# Report to Toronto District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee

From: David Lepofsky C.M. O. Ont. SEAC Chair

Date: September 30, 2024

We’re looking forward to our next TDSB Special Education Advisory Committee meeting which will take place on Tuesday, October 8, 2024 at 8 PM in person and online. Please try to attend in person. We aim to finish at 9 pm sharp, so everyone can get on to other commitments.

### Giving Your Input to TDSB Executive Office – Business Services. Craig Snider

Craig Snider, the budget person, will be back at this SEAC meeting. However, this time, he will not be presenting to us. We will be presenting to him!

Under the Ontario special education regulations, TDSB is supposed to consult SEAC on the special education budget. As part of our doing so, you will have an open chance to give Craig Snider feedback at this meeting on what you want included in next year’s budget, for the benefit of students with special education needs. Bring your ideas. We will go around the table and invite you to each offer any thoughts you have. This is months before the final budget is formulated, so it gives us a chance to have an impact much earlier in the process.

### Latest Developments Regarding Our Efforts to Get TDSB to Better Inform Parents of Students with Special Education Needs About the Available Options, Services and Supports and How to Access Them

On Wednesday, September 25, 2024, I made a presentation to the TDSB Programs and School Services Committee. You can watch it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GabzdGYs6tU&1h24m59s>

At the end of this report, I set out the written submission I filed with PSSC and the TDSB staff report that was submitted to that Committee.

Trustees on PSSC listened carefully and asked me several questions. However, at the end, they simply passed a motion referring the matter back to staff. This motion was obviously written in advance, presumably by staff. I know this because the text of the motion was presented on a screen immediately after I finished my presentation.

Staff has reached out to work with SEAC on this issue, since that meeting. We are of course taking them up on this, and eager to do what we can to help. However, I have notified TDSB that I will want to address the issue at the next full meeting of the TDSB trustees as a whole. That meeting is on October 9, 2024, the day after our next SEAC meeting.

### Avenues for Parents Who Believe Their Child is Not Getting Education Supports They Need

We last discussed this at the June and September 2024 SEAC meetings. The K-12 Working group will discuss the issue at its next meeting scheduled for October 4, 2024 at 3 pm. We will aim to possibly bring a motion to the trustees on this issue for SEAC to consider at its October 8, 2024 meeting. If you have thoughts, beyond those discussed at our recent SEAC meetings, feel free to email them to Lianne Dixon. If you’d like to come to the October 4, 2024 K-12 Working Group meeting, even if you are not already a member of that working group, let Lianne know.

I will aim to get something to you over that weekend after the October 4, 2024 K-12 Working Group meeting, for us to discuss at the October 8, 2024 SEAC meeting. At the same time, we will discuss the related issue of giving TDSB feedback that it separately requested on the Concerned Parents Protocol. The issues are really the same thing.

## The Urgent Need for TDSB to Do a Much Better Job of Letting Parents Know What Options, Services and Supports are Available for Students with Special Education Needs and Where to Go to Advocate for Them

A submission to the TDSB Program and School Services Committee on behalf of the TDSB Special Education Advisory Committee by SEAC Chair David Lepofsky

September 24, 2024

### Introduction

SEAC now comes to the TDSB trustees seeking their help to better address a problem that has plagued too many parents of students with special education needs for years. We ask the trustees to take action after exhausting our efforts at getting this problem effectively addressed by TDSB staff.

In summary, we are trying to get TDSB to take substantial new action because at present, too many parents of students with special education needs find it too difficult just to find out what services, programs and options are available for their child at TDSB and how and where to advocate for them. To many of them, TDSB is like a restaurant that won’t give these customers a menu.

This submission sets out SEAC’s June 10, 2024 motion to the trustees, seeking action by the trustees. It then explains the problem, which SEAC has been raising with TDSB staff for eight years. After that, the traditional explanations of TDSB’s response to this need are listed, followed by an explanation why those responses are demonstrably inadequate.

It shows how the new TDSB staff report to trustees, written in response to the June 10, 2024 SEAC motion, aims to show that the problem is being effectively dealt with. However that staff report actually reinforces the need for the trustees to take action.

This submission then shows that the action here requested is supported by the new TDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan, and the new PPM 170 from the Ontario Government. The submission concludes with the text of the motion which SEAC passed on this issue over eight years ago, on June 13, 2016.

### SEAC’s Motion to the TDSB Trustees Passed on June 10, 2024

The Right of Parents, Guardians and Students with Disabilities/Special Education Needs to Know about TDSB Programs, Services, and Supports, and How to Access Them

Whereas students with disabilities/special education needs and their parents/guardians have a right to user-friendly access to important information about the programs, services, supports and educational offerings available for them at TDSB and how to access them. This should be easy to find, written in plain language without education jargon, and available in multiple languages and multiple formats, including accessible formats.

And whereas for over eight years, SEAC has repeatedly told senior TDSB officials that too many families find it hard to find this information. They find this very frustrating. This undermines their ability to advocate for their child’s needs.

And whereas TDSB has told SEAC that it is the responsibility of each principal to convey this information to parents and guardians of students with special education needs and that parents can look to TDSB’s website, its Special Education Plan posted there, and some brochures. Yet SEAC has advised TDSB that this is not an effective solution.

And whereas TDSB’s 2024 Multi-Year Strategic Plan commits to treating parents as partners and to “[i]dentifying, removing, and preventing systemic, procedural, and attitudinal barriers that stand in the way of equity of access and outcomes in education.”

SEAC therefore recommends that the TDSB Board should

1. As a priority, create and implement a strong, comprehensive action plan to fully, effectively and pro-actively inform all parents/guardians/students, including parents/guardians of students with disabilities/special education needs, about the programs, supports, services and educational offerings that could assist students with disabilities/special education needs, and where and how to access and advocate for them, and
2. report by the end of 2024 and every six months thereafter t to the Board and to SEAC on their progress.

### A Major Problem that Cries Out for Action

In 2024, parents of students with special education needs still often find it too hard to find out what services, supports and options TDSB offers for their kids and where to go to advocate for these. SEAC has been trying for eight years to get TDSB to substantially improve in this area. Yet there has been too little progress. The problem remains. TDSB has not yet acknowledged that this is a real problem, much less its severity. TDSB has not made it a priority to fix this and taken all the needed action. SEAC has taken several steps to effectively convey to TDSB staff the problem, its severity, and its serious impact on parents of students with special education needs. It is now resorting to the step of bringing this issue to TDSB trustees.

In June 2016, SEAC passed a strong motion with recommendations on this. That earlier motion is set out at the end of this submission. SEAC members have raised this issue at several SEAC meetings since that motion, seeking corrective action.

in 2018, SEAC conducted an extensive online survey of parents of students with special education needs. Responses from hundreds of parents showed that they have a hard time finding out what is available for their children at TDSB and where to go to effectively advocate for their child. SEAC delivered the final report of this survey to TDSB staff on several occasions.

No one at TDSB ever disputed the accuracy of the trend that this survey revealed. It was consistent with and reinforced by the experience of SEAC members and their member associations. SEAC members and member associations often have to fill the gap by explaining to parents and families the information that is so hard to get from TDSB. SEAC members, including associations they represent, should not have to devote their volunteer efforts and scarce resources to fulfil so basic an obligation that rests with TDSB.

In January 2022, the final report of the Ontario Government-appointed K-12 Education Standards Development Committee confirmed that this is a serious problem across Ontario’s school system. The Government of Ontario appointed the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee to identify recurring disability barriers in the K-12 school system and recommended needed reforms. Half of its membership was drawn from the disability sector. The other half was drawn from the education sector at all levels. Findings and recommendations required at least a 75% vote in favour. Therefore, the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee’s findings were amply supported by an expert assessment by a strong consensus of people drawn from the disability and education sectors. TDSB SEAC Chair David Lepofsky served as a member on the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee.

In the fall of 2023, a SEAC subcommittee met with TDSB staff to explain in great detail the problems here and the inadequacy of TDSB’s current responses. To its credit, TDSB staff provided a short-term action plan for the period from late 2023 through the first quarter of 2024. That action plan was helpful because it covered some of these needs. However, standing alone, it would not solve the problem. TDSB took some steps to implement it, but these fell well short of the action plan’s terms. The problems for parents of students with special education needs persist unabated.

### TDSB’s Traditional Response to This Issue

TDSB staff have told SEAC many times that these are the ways TDSB addresses this need:

1. Lead responsibility for providing parents with this information rests with each school principal.
2. Families can consult the special education page on the TDSB website and several TDSB brochures.
3. Parents can consult the TDSB Special Education Plan on the TDSB website.
4. More recently, TDSB has added that parents can find this information out during formal meetings with the school team.

### Why TDSB’s Current Strategies Have Been Inadequate

* The proof is in the pudding. TDSB has relied on these strategies for years. The problems for parents of students with special education needs still persist and have not reduced. As such, something new and much more effective is needed.

SEAC has told TDSB staff numerous times over the past eight years that those responses have proven to be insufficient.

* Leaving this responsibility with each TDSB principal is inadequate. There are some 580 principals. There are over 40,000 TDSB students with special education needs. For each principal to have to repeat this information for each family over and over is not a good use of their limited time. They’d have little or no time left to run their schools.
* Each principal does not necessarily know all the information parents need, such as all the programs, supports and services available at TDSB for students with special education needs. Parents should be able to easily find out as much information as possible without having to try to arrange time with their principal to discuss this.
* The TDSB’s special education website and its special education brochures are seriously insufficient. SEAC has given TDSB staff very detailed feedback on them, some of which is line-by-line feedback. They are not user friendly. They are full of technical and at times impenetrable education jargon. They don’t relate key information that parents need. They need a top-to-bottom total rewrite.
* It is not easy to locate this content on TDSB’s website, especially for parents who do not already know the “inside baseball” jargon.
* It is obviously not an effective solution to ask parents to try to find the answers they need by reading the TDSB’s Special Education Plan. That document is very, very long. It is full of education jargon and information that would be irrelevant to parents seeking such basic information. It is not easy for a layperson to read. It is not meant as a communication strategy for parents of students with special education needs. Rather, it is a regulatory filing requirement for each school board as a means for provincial oversight.
* Making this worse are the many bureaucratic barriers at TDSB that can impede parents who are trying to find out this information for their child. For example, as a matter of policy, TDSB *does not allow* parents of students with disabilities to tour a TDSB congregated school before they are offered a placement at that school at an Identification and Placement Review Committee (IPRC). In contrast, any parent can tour any other high school by attending their open houses. This bureaucratic barrier is clear disability discrimination.

Parents of students with special education needs should not have to wait years for a major revamp of the entire TDSB website. Its web content on the issues covered by this motion could readily be replaced as a priority stand-alone project. While this is needed, it is far from a total solution. It will not address the problem for the many parents who are not computer-literate and web-connected or for whom English is not their functional language.

### New Staff Report on SEAC’s June 10, 2024 Recommendation Demonstrates the Pressing Need for the Trustees to Take Action

In anticipation of SEAC’s September 25, 2024 presentation to the TDSB Program and School Services Committee, TDSB staff have provided a report to the trustees. Its contents reinforce the need for the trustees to take action on SEAC’s recommendation, because:

TDSB staff still do not acknowledge that there is a problem, no matter how much compelling feedback they receive from SEAC, its member associations and others that there is a problem. If TDSB don’t recognize that parents of students with special education too often encounter difficulties figuring out what services, supports and options are available at TDSB for their child and how and where to advocate for them, the staff are not likely to solve a problem that they don’t think exists.

The TDSB staff report lists a number of documents that TDSB makes available to parents, no doubt to convey the idea that parents have a lot of helpful information available to them. Yet SEAC has told staff in detail that these documents, as now written are woefully inadequate. They are riddled with education jargon. They don’t relate key information. They, like TDSB’s website content on special education, need a total re-write. That the staff report does not acknowledge this, and instead relies on those documents, yet again shows why there is a pressing need for the trustees to take action.

The staff report concludes:

“TDSB staff continues to work closely with SEAC and other stakeholders to improve access to information for parents/guardians/caregivers of students with disabilities and special education needs.”

Yet the staff report offers no plan of action, or new strategy, beyond vaguely stating that staff continues to work with SEAC and other stakeholders.

### Taking Strong, Priority Action Promotes Goals in the new TDSB Multi-Year Strategic Plan

TDSB is committed to prioritizing measures set out in its new Multi-Year Strategic Plan. That Plan includes several commitments that cry out for TDSB to effectively address this multi-year problem as a new priority:

* The Plan states that TDSB values “Partnerships with students, parents/caregivers/guardians, staff, community partners, and education partners”
* “The TDSB is committed to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers that create disproportionate outcomes for underserved students. The TDSB’s goal is to provide an equitable, accessible, and inclusive education experience for all students according to their unique needs.”
* It commits to “Identifying, removing, and preventing systemic, procedural, and attitudinal barriers that stand in the way of equity of access and outcomes in education.”
* It commits to “Increasing equity of access to programs, extracurricular opportunities and other enrichment opportunities.”
* It commits to “Welcoming, respecting, and valuing parents/caregivers/guardians as partners in their children’s learning and development.”
* “The conditions for success, listed below, are factors that contribute to the successful implementation of the Multi-Year Strategic Plan, 2024-2028.”

“We partner with parents/caregivers/guardians and the community as essential partners in our shared efforts to improve outcomes for all students.”

* Accessibility and Inclusion: “We increase the ability of all students to access education in a way that reflects their needs and removes structural, procedural, and attitudinal barriers to inclusion.”
* Effective Communication: “We regularly engage in two-way communication with our internal and external educational partners.”

### New Action that SEAC Recommends is Also Required by New PPM 170 from the Ontario Government

New, effective action here is also needed in order for TDSB to comply with the Ontario Government’s [Policy/Priority Memorandum PPM 170](https://www.ontario.ca/document/education-ontario-policy-and-program-direction/policyprogram-memorandum-170), issued on June 6, 2024. Its aim is “to strengthen service standards and ensure consistent and reliable information is provided and made available to a parent for greater transparency and accountability in the education system across the province.”

While PPM 170 does not specifically focus on students with special education needs, the actions it requires are all the more important for their families, in light of the persistent problems that SEAC has reported to TDSB over the past eight years.

PPM 170 emphasizes the fundamental importance of a school board’s effectively providing parents with information they need in connection with their education and school experience. For example, it states:

* “School boards must make parents of students enrolled in publicly funded schools aware of the information available to them to support their active involvement in their child’s education, and how to access it. This information must be made publicly available on the school board’s website.”
* It requires school boards to have an effective protocol for efficiently responding to parent inquiries.
* “School boards should also take action to ensure that responses to parent inquiries:

are conducted in a clear manner that is easily understood by a parent.

include relevant and accurate information that addresses the specific inquiry.”

“School boards are encouraged to conduct regular reviews of their protocols and make updates as necessary.”

### SEAC’s Earlier Motion Passed on June 13, 2016

#### The Right of Parents, Guardians and Students with Special Education Needs to Know about TDSB Special Education Programs, Services, and Supports, and How to Access Them

##### BACKGROUND

Parents and guardians of students with special education needs and, where practicable, students with special education needs themselves, need direct, easy access to important information about special education opportunities, supports and services at TDSB. They have a right to know all the important information they need including, for example, in these areas:

1. What is “special education” and who is entitled to receive it.
2. TDSB’s duty to ensure that the educational needs of students with disabilities are effectively accommodated, as required by the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights. TDSB itself needs to understand what the Code and Charter refer to when talking about duty to accommodate. This gives TDSB an opportunity to establish what the requirement is and to convince frontline workers that it is what they need to do – a potential paradigm shift for the board.
3. The range of options, placements, programs, services, supports and accommodations available at TDSB for students with special education needs.
4. What persons and what office to approach at TDSB to get this information, to request placements, programs, supports, services or accommodations for students with special education needs, or to raise concerns about whether TDSB is effectively meeting the student’s education needs.
5. The processes and procedures at TDSB for a parent, guardian or student to request or change placements, programs, services, supports or accommodations for students with special education needs. This includes formal legislated processes like the Identification and Placement Review Committee (IPRC) and the development and implementation of the student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP). It also includes other informal processes such as requests for programs, services, supports and accommodations in the classroom that are not covered in an IPRC or IEP.

This information must be easy for parents, guardians and students to find. It should be available in plain language for parents and guardians of students with special education needs who have a wide range of skills, abilities and education. It should be available in a wide range of languages to meet the diversity of linguistic communities served by TDSB.

At present, TDSB is not effectively meeting these important needs. Parents and guardians of students with special education needs too often find it very difficult to find out the important information described above. Even when some of it is provided, such as the TDSB Parents’ Guide to Special Education, it is often only provided within two weeks before an IPRC meeting. That is long after parent, guardian or student first need this information.

This information is not easy to find on TDSB’s website. The website does not consistently use plain language. Some of it is not available at all. TDSB’s website too often uses terminology that parents and guardians of students with special education needs may not know. Moreover, TDSB’s website has accessibility deficiencies.

Some of this needed information is found on the TDSB website, but it is buried somewhere in the TDSB Special Education Plan. Few parents would even think to struggle through that long, highly technical and detailed document. Moreover, the TDSB Special Education Plan includes clearly inaccurate information. It would misinform parents and guardians of students with special education needs about certain TDSB special education options. It inaccurately describes eligibility for and the focus of both TDSB’s Mild Intellectual Disability (MID) and Developmental Disability (DD) Intensive Support Programs. This is so even though SEAC alerted TDSB staff to this and sought its correction last year.

The 2016 final report of the Barbara Hall review of TDSB governance further documented that TDSB is not effectively ensuring that parents, guardians and students have the information they need. It found:

“Parents expressed frustration at their inability to advocate for their children's special education needs in an effective way. They feel isolated, afraid and unsure of how to work with the school board administration to support their children's learning needs. They also said that the specific information they require to be informed about the options available to support students is not easily accessible on the website or from any other source.”

TDSB has told SEAC that it leaves it to the principal at each of its 550 schools to convey much of this information to parents and guardians of students with special education needs. We have asked TDSB for any instructions that TDSB gives to principals regarding the provision of this information. We have not been shown anything to indicate that TDSB has in place a process to ensure that all parents and guardians of students with special education needs are effectively given the information they need and that this is done as soon as possible during a student’s engagement with TDSB.

It is inefficient and unreliable to leave this responsibility to 550 principals, spread across Toronto, to each deal with this as they choose. When it is left to each principal, without clear policy directions and pre-prepared materials for parents, guardians and students, TDSB won’t be able to ensure that this important need is met.

Some of this information can be needed by any of the parents or guardians of all 240,000 TDSB students. Some of this information is important specifically for the parents or guardians of the 46,000 TDSB students with special education needs.

Some of those families do not have internet access. Some do not speak English. A failure to provide the needed information and in a timely and accessible way can undermine the effective accommodation of at least some students with special education needs.

As one important example, there could well be many students who have special education needs but that TDSB does not know about among the 200,000 TDSB students who have to date not been formally or informally identified as having special education needs. TDSB has told SEAC that TDSB does not send a communication to all parents and guardians of all TDSB students at the start of each school year alerting them that if a student is having any difficulty learning or taking part in TDSB educational programming, they can approach TDSB to explore whether the student has any special education needs and find out options for TDSB to meet those needs. To identify that a student may have special education needs, it is left to the classroom teaching staff or to parents and guardians to bring this forward on their own initiative.

As another example, TDSB does not have a standard form to ensure that parents who receive a draft IEP from a school know at that point what avenues or options they have for agreeing to it, disagreeing with it, or seeking its improvement. TDSB has indicated that this is left to each school to communicate as it decides.

As a result, TDSB operates either as a restaurant that has no menu or that is not providing its menu to all of those who need it. If parents and guardians of students with special education needs do not have easy and timely access to this needed information, it reduces their ability to ensure that TDSB effectively meets the special education needs of all of its students with those needs. By sharing an information package with all families and not just with those who have been formally or informally identified as having special education needs, TDSB can help educate all families about special education. This will help smooth and reinforce the TDSB’s efforts on inclusive education.

##### RECOMMENDATIONS

SEAC therefore recommends as follows:

1. TDSB needs to develop and provide all parents with effective information resources on services for students with special education needs. TDSB should ensure that parents, guardians, and where practicable, students are informed, as soon as possible, in a readily accessible and understandable way, about such important information as:
2. What “special education” is and who is entitled to receive it.
3. TDSB’s duty to ensure that the special educational needs of students with disabilities are effectively accommodated, as required by the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Charter of Rights.
4. The range of options, placements, programs, services, supports and accommodations available at TDSB for students with special education needs.
5. What persons and what office to approach at TDSB to get this information, to request placements, programs, supports, services or accommodations for students with special education needs, or to raise concerns about whether TDSB is effectively meeting the student’s education needs.
6. The processes and procedures at TDSB for a parent, guardian or student to request or change placements, programs, services, supports or accommodations for students with special education needs. This includes formal legislated processes like the IPRC and the development and implementation of the students IEP. It also includes other informal processes such as requests for programs, services, supports and accommodations in the classroom that are not covered in an IPRC or IEP.
7. Without restricting the important information that must be made readily available, TDSB should ensure, among other things, that:
8. Parents and guardians of students with special education needs can easily find out and, where necessary, visit different placement, program, service and support options for a student with special education needs before the parent, guardian or, where practicable, the student must take a position on what placement, program or services should be provided to that student.
9. Parents and guardians of students with special education needs and, where practicable, students with special education needs themselves, should be given clear, understandable explanations of their rights in the special education process. For example, when TDSB presents parents or guardians with a proposed IEP, TDSB should carefully explain to them that they need not agree to the proposed IEP, that TDSB is open to their suggestions for changes to the proposed IEP, and the avenues by which parents or guardians can seek to get TDSB to make changes to the proposed IEP.
10. TDSB should now implement a comprehensive plan to substantially improve its provision of the important information, described above, to all parents and guardians of TDSB students, and to all TDSB students where practicable, and especially to parents and guardians of students with special education needs. Every parent should have an option to receive information digitally and/or in hard copy, and to be able to opt in or opt out of the format they prefer:
11. This plan’s objective should be to ensure that all parents, guardians and where practicable, students, have the important information they need to ensure that students of all abilities can fully access and benefit from the educational opportunities available at TDSB.
12. TDSB should not simply leave it to each principal or teacher to make sure that this important information is effectively provided. TDSB should instead have an effective system in place to ensure that this information actually reaches all parents and guardians,
13. TDSB should ensure that all of this important information is fully and readily accessible in a prompt and timely way to all parents, guardians and students, in accessible formats and in jargon-free plain language, in a diverse range of languages. It should be easy to find this information without having to call all around TDSB.
14. TDSB should not simply rely on its website to share this information as this will not serve those families that do not have internet access. Instead, TDSB should both improve its internet content on this information and ensure that this information is provided to parents and guardians in written form.
15. This plan should include TDSB sending home information at the start of each school year in a package of information to all families and not merely families of those students who are already being served as having special education needs. This package should include, among other things, a Question-and-Answer format to help families think about how this information could relate to the student in their family.
16. This plan should include the creation of a user-friendly package of information to be provided to families who first approach TDSB about the possibility of enrolling a child at TDSB (e.g. when they register for kindergarten).
17. This plan should also include hosting events at local schools to help families learn how to navigate TDSB processes like the IEP and the IPRC processes.

## TDSB Staff Report to TDSB Programs and School Services Committee

Statutory Committee

**Name of Committee**: Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

**Meeting Date**: June 10, 2024

**Directed To**: Program and School Services Committee

A hybrid meeting of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) convened on June 10, 2024 from 7: 00 p.m. 9:00 p.m. with SEAC Chair David Lepofsky and Vice-Chair Richard Carter presiding.

# 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

Stephany Ragany - (Alternate) VOICE for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Children

Alana Bell – Association for Bright Children

Guilia Barbuto- Learning Disabilities Association Toronto District Trustee Aarts

Diane Montgomery (Alternate)- Integration Action for Inclusion in Education and Community

Aline Chan (Alternate)- Community Living Toronto

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|  | Dana Chapman (Alternate)- Ontario Parents of Visually Impaired Children (OPVIC)Ann Blanchette – (Alternate) Epilepsy TorontoReese Macklin – (Alternate) Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada CADDAC**Staff**Louise Sirisko- Associate DirectorNandy Palmer- System Superintendent, Special Education and Inclusion Effie Stathopoulos - Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education Andrea Roach- Centrally Assigned Principal, Special EducationKatia 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 Mun Shu Wong- (Audio/Video)Erin Pallett (Audio/Video)Lianne Dixon- TDSB SEAC Liaison |
| **Regrets**: | Jean-Paul Ngana- LC2 Representative Saira Chhibber- LC1 RepresentativeBronwen Alsop- VOICE for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Children Jordan Glass- LC2 RepresentativeKirsten Doyle- LC3 RepresentativeIzabella Pruska-Oldenhoff – LC4 Representative Trustee PatelTrustee Hassan |

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|  | Aliza Chaqpar- Easter Seals OntarioNerissa Hutchinson- Sawubona Africentric Circle of Support |

# Part A: Recommendations (Appendix A) SEAC Motion

To address parents' right to user-friendly access to important information about the programs, services, supports, and educational offerings available for them at TDSB and how to access them, at its June 10, 2024 meeting, SEAC passed a motion entitled “The Right of Parents, Guardians, and Students with Disabilities/Special Education Needs to Know about TDSB Programs, Services, and Supports, and How to Access Them”.

SEAC recommends that the TDSB Board should:

1. As a priority, create and implement a strong, comprehensive action plan to fully, effectively, and pro-actively inform all parents/guardians/students, including parents/guardians of students with disabilities/special education needs, about the programs, supports, services and educational offerings that could assist students with disabilities/special education needs, and where and how to access and advocate for them, and
2. Report by the end of 2024 and every six months after that to the Board and to SEAC on their progress.

# SEAC Membership Updates

Whereas, the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) has received a nomination from the Association for Bright Children (ABC) for Jessica Miklos to be its alternate representative: and

Whereas, this candidate meets the Ministry of Education and Board criteria for eligibility: Therefore, be it resolved that:

Jessica Miklos be appointed to the Special Education Advisory Committee as the alternate representative for the Association for Bright Children (ABC) for a term ending November 14, 2026.

# Part B: Staff Supplementary Information

As outlined in the Special Education and Inclusion Department’s annual reports for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, a priority has been increasing communication and engagement of parents/guardians/caregivers. TDSB staff has also worked closely with SEAC over the past two years to implement feedback to improve communication with families.

As required by the Ministry of Education, the TDSB Special Education Plan includes all relevant information about the programs, supports, services and educational offerings available to students with disabilities and special education needs, and information on how to advocate for these supports. TDSB’s Guide to Special Education for Parents/Guardians/Caregivers also contains this information and is available in multiple languages and in various accessible formats. TDSB also has the following guides: Guide to the Referral Process, Guide to Identification, Placement and Review Committees (IPRCs), Guide to Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and Guide to Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC).

The Special Education and Inclusion public website also has a Q & A section, created in collaboration with SEAC, that directs parents to supports offered by the TDSB.

In June 2024, the Ministry approved PPM 170:

The purpose of this memorandum is to outline requirements and provide direction to school boards on communication with parents/caregivers, to strengthen service standards and ensure consistent and reliable information is provided and made available to a parent/caregiver for greater transparency and accountability in the education system across the province. By establishing standardized guidelines, the Ministry of Education enhances communication and the overall engagement between parents and school boards. School boards are required to:

* provide parents/caregivers with information to support their active engagement in their child’s education.
* develop and comply with a protocol setting out standards for acknowledging and responding to parent inquiries.

TDSB’s [PR 505 Parent Concern Protocol](https://www.tdsb.on.ca/About-Us/Detail/docId/169) is in the process of being revised for alignment with [PPM 170](https://www.ontario.ca/document/education-ontario-policy-and-program-direction/policyprogram-memorandum-170). Community Advisory Committees (CACs), including SEAC, PIAC and School Councils were asked for input into TDSB’s changes to align with the requirements of the PPM in June 2024 via a survey.

TDSB staff continues to work closely with SEAC and other stakeholders to improve access to information for parents/guardians/caregivers of students with disabilities and special education needs.

# Report Submitted by:

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# Appendix A: SEAC Motion

The Right of Parents, Guardians and Students with Disabilities/Special Education Needs to Know about TDSB Programs, Services, and Supports, and How to Access Them

Whereas students with disabilities/special education needs and their parents/guardians have a right to user-friendly access to important information about the programs, services, supports and educational offerings available for them at TDSB and how to access them. This should be easy to find, written in plain language without education jargon, and available in multiple languages and multiple formats, including accessible formats.

And whereas for over eight years, SEAC has repeatedly told senior TDSB officials that too many families find it hard to find this information. They find this very frustrating. This undermines their ability to advocate for their child’s needs.

And whereas TDSB has told SEAC that it is the responsibility of each principal to convey this information to parents and guardians of students with special education needs, and that parents can look to TDSB’s website, its Special Education Plan posted there, and some brochures. Yet SEAC has advised TDSB that this is not an effective solution.

And whereas TDSB’s 2024 Multi-Year Strategic Plan commits to treating parents as partners and to “Identifying, removing, and preventing systemic, procedural, and attitudinal barriers that stand in the way of equity of access and outcomes in education.”

SEAC therefore recommends that the TDSB Board should:

1. As a priority, create and implement a strong, comprehensive action plan to fully, effectively, and pro-actively inform all parents/guardians/students, including parents/guardians of students with disabilities/special education needs, about the programs, supports, services and educational offerings that could assist students with disabilities/special education needs, and where and how to access and advocate for them, and
2. Report by the end of 2024 and every six months after that to the Board and to SEAC on their progress.