**Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)**

## MINUTES for Monday, June 5, 2017

### SEAC – Representatives and (Alternates) Present *(TC\* - by teleconference)*

Association for Bright Children (ABC) Diana Avon (Melissa Rosen)

Autism Society of Ontario – Toronto Lisa Kness

Brain Injury Society of Toronto (BIST) *regrets*

Community Living Toronto Clovis Grant (Margarita Isakov)

Down Syndrome Association of Toronto Richard Carter

Easter Seals Ontario Deborah Fletcher

Epilepsy Toronto Steven Lynette

Integrated Action for Inclusion (IAI) *regrets*

Learning Disabilities Association Toronto *regrets*

VIEWS 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 Jordan Glass

TDSB South East Community Diane Montgomery

TDSB South West Community Nora Green Paula Boutis

TDSB Trustees Alexandra Lulka Pamela Gough (TC\*)

Regrets: Trustee Alexander Brown, Olga Ingrahm (SE Community), Mark Kovats (LDAT), Kim Southern Paulsen (IAI), Cynthia Sprigings (BIST), Phillip Sargent (NW Community),

Staff Present: Uton Robinson, Executive Superintendent, Special Education and Section 23 Programs

Ted Libera, Central Coordinating Principal, TDSB Caring and Safe Schools

Marilyn Lowe, Supervising Principal for Special Education, Retired

Margo Ratsep, SEAC Liaison

Delegations: John Oldenhoff, on behalf of “Friends of Beverley”

 Nicole Payette, concerned parent

Recorder: Margo Ratsep

MINUTES

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

## Call to Order

SEAC Chair David Lepofsky called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He welcomed visitors in the gallery and invited SEAC members and staff in attendance to introduce themselves. He thanked all the volunteers, and announced the retirement of Clovis Grant, giving recognition and thanks for his many years of volunteering on SEAC. He suggested a procedural change, so that speakers refrain from prefacing their comments with the formal phrase “through the Chair”.

## 2. Declaration of Possible Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

## 3. Approval of the Minutes

On motion of Richard Carter, the Minutes of May 1, 2017 were approved as amended (with 2 abstentions). Amendments included correction to the start of the meeting time, adjustment to the wording in the second paragraph under Item 5 and the addition of a 5th bullet under item 6. Carried

**4. New SEAC Membership Recommendations**

Over the past month, the SEAC Liaison received a number of emails pertaining to SEAC membership, as follows:

* Email dated April 27, 2017 from Kim Southern-Paulsen indicating her intention to vacate her seat as SEAC Representative for Integration Action for Inclusion and serve as Alternate instead
* Email dated May 2, 2017 from Margarita Isakov, resigning as Alternate for Community Living Toronto and indicating her desire to represent Integration Action for Inclusion instead, leaving a vacancy
* Email dated May 4, 2017 from Rick Strutt, applying to become an Alternate Representative for the North East Community, for which there are 2 vacancies.
* Email dated May 5, 2017 from Sheelagh Hysenaj, resigning as Alternate representative for Epilepsy Toronto, leaving a vacancy
* Email dated May 24, 2017 from Clayton Eaton, Integration Action for Inclusion with two nominations: Margarita Isakov as Representative and Kim Southern Paulsen as Alternate
* Email dated June 1, 2017 from Clovis Grant, resigning as representative for Community Living Toronto, leaving a vacancy
* Email dated June 4, 2017 from Curtis Jordan Bulatovich applying to become an Alternate representative for the North West Community, for which there is one vacancy.

The following 3 motions were carried, recommending board appointments to SEAC:

**1. Integration Action for Inclusion Rep and Alternate Rep**

*\*\*\* Motion – by Pamela Gough and seconded by Richard Carter:*

*Whereas Kim Southern Paulsen has resigned as the representative for Integration Action for Inclusion on the Toronto District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)in favour of becoming the Alternate representative, and*

*Whereas Margarita Isakov has resigned as the Alternate representative for Community Living Toronto in favour of becoming the representative for Integration Action for Inclusion, and*

*Whereas SEAC has received nominations to this effect from the executive officer of Integration Action for Inclusion and both named applicants meet the Ministry of Education and board criteria for eligibility, therefore,*

*Be it resolved that the board appoint Margarita Isakov as the Representative and Kim Southern-Paulsen as the Alternate Representative for Integration Action for Inclusion for the remainder of the 2014 to 2018 term.*

**2.** **North East Community Alternate Representative**

*\*\*\* Motion – by Paula Boutis and seconded by Clovis Grant:*

*Whereas there are two vacancies for North East Community Alternate Representative on the Toronto District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), and*

*Whereas SEAC has received an application from Rick Strutt to become Alternate Representative for the North East Community and he meets the Ministry of Education and board criteria for eligibility, therefore,*

*Be it resolved that the board appoint Rick Strutt as an Alternate Representative for the North East Community, for the remainder of the 2014 to 2018 term.*

**3. North West Community Alternate Representative**

*\*\*\* Motion –**by Paula Boutis and seconded by Aline Chan:*

*Whereas there is one vacancy for North West Community Alternate Representative on the Toronto District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), and*

*Whereas SEAC has received an application from Curtis Jordan Bulatovich to become Alternate Representative for the North West Community and he meets the Ministry of Education and board criteria for eligibility, therefore,*

*Be it resolved that the board appoint Curtis Jordan Bulatovich as an Alternate Representative for the North West Community, for the remainder of the 2014 to 2018 term.*

***5.*****Motion #5 Inclusion at TDSB, Recommendation 3 (a) Vote on Wording Options**

With SEAC’s agreement, the Chair deferred this item to after Item 6.

***6.*****Delegations on Motion #5 Recommendation #7 Congregated Schools at TDSB**

**Delegation # 1: John Oldenhof, representing “Friends of Beverley” (School)**

John Oldenhof spoke to a slide presentation he had provided to SEAC in advance of the meeting. He acknowledged the value and wide applicability of a philosophy of inclusion, but argued that there is a threshold, beyond which a combined approach is required to provide the needed resources, concentration of expertise and centralization of services. Since SEAC was put in place to advocate for all children with special needs, SEAC needs to discuss what the children need and advocate for that, focusing on recommendations that have broad application. Congregated settings must be protected, with a minimum number/critical mass of special needs classes, specially trained and knowledgeable staff, shared specialized resources and equipment and purpose-built environments. He outlined the advantages and benefits of the congregated setting his child attends and presented the argument that SEAC had not consulted adequately with the parents of the student populations affected by recommendations 3(a) and 7 of SEAC Motion #5. On behalf of the families he represented, he requested those 2 recommendations be withdrawn or at a minimum deferred to the fall, to permit greater opportunity for SEAC to hear from affected families.

 **Delegation # 2: Nicole Payette, concerned parent of a special needs child**

Nicole Payette spoke to her concerns about Recommendation 7 in SEAC Motion #5, and requested its removal. A copy of her presentation was provided in advance to SEAC members. As the parent of a medically fragile child currently attending a congregated school setting, Nicole argued that essential information such as the severity of the disabilities of the complex special needs children that attend some congregated schools was not taken into consideration when making this recommendation. The parents of the children in congregated schools are not opposed to integration but integrated schools are not always an option for their children due to safety issues and lack of specialized resources needed due to the complexities of their children’s needs. She described the advantages of her child’s congregated school setting, especially for the medically fragile children who attend. These included specially designed facilities, equipment and resources, specially trained and knowledgeable staff, safety parameters that can be met and social networks for students and parents, based on shared experience. She urged that SEAC rescind recommendation 7 and focus instead on addressing the full spectrum of needs, by ensuring parents have the right to choose from among congregated schools, partially integrated and accessible schools that have special needs and regular classrooms and fully integrated settings for the more functional special needs children, giving them all of the supports needed to ensure that they can reach their full potential.

Following the 2 delegations, the floor was opened to questions and comments.Every speaker first expressed their appreciation for the delegates’ presentations and followed up with their points:

SEAC Input 1(PB): Happy the delegates came and hope they remain happy with the services being received.

SEAC Input 1(PB): I have through my daughter's community experience with complex needs and medically fragile children, though my own child is atypical. But through that community I am aware of the perspective of parents who want their child in the regular classroom with the appropriate supports and have fought to get these and struggle to move away from these congregated sites. Happy the delegates came and hope they remain happy with the services being received.

Delegate Response – The families represented by the delegation want the option, not to have it removed. Aware there are parents who opt to have their child privately taught because TDSB was unable to place their child in a congregated school setting. There are many who want options such as Beverley School because they don’t feel an inclusive environment can meet their child’s needs. There is a threshold where specialist environment and staff are needed.

SEAC Input 2 (DF): As mother of a child with complex needs, fought to have her child in an inclusive setting. As of grade 9, her child is in a segregated high school setting because of everything said by the delegates, including the special services she can only get in that setting. These options have to be available. If it is about keeping options open, we will.

SEAC Input 3 (SL): The issue is bigger than previously recognized. The SEAC motion is trying to create an integrated society within the board, but we have to be careful not to include wording that forces people to make a decision. We have to be thoughtful as a committee about the needs of these children. Some cannot work effectively in an integrated setting, where they do not have social peers or the needed support environment where they can feel safe and comfortable. With the amount of challenges these children have, we must give thought as a committee about the wording of 3a and 7 as part of this. We cannot make the choice for these parents.

SEAC Input 4 (NG): All SEAC members are here for our own reasons – Personally, chose to stay in own community for the safety benefits provided by a community who understood and cared about her child, but don’t want to limit the rights of others to make their own choice. Personally dreaming of a time where all needed supports are provided in the neighbourhood school. Right now, that experience can be socially isolating for some. The major concern as a committee is *who* is directing choices – the family or staff? Families who want to stay in their home school, should be able to. The vision down the road is for everyone to be loved and served in his/her own neighbourhood.

Delegate Response: Jurisdictions need to rethink their cost structure and how to implement inclusion. Imagine the disruption that could be caused and the economics of it – there is expensive equipment, and specialized resources and services needed that cannot be used by everyone.

SEAC Input 5 (RC): An example is the use of facilities by the organization “Making Waves” helping children learn how to swim. Own child is developmentally delayed and attends Heyden Park Secondary School – an all-girls school with a special education program in an integrated setting. To have partially integrated schools is an attractive model – provides maximum flexibility.

SEAC Input 6 (SL): Scarborough Village School as another such model.

SEAC Input 7 (AC): Speaking in support of the delegates in what they are asking for – the withdrawal or rewriting of 3a and 7. Her own child moved from an integrated to congregated site and preparation was needed in both. Have received calls from integrated schools to pick up her child from school. Integration takes a lot of modelling and effort from all stakeholders. Do hope and dream for this for all children, but parents should not be telling other parents what’s best – it is the parents’ choice. Our focus should be on what is required to meet the needs of different students. It would be helpful to see a cost comparison between congregated and non-congregated sites so we can write to tell the ministry what we need.

SEAC Input 8 (DW): Important to hear the delegates’ message. Personally agree with parental choice.

SEAC Input 9 (Chair): Asked three questions:

1. Is your focus on meeting the needs of kids with complex medical needs?

Delegate Response: Not just – not all have medical needs – each family is thinking of their own experiences and needs.

2. There are 12 sites – how many sites deal with these needs?

Response from Uton Robinson: The profile shared earlier covers a wide spectrum – there are similar profiles at a number of sites. To say they are very different wouldn’t be fair. Many do deal with very complex medical needs, have specialized equipment, etc.

3. We are hearing that by having this concentration of needs, there is a concentration of skilled staff and equipment and that integration will work for some kids and not others. SEAC is not proposing that TDSB lose the expertise or that any of these kids be required to go into a class with students without disability – we can turn our minds to rewording. But the important question is, assuming it is a school where your children get the exact same services, equipment and expertise and can get that education if you wish in a special education class, not a regular class – and assuming the school is big enough, with enough money, is there a problem about having students without disabilities also somewhere else in that same school, learning there too? Is there a reason why the students with disabilities for whom you are advocating must learn in a school building where no students without disabilities are also learning elsewhere in that building?

Delegate Response: Not opposed to sharing space but we need to have the discussion, to identify the things about congregated schools that make them successful. There is a lot to consider – i.e. the play area and how it is shared, locks on the door, etc.

Delegate Response: Knowing the challenges, not sure how you pull something like that off – in a congregated school the kids feel welcome and supported – there are other children with the same needs, parents with the same challenges. Can’t imagine how to justify one child’s situation (like that of her child) with other parents, it’s asking our kids to educate everyone else. Money cannot solve the social aspect (i.e. When some girls turn 14 they turn on each other – like a ‘right of passage’.)

The Chair proposed extending the meeting to 9:30 and there was consensus to do so.

SEAC Input 10 (JG): There is a voice for integration on SEAC however the delegates have changed his mind. All have different experiences and have given insight into difficulties not seen before – a voice that needs to be heard as well.

SEAC Input 11 (PB): Echoing input 4, but feeling sad about a really wrong sense that children with complex needs are hurting or imposing on neuro-typical children. We are all in this to have the best life for our kids. With respect for delegates’ views, worry about choices made on the basis of stereotype and personal shame. It is hurtful to hear a child can’t be near a regular class. TDSB has given us boxes within which to work. We haven't spent a lot of time thinking about out-of-the-box ideas that don’t force us into thinking it’s either this or that, but look at new ways to attack these problems.

SEAC Input 12 (MR): Thanking SEAC Chair for insight, drive, perspective and solution focus and also Uton, who has listened to a lot of complaints and has cared and tried to move the TDSB battleship – a lifeline for parents all over. Thanking SEAC as well and offering a framework to reconcile potential differences. SEAC supports parental choice. All are saying that students’ needs are so great and diverse that we need flexibility and variety. We hope different models could be implemented, but we cannot sacrifice students by dumping them into a model if the supports are not there yet. None can speak for the other exceptionalities. We hold some expertise and experience in our own exceptionality, but cannot even speak for every student within a single exceptionality. There is a desire among some to have a model of inclusion and integration – it is helpful to many and there are things we can do to make it a reality, but we cannot do that for everyone. Thinking of life choices, there are a lot of models (as in marriage) man/woman, same sex marriage, one working, both working, etc. In our own experience we may feel one of those models is the preferred one. But the model that works for one of us shouldn’t be forced on others. We can advocate without forcing our own solutions on others.

SEAC Input 13 (CG): Echoing much of what has been said – the importance is hearing and fully understanding the complexities. We are dealing with a world that may need a social experiment. Personally prefer the utopian model that has been proposed. We need to envision a different world. It’s important we maintain a view that we create a world where our children are accepted, can fit into the world and that we don’t make a box where we live. We want their needs to be met. I wish the support and services can be where we live.

SEAC Input 14 (JPN): We need to reflect on what the delegates have shared with us. Don’t see a problem about going back to *what* is needed. We need to consider everything and think about it. Don’t think people are trying to stay in a box – it is a choice parents have made. If we approach all stakeholders in order to look into the *what* is needed, then we can look at the *how* to meet the needs.

SEAC Input 15 (AC): Recognizing the needs of the medically fragile child and focusing on parental choice. Don’t think parents should be discouraged to go to a congregated school (like Drury) but that is what is happening – Would like to know why.

SEAC Input 16 (DF): Echoing delegates in that there is no shame – Her own child is not where she is because of parents feeling ashamed. The reason she went from integration to a more congregated setting is because she was tired of being “the only one in her class”. Now she is with kids like her. It’s not because I don’t want to impose her on the other kids – she is happier now and getting the support she would never get in a regular setting.

SEAC Input 17 (DA): Even gifted kids get bullied, have high levels of anxiety and are “different”. Different kids get picked on – they need a sense of community. Own child has giftedness exceptionality and is in a congregated class with a sense of community with peers – not the “freak”. It’s not right to move kids to a special class unless it is the parents’ choice. The happiness of the child should be the uppermost thing. Would love everything to be wonderful and inclusive all the time – but it’s not human nature and we’re not there yet. Would rather see the kids well supported in whatever setting is wanted by parents.

SEAC Input 18 (NG): Have we heard from other congregated sites? Parents from other congregated sites should be aware that this discussion is happening.

Delegate Response: Parents from other sites are aware but not able to come tonight.

The Chair called an end to discussion and turned to the delegates for final comment:

Delegate 1 John Oldenhof: Move the threshold so that inclusion becomes an option available for more children, but recognize there is still a need for congregated settings. Personally looks forward to day when his child is able to communicate his needs – if he has pain, is tired, can dress self. Beverley School is helping him learn how to learn. When we see/hear messages about a meaningful career, opportunities, doing math, we realize this is not going to happen tomorrow for our child and we need to provide all the services that can help him…anything that can help him become more self-sufficient. Acknowledged that if there were room for students without disabilities studying elsewhere in the building and if the school retained the services and staff expertise concentrated in that school for students with disabilities, he would not necessarily be opposed to that.

Delegate 2 Nicole Payette: Our child’s medical needs must be met. We discussed options with Sick Kids – looked at all the boards for the best services available and found Beverley School to be the perfect environment for her. Integration would put her at risk. We’re not ashamed – it is just more about her complex needs. We want children to be children. It’s the reality of life and people’s perceptions. We try to do what we can to educate others, but we want her to experience her life to the fullest. We cannot lose sight that it is a parent’s choice.

The Chair wrapped up discussion, commenting that SEAC is a table full of people that share the delegate’s passion and the willingness to take on tough issues. The biggest result may be that more parents of children with special education needs advocate more. The Chair proposed that SEAC return to Item 5 on the agenda.

**5.** **Motion #5 Inclusion at TDSB, Recommendation 3 (a) Vote on Wording Options**

The Chair proposed how voting could take place for the wording of Recommendation 3(a). Members would be able to vote yes or no on each wording option and could reject all four options if they wish. Discussion followed with several SEAC members proposing that, in light of the perspectives shared by the delegations, 3(a) not be voted on in order to give time for reflection and opportunity for more input. The Chair deferred a decision on 3(a) to September.

\*\*\* Motion – moved by Paul Cross, seconded by Jean-Paul Ngana, that:

*SEAC formally recall and reconsider recommendation 7 from Motion #5*

The motion carried.

The Chair indicated he would inform PSSC that Recommendation 7 of Motion #5 was being revisited by SEAC and proposed the formation of a summer work group to look at it. The following SEAC members volunteered to become part of that work group: Aline Chan, Jordan Glass, Richard Carter, Paul Cross, Diana Avon, Paula Boutis, Deborah Fletcher, Steven Lynette, Dick Winters, David Lepofsky

**7. Proposed "Refusal to Admit" or Exclusion Practices at TDSB**

Ted Libera, Central Coordinating Principal, TDSB Caring and Safe Schools, thanked SEAC for its previous input and indicated parts of the draft procedure he had distributed to them in advance of the meeting arose from their input.

The Chair prefaced discussion, commenting that SEAC learned in February from another presenter that boards can require parents to take their child home or keep their child home without recourse to the protections available under suspension or expulsion. Ted Libera had previously explained there was no policy or written formal procedure. It was to SEAC’s credit that it has been a catalyst for potential change.

Ted Libera updated SEAC that Trustee Brown has written a motion regarding either developing a policy on “Refusal to Admit” or adding to an existing policy if more appropriate.

The Chair opened the floor for input.

SEAC Input 1 (Chair): expressed his own need for a factual example where a student’s behaviour posed such a threat as to have refusal to admit applied, but was not susceptible to suspension or expulsion. The chair indicated he could not now imagine a specific situation where it would be justified to exclude a student under s.265 of the Education Act, but where it would not be justified to suspend or expel a student under the school's power to discipline. Therefore, it is not clear there is ever a need to use the power to exclude students from a school or class. He then raised three additional points:

1. Section 265 of Education Act – allows principals to exclude from school or a class. He sees a hierarchy of choices in making this decision but doesn’t see a duty on the part of a principal to consider each of the following steps on the ladder:

1. You can stay in the school but not in that class
2. You can’t stay in this school due to the concern, but you could go to another school
3. You can’t stay in the class, school or any school, so stay home

He stated that the school principal should have to consider each step of this hierarchy and take the least intrusive choice.

2. The draft procedure notes a review after 5 days, and a review is a help, but the onus should be on the school principal to justify further exclusion – the principal should have to reconsider the chain of options

3. The draft procedure proposes the scenario of a police investigation but it isn’t clear why maintaining a police investigation poses a threat to others. Section 265 is not an aid to police investigations. It does not seem justified that because police are investigating an incident, a student should be ordered to not attend that school, or indeed any school at TDSB.

SEAC Input 2 (DA): Issuing a refusal to admit should have a time frame clearly delineated and a clearly delineated alternative is needed – What is the parent supposed to do for that child?

SEAC Input 3 (NG): Who determines adequacy of programming to prevent the refusal to admit? Some staff do not always implement recommendations made to them – Need to list who the principal has consulted and someone should conduct an audit to show that recommendations have been followed. How is it going to be tracked? How many kids are out of school? How are kids’ needs being met?

SEAC Input 4 (PB): Based on conversations with parents – one of the selling points for placement in a special education class for behaviour is the support available “…*so parents won’t be called to take their kid away from school because the staff the child likes is away today”.* How does this policy address the exclusion of students for these kinds of exclusions?

SEAC Input 5 (DF): Own daughter was once inappropriately excluded in this way. Has also helped a family whose child was placed on a modified day, only attending one hour a day. A modified day is a refusal to admit. It needs to be tracked. When a principal does something like this inappropriately, what are the consequences to the principal and why are they still working? Need a feedback system – the board exists to serve the customers, their families. There has to be some way of monitoring performance and getting them out of the board when not doing a good job.

SEAC Input 6 (JG): Echoed that a modified school day is a refusal to admit. (Own daughter was limited to 3 hours a day.)

SEAC Input 7 (JPN): This is a procedure – but a procedure normally follows the policy. Looking at the reference document, what is always missing is accountability – an obligation to report on what is being done. Also confusing is putting it all on the principal – a parent needs to be able to go to the right person for recourse.

SEAC Input 8 (LK): Echoed point about accountability. Have seen a number of safety plans stating a child with ASD may do things that are unsafe – but that it is the principal’s discretion to exclude the child. But a safety plan is meant to mitigate and prevent the issues from arising so that refusal to admit does not occur. Teachers may not want to state what has occurred to cause a problem. Parents are left with no choice.

SEAC Input 9 (RC): How often does it happen that the safety plan states 100% supervision by SNA and if the SNA is absent, the child can’t come to school? Also – the document uses the terms student, pupil and person inconsistently – what is what?

SEAC Input 10 (Chair): Offered several suggestions:

1. From own experience in Ontario public service – this procedure should require an approving sign-off from the Superintendent of Education within 24 hours, to justify what is done and signed-off on. How often principals are doing this should also be tracked and signed-off on. A principal should not be able to exclude a student unless they get that superintendent's sign-off within 24 hours, approving it.
2. Thinking this refers to students with special education needs and it should refer to students with all disabilities
3. Create a video, or a training quiz to help principals understand its use - to show situations where it is permissible and where not
4. This is a special education issue. It is disproportionately students with disabilities – SEAC raised the issue and is happy to be involved as this procedure moves forward.

SEAC Input 11 (DW): Need to add a positive side to prevention in use of Refusal to Admit – how to prevent having to do this.

Ted Libera thanked SEAC for their input and added that there will be many drafts of the procedure. He foresees continued consultation going forward.

The Chair proposed extending meeting to 9:40 and there was consensus to do so.

**8. SEPRC Practice at TDSB – Marilyn Lowe**

The Chair explained that a number of SEAC members had raised questions about the TDSB placement process through a Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC), which is used with new students who have not yet begun attending a TDSB school. He introduced Marilyn Lowe, Supervising Principal for Special Education (retired), who was present to respond to questions. Marilyn had provided a slide presentation on the SEPRC process in advance of the meeting and spoke briefly before taking questions.

In 2012 Marilyn was asked to write the procedures for SEPRC, to address an issue identified by lawyer Brenda Bowlby (author of An Educator’s Guide to Special Education Law). Ms Bowlby held that school boards had no jurisdiction to hold Identification Placement and Review Committee meetings for students not yet attending a board. The SEPRC procedure was developed to address the needs of families who pre-register a child and want more immediate access to special education class placement for when the child starts attending. Marilyn gave a synopsis of the SEPRC process, fully described in the slide presentation, highlighting the following points:

* The procedures look similar – but a SEPRC makes a recommendation, not a decision.
* The purpose is to look at parental interest in having a pre-registered child with complex needs in a special education class upon arrival at school – i.e. coming to school for the first time or coming from another board.
* TDSB had been told that it had to do this differently than through an IPRC – but with the same interest of students in mind.
* Wanted to be sure that when an IPRC is held, there has been enough time for the child to be observed and assessed, and for sufficient information to be collected to enable decision-making
* Previously had tried to make decisions without a lot of information and using non-TDSB information.
* When a parent meets the principal and discusses the child’s special needs, if a parent is looking for an intensive support program and the school and SST are of the opinion the child might benefit, then a SEPRC is held.
* The committee makeup is the same as an IPRC but it can only make a recommendation for programming purposes. A SEPRC cannot make decisions around exceptionality. If there is enough information, the child may be thought to meet exceptionality criteria, but this would only be noted for programming purposes.
* A SEPRC can only take place if parents want the process to start and the parent attends the meeting.

SEAC Input 1: The Chair started discussion with his own comments on concerns he has about the process:

1. When a child registers in February before starting in September, don’t understand why that child is not considered to be a student of the board. If that is a problem, the board should be asking the ministry to change the legislation.

2. There is no appeal process. As written, the committee meets and a recommendation is made that parents either accept or the child must go to the home school. There may be more than one appropriate choice.

3. Even if the forgoing is wrong, TDSB owes families an IPRC at the start of the school year, and not 6-9 months later and doesn’t offer it right away.

Response – In the SEPRC process, Special Education offers the program and parents visit before deciding. After 6 to 9 months in the program the child’s progress is reviewed at a School Support Team (SST) meeting to determine if the recommendation was appropriate and if so to proceed to an IPRC. This gives time to see if the program is appropriate.

SEAC Input 2 (NG): Re: kindergarten placements, kindergarten should be a developmental program with kids at all different levels – if we can’t be inclusive in kindergarten when can we?

Response – The intent is that it is for the kids who cannot manage in their home school

Input 2 continued: The board should offer options with the associated benefits and deficits.

SEAC Input 3 (PB): If Brenda Bowlby is correct, the intent of the legislation is to make the decision after a child has been in the home school in a regular classroom with supports. Are we doing through the back door what we can't do through the front door by choosing to do something with no legislative basis, even if there are parents who want their child to be in a special education class from day one? In the IPRC brochure there are 3 lines referencing the SEPRC and no one knows what rights and responsibilities they have. If there is no legal IPRC before a child is enrolled, there is no binding decision, so I disagree with Ms Bowlby's opinion that the IPRC was illegal because there was no appeal process - there is no binding decision if the IPRC is not properly conducted, it's a nullity and has no force or effect. So parents could just decline the "placement" as they could now through SEPRC (though they aren't clearly told that). Through SEPRC, parents are told they can either choose what they are offered, or else go to the home school with no or insufficient supports, so parents think they really don’t have a choice but to accept the spec ed placement. It undermines what the legislation directs, which is first a regular classroom placement with proper supports in place. There are a lot of parents pushed in the direction of taking a special education placement. Most concerned about the youngest kids in diagnostic kindergarten classrooms. .

Response: That is not the intent of the process. Parents are looking for a range of placement option and some parents want that option. The SEPRC is meant to ensure those parents have the option – to address a small number of students who in the parents’ mind could benefit from being in a special education class from day one. Other school boards have something that looks similar, where there is a meeting with the parents and staff to discuss the needs. SEPRC is not intended to place lots of children in special education – it is just a process that guides the meeting required to get the kids where the parents want them to be. Once the SEPRC meeting takes place, the flow is that an IPRC meeting follows, if it is later decided the recommended placement is appropriate. If placed by SEPRC, after 3 months the SST and parents may decide the child would be better back in their regular program. If benefitting from the placement and parents want to keep the support, an IPRC is held to decide exceptionality and formalize the placement.

SEAC Input 4 (DF): Feel that the process is being abused. Transitioning back to regular class is very difficult. The four points made are broken all the time. In one example – the principal refused to see the family – they got a letter in the mail telling them to come to a SEPRC in May – they were bullied into believing their daughter needed to go to a different school. They fought and won but the child was only allowed in for an hour a day. What happens when a policy is not followed and why is the principal still working? There are hundreds of incidents like this.

SEAC Input 5 RC): Looking at a scenario where the family goes to SEPRC and accepts an intensive support program in another school – what is the child’s home school and can the child ever go back if their class is at capacity? What is the time limit for returning the form? When the child is enrolled – where does that fit into the optional attendance process?

SEAC Input 6 (DA): Speaking for Gifted students, it is a way for a child to enter a gifted program that they have already been in, directly from outside the board.

SEAC Input 7 (SL): When a parent and child come to the school, who decides a SEPRC is needed?

Response: It’s a conversation begun with the parent. The principal along with the School Support Team (SST) will consider the information.

Input 7 continued: The process is designed to find children who may need an intensive support program from day one coming into school. It works with Gifted, however, from what is heard it is a train wreck for any child not gifted. Any child with a deficit is not given the benefit of the doubt and not treated according to the policy. Every principal between now and September needs to be told how it is to be done.

SEAC Input 8 (JG): Wondering if there are cases in another school board where a child is in a special program or doesn’t go to school.

The Chair closed discussion, noting that in the regulation any parent has the right to request an IPRC for identification and placement. If the student has a SEPRC in the spring before they start, parents shouldn’t be told that an IPRC can’t be held for 6 to 9 months. He indicated his intention to revisit this discussion in September.

At his request, Executive Superintendent Uton Robinson was given a few minutes to address SEAC before the meeting could be adjourned. He offered the following comments:

This has been a very good year in terms of what has been brought forward from SEAC and staff has done what it can in terms of the motions. Going forward, there is a need to chunk things. We don’t get the chance to share the information we need to share. We need to chart three to four things we want to complete. The myriad of motions and their pieces are interesting and we will continue to try to get a better understanding of them, but in terms of real change we cannot address 50 motions. Staff intentions are honorable and it pains me to hear what I hear, but I don’t believe this is the way we want to operate. Let’s not play “I gotcha” – let’s work together. Thank you for all you do, but I have to say I feel I have been marginalized because of the way the meetings have transpired. I want to address issues from a depth perspective. There are many intersections that need to be looked at and no simple solutions. Every now and then, I would like at least 5 minutes on the agenda.

SEAC Response 1 (NG): Expressing feelings as a member of SEAC and understanding Uton’s perspective, has missed staff presentations – has lost track of what is happening, had trouble understanding where to go from here to prioritize and make things manageable and doable by staff. Proposed SEAC establish an agenda setting committee (i.e. as per PAAC on SEAC)

SEAC Response 2 (AC): Concurring – work best in partnership. Thanking the Chair and appreciating the voice of the parents, value hearing other members’ thoughts – want to know from Uton about initiatives and directions – prioritization needs to be happening.

SEAC Response 3 (JPN): People do know a lot more about SEAC because of David’s work and also agree with what Uton said – brought this issue up before, to put his report back on the agenda and also reports from trustees to know what they are doing – not just one trustee but from all three. Also missing the Professional Support Services staff report SEAC used to get.

The Chair closed discussion by thanking SEAC for their input. He commented that SEAC has done the heavy lifting and has two months over the summer. From September to December the agenda is open, so a big chunk is available for Uton. Any ideas about how SEAC covers everything SEAC wants to do can be emailed to David.

**9. Feedback on Special Education Plan**

This item was not covered.

**10. Feedback on Draft Special Education Brochures**

Members were encouraged to review the Item 10 attachments of the draft brochures for IEP, IPRC, IST/SST and Parent Concerns Protocol. The Chair announced he is setting up a meeting with TDSB Communications to reach out to parents and invited members interested in meeting over the summer about this to email him.

**11. Association Reports**

* Richard Carter suggested that time limits be assigned to agenda items next year. He spoke briefly about the Down Syndrome Association conference in Banff and highlighted key note Shelley Moore on inclusive education. He recommended a video he would like to share with SEAC
* Aline Chan voiced thank you to Clovis Grant who is retiring from SEAC after many years representing Community Living.
* Steven Lynette reminded members about the Epilepsy Toronto ‘Buskerfest’ being held at Woodbine Park in the Beach, Labour Day weekend.
* Clovis Grant voiced appreciation for all the kind words he had received, stating he had learned a lot and thanking the “many hearts at this table” for the special and important work they do.

**12. Other Business**

This item was not covered.

**13. Adjournment**

On motion of Clovis Grant, the meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

**Next Meeting – September 11, 2017** Please note: due to renovations in the board room, the September meeting is scheduled to take place in Committee Room A