

Toronto District School Board

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES



Committee Name: Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)
Date: Monday, September 15, 2014
Time: 7pm
Present: Diana Avon, Michelle Brick, Aline Chan, Paul Cross, Mitchell Curci, Catherine Drillis, Clovis Grant, Olga Ingrahm, Trustee Howard Kaplan, Steven Lynette, Jean-Paul Ngana, Ginny Pearce, Philip Sargent, Najia Shafi,
Regrets: Heather Breckenridge, Christina Buczek, Richard Carter, Deborah Fletcher, Trustee John Hastings, Debra Hayden, Karen Prizzon, Trustee Sam Sotiropoulos, Cynthia Sprigings, Bantyeahun Tezazu, Nancy Turner Wright
Staff: Uton Robinson, Anne Seymour, Jeff Hainbuch, Margo Ratsep
Guests: David Haffner & Sharon McWhirter, Chiefs of Speech and Language, Toronto District School Board
Recorder: Linda Mendonca & Margo Ratsep

ITEM	DISCUSSION	RECOMMENDATION/MOTION
1. Call to Order/Quorum	A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee was convened at 7:09 pm on Monday, September 15, 2014 in the Board Room, 5050 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario with Michelle Brick presiding as Chair.	
2. Approval of Agenda	Motion: Paul Cross moved that the Agenda be approved as amended.	Motion carried.
3. Declaration of Possible Conflicts of Interest	None declared	
4. Confirmation of Minutes of June 2, 2014	Motion: Aline Chan moved that the minutes from September 15, 2014 be approved.	Motion carried.
5. Special Education Department Staff Introduction	Executive Superintendent Uton Robinson introduced Jeff Hainbuch, Co-ordinating Superintendent. Jeff has a specialty in Technology. Jeff will be working closely with SEAC going forward.	

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<p>6. Staff Presentations:</p> <p>Guests: Chiefs of Speech and Language David Haffner and Sharon McWhirter</p>	<p>SEAC received a presentation by TDSB Chiefs of Speech and Language Services, David Haffner and Sharon McWhirter</p> <p>Topic: Speech and Language Services – Emerging Challenges.</p> <p>The presentation was in response to a request from Chair Mari Rutka and Director Donna Quan, for SEAC’s input on the province’s provision of Speech Language services and the delivery of school-based Speech Language services in TDSB. There are concerns about the duplication of services, the long waiting lists, and parental challenges in accessing Speech Language services. The SEACs of the Catholic District School Board, Rainbow District School Board, and Lakehead District School Board have written letters to provincial ministries to address some of the concerns and are recommending actions to align services to make them more accessible, efficient and effective. TDSB recognizes the downsides of the services that it and the different agencies, and organizations are providing and is suggesting the province permit closer alignment of some of the services.</p> <p>SEAC echoed the concerns and would like to assist in advocacy.</p> <p>Action: SEAC to review Deloitte recommendations and draft a letter or motion for the October meeting.</p>	
<p>7. Open Discussion & Consultation</p>	<p>1. The type, frequency and format of financial information needed by SEAC to fulfill its mandate (Michelle Brick)</p> <p>This item was raised due to requests from members for different kinds of budgetary information. Michelle confirmed that SEAC is not allowed to have information that Trustees do not have. SEAC received presentations and two handouts last spring, which provided breakdowns of special education funding. Additional staffing information is requested including how staffing decisions are made. SEAC would like to know what the direction is for Special Education for the next year, and to be provided with status reports on staffing impacts and decisions. Michelle suggested that SEAC form a sub-committee to look at this or wait till January once the new SEAC membership is formed.</p>	

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	<p>Members directed the Finance Sub-committee to begin looking at this. SEAC Finance Sub-Committee Members include: Ginny Pearce, Jean-Paul Ngana, Nora Green, Michelle Brick, Margo Ratsep</p> <p>2. PIAC/SEAC Working Group on Special Education Parent Conference (Jean-Paul Ngana & Margo Ratsep)</p> <p>Last year SEAC agreed to support the PIAC Special Education Working Group in planning another Special Education Conference for Parents. At the request of the joint Working Group, SEAC applied for funding from the Parent Reaching Out (PRO) Grant and received \$13, 500. The Director has also committed additional funding for the conference. The date for a conference has not been established yet. Complicating factors include the availability of staff support for event planning. Discussion is ongoing between departments of Special Education and Parent and Community Engagement.</p> <p>Clovis Grant, Jean-Paul Ngana and Nora Green volunteered to assist on the SEAC/PIAC Conference Planning Committee. Margo will find out when the joint PIAC/SEAC Working Group is to meet.</p> <p>3. SEAC Membership Renewal for 2015 to 2018 (Uton Robinson)</p> <p>Executive Superintendent Uton Robinson reported on the process for SEAC membership Renewal. SEAC membership includes 12 local community agencies, 8 community representatives and 3 trustees. Posting for membership renewal will take place in October. Last year's Special Education Audit had asked TDSB to investigate if a First Nations Representative is required. Legal advice concluded that TDSB is not required to have a First Nations representative.</p> <p>4. Effective Implementation of Gifted Programs (Jean-Paul Ngana)</p> <p>Jean-Paul brought forward parent concerns about access to the TDSB Gifted Programs. SEAC discussion included screening methodology for Gifted identification, timelines for offers of placement, general knowledge about the existence of Gifted Programs among some populations, understanding the criteria for Gifted identification and a lack of</p>	
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	<p>transparency around access to Gifted programs at specific geographic locations requested by parents.</p> <p>SEAC members advised that TDSB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clarification around how offers of placement are made • Showcase all programs more effectively (at parent conference, PIAC meetings and events, parent flyers, etc.) to provide information on assessment, accessing programs and how to navigate the Board • Provide to parents more clear descriptions for the programs • Provide the public an opportunity for input to review and improving programs • Present information about programs for different exceptionalities at monthly SEAC meetings • Improve communication at the school local to reach more communities, through flyers or newsletter articles • SEAC might consider applying for a PRO grant next year to produce information fliers <p>Executive Superintendent Uton Robinson invited SEAC input about how TDSB can improve communication in the publicly posted Special Education Plan, which outlines in detail the specific information about exceptionalities and the kinds of program support available. The desired information begins on page 31 of the Plan.</p> <p>Diana Avon and Catherine Drillis volunteered to work on producing a draft flyer on Giftedness, for review by TDSB before possible use.</p> <p>5. Protocol Clarification re: Public Communication with SEAC</p> <p>Margo Ratsep distributed the draft of the protocol by email and invited feedback.</p>	
<p>8. Business Arising from the Minutes</p>	<p>None Noted.</p>	

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<p>9. Trustee Reports and Follow-up on Previous Action Items</p>	<p>Trustee Howard Kaplan reported that Board business has slowed. A special Board meeting was held to handle time sensitive contracts and PSSC and OFMC meetings are being held next week.</p>	
<p>10. Reports/Updates from Active SEAC Subcommittees Special Education Plan ...Subcommittee Members</p>	<p>Ginny Pearce reported on the Special Education Plan Sub-committee meeting and the suggestions made for improving the Plan.</p> <p>SEAC advised the TDSB Special Education Department to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more information about ASD program qualification and alternative placements • Clarify goal-setting in the section on IEP (few but targeted and measurable goals and ongoing assessment of the IEP as a 'living' document) • Provide clarification about qualification for an IEP and what happens when there is disagreement about this between parents and school • Provide information about Individual Learning Plans (ILP) and how they are used • Improve access to contact information for Special Education Consultants and Exceptionality Co-ordinators 	
<p>11. Special Education Department Updates...Uton Robinson, Anny Seymour, Jeff Hainbuch</p>	<p>Uton Robinson provided an update. (See Appendix A)</p>	
<p>12. Correspondence Received by the Chair</p>	<p>SEAC received the correspondence.</p> <p>In response to Item 11, members asked if unqualified teachers could be teaching special education assignments, and how the board monitors special education teaching assignments to ensure teachers hold special education credentials. Executive Superintendent Uton Robinson explained unqualified teachers could teach under a 'Letter of Approval', which requires completion of the additional qualification within the school</p>	

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	<p>year. There are also HR processes in place to prevent unqualified assignment for all posted special education positions, and principals must follow regulations when making teaching assignments among existing staff. If unqualified assignment does happen, steps are taken to rectify the situation. The Parent Concern Protocol directs parents concerned about this to contact the Principal and if unsatisfied, the School Superintendent.</p> <p>***Motion by Clovis Grant to extend the meeting by 15 minutes was approved.</p>	Motion carried.
13. New Business	<p>Richard Carter reported on a Bussing concern. If a student should qualify for bussing, the parent receives a letter in August indicating that prior to the start of school the parent will receive a call with time, and date of pick up and drop off of their children. In some instances, the details are incorrect or not communicated. Richard asked what TDSB can do to address these kinds of concerns.</p> <p>Action: Executive Superintendent Uton Robinson undertook to invite Karen Meeson from the Transportation department to a future meeting to describe how the bussing system works and to receive SEAC input.</p>	
14. Adjournment	<p>The meeting adjourned at 9:10 pm.</p>	

SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Appendix A

Executive Superintendent Uton Robinson

Welcome back to another excited year of learning at the TDSB.

A special welcome is extended to our new Co-ordinating Superintendent Jeff Hainbach. In addition to supporting Special Education programs in the West Region, he holds responsibility for the Technology portfolio for students with Special Needs. In the next few months a strategic technology plan will be shared with SEAC.

This school year began with an opportunity to address our new principals and vice-principals at their summer orientation session. We were given the opportunity to share the “Vision for Special Education” as outlined in the ***Special Education Plan, 2014***:

An emphasis will be placed on Moving Towards Greater Inclusion. We know that students with exceptionalities have the same basic needs as their peers.

They need to:

- *Participate and be included as fully as possible, in all activities, curricular and co-curricular, of our school communities*
- *Be valued as individuals for their unique contributions to school life*
- *Have no boundaries placed on, or prejudgments made about, their capacity for learning*
- *Enjoy a safe and secure learning environment*
- *Enjoy a sense of belonging to a school community that accepts ownership and responsibility for their learning*
- *Be unencumbered by stereotypical, outdated perspectives on abilities and disabilities*

Our team also had the opportunity to speak to all of the Superintendents of Education about initiatives and procedures that are in place to ensure that students with exceptionalities are given every opportunity to be successful. They then shared this information with the principals in their Family of Schools. The aim is to ensure a consistent and positive experience for all students and parents who require the services of Special Education and Section 23 Programs.

We look forward to supporting the work of SEAC, which is to make “...recommendations to the Board concerning any matter affecting the establishment, development, and delivery of special education programs and services.” (***Special Education Plan, 2014***).