**Special Education and Section 23 Department Update**

Executive Superintendent Uton Robinson

SEAC Meeting of Monday June 18, 2018

**Vision Program**

Every year for the past 30+ years, the TDSB Vision Program takes 15 – 20 students with severe vision loss and blindness in grades 5 – 12 on a 3 day outdoor education trip to Mono Cliffs.  The main goal for this trip is to enable students with blindness and very low vision to experience the outdoors and challenge themselves physically.   Through the disability-specific instruction and support from the Vision Program and Mono Cliffs staffs, students engage in the typical activities offered by Mono Cliffs such as tree-top trekking, survival skills, orienteering, hiking, and cross-country skiing (when there’s snow).  Mono Cliffs staff work together with Vision Program staff to adapt the activities so that students are able to participate in every aspect of camp with the greatest degree of independence possible.  Like their sighted peers, students from the Vision Program are expected to participate in the eco-schools challenge to conserve water and energy and to reduce waste.  Sharing the common areas and meals in the cafeteria with students from another school (also present during the same 3 day period) promotes positive social interaction for both groups of students.

A group of Vision Program students just returned from this year’s trip and were excited to share their stories of climbing 30 foot trees and walking among the tree tops.  They worked tirelessly and cooperatively in the rain to shovel soil into large planters and move rocks to help build a new pond.  They also hiked 2.5 km to the escarpment look-out and enjoyed a moment of silence as they listened to the sounds of the gorge and the animals below, above, and beside them.  At night, the students and staff put on a talent show to celebrate each other’s strengths.  Students with vision loss look forward to this trip every year because it’s a time when they can challenge themselves and create life-long friendships.

**Special Education Experiential Learning**

The Special Education Experiential Learning (SPEEL) program held its annual year-end luncheon and dance at Sala Caboto on June 7th to celebrate the achievements of students who completed community work placements this year. About 200 students, including 45 graduates from across 24 schools in the TDSB proudly received their “Certificate of Completion of a Work Experience”, along with gift bags assembled by the students of Maplewood High School.

Scores of painted butterflies created by the students of York Mills Collegiate Institute adorned the banquet hall which was filled to capacity with students, teaching and support staff, families and invited guests, including Durward Anthony, the Nutrition Liaison Officer of the TDSB Nutrition Program who spoke about the invaluable contributions of our energetic student volunteers. Some 2870 meals were prepared by 16 participating students this year alone.

Welcome addresses were given by Ron Felsen, the Centrally Assigned Principal of Teaching and Learning, and Uton Robinson, Executive Superintendent of Special Education, respectively to a very enthusiastic audience.

Our new partner, The Disability Channel (TDC) and co-founder, Jay Stoyan came to film the celebration, surprising us with two very special field reporters, Nick Herd who hosts “Keepin It Real” at The Disability Channel, and motivational speaker, Unstoppable Tracy who recently presented the keynote at Parents as Partners, 2018. Unstoppable Tracy gave a short but awe inspiring impromptu speech on the power of believing in one’s abilities no matter the adversity. Several students assisted her and the camera crews as they interviewed students, staff and family members. We’re all looking forward to seeing the final product.

That the celebration was so well-attended is testament to the growth of the SPEEL program and the initiatives undertaken over the years. We look forward to another exciting year of continued success in serving our students and communities.

**Occasional Support Staff**

The TDSB is consistently recruiting for occasional support staff based on the demands on the system and will continue to do so. There is a higher need due to absences of our permanent staff. The retention of staff does not appear to be an issue however it is noted that replacement staff may also be employed with other Boards and may be accepting work assignments at these Boards. Occasional support staff are members of the union and subject to provisions of the current collective agreement.

**Website Update**

We continue to develop comprehensive, user-friendly, plain language resources to provide parents and students with information about special education programs, services and supports. The Special Education website has been updated. Marcela Mayo, from Communications, will briefly demonstrate what has been done to make the website parent friendly during the staff report time on Monday.

**Special Education Plan**

Each school board is required to maintain a Special Education Plan, to review it annually, to amend it from time to time to meet the needs of students with special needs and to submit any amendment(s) to the Ministry for review each year (Regulation 306). As noted in the current plan, “When developing and modifying the board’s Special Education Plan, many sources of input and feedback are taken into consideration on a continuous basis throughout the year. A statement on the Special Education pages of the TDSB website invites written public input into the Special Education Plan. Annual sources of input include: individual parents with concerns about system wide policies, processes and procedures, school councils (on matters impacting the school), the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), members of other board Community Advisory Committees (CAC), community organizations, special education advocates and secondary school students. In put was received in such venues as department hosed Ward Forums, public consultations on Program Accommodation Reviews, TDSB CAC meetings, the system-wide TDSB Parent Conference and the parent meetings with department staff about personal concerns related to special education. These opportunities will continue on an ongoing basis. We will share the updates shortly and ask that SEAC update the section that focus on their involvement and contributions.

**Read and Write Suite**

We are excited to announce that in September, all students in the TDSB will have access to the Read and Write suite, including the full version of Read and Write for Google Chrome. The Read and Write suite offers many tools to support students with special needs in attaining their learning goals.  Text-to-speech, speech-text, word prediction, and picture dictionary are some of the tools that are essential for some students, and beneficial to all. The complete toolbar will be available in all browsers, at school and at home. The TDSB will be offering learning opportunities for staff, students and parents in the 2018-19 school year.

**TDSB Student Breakdown by Exceptionalities**



The general patterns of increases (in black) and declines (in red) over three years, are consistent with what we have been seeing earlier.   **Most** key Special Education categories have declined.  However, there are three noticeable exceptions: Giftedness (as an exceptionality, and in students attending Gifted programming); Autism; and ‘Non-identified’, that is, students with an IEP but no exceptionality.      
  
With those three increases- in particular, the increase of ‘Non-identified’ students- the total number of students with Special Education Needs has increased, so that the total proportion of students with SEN in the TDSB has increased from 18% to 19% over three years.

However, there is one category of decline that is unusual, in that it has not been seen before: the decline in the number of students in “Non-identified (has an IEP): Special Education Classes”.   That is, these are students who do not have an exceptionality but are in congregated Special Education classes: the TDSB accounts for the vast majority of these students in Ontario.   We know that most of the students in this category, are found in the HSP program, as well as the Kindergarten Diagnostic program.     
  
The decline of 236 students over the three years, may be the first time that this category has declined in over a decade.  It will be very interesting to see if this trend continues next year.

**Steps to Student Support and Services**

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| ***Teacher or Parent Concern for Student’s Learning*** |
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| ***STAGE 1: Classroom Screening and Interventions*** |
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| *The teacher**confers with parents and other teachers and gathers information about areas of student strength and need, through classroom observation, work samples, record of achievement, parental information about vision, hearing and/or other medical issues, etc.* |

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| ***Has Enough Information***  *The teacher plans and implements interventions. If interventions are effective, continue and monitor.*  ***🡪 No additional support is required.*** | **OR** | ***Interventions are Insufficient***  *If, after an appropriate trial period, the interventions are not effective, prepare an Individual Learning Plan (ILP)*  *🡪* ***Need additional support*** |

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| ***STAGE 2: Referral to In-School Team*** | | | | |
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| ***In-School Team (IST) Consultation***  *IST meeting includes school administrator, child’s teacher(s), school-based Special Education/Guidance staff, and others – parent(s)/guardian(s), student (of age), advocate, etc.* |  | ***Reviews Information***  *Background information, classroom screening results, effectiveness of interventions* |  | ***Defines the Problem***  *Review the Individual Learning Plan (ILP)* |

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| ***IST Has Enough Information***  *– Brainstorms interventions*  *– Selects interventions and plans implementation*  *– Plans monitoring and follow-up meetings*  *– May begin Individual Education Plan (IEP)*  *– Keeps parent(s)/guardian(s) informed* | **OR** | ***IST Requires Additional Information***  *– Identifies information needed*  *– Identifies personnel*  *– May refer to School Support Team for consultation with professional support staff* |

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| ***STAGE 3: Follow-Up Consultation with School Support Team*** | | | | |
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| ***School Support Team (SST)***  *SST consultation includes school administrator, child’s teacher(s), school/central Special Education staff, Professional Support Services staff, and others as indicated by student need.*  *Parents must be invited.* |  | ***The SST Reviews***  *The ILP and effectiveness of interventions in place, and:*  **OR**  *– If effective, continue and monitor*  *– If ineffective, may recommend: CBRM support, new strategies, support referrals, assessment*  *– Begins IEP if not begun already*  *– Plans monitoring and follow-up*  *– If assessments are necessary, parental permission is requested* |  | ***The SST Reviews***  *Any new information and/or assessment results and:*  *– Recommends interventions: CBRM support, new strategies, support referrals*  *– May recommend additional assessment*  *– May recommend IPRC* |

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| ***STAGE 4: Referral to an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)*** |
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| *The**principal acts on the School Support Team’s recommendation to request an IPRC meeting, based on the results of: – ongoing program interventions*  *– educational assessment*  *– other assessments (as requested and/or presented)*  *The**principal also refers a student to an IPRC on receipt of a written request from parent(s)/guardian(s).* |

**Enhanced Ministry Funding**

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| ENHANCED MINISTRY FUNDING | TDSB VISION FOR LEARNING ALIGHNED WITH EQUITY and WELL-BEING GOALS | STAFFING PROPOSAL |
| Mental Health Workers (EPO)   * to support students in secondary schools who have mental health concerns * to expand mental health awareness and education * to provide early identification, assessment and timely referrals * to use regulated health professionals | Student Achievement, Equity and Well-being are the foci of the TDSB vision   * Well-being impacts a student’s learning and achievement * Awareness of signs and symptoms of a student who is struggling * Tiered approach to helping all, some and a few students * Prevention and intervention approaches | 14.6 Social Workers to provide service to 29 Secondary Schools on a half time basis |
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| ADDRESSING WAITLISTS   * to address current waitlists for assessments * to increase services and programs for students with special education needs | Improving student achievement by identifying and closing all gaps   * address learning needs that may prevent a student from achieving their potential | 2 Speech Language Pathologists  1 OT/PT |
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| MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAM   * to build capacity and help staff respond to unique needs of students * composed of psychologist OR registered social worker OR behavioural specialist OR speech-language pathologist OR someone with similar qualifications (4FTEs) * Other Staffing resources to support students with special education needs | Address the needs of all students, including those with special needs, through an inclusive framework of practice   * to help close the gaps in learning * to help with transitions * to build capacity in the system | 4 Team Leads.  8 Speech Language Pathologists  4 OT/PT  6 CYC |
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| \*\*\*staff will be divide equitably among the LCs |  |  |
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