



# Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Meeting MINUTES

April 7, 2014, 7:00 p.m.  
5050 Yonge Street, Boardroom

**Members Present:** Diana Avon, Heather Breckenridge, Michelle Brick, Aline Chan, Paul Cross, Clovis Grant, Trustee John Hastings, Olga Ingrahm, Trustee Howard Kaplan, Steven Lynette, Jean-Paul Ngana, Phillip Sargent, Trustee Sam Sotiropoulos, Cynthia Sprigings, Nancy Turner-Wright

**Alternates Present:** Nora Green, Oksana Romanov, Elaine Dodsworth-Lever

**Regrets:** Christina Buczek, Gal Koren, Ginny Pearce, Richard Carter, Yama Arianfar, Debra Hayden

**Staff Present:** Uton Robinson, Anne Seymour, Cindy Burley, Margo Ratsep, Gillian Parekh

**Recorders:** John Manalo, Margo Ratsep

Item	Business
1.	<p>Call to Order</p> <p>A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee was convened at 7:03 p.m. on Monday, April 7, 2014 in the Boardroom, 5050 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario with Chair Michelle Brick presiding.</p>
2.	<p>Approval of the Agenda</p> <p>***Motion: Trustee Kaplan moved that the Agenda be approved, as amended. The motion was carried.</p> <p>Amendment to Agenda: Item 7.3 regarding SEAC Newsletter is deferred to the May meeting.</p>
3.	<p>Declarations of Possible Conflicts of Interest</p> <p>The following conflict of interest was noted:</p> <p>As an employee of a Busing Contractor, Philip Sargent declared a conflict of interest under Item 7.1 on Busing RFP, and committed to leaving the room during discussion and potential recommendations.</p>
4.	<p>Confirmation of Minutes of February 3, 2014</p> <p>***Motion: Paul Cross moved that the Minutes of March 3, 2014 be approved. The motion was carried.</p>
5.	<p>Presentation: Years of Action 2013-2017</p> <p>Uton Robinson, Gillian Parekh and Cindy Burley reviewed the Director's "Years of Action: 2013-2017" as it applies to Inclusion and Special Education. (See pages 5 to 6 for a synopsis of the presentations.)</p> <p><b>Action:</b> SEAC input was invited through distributed feedback sheets. Members are to discuss with their representative groups and are invited to attend a working session to provide feedback, from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. prior to the May 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.</p> <p><b>Staff Undertaking:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Uton Robinson undertook to provide a draft "roadmap" or outline of milestones for consultation about how the implementation of the Years of Action commitments for Special Education will proceed</li> <li>2. The Special Education Department will consult with the Finance Department to provide SEAC with information on projected costs</li> </ol>
6.	<p>Presentation: PPM 156 – Supporting Transitions for Students with Special Education Needs</p> <p>Cindy Burley presented the TDSB webcast being used to support system implementation of PPM 156. The rollout of workshops and professional learning about PPM 156 for teachers and administrators will occur this school year and implementation is effective September 2014.</p>
7.	<p>Open Discussion and Consultation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Busing RFP</u></li> </ol> <p>SEAC member Phillip Sargent left the room due to a Conflict of Interest.</p> <p>Nora Green expressed the need for TDSB to facilitate greater inclusion of students with physical challenges on class trips. Concern was shared about steps being taken by some Busing Contractors, seemingly to avoid having to have in their fleet full-sized buses with wheelchair accessibility.</p> <p>***<b>Motion: On motion of Nora Green, SEAC recommends:</b></p>

	<p><b>Whereas parents of students with physical challenges have requested inclusive transportation for their children; and</b></p> <p><b>Whereas full size buses exist that can transport students with physical challenges in the company of their classmates;</b></p> <p><b>Therefore, be it resolved that the board include in its annual RFPs, the requirement for Busing Contractors to have some full size, wheelchair accessible buses, to enable the transportation of students with physical challenges with their classmates on field trips.</b></p> <p><b>The motion was carried.</b></p> <p>SEAC member Phillip Sargent returned to the room following the vote.</p> <p>2. <u>Communication Tracker</u> A draft of the Communication Tracking Form was reviewed. <b>Action:</b> SEAC members are to make trial use of the form for the next couple of months and to email any suggestions for refining it to the SEAC Liaison Margo Ratsep.</p> <p>3. <u>SEAC Newsletter</u> On suggestion of Michelle Brick, SEAC agreed to defer this item to the May meeting.</p>
8.	<p>Business Arising from the Minutes SEAC was invited by Executive Superintendent Robinson to appoint a member representative to participate on the TDSB Enrolment Work Group.</p> <p><b>Decision:</b> Aline Chan volunteered to represent SEAC on this working group until the end of the year.</p>
9.	<p>Trustee Reports and Follow-up on Previous Action Items Sam Sotiropoulos reported on work being carried out by TDSB in review of its protocols for Police Records Checks. Questions arose regarding what would be required of parents under special circumstances, such as those who must accompany their child on fieldtrips due to the child's special needs.</p>
10.	<p>Reports/Updates from Active SEAC Subcommittees Jean-Paul Ngana reported from the PIAC/SEAC Special Education Working Group on:</p> <p>1. <u>A proposed process for facilitating parent input and information sharing between PIAC and SEAC on matters pertaining to Special Education.</u></p> <p>At the PIAC/SEAC Special Education Working Group meeting, there was discussion about the growing number of "parent conferences" at individual school, Ward and combined Ward levels on special education topics. The increased interest in Special Education is seen as very positive and meeting a need, but expansion of these kinds of events in all wards could over-extend after-hour staff and PIAC/SEAC volunteer resources. The PIAC/SEAC Special Education Working Group has put forward a motion for the consideration of PIAC and SEAC. The motion recognizes the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. that a great deal of work and effort goes into the PIAC/SEAC Special Education Parent Conference, needing many people to help, and that planning multiple smaller conferences draws on the same finite resources of people volunteering their time and effort</li> <li>2. that Spec Ed staff also present at several department, SO and Trustee-planned parent evenings, and that their workloads have increased with larger Families of Schools and with more schools and families to support</li> <li>3. that it might be practical to streamline PIAC/SEAC/Trustee efforts, to efficiently hear from and educate parents at local and system levels about Special Education topics, without over-extending staff and volunteer resources or creating competing events with the same objective. (i.e. Focus requests for volunteer resources and efforts towards the larger, well-attended system conference vs many small Ward Special Education conferences)</li> <li>4. that Ward meetings could be a valuable way to give parents a more easily accessible opportunity to provide feedback on special education topics – a way to hear back from parents rather than</li> </ol>

	<p>just giving them information</p> <p>5. that when Ward meetings – or combined Ward meetings – are periodically dedicated to a special education topic, they could focus on collecting more targeted parent feedback (on the specific topics as needed by the board) and on providing parents with targeted, supportive information (i.e. from SEAC agencies geared towards specific needs)</p> <p>Motion from the PIAC/SEAC Special Education Working Group, seeking SEAC's Support  <b><i>That PIAC and/or SEAC representatives (as it applies):</i></b></p> <p><b><i>a) seek continued Trustee support for the annual Special Education Parent Conference and for them to communicate/broadcast information to parents about it in their communications</i></b></p> <p><b><i>b) investigate if the agenda of each ward forum can include an opportunity to seek general feedback from parents regarding Special Education related successes and areas of concern</i></b></p> <p><b><i>c) investigate the willingness of SEAC Community reps to attend Ward meetings to assist in collecting community feedback on special education topics</i></b></p> <p><b><i>d) invite SEAC and the Spec Ed department to suggest targeted discussion topics for Ward meetings, related to improving delivery of special education supports and services</i></b></p> <p><b><i>e) provide SEAC's data collection tool to PIAC reps and/or Trustees for use at Ward meeting</i></b></p> <p><b>Decision:</b> SEAC members voted to support the motion in principle. It was further suggested that Trustees be asked to invite SEAC Community Reps to the Ward meetings. Jean-Paul Ngana will express SEAC's support at the April PIAC/SEAC Working Group Meeting and bring next steps back to the May meeting.</p> <p>2. <u>PIAC/SEAC Special Education Parent Conference</u>  Jean-Paul reported that the tentative date for this conference is November 15, 2014.  *** Motion: Clovis Grant moved a 15 minute extension to complete business. The motion was carried.</p>
11.	System Superintendent's Report Cindy Burley distributed a handout from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities about a Pilot Project – Strengthening Transitions for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, for inclusion in the minutes ( <i>See page 7</i> )
12.	Correspondence Received by the Chair <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email dated March 23, 2014 from Lillian Wagman regarding questions about statements made by Director Quan in the plan "Years of Action"</li> </ul> SEAC received the correspondence.
13.	New Business There was no new business
14.	Agenda Setting for Future Meetings Suggestions for future agendas include the following: May 5: - 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. SEAC consultation on Inclusion Drivers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Member Presentation: Association for Bright Children</li> <li>- Psychology Staff Presentation: Learning Disabilities (Parent Friendly Language)</li> <li>- Capital Budget and Long Term Plan (Craig Snider)</li> <li>- Tracker trial input and refinements</li> <li>- PIAC/SEAC Special Education Working Group next steps</li> </ul> June 2: - Member Presentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff Presentation: Secondary work on Executive Function, Accommodations and Transition Planning</li> </ul> September 15: - <u>No</u> member presentation October 6: - Member Presentation: VOICE

15.	Adjournment ***Motion: Howard Kaplan moved that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

**Next meeting: May 5, 2014 is confirmed**

## **Inclusion and “Years of Action 2013-2017”**

### ***Uton Robinson presented the following:***

- The Years of Action has articulated the ambitious goal that over the next 4 years, there will be a “50% reduction of students placed in congregated Special Education classes”.
- TDSB is committed to ensuring that fairness, equity and inclusion are essential principles of our school system and that these principles are integrated into all our policies, programs operations and practices.
- The move to inclusion will provide all students with the most enabling learning environment so that they will experience success academically and socially as they develop the skills required for life beyond their schools years. We must think of all students as diverse learners, each with his or her own strengths, needs and learning style.
- Changes will be thoughtfully implemented based on extensive research, best practices, and with a consistent focus on student achievement.
- There will be extensive and ongoing consultation with students, parents, staff and community members including SEAC
- Noted Canadian Educator George Dei (2006) stated that “Inclusion is not bringing people into what already exists, it is making a new space, a better space for everyone
- *Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation (2009)* highlighted the following guiding principles that we have embraced at the TDSB: *Equity and Inclusive education:*
  - Is a foundation of excellence
  - Meets individual needs
  - Identifies and eliminates barriers
  - Promotes a sense of belonging
  - Involves the broad community
  - Builds on and enhances previous and existing initiatives
  - Is demonstrated throughout the system

### ***Gillian Parekh, author of the TDSB Research document “A Case for Inclusive Education” presented a review of the literature on Inclusive Education, including the following points:***

- Studies exploring inclusive models generally demonstrate positive or no effects on students with special education needs (SEN). Typically developing students do not experience any negative impacts from inclusion
- Students with SEN who are included are more likely to be economically independent in the future
- Systems need to ensure that their system decisions and best practices are research-based. Evidence based strategies include:
  - Cooperative teaching where special education teachers support general education teachers by providing instruction in the general education class
  - Planning approached collaboratively by the teaching staff
  - Peer tutoring in heterogeneous groups
  - Problem-solving as a team: teachers guide students through the processes involved in problem-solving
  - Promoting co-operation and shared responsibility by involving parents in the classroom
- Removing systems of categorization: Many jurisdictions around the world are moving away from employing psychometric testing and categorizing students by ability/disability. For example: Sweden does not categorize students or use psychometric testing. Scotland categorizes students who need additional support into a single category. Denmark and England only distinguish students who have profound disabilities
  - When the focus on identification is reduced it promotes attention to the students’ environment and on how to make the classroom and curriculum delivery more enabling
  - It appreciates differences in learning styles within ‘diagnostic categories’

- It ensures that students who do not demonstrate any form of pathology have equitable access to education opportunities
- It encourages differentiation based on students' learning styles as opposed to deficit-based instruction
- Moving from a direct service to an indirect service delivery model: In a direct service model, the specialists or consultants work directly with the students identified as having a SEN. In an indirect service model, the specialists or consultants work directly to support the teacher who has identified students in their classroom
- The transition to an Inclusive Education Model requires a fiscal commitment in order to be successful.
  - Teachers are generally supportive of inclusive education but they must have access to resources and effective professional learning to boost confidence in their skills
  - To be successful, systems need to develop a community of leaders, and allocate money and resources to the transition process to ensure teachers are fully supported. They need to invest in training school leaders, parents and teachers
  - There need to be established models of success to build community confidence, particularly to ensure parents are confident with inclusive placements
- To do it well takes many years. At least 3-5 years.

***Cindy Burley provided an outline of the proposed Drivers for guiding the Implementation of Inclusion:***

- **Equity**—access to programs, services and appropriate resources as much as possible in home schools
- **“Learning for All” Philosophy**—our shared beliefs that all students can succeed, each with his/her own unique patterns of learning
- **Universal Design for Learning**—school environments that integrate universal design into every facet of the schools' guiding principles, from design and construction to program planning and implementation for all students
- **Leadership Commitment**—commitment to, engagement in and modeling of the *Learning for All* philosophy
- **Research-based Decision-making**—informed decision-making based upon educational research and best practices in large urban settings
- **Consistency and Transparency**—clarity of system-wide messaging with consistent implementation across the TDSB
- **Minimizing Transitions**—student transitions to the home school will occur, where possible, at a natural transition between division/panels
- **Supported Transitions**—student transitions will be planned in a personalized and precise manner with dedicated support personnel, as needed, to ensure successful transitioning
- **Capacity Building through Ongoing Professional Learning**—professional learning for educators, administrators, support staff and professional support staff will focus on increasing knowledge about diverse learners in order to intervene effectively using a tiered support approach
- **Facility Requirements**—the need for barrier-free accessibility at all schools, as well as purposefully designed learning environments that address student learning needs, sensory needs and safety
  - School and classroom design, including the use of agile space, to promote the inclusion of students with special education needs and to ensure that students are not excluded from opportunities due to their unique needs
  - Learning environments that support students with disabilities of a physical nature, including mobility, vision and hearing needs, as well as students with varying cognitive, social/emotional and safety awareness needs
  - Learning environments that seamlessly incorporate the use of a full range of meaningful assistive technology opportunities for all students, as appropriate



**PILOT PROJECT – STRENGTHENING TRANSITIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS**



(<http://twitter.com/yorkuda>)

The Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU) is providing more supports to help students with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) apply for and succeed in post-secondary education. Students will get help building the skills they need through a variety of resources, activities and programs.

**Any student attending any Ontario high school who is transitioning to post secondary can attend the ASD Transition Day and Project ADVANCE. These sessions are NOT intended to be for York-only students.**

Our program is currently being developed so please check back regularly for updates as it evolves.

**Program Supports:**

**Available to ALL Ontario high school students/parents/teachers:**

1. **Outreach** to local high schools to meet with both parents and students to discuss the transition process. Team members can come out to speak to groups of 40 or more individuals (combinations of parents, students and teachers are encouraged). Contact us by email if you would like to arrange a site visit. We require a minimum of 2 weeks notice for school visits.
2. **Service Provider's Workshop** (<http://lds.info.yorku.ca/project-advance/workshop-for-service-providers/>) for teachers in special education and guidance who want to learn more about supporting students with learning disabilities and ASDs with the transition to post secondary. These workshops take place in October and February annually.
3. **ASD Transition Day** (<http://lds.info.yorku.ca/asd-transition-info-day/>) takes place each June and is for BOTH students and parents. This is a workshop that discusses how parents and students can prepare for the transition to college/university. Students are encouraged to attend the June of their grade 11 or 12 year.
4. **Project ADVANCE** (<http://lds.info.yorku.ca/project-advance-2/>) - This two week summer transition program (1st two weeks of July or the last 2 weeks of August) for students who are attending ANY POST SECONDARY INSTITUTION with learning disabilities will have a component developed specifically for students with ASDs.
5. Connections with the **ASD Coordinator** prior to registering with Learning Disability Services so that students and parents can familiarize themselves with what to expect at registration/intake with Learning Disability Services as well as with the more general registration processes of the university.
6. Opportunities to have specific ASD supports in the residence (coming soon).

**Available to York bound Ontario high school students/parents/teachers:**

1. **ASD Peer Support** (<http://lds.info.yorku.ca/asperger-support-group/>) groups to connect with others. The ASD Peer Support group runs each Thursday afternoon from 2:30 - 4pm.
2. **Asperger Mentorship Program** (<http://yupc.news.yorku.ca/2011/09/12/mentorship-program-supports-students-with-asperger-syndrome/>) in which students are paired with a mentor – usually a clinical psychology-developmental grad student with experience in ASD – who meets with them anywhere from once a month to once a week, depending on need, to discuss issues, develop strategies and provide individual attention.
3. Groups on Anxiety and Anxiety Reduction.
4. A for credit course (<http://lds.info.yorku.ca/language-and-learning-seminar-course-1151000/>) where students can learn more about the psychology of their learning disability/ASDs, discuss career and career development models, and explore the impacts of stress on their academics.
5. On-going daily support check-ins with the ASD Coordinator if a student needs to review course demands, university administration, or has concerns with navigation on campus. See the following Sample Student Schedule for Students with ASDs (<http://lds.info.yorku.ca/files/2014/02/Sample-Student-Schedule-for-Students-with-ASDs.pdf>) for what a first year schedule might look like.
6. 1:1 support with a Disability Counsellor to discuss accommodation and advocacy needs.
7. On-going support with a Learning Strategist/Assistive Technologist/Academic Coach.

**Physical Supports**

1. Access to a quiet study space in TEL 1017B.
2. A technology lending library so students can borrow assistive technology and equipment to see if it meets their needs (coming soon).
3. A low sensory room for students who need a break (coming soon).