

**Special Education and Section 23 Department Update**

Executive Superintendent Uton Robinson

SEAC Meeting of Monday March 5, 2018

**Highlights from the Director’s Response to the Enhancing Equity Task Force Report**

Special Education

* Continue to support Special Education students, including Gifted, through parent choice of local school placement or congregated sites
* We do not recommend phasing out Gifted programs or congregated school sites
* We will confront and challenge the deficit thinking that organizes students by perceived ability
* We will review our Individual Education Plan and Identification, Placement and Review

Committee (IPRC) processes to ensure greater clarity, transparency and accountability so that parents, guardians and students feel valued and included

* Parents and guardians will feel that their voices have been heard and their preference of placement has been honoured. Parents and guardians of students with special education needs who desire a local neighbourhood school placement with appropriate accommodations, modifications and/or alternative programming will receive placement through the IPRC process
* We will continue to provide special education programs and schools for students with special education needs as a necessary and differentiated approach to supporting all students.

**Special Education Highlights Rob Brown**

* The proportion of students with Special Education Needs (including Gifted) has **increased** across the province, from 17.0% to 17.5%, an increase of half a percent (0.5%).
* However, the proportion of students with Special Education Needs (including Gifted) **increased** in the TDSB from 17.7% to 18.6%, an increase of almost 1%,, and hence an increase at **almost double the provincial rate of increase**.
* Across all parts of the province including the TDSB, most of this increase was generated by increases in “**Non-identified (has an IEP): Regular Classes**”.
* The **TDSB saw the most noticeable decline in the proportion of students with Exceptionalities (excluding Gifted): Special Education”.**  This proportion declined from 3.4% to 3.1% of all students.  The proportion of these students in the rest of the province was unchanged; therefore the gap between the TDSB and the rest of the province in terms of congregated Special Education classes has- outside of Gifted- declined slightly.
* However, **the proportion of students with a Gifted exceptionality in Special Education Classes increased** at the TDSB from 1.7% to 1.8% of the TDSB
* population, while at the same time the proportion of students in Gifted Special Education slightly declined outside the TDSB (the main decline was in the GTA outside the TDSB).  As a result, the gap between the TDSB and the rest of the province in terms of Gifted congregated classes has slightly widened in the past two years.
* Likewise, the number of and proportion of students in **“Non-identified (has an IEP): Special Education Classes” has increased** slightly to 4,055 from 3,989 (and to 1.7% from 1.6% of the full TDSB population)    At the same time, the number of students in this category from other boards declined slightly.  In the TDSB, these students come from the HSP and from the Kindergarten (KIP) program.   Therefore the TDSB proportion of these students increased from 80% of the province in 2014-15 (3,989 of 5,004 students in Ontario) to 82% of the province in 2016-17 (4,055 out of 4,947 in the province).

To conclude: Special education needs in both the TDSB and the province have increased, primarily due to the increase in what we call “IEP only” students who have an IEP in Regular classes.   The TDSB decline of students with exceptionalities in congregated classes continues, at a rate exceeding the rest of the province (although the TDSB still has a very sizeable gap compared to the rest of the province).  However, at the same time, the very sizeable gap between the TDSB and the rest of the province in terms of Gifted congregated and Non-identified congregated has actually increased.

**Changes to the Home School Program**

The TDSB will end the Primary Home School Program this year and remodel the Home School Program for students in Grades 4 to 8 going forward. The remodelling will focus on how to deliver needed student support within the student’s regular class.

Key research findings pulled from a synthesis of international empirical studies (Mitchell, 2010) include:

‐ Clustering students into ‘low‐ability’ groups

reduces academic expectations

‐ Students often experience less instruction in

‘lower ability’ classrooms

‐ A great deal of academic learning occurs

through students’ interaction with peers

‐ Being assigned to a ‘lower ability’ group is often

Permanent

As the TDSB works to remodel its Home School Program and special education processes, these findings and others answer the question of “why” there is a need to change how this program is delivered to our students. Additional communication about the changes to the Home School Program will be shared with parents prior to the March Break.

The following message was shared with the system

Home School Program (HSP)

Further to information communicated on February 27, 2017, through System Leaders’ Bulletin and March 20, 2017, through DirectLine, for the 2017/2018 school year, no Grade 1 students will be placed in HSP. In the 2018/19 school year, HSP will only support Junior and Intermediate students (Grades 4-8 only).  No Grade 2 or 3 students will be placed in HSP in the next school year.  There will be no reduction in the Community Based Resource Model (CBRM) which includes HSP staffing, or CBRM EA at the system level because of this remodelling.  As in the past, there may be fluctuations at individual schools due to changes in factors considered in the CBRM allocation process (net enrolment, students being supported in CBRM, LOI).

As schools will begin planning for the 2018-2019 school year soon, we re-issued information from last spring in the January 15 edition of DirectLine around more inclusive models of running HSP.  The K-12 Inclusion/Remodelling of HSP Committees are just getting established and will be working to share best practices for teachers, support staff, professional support services personnel and administrators who are already engaged in such work and those who are just beginning with this learning which supports the Integrated Equity Framework and anti-oppressive practices.

Each elementary school has received a minimum of a half day of release to send a teacher for professional learning to support classroom teachers who are teaching students with special education needs in the regular classroom.  These will be general sessions on Universal Design for Learning and Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Methods and Strategies. Part One of these sessions is already running throughout the Learning Centres.  Part Two will be coming towards the end of April and the beginning of May.  These will be a follow-up as to how this new learning has been applied in classrooms, to discuss success and any barriers encountered.  Part Two will also provide some overviews of assistive technology for all students.  Further release time will be provided for these sessions.

There will continue to be professional learning opportunities for support staff and teachers focusing on specific profiles of learners, different divisions (primary/junior/intermediate/senior), differentiated instruction and, in general, how to improve outcomes for students with special education needs.  Please look for upcoming sessions on Key to Learn, with multiple options available on the following dates:  April 26, and June 8.

For questions, please contact the Centrally Assigned Principal for Special Education for your Learning Centre.

LC1 – Janine Small

LC2 – Susan Moulton

LC3 – Cynthia Zwicker-Reston

LC4 – Jennifer Newby

**School Based Staff Allocation 2018-2019**

The Staffing Allocation Committee prepares a report that will go to the Board of Trustees shortly “because staff allocation decisions are required by early March in order to be ready to open schools in September 2018 and implement the staffing processes as defined by Collective Agreements” (SAC pg. 2). The following allocations are being recommended for Special Education staffing allocation:

* Allocate 2,705.5 Full Time Equivalent Special Education Support Staff at a cost of $155.7 Million. This represents no change in the allocation for 2018-2019.
* Allocate 1,650.5 Special Education Elementary teachers. This represents an increase of 5.5 teachers over the current school year.
* Allocate 505.5 Special Education Secondary teachers. This represents an increase of 2 teachers over the current school year.

It is important to note “That the actual deployment of Special Education classroom supports may change based on student needs; however the overall supports in Special Education will remain constant” (SAC Appendix B).

**IEP/IPRC Process**

Is the IEP and IPRC process providing equity of access, opportunity and outcome for all students with special education needs? We want parents to become more involved in the IEP and IPRC process. Parents of students with special education needs who desire a local neighbourhood school placement or a congregated site placement with appropriate accommodations, modifications and/or alternative programming will receive this placement through the IPRC process. They will have increased voice and genuine input and say into placement options. Parents will feel that their voice has been heard and their preference of placement honoured. While the important perspective of staff will contribute to the decision making process, parent preference will be accommodated. This means that the “culture” of the IPRC may need to change. Towards this end an “IPRC procedure (script)” has been developed to guide this process.

Should there be a conflict during or after the IEP consultation process, the Parent Concern Protocol, up to the level of the involvement of the Superintendent of Education will be used to arrive at a successful resolution for the student and parent/guardian. Professional Learning on *“Shared Solutions: A Guide to Preventing and Resolving Conflicts Regarding Programs and Services for Students with Special Education Needs*” (2007), will be used to support this work.

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