on parent voice in this board and that we will always focus on student voice. He stands by the word "political" explaining that If families don't appreciate what's happening on any side of a very difficult conversation, there are many political avenues that are used. Media, politicians and additional pressures enter the discussion. He explained that we cannot ever waiver from student need, but some forces will try to pull us from that. Student need comes first and a deep understanding of what parents want for their children. He assured SEAC that whenever that the language crosses our desks that "I cannot serve your student here" we are going to deal with it systemically.

David Lepofsky (VIEWS for the Visually Impaired)

- The Enhancing Equity Task Force (EETF) is predominantly about race equity. We need a special education independent review. The EETF emphasized the need to remove barriers. Our first five motions will identify for you some of the core barriers that need to be fixed. We recommended the creation of a new appeal for IEP decisions.
- Dr. Malloy made assurances that special education will be positioned exceptionally strongly in his Report. He will be taking back that barriers to accessibility are broader and he has recommendations to work from. He explained that we need to look at the already existing parent complaint process and where the superintendents are in that process. The superintendents have the ability to mediate and facilitate. He agreed that we need a place for parents to go when there is disagreement around anything to do with the IEP. It will be incorporated in his recommendations as he has heard and will be responding to the request for some form of appeal type process when disagreement, dissension or conflict exists.

Melissa Rosen (Association for Bright Children)

- We are hearing that students won't be placed in gifted ISP's unless they have extremely complex needs.
- Dr. Malloy stated emphatically that ISP Gifted is not changing at all and advised SEAC that if they are hearing that there is any change to ISP Gifted to please contact their superintendent and they will deal with it. The issue that emerged from the process of the last little while is the notion of access and we will be exploring the issue of access, not just to ISP gifted programs but to the whole notion of being identified gifted. He asked that members please share this message and if they hear anything that is different, to contact their superintendent.

Diana Avon (Association for Bright Children)

- One of the biggest causes of concerns is that there are no programs for gifted students under grade 4. Programs in other boards are changing so that support is given in the regular classroom. Are there going to be people listening what we have to say in delegations?
- Dr. Malloy explained that he just brings his thinking and staff's thinking to the board, so when people delegate, they delegate to the board and not to him or to staff. The board then passes motions. He presented that he has no intention to do any further streaming in the primary grades based on the research that he has done and research from OECD on the impacts of streaming.

Aline Chan (North East Community Member)

- We need to put something together to inform the Ministry that we need additional resources for Job Development and Experiential Learning.
- Dr. Malloy explained that we can go to the province asking for resources when we are honest about what our own data says about what's not working. When it comes to the notion of the end in mind, we need to do better as it relates to experiential learning. We don't receive the resources we need for post twenty-one. He stated that there is a gap in Ministry policy and funding in this area.

Paula Boutis (South West Community Representative)

- With regards to specialized programs/alternative schools/themed elementary schools, there is no reference in the Education Act to them. We need to look at programs we need, not the programs people would like to have.
- Dr. Malloy responded that they are analyzing what the truths are behind costs of special programs and special schools. He indicated that he was not going to speak to this right now because that is further than we are going to see in this Report. There will be a direction to do some studying to find out where our resources are going, look at what the obstacles to true access are, and potentially make some policy decisions. He reiterated that each and every student deserves access to the program that is best for them and that this is one thing that the community appears to be bound by and committed to.

Diane Montgomery (South East Community Representative)

- How are we going to set expectations for parents and show parents where and how supports will be put in place?
- Dr. Malloy responded that we have classrooms where the way the program is delivered, each child brings his or her strengths to the table. He noted that support is often connected to human beings - where we need help is sometimes there is only one definition of what support looks like. He explained that we have to help the board move the conversation and student by student, family by family, change some system standards. He hoped that SEAC would help the board in this endeavor.

6. Staff Updates and Requests for SEAC

EA/SNA Absences

Executive Superintendent Robinson shared information responding to a query that came from a SEAC member around the many daily vacancies of educational assistants and

special needs assistants that are affecting special needs students at school. He described the challenge that many boards as well as TDSB are having in recruitment and hiring of qualified EA/SNA's. The Board is consistently recruiting based on the demands of the system and will continue to do so. Executive Superintendent Robinson explained that in the spring, TDSB is going to be having job fair to recruit more individuals to take on the role of EA/SNA. He assured SEAC that Principals are working to meet the needs of students and making whatever arrangements they can. He would like to come back with numbers and perhaps have human resources staff speak to SEAC about this issue at a later date.

Transportation

Executive Superintendent Robinson referred to a new vision for transportation that is outlined in his Report and invited members to take part in an online transportation survey.

Universal Design for Learning

Executive Superintendent Robinson spoke about Universal Design for Learning and the training that many individuals have participated in throughout TDSB over a great number of years. It continues to a direction that the board is going and details about UDL will be available when the Enhancing Equity Task Force (EETF) Report comes forward. There are four or five action items around special education that SEAC may wish to discuss.

Annual Reviews

Executive Superintendent Robinson explained the IPRC review process for this fall. Students in ISP's will not have an opportunity to waive their annual review. All students will have a review this year if they did not have one last year. There is increased emphasis on having the review meeting actually happen so that conversations can be held. There need to be rich conversations to talk about strengths and needs. Parents will be invited to attend the meeting and encouraged to participate. If parents don't attend, the conversations need to continue outside of the meeting. There needs to be an opportunity for engagement and discussion.

Executive Superintendent Robinson referred to the possible rebranding of Section programs and suggested also perhaps there should be a discussion around rebranding ISP's. He would appreciate hearing feedback as "intensive" connotes to many families that what they will be receiving will be very different.

Providing Feedback on IEP Consultation letter and Sp. Ed. Brochures

Prior to the last SEAC meeting, there was a request for input around the IEP Consultation Letter. Executive Superintendent Robinson is hoping SEAC will provide feedback as well on the IEP and steps to take as we go through IEP process including some sort of an "appeal" process for parents. If you have comments on the Special Education brochures that were sent previously and/or IEP consultation letter, please forward it.

7. Motion # 6 "Refusals to Admit"

The Chair introduced guest Luke Reid, legal counsel at the ARCH Disability Law Centre and asked what further discussion was needed to pass Motion #6. It was agreed that there was some urgency in passing the motion. At the SEAC meeting on December 7, 2017, Items #1 – 6 were reviewed, amended and passed. The suggestion was made that SEAC vote to pass Motion #6 without going through the remaining Items one by one. It was agreed that a vote could be held on the entire Motion. The motion to vote on Motion #6 was made by Curtis Bulatovich and seconded by David Lepfosky. The voting process followed past practice. The vote to pass Motion #6 was unanimous. The Chair stated that feedback around Motion #6 is still welcome and Luke Reid offered to come back to a SEAC meeting at a later date if his input was requested.

Executive Superintendent Robinson was asked about where the board is around a policy for Refusal to Admit. He responded that the board is very close to being able to present this policy. Ted Libra could possibly bring it to next SEAC meeting if SEAC would like. He would like to have the opportunity to share what has been developed so far. Executive Superintendent Robinson will bring information that may change some of the language in Motion #6.

8. Setting SEAC Priorities for 2018

This item was deferred to the February meeting.

9. Association Reports

Parents as Partners – April 28th

- Transportation will be provided for parents
- Registration opens in February
- Special Education has been allocated 20 workshop spots – Liaison will follow up on how many have been booked and report at the next SEAC meeting
- Different Agencies can request tables – more information will be presented at next SEAC meeting
- SEAC will have a table with the SEAC display board and information for parents

Trustee's Report

- Trustee Brown shared information about the 2016/17 Safe and Caring Schools Reports, specifically the suspension statistics for students with IEP's and IPRC/IEP's. He will be asking questions about these numbers when the Report is presented next Wednesday January 24th. Trustee Brown offered to send a copy of the Report and information about the meeting to SEAC through the Liaison

10. Other Business

Nora Green (SW Community Representative) will be attending the Committee meeting next Wednesday at 4:30 pm. Trustee Chis Glover's Employment Equity Motion is on the agenda.

SEAC members were all in favour of inviting Trustee Glover to come to the next SEAC meeting. Steve Lynette informed SEAC about JOIN (Job Opportunity for Information Network), an employment agency for people with disabilities.

Nora was asked to present feedback after attending the Committee meeting next Wednesday. She agreed.

SEAC Meeting – Monday January 15, 2018

11. Adjournment

On motion of Steven Lynette the meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Reminder: The next meeting is on Monday, February 5, 2018