

Approved Minutes

**Name of Committee:** Special Education Advisory Committee

**Meeting Date:** December 10, 2024from 7:05 p.m.– 9:00 p.m. (Hybrid)

**Chair:** **David Lepofsky**

**Vice-Chair:** **Richard Carter**

A meeting of the Special Education Community Advisory Committee convened on December 10, 2024, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at 5050 Yonge Street

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| **Attendance**: | Leo Lagnado - Autism Society of Ontario (Toronto Chapter)  Richard Carter- Down Syndrome Association of Toronto (DSAT)  Steven Lynette- Epilepsy Toronto  Nora Green- Integration Action for Inclusion in Education and Community  Beth Dangerfield – Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada  David Lepofsky- Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children (OPVIC)  Tracey O'Regan - Community Living Toronto  Bronwen Alsop- VOICE for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Children  Guilia Barbuto- Learning Disabilities Association Toronto District  Nerissa Hutchison – Sawubona Afrocentric Circle of Support  Saira Chhibber- LC1 Representative  Trustee Aarts  Diane Montgomery (Alternate)- Integration Action for Inclusion in Education and Community  Stephany Ragany (Alternate) - VOICE for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Children  Ann Blanchette (Alternate) Epilepsy Toronto  Reese Macklin (Alternate) - Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada  Jessica Miklos (Alternate) – Association for Bright Children    **Staff**  Louise Sirisko- Associate Director  Nandy Palmer- System Superintendent, Special Education and Inclusion  Effie Stathopoulos - Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education  Christine Harvey Kerr - Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education  Katia Palumbo- Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education  Alison Board - Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education  Elizabeth Schaeffer- Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education  Tanya Hazelton - Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education  Lianne Dixon- TDSB SEAC Liaison |
| **Regrets**: | Aliza Chaqpar- Easter Seals Ontario  Trustee Patel  Trustee Hassan  Jordan Glass- LC2 Representative  Jean-Paul Ngana- LC2 Representative  Kirsten Doyle- LC1 Representative  Izabella Pruska-Oldenhoff – LC1 Representative  Alana Bell – Association for Bright Children |

* The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by acting chair Diane Montgomery. A quorum was reached.
* LiveStreaming Announcement: The meeting will be live-streamed via TDSB Live Webcast - Special Education Advisory Committee.
* Declarations of Possible Conflicts of Interests – No conflicts declared.
* LandAcknowledgement**:** acting vice chair, Tracey O’Regan read the land acknowledgment.
* AgendaReview/Approval: The motion to approve the agenda was proposed by Tracey O’Regan and seconded by Steve Lynette
* Minute Approval – the minutes from October and November were approved. Moved by Steve Lynette, seconded by Leo Lagnado

At this point, David Lepofsky took over as SEAC Chair to chair the meeting

**Town Hall Follow-Up**

SEAC members had the opportunity to share their comments/concerns/next steps, and suggestions around the Town Hall. Summaries from each room had been shared with SEAC members before the meeting.

The following concerns were noted:

Format of the Town Hall

* some parents were unaware of the format and did not understand the mandate of SEAC.
* some members commented that the time was limited considering the seriousness of parents' concerns.

General barriers to success/areas for improvement

* teacher education,
* emotional safety for students with disabilities,
* social stigma for special needs students
* inadequate accommodations
* limited support systems.
* serving only the neediest students – lack of resources for less needy students
* communication
* consistent IEP development
* extended wait time for assessments
* ADHD not being recognized

Positive Feedback

* Many parents made positive comments about the good communication that is taking place and shared stories of dedicated and concerned adults working hard to help students despite limited resources.
* There was a general feeling that staff are caring individuals, but they are not adequately supported.
* Suggestions were made about seeking additional funding from the Ministry and/or look at how current funding is spread throughout different programs..
* Parents were pleased to have the opportunity to share their experiences.
* The individual stories shared by parents reflect systemic issues that SEAC can address.
* Many SEAC members felt that the Town Hall was a success as it provided parents an opportunity to share their concerns.
* The chair thanked the courageous parents who shared their personal stories and staff who supported the Town Hall’s organization and execution.
* It was suggested that another Town Hall can be held next year.

Staff Response

* Staff were present in each room and listened to all the delegations.
* They took careful notes and highlighted actionable items.
* Social Work staff were on hand in case there was a need for emotional support/intervention
* It was suggested that a committee be formed to consider the feedback and make recommendations around key issues to staff.

**Special Education Plan** - Executive Superintendent Nandy Palmer

* The Special Education Plan is one of the 2 areas in legislation on which SEAC provides feedback – the other is budget.
* The plan is robust and compliant with the ministry guidelines.
* There is a feedback form available for many different groups to provide input to the Plan including SEAC.
* The special education plan is more of an account of what is happening in special education in TDSB rather than a plan for the future. It reflects what is currently happening.
* Concerns were raised that the plan is compliant but not a parent-friendly document;
* The Special Education Plan Working Group would like to collate feedback and she will provide the feedback to the TDSB.
* Staff explained that there is a Parent Guide to Special Education which is available in several languages, Braille, audible, etc. This document is parent-friendly and simplified.

Action Item: Email feedback and comments to Nora. Provide this feedback by the January 2025 meeting.

**Modified Days**

Nandy Palmer presented the TDSB perspective on modified school days.

The goal is to return all students to the full-time learning schedule.

* February 2023 - started the Modified Day data and we completed a full year of data
* Superintendents and Administrators had been provided with information to help them understand which students are to be included on the modified day Google form
* A Modified Day is not a punitive process – it is a process that is followed in collaboration with families and schools working together.
* 451 of 141,000 TDSB students are on a modified day schedule and half of those students are on ABA Therapy
* ABA is by Parent Consent
* Parents are in the decision-making process for their child to be on a modified day for whatever the program or \*\* However, a parent’s consent is not required for TDSB to put a student on a modified school day.

reason may be

* Besides ABA, reasons for a modified day are varied, and include behaviour and medical issues, but these are arranged with parental involvement
* The Superintendent has to connect with the school to get the student back to school full time and the school cannot be vague in the reason for a modified day

**IEP Consultation Letter**

Executive Superintendent Nandy Palmer

Staff presented a revised letter that included suggestions from SEAC.

SEAC members agreed that the revised letter represents a substantial improvement but suggested further improvements.

Suggested additions

* Add “If you require further accommodation…:
* The meetings can be held by phone, Zoom (internet), or in person.
* Include this statement: **“**The Board is committed to doing its best to accommodate your student’s learning Needs”
* Area of Need is accommodating (positive)/Area of Growth is negative.
* Remove the line stating that the school has already had a conversation about the IEP – should have happened but in some cases, it hasn’t happened.

**Leadership Report -** Executive Superintendent Nandy Palmer

* As of September 2024 – Speech Therapy, OTPT and Psychology have joined Special Education and Inclusion Department and have created Parent Guides.
* Developed a new Parent Newsletter, which was published online and on TDSB Connects. It contains various resources for parents.
* We continue to offer drop-in and learning sessions for Parents Guardians and Caregivers
* Engaging in Professional Learning for newly appointed administrators – 6 sessions offered
* SEAC has been informed of all learning offered by the Special Education and Inclusion Department
* December 16 – TDSB Social Service offering a support event to parents

**Action Item:** Add SEAC Liaison to the mailing list for the Parent Letters so they can be distributed to SEAC members.

**Action Item**: Send Parent Letter to Trustees

**Election for term January 2025 to December 2025**

Election for Chair – David Lepofsky – Acclaimed as Chair for SEAC

Election for Vice Chair – Tracey O’Regan – Acclaimed as Vice Chair for SEAC.

Richard Carter was thanked for all his hard work over the past year as Vice Chair.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm