# Special Education and Section 23 Department Update

Executive Superintendent Uton Robinson

SEAC Meeting of March 20, 2017

**Autism Services Department**

On Thursday February 23rd, 2017, staff, friends and family gathered to celebrate the retirement of Jan Fukumoto. Since September 2007, Jan has been the Co-ordinator of the TDSB Autism Services Department.  During her time in this complex role, she has made several contributions that have resulted in TDSB's ability to better meet the needs of students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). One of her last formal contributions to our students was her submission of an application to the Ministry of Education for new funding to support new and/or existing after school programs that build and enhance skills for students with autism spectrum disorders. The successful application will:

1) Provide weekly opportunities for students:

* To develop confidence and independence in their choice of leisure skill in a safe environment,
* To transfer the leisure skills learning to home, once a week
* As appropriate, to transfer the new skills to the community, after completion of the session

2) Provide weekly opportunities for parents:

* To meet with other parents and discuss the importance of leisure skills for their children
* To develop their own skills in the chosen leisure skill in order to successfully support their child in their skill development
* To organize the practice of the skill at home once during the week
* To identify similar leisure activities within their local community for their child/children/family

3) Provide opportunity for school staff:

* To attend the sessions provided to the students and problem solve how to incorporate leisure skills more fully into the student's day and into the student’s Individual Education Plan.

On behalf of staff, we wish Jan Fukomoto all the best as she begins another life chapter.

It is a pleasure to introduce our new Coordinator for Autism Services, Lydia Tisma. She has been a part of the East ASD team since 2007. She has had the opportunity to work with a broad spectrum of students with autism in various settings, programs and environments. Among her many experiences, she has successfully worked within a team framework involving parents, educators, psychologists, social workers and other professionals to realize objectives in support of student learning. We look forward to the system leadership that Lydia will provide in serving the needs of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

**Toronto Region Coordinated Service Planning Partnership Agreement**

As referenced in the partnership agreement: "In  2014, the Ministries of Children and Youth Services, Community and Social Services, Education and Health and Long-Term Care introduced the Special Needs Strategy to improve services for children and youth with special needs in Ontario" (P.2)

This partnership is between the Lead Agency (Surrey Place Centre) and the Core Service Providers (Family Service Toronto, Community Living Toronto, YouthLink and CCACs) and Partners in the System Management Group. The Toronto District School Board is one of several System Management Organizations.

"Coordinated Service Planning is expected to improve service experiences and outcomes for children and youth with multiple and/or complex special needs and their families through:

* The provision of a comprehensive, seamless and family-centered approach; and
* The support of a Service Planning Coordinator who will help connect them to the multiple, cross-sectoral services they need as early as possible, and monitor their needs and progress through a coordinated service plan" (P.3).

Rae Roebuck – Partner, First Leadership and Project Coordinator has prepared a presentation for SEAC. Many current SEAC members were involved in the Initial consultation work in 2014- 2015.
The vision is based on the following quote: "An Ontario where children and youth with special needs get timely and effective services they need to participate fully at home, at school, in the community, and as they prepare to achieve their goals for adulthood."

Rae’s presentation will give SEAC members an update on the Coordinated Service Planning model and the role implications for all organizations and systems.  We look forward to this presentation as we move toward the signing of implementation partnership agreements as required by the four ministries responsible for this strategy.

**Special Education Staffing Update**

At a Special Board meeting on March 8 the TDSB School Board approved the following staffing levels of school-based Special Education staff for the 2017-2018 school year:

* The allocation for **2, 462.5** Full Time Equivalent positions of Special Education Support Staff. This allocation is the same as the current school year.
* The allocation of **1,647.0** Elementary Teachers. This allocation is slightly higher than the current special education teacher allocation of 1,635.5 due to expected enrolment increase.
* The allocation of **512.5** Secondary teachers. This allocation is slightly lower than the current special education teacher allocation of 517.5 due to declining secondary enrolment.

**Home School Program**

On Wednesday March 8, 2017, more than one hundred elementary administrators participated in a collaborative inquiry focusing on an inclusive model for Home School Programs (HSP).

The following learning goals guided the conversations:

1. Share knowledge among schools about best practices with respect to inclusion of students in the Home School Program.

2. Understand specific supports needed for schools to continue with an inclusive model of HSP

3. Share tools that can be used to implement an inclusive HSP in support of student engagement, achievement and well-being.

The group was reminded about the historical background of the Home School Program, which began around 2002. The HSP was intended to:

* Support students in their local school through a "push in " model
* Be an intervention within each school to help keep students within their local home school
* Serve as a setting to better support the inclusion of students into the regular program after a timed, tiered intervention.

Through the Integrated Equity Framework, staff are looking at how to ensure that students are benefiting from HSP by reviewing how schools are implementing the program.

**Inclusion: Creating School and Classroom Communities Where Everyone Belongs** (Gillian Parekh and Kathryn Underwood, 2015)

As we consider a definition of Inclusion, Parekh and Underwood offers the follow responses to the question “What is Inclusive Education?”:

1. An inclusive classroom is a place where all students experience a sense of belonging and social citizenship (e.g., membership, inclusion, shared power, and value) (Parekh, 2014)

2. An inclusive classroom modifies the environment to fit the student, not the student to fit the environment.

3. An inclusive classroom is a space where all identities and cultures (including disability culture) are celebrated.

4. An inclusive classroom prioritizes the right to participation and focuses on setting a positive climate where local engagement and friendships can be promoted (Underwood, 2013)

5. An inclusive classroom rejects deficit thinking and does not segregate or organize students according to ability.

**Special Education Plan**
Special Education staff is seeking the SEAC's involvement in the annual review of the Special Education Plan. This plan provides the public and the ministry with information about the board's delivery of programs and services. The following areas are to be reviewed:

* Roles and Responsibilities
* Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies
* The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) Process and Appeals
* Educational and Other Assessments
* Specialized Health Support Services in School Settings
* Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities
* Special Education Placements Provided by the Board
* Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
* Provincial and Demonstration Schools in Ontario
* Special Education Staff
* Staff Development
* Equipment
* Accessibility of School Buildings
* Transportation
* The Board's Special Education Advisory Committee
* Coordination of Services with Other Ministries or Agencies
* Submission and Availability of School Board Plans