**SEAC response to the TDSB motion to create more equitable outcomes for students with special needs**

On Jan 16, 2018 the Programs Committee of the TDSB unanimously passed a motion asking the Director to present a report to the Programs Committee in May 2018 and an action plan in September 2018 that includes ambitious employment and other postsecondary goals for students with disabilities (Appendix 1).

In response SEAC provides the following suggestions and insights:

1. **Mandate of the Board to address Inequitable Employment Outcomes of Students with Special Needs**

PPM 156, ***Supporting Transitions For Students with Special Education Needs****,* was to be implemented in September, 2014. This memorandum from the Ministry was intended to improve the outcomes of students with special education needs through thoughtful and informed transition planning for students. For students with intellectual disabilities, this Transition Plan is developed in consultation with families and community agencies in order to ensure that children have successful outcomes as they leave school. The memorandum explicitly states that it supports the transition from secondary school to the next pathway. Most Boards use this tool in a rudimentary way to superficially plan from one grade or school to another. This is not merely meant to be the passing of relevant student information from one year to the next, but a backward design tool which keeps the end in mind at all times. It is a goal setting tool for collaborative teams to use as they develop effective, responsible and productive programming which results in the highest level of independence possible, ideally paid employment.

In addition to the implementation of PPM 156 is the ***Integrated Transition Planning for Young People with Developmental Disabilities.***This protocol was announced in January 2013 and was a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Child and Youth Services and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The Integrated Transition Planning Protocol requires school, home and community participation. This is a planning protocol for students who qualify for Developmental Services Ontario. In theory there is supposed to be a common document which all parties can access in order to collaborate and support the transition of youth into the community.

1. **Post-secondary employment and other inequities for students with special needs**

* Students leave the TDSB and enter a workforce where 79 percent of people without disabilities have paid employment, but only 51 percent of people with disabilities have paid employment and only 26 percent of people with intellectual disabilities have paid employment.
* 87% of people with intellectual disabilities in Washington State have paid employment. In Ontario, only 26% of people with intellectual disabilities have paid employment.
* Teenagers who have paid employment experiences are much more likely having paid employment as adults.
* Jobsearch skills for people with disabilities are different and require specific training.
* Employment for people with intellectual disabilities will look different for each person.
* The biggest barriers to paid employment for people with disabilities are low expectations.
* Several studies show that hiring people with disabilities is not an act of charity. It’s good for the bottom line.
* Washington state is a “work first” state and has set the goal of having 10% of new hires being people with disabilities.

1. **Recommendations**
2. The TDSB should transform its education for students with disabilities, including students with intellectual disabilities, to ensure they have sufficient pre-employment training and opportunities, as all other students do. The goal should to ensure that students have person centred and individualized programming, developed in close collaboration with the student and families, with the goal for each student to have paid employment at the end of their secondary education, or to be registered in a post-secondary program with funding supports.
   * 1. To achieve this goal, starting in the spring of 2018, the TDSB should
        1. conduct an exit survey of all students with disabilities, and/or their parents and guardians, who are leaving the system. The survey would ask:
           1. whether the student has been accepted into a post-secondary program, paid employment or another program,
           2. whether the student has a resume, has applied for jobs, has the specialized job search skills needed for students with disabilities,
           3. whether they have passport funding, ODSP, or other sources of funding support,
           4. in what ways the programming they received could be improved for future students.

* + 1. The TDSB should conduct staff annual training on the employment of people with disabilities beginning with the 2018/19 school year.
    2. The TDSB should review programs offered in other jurisdictions that have much greater success with outcomes to determine best practices and adopt these best practices;
    3. The TDSB should establish a baseline of data and information on the programs, work, and opportunities currently afforded to students with disabilities compared to their typical peers and establish a plan to ensure all students have appropriate access to meaningful programs and opportunities (e.g. job fairs, Specialist High School Skills Major, meaningful co-operative placements with employers); and the TDSB must ensure that any and all barriers to these programs and opportunities are systematically identified and removed;
    4. The TDSB should ensure that students with disabilities, like all other students, are also participating in their community service volunteer hours;
    5. The TDSB should assist in the education of employers in the benefits of employing persons with disabilities and the employer’s role in ensuring the success of persons with disabilities;
    6. The TDSB should hire external staff with skills in job skill development for students with disabilities.
    7. The TDSB should work much more closely with employers to expand and improve co-op and other pre-employment training programs for TDSB students with disabilities.
    8. The TDSB should establish strong working relationships with any agencies and consultants that assist in the employment of persons with disabilities;
    9. The TDSB should establish strong working relationships with post-secondary institutions to ensure students with disabilities are able to take advantage of any programs and accommodations available to them through these institutions;
    10. The TDSB should ensure it is affording students with disabilities genuine and authentic networking, mentoring, and relationship building opportunities with typical peers throughout the system;
    11. The TDSB should ensure it is fully engaged in the Ministry of Education Pilot process regarding “Provincial Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities - Access Talent - EDU Pilot”
  1. The TDSB set a goal of hiring 18% of students with disabilities for TDSB student employment programs to reflect the proportion of students with an IEP.
  2. The TDSB set a goal of 10% of new hires be people with disabilities.

Appendix 1: Motion passed by the TDSB Programs Committee Jan 16, 2018

*Enhancing Equity Task Force Report and Recommendations:  Post-secondary and Employment Goals*

*Whereas the Enhancing Equity Task Force Report notes that “individuals living with disabilities are more likely to face poverty, un- or under-employment, poor health and exclusion from their communities”(p. 57);*

*Whereas, students leave the TDSB and enter a workforce where 79 percent of people without disabilities have paid employment, but only 51 percent of people with disabilities have paid employment and only 26 percent of people with intellectual disabilities have paid employment\*;*

*Whereas the TDSB has a role to play in addressing these inequities of outcomes through its special education services, including its co-op, pre-employment training and student employment programs;*

*Whereas, the attached report "Employment for All: An Equity Goal for the TDSB," from the Etobicoke Centre Special Education Forum describes opportunities for the TDSB to improve its pre-employment training and thus to increase employment outcomes for TDSB students with disabilities;*

*Therefore be it resolved that the Director include in the Integrated Equity Framework the goal of improving post-secondary preparation for students with disabilities through enhanced pre-employment training and greater connections to funding and post-secondary programs;*

*Be it further resolved that the Director report back to the Programs committee in May 2018 with a report and in September 2018 with an action plan that includes ambitious employment and other postsecondary goals for students with disabilities*

*The action plan could include:*

* *Collecting data on post-secondary pathways for each student with disabilities*
* *Staff training on the employment potential of people with disabilities;*
* *Setting a goal of hiring 18% of students with disabilities for TDSB student employment programs to reflect the proportion of students with an IEP,*
* *Working more closely with employers to expand and improve co-op and other pre-employment training programs for TDSB students with disabilities*

*\*  Statistics Canada; Ontario Disability Employment Network*