Approved Minutes

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

**Meeting Date: March 21, 2022**

A meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee convened on March 21, 2022, from 7: 00 p.m. to 9:28 p.m. via Zoom with SEAC Chair Steven Lynette and Vice-Chair Diane Montgomery

Attendance:

Melissa Rosen (Association for Bright Children (ABC), Steven Lynette (Epilepsy Toronto), Richard Carter (Down Syndrome Association of Toronto), , Tracey O’Regan (Community Living Toronto), Aliza Chagpar (Easter Seals), Tania Principe (Integrated Action for Inclusion (IAI), David Lepofsky (VIEWS for the Visually Impaired), Juanita Beaudry (CADDAC), Shanna Lino (VOICE for Hearing Impaired Children),  Nadia Persaud (Learning Disability Association), Lisa Kness (Autism Ontario), Tracey Burrell (BPSG), Aliza Chagpar (Easter Seals) , Aline Chan  LC1, Nora Green  LC1, Jean-Paul Ngana LC2,  Jordan Glass LC2, Kirsten Doyle LC3, Olga Ingrahm LC3, Diane Montgomery  LC4,  Izabella Pruska-Oldenoff LC4, Trustee Michelle Aarts, Trustee Alexander Brown, Trustee Dan MacLean

Alternates attending: Julie Diamond (Autism Society), Ioanna Agelothanasis (LC2), Caren Watkins (LC1), George Petrovic (LC4). Adebukola Adenowo-Akpan (Easter Seals Ontario), Nerissa Hutchison (BPSG)

Regrets:

Staff:

Andrew Gold, Associate Director, Audley Salmon, Associate Director, Janine Small, Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education, Andrea Roach, Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education LC4, Effie Stathopoulos, Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education LC1, Susan Moulton, Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education LC2, Jennie Petko, Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education LC 3, Wendy Terro, Centrally Assigned Principal, Special Education, Special Education, Mun Shu Wong, Media Services, Lianne Dixon, SEAC Liaison, Shameen Sandhu, System Leader, Mental Health

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Item | Discussion | Motion | Recommendation |
| Call to Order - Quorum | Live stream announced |  | Quorum achieved |
| Land Acknowledgement | Read by Chair |  |  |
| Approval of Agenda | Approved with addition of discussion around masking/vaccinations in high risk settings/congregated sites | Motion to approve the agenda | Carried |
| Approval of Minutes from February SEAC Meeting | Minutes were approved with adjustments. Recommendation was made to move discussion summary out of the recommendation box. | Motion to approve the minutes | Carried |
| Conflicts of interest | No Conflicts of Interest |  |  |
| Discussion – masking/vaccinations in high risk settings/congregated sites | Discussion around recent changes to masking and vaccination requirements were discussed and there were many concerns raised about the impact of these changes on high risk student populations. SEAC agreed to write a letter to the Minister of Education and Trustees of the board.  A motion was presented:  SEAC recommends that TDSB ensure that congregated schools maintain a mask and vaccination requirement to the full extent of its capacity, to protect the health and safety of vulnerable students with disabilities. |  | Motion was passed |
| Leadership and Learning Report | Andrew Gold  As per SEAC’s request, a written leadership report has been provided to accompany the PowerPoint and presentation.  **Special Education Staffing Update** was shared. Appendix A   * The reduction in Elementary teacher staffing for special education is now 13 FTE. * The reduction in Support staff staffing for special education is now 68 FTE.   Intensive Support Programs (ISPs) have not been impacted by the proposed reductions. Opening and closing of ISP programs are responsive to student needs and staffing would reflect program requirements (e.g., class caps). Students who require ISP programs are continuing to be supported as needed.  **SEPRC**  **Information was provided regarding the SEPRC process and statistics were shared regarding numbers and outcomes of SEPRCs**  TDSB has and continues to stress that the Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC) is a process designed, subject to parental preference, to support students who are not a student of the TDSB, with extremely complex medical and/or physical special education needs, and whose needs cannot be met in the regular class with support even for a short period of time. The student may be considered for immediate placement in an Intensive Support Program (ISP).(See page 86 in 2021-2022 Special Education Plan)  SEPRC is not mandated under Reg. 181/98 and was only instituted as a process to help support the transition of students *who usually have been receiving intensive, full-time special education class support in other school systems including out of province, or specialized preschool/daycare prior to their arrival in the TDSB.* (p. 86 in 2021-2022 Special Education Plan)  This committee does not decide upon exceptionality, only recommended placement and students would have to return to an IPRC 6-9 months after attending the recommended special education program.  Discussion followed expressing concerns about equity for students who are currently TDSB students who may be at a disadvantage if newly arrived students use this process as a “fast track” to placement.  **Psychological Assessments** statistics for February 2022 were shared. Next month waiting time will be included in the statistics.  **IEP access for Itinerant Teachers**  By September 2022, itinerant teachers will have IEP access (write and display) for all students they support - tier 1, 2, or 3.  Itinerant teacher names will be listed on the IEPs as part of the IEP development team.  **Announcements**  Andrew Gold will be continuing as Associate Director  Associate Director Audley Salmon will be taking over the portfolio that includes Special Education and SEAC. |  |  |
| K-12 Discussion | Working Group met – proposed motion was introduced.  Set out 4 of the recommendations of the K-12 Standards to be voted upon  Motion was circulated prior to meeting.  (Appendix B) |  | Motion was passed |
| Recommendation - SEPRC | **SEPRC Motion: Motion to affirm and require continuation of unrestricted access to SEPRC for all families**  (Appendix C) | Melissa Rosen | Motion was passed |
| Trustees Report   * Trustee Aarts * Trustee MacLean * Trustee Brown | Nil |  |  |
| SEAC Member Reports/ Input | World Autism Day April 2  Purple Day for Epilepsy awareness March 26  World Down Syndrome Day – March 21 |  |  |
| Other Business  Other Business  B. Correspondence - none  Adjournment  Next Meeting: April 11, 2022 @ 7:00 pm |  |  |  |

Appendix A

**Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting**

**March 21, 2022**

**Leadership Report**

**Leadership, Learning and School Improvement**

Andrew Gold, Associate Director Leadership, Learning and School Improvement

Sandra Tondat, Acting System Superintendent of Special Education & Inclusion

**Welcome**

**Staffing Allocation**

Thank you to the central special education staff who worked diligently on the Special Education School Based Staffing Allocation process.

The changes for the 2022-2023 school year are a result of declining enrollment. Further, prior to release of the GSNs, a decrease in Student Support Funds provided by the Ministry of Education as well as the discontinuation of Education Worker Protection Funds that are part of Collective Agreements that expire on August 31, 2022 had an impact on total special education staffing to schools. However, staff have worked hard to minimize reductions to school based special education staffing levels despite these significant decreases in funding. Specifically:

* For Elementary teaching, the funding reductions above would require a reduction of 168.5 FTE teachers. The reduction will be 66.5 FTE.
* For Secondary teaching, the funding reductions above would require a reduction of 16.5 FTE. The reduction will be 66.5 FTE.
* For Support staff, the funding reductions above would require a reduction of 207.9 FTE. The reduction will be 140.5 FTE.

This is a 5% overall reduction in special education allocation.

However, with the recent Ministry GSN announcement, there is a restoration of a portion of the Student Support Fund (SSF); System Priorities Fund (SPF) and PPF Fund which has enabled some further restoration for staffing of Elementary teachers and Support Staff. As a result, the overall reduction in special education is 2% which is relatively consistent with the change in enrolment.

This means:

* The reduction in Elementary teacher staffing for special education is now 13 FTE.
* The reduction in Support staff staffing for special education is now 68 FTE.

Finally, please note that Intensive Support Programs (ISPs) have not been impacted by the proposed reductions. Opening and closing of ISP programs are responsive to student needs and staffing would reflect program requirements (e.g., class caps). Students who require ISP programs are continuing to be supported as needed.

Special Education provides tiered support that may not necessarily result in additional allocation to schools. Consideration is given to the fact that students transition from school to school, year over year and as such, staffing allocation is adjusted accordingly based on student needs and requirements.

**Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC)**

Toronto District School Board (TDSB) is committed to making sure that students with special education needs receive the appropriate programs and/or services to meet those needs from the day they first begin attending a TDSB school. (Special Education Plan, 2021-2022)

The Intent of the SEPRC

TDSB has and continues to stress that the Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC) is a process designed, subject to parental preference, to support students who are not a student of the TDSB, with extremely complex medical and/or physical special education needs, and whose needs cannot be met in the regular class with support even for a short period of time. The student may be considered for immediate placement in an Intensive Support Program (ISP).(See page 86 in 2021-2022 Special Education Plan)

SEPRC is not mandated under Reg. 181/98 and was only instituted as a process to help support the transition of students *who usually have been receiving intensive, full-time special education class support in other school systems including out of province, or specialized preschool/daycare prior to their arrival in the TDSB.* (p. 86 in 2021-2022 Special Education Plan)

This committee does not decide upon exceptionality, only recommended placement and students would have to return to an IPRC 6-9 months after attending the recommended special education program.

The intent of SEPRC has remained consistent since it was first implemented. Note the purpose of the SEPRC taken from the 2017 Special Education Plan:

*For a small number of eligible students who are registered but not yet attending a TDSB school and present with extremely complex needs, the SST may request a Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC) meeting. If parents are in agreement, a SEPRC recommendation can facilitate placement in a full-time special education class designed to address more complex needs.*

Over the last eight years the SEPRC process included:

* students with complex needs and/or receiving intensive, special education class support in other school systems and/or community agencies prior to their arrival in the TDSB
* students who are new to the country with special education needs looking for special education class
* students with any special education needs (e.g., Gifted, Learning Disability, Behaviour) seeking entry to a TDSB program

Number of SEPRCs Per School Year by Exceptionality:

**Autism**:

2016-2017: 7

2017-2018: 11

2018-2019: 14

2019-2020: 5

2020-2021: 2

2021-2022: 2

**% for 2021-2022: 1%**

**Behaviour:**

2016-2017: 10

2017-2018: 4

2018-2019: 4

2019-2020: 5

2020-2021: 2

2021-2022: 5

**% for 2021-2022: 3%**

**DD:**

2016-2017: 51

2017-2018: 73

2018-2019: 117

2019-2020: 87

2020-2021: 49

2021-2022: 37

**% for 2021-2022: 22%**

**DK:**

2016-2017: 91

2017-2018: 115

2018-2019: 216

2019-2020: 79

2020-2021: 127

2021-2022: 105

**% for 2021-2022: 62%**

**Gifted:**

2016-2017: 10

2017-2018: 21

2018-2019: 51

2019-2020: 15

2020-2021: 11

2021-2022: 2

**% for 2021-2022: 1%**

**DHH:**

2016-2017: 0

2017-2018: 6

2018-2019: 5

2019-2020: 1

2020-2021: 3

2021-2022: 1

**% for 2021-2022: 1%**

**KIP:**

2016-2017: 1

2017-2018: 2

2018-2019: 4

2019-2020: 0

2020-2021: 0

2021-2022: 0

**% for 2021-2022: 0%**

**MID:**

2016-2017: 13

2017-2018: 22

2018-2019: 27

2019-2020: 24

2020-2021: 23

2021-2022: 9

**% for 2021-2022: 5%**

**LD:**

2016-2017: 1

2017-2018: 4

2018-2019: 6

2019-2020: 3

2020-2021: 1

2021-2022: 2

**% for 2021-2022: 1%**

**PD:**

2016-2017: 3

2017-2018: 14

2018-2019: 9

2019-2020: 5

2020-2021: 5

2021-2022: 7

**% for 2021-2022: 4%**

**Total:**

2016-2017: 187

2017-2018: 272

2018-2019: 453

2019-2020: 224

2020-2021: 223

2021-2022: 170

Please note the largest number of students who have a Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC) meeting enter the Diagnostic Kindergarten (DK) programs serving Junior/Senior Kindergarten students, followed by students entering Developmental Disabilities (DD) programs. In addition, since the pandemic we have also seen a decrease in the number of students moving between school Boards and entering school in Full Day Kindergarten (FDK).

Number and Outcome of SEPRCs Per School Year:

**# of SEPRC Scheduled:**

2016-2017: 200

2017-2018: 401

2018-2019: 596

2019-2020: 206

2020-2021: 247

2021-2022 (numbers to date): 208

TOTAL: 1585

**Recommendation: ISP:**

2016-2017: 188

2017-2018: 271

2018-2019: 444

2019-2020: 83

2020-2021: 228

2021-2022 (numbers to date): 194

TOTAL: 1408

**Recommendation: Regular Class**

2016-2017: 6

2017-2018: 5

2018-2019: 9

2019-2020: 1

2020-2021: 1

2021-2022 (numbers to date): 2

TOTAL: 24

Accessing the SEPRC

The SEPRC process can be accessed throughout the school year. However, they are typically scheduled during the Spring and early Fall, in line with Kindergarten registration and new to school registration. All SEPRC meetings require a package that includes documentation in order for the committee to make an informed decision about program recommendation.

The SEPRC was originally intended to support students with extreme complex needs (medically fragile, extreme behavioural needs, students who would typically qualify for the Developmental Disability exceptionality). SEPRCs are designed for students with profiles where their needs cannot be addressed in the home school, with special education supports, for even a short period of time.

Parents/guardians of students with special education needs are encouraged to reach out to their local schools to register their child and upon registration to share documentation and relevant information so that a successful transition is planned that may include a transition meeting with key personnel. The students would be supported in the inclusion model with support of the Special Education and Inclusion team (i.e., tiered support, Universal Design for Learning, Differentiated Instruction). Once students are registered at their home school in a regular class, parents can request an IPRC.

Consultation of SEPRC

Review of the TDSB Special Education Plan occurs annually in collaboration with SEAC and the consultative process seeks their advice and recommendations. Any changes to the annual Special Education Plan and specifically to the SEPRC were brought to the attention of SEAC. This year there was an extensive review of the plan from the SEAC working group committee. The information noted for SEPRC by SEAC has remained the same for the past 3 years.

For example:

Special Education Plan 2017-2018 pg. 43

“For a small number of eligible students who are registered but not yet attending a TDSB school and present with extremely complex needs, the SST may request a Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC) meeting. If parents are in agreement, a SEPRC recommendation can facilitate placement in a full time special education class designed to address more complex needs.”

Special Education Plan 2018-2019 pg. 43

“For a small number of eligible students who are registered but not yet attending a TDSB school and present with extremely complex needs, the SST may request a Special Education Program Recommendation Committee (SEPRC) meeting. If parents are in agreement, a SEPRC recommendation can facilitate placement in a full time special education class designed to address more complex needs”

Current 2021-2022 Special Education Plan Section C pg. 86

“Students new to the TDSB with extremely complex medical needs may be considered for immediate placement in an intensive support special education program. Usually, these are students who have been receiving intensive, full-time special education class support in other school systems including out of province, or specialized preschool/daycare prior to their arrival in the TDSB”

**TDSB SEAC 2021-2022 Survey Results**

[TDSB SEAC 2021-22 Survey Result.pdf](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CMb5yLUv8GcW9HFDZTBmkyrcUY2DWGGk/view?usp=sharing)

Highlights from the results of the TDSB SEAC Service Excellence 2021-22 Survey indicate the following:

* N = 17 responses

Survey Questions:

Do you think SEAC membership is representative of the multiple ethno-racial communities TDSB serves?

Yes: 7

No: 5

Unsure: 5

How satisfied are you with the information shared in the Staff Leadership Report presented at SEAC meetings?

Very Satisfied: 4

Satisfied: 7

Not Satisfied: 2

How satisfied are you with the response time and level/content of details provided by TDSB Staff to SEAC questions?

Very Satisfied: 5

Satisfied: 5

Not Satisfied: 4

How satisfied are you with the collaboration between TDSB staff and SEAC as it relates to the annual update of the Special Education Plan?

Very Satisfied: 5

Satisfied: 6

Not Satisfied: 2

Rate the ease of finding information about SEAC and Special Education on the TDSB website?

Hard 4

Moderate 7

Easy 2

Next Steps:

Staff will review survey information and comments more closely and determine next steps. Some next steps include:

* Provide information about how services impact classrooms and improve student performance.
* Align or link Special Education Plan, Multi-Year Strategic Plan, the Fiscal Plan and various local plans (SIP)
* Examine ways that staff can further collaborate and engage with SEAC to support mandates and resolve special education issues.

**Psychological Assessments - February 2022**

Provided below is the report of assessments completed in February:

Completed:

LC1: 138; LC2: 116; LC3: 82; LC4: 212; Total: 548

Referrals:

LC1: 227; LC2: 208; LC3: 171; LC4: 833; Total: 548

**Cumulative stats from September 2021:**

Completed:

LC1: 412; LC2: 540; LC3: 388; LC4: 639; Total: 1979

In Progress:

LC1: 242; LC2: 314; LC3: 233; LC4: 309; Total: 1098

Waiting:

LC1: 358; LC2: 297; LC3: 321; LC4: 517; Total: 1493

Removed:

LC1: 88; LC2: 145; LC3: 92; LC4: 174; Total: 499

Total Referrals:

LC1: 1100; LC2: 1296; LC3: 1034; LC4: 1639; Total: 5069

**IPRC - February 2022**

Completed: 123

Scheduled: 82

IPRC Cumulative since August 2021: 1920

Appendix B

**REPORT TO TDSB SEAC FROM THE K-12 WORKING GROUP**

March 2, 2022

The K-12 Working Group proposes a motion, set out below, which will we will ask SEAC to consider passing at the March 21, 2022 SEAC meeting.

Trustee and TDSB Board chair Alexander Brown advised SEAC at its last meeting that to have an impact, SEAC should bring forward recommendations for trustees to consider before May of this year, since after that, trustees are absorbed in election matters. Moreover, Associate Director Andrew Gold has told SEAC that TDSB wants to tackle the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee report in chunks, one at a time.

Drawing on that advice, the K-12 Working Group met, and identified a short list of four recommendations in the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee report to present as priorities, on which TDSB should get started. We looked to present a short list of recommendations that would meet these criteria:

* They are important measures that will help directly address the important needs of a wide spectrum of students with disabilities at TDSB.
* They are realistic and manageable "low-hanging fruit".
* They are included in or build on reform recommendations that SEAC has already approved.
* They respond to concerns we have heard time and again from parents and from organizations that represent parents. For example, SEAC's parent survey in recent years demonstrated that many parents have difficulty finding out what TDSB offers students with special education needs and how to navigate TDSB to advocate for their child.
* They are consistent with TDSB's stated commitment to human rights, equity, diversity and inclusion.

We hope the resolution below speaks for itself. We invite SEAC members to share their feedback on this by email to the group now, so that we can consider whether this needs any refinement.

We emphasize that there is a lot in a 185 page report by the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee. We have to start somewhere. No doubt, we could all add to this list. However, we are aiming to make this first list short. We will then progress to work through the report, leaving nothing behind.

\*\*\*\*

**Proposed Motion by SEAC**

Whereas the Ontario Government appointed the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act to make recommendations to create a barrier-free, accessible education system for students with disabilities in Ontario schools.

And whereas the Ontario Government made public the initial report of the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee on June 1, 2021.

And whereas at its February 14, 2022 meeting, SEAC passed a motion that recommends that TDSB implement the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee's recommendations.

And whereas it would be good for TDSB to start by implementing measures that are readily achievable and that would be high-impact for students with disabilities.

SEAC therefore recommends that TDSB give initial priority to implementing these four measures, which the K-12 Education Standards Development Committee has recommended:

1. TDSB should invite parents/guardians of any student for whom an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is being considered or developed to an "IEP" meeting with school staff (in person or virtually), to work collaboratively on what the IEP should include. The Parents/guardians should be told that they can bring with them any support people or professionals they wish to help at the IEP meeting. If the school does not agree to provide an accommodation, service, support or program that the parents/guardian request, they should be given the reason for this.

2. Because too many parents/guardians of students with disabilities do not know what services, supports, placements or options are available for their child at TDSB, or to whom or how to advocate for them, TDSB should develop and implement a comprehensive plan in consultation with SEAC to effectively let parents/guardians of students with disabilities know, in plain language and multiple languages, the options available for their child at TDSB, and to whom and how to advocate for them, including an explanation of the processes of the Individual Education Plan and the Identification and Placement Review Committee.

3. TDSB should establish a new fair, speedy, impartial and expert dispute resolution process for parents/guardians of students with disabilities who believe that their child's disability-related needs are not being met, e.g. because their IEP is insufficient or is not being fully implemented.

4. For TDSB trustees to be more fully and directly engaged in overseeing TDSB's accessibility issues, TDSB's trustees should establish an Accessibility Committee of the Board. SEAC should be invited to send two members to serve on that committee.

Appendix C

**SEPRC Motion: Motion to affirm and require continuation of unrestricted access to SEPRC for all families**

WHEREAS some families of students with special education needs, before moving their child into TDSB, seek to meet with appropriate staff, to identify these needs, make necessary accommodations and supports, and / or agree on an appropriate classroom placement for that child;

AND WHEREAS this is sought and required so that the child may be placed in an appropriate classroom with necessary supports from the first day of school in their new school board;

AND WHEREAS parents who request a SEPRC meeting any time in the year before the start of

the next school year, for their child of any grade level who is not in the TDSB, typically already have assessments, known diagnoses, and / or concerns about their child’s special education needs, and might also benefit from additional assessments, or advice from TDSB staff;

AND WHEREAS parents who approach the TDSB to obtain a SEPRC meeting before their child has started in the new school board in any grade are concerned about their child receiving adequate supports and an appropriate placement starting from their first day of school;

AND WHEREAS the SEPRC (Special Education Placement Review Committee) process (herein referred to as the “SEPRC Process”) is designed for parents to have an opportunity to meet with TDSB staff to discuss their child’s special education needs and enable necessary supports to start on their first day of school;

AND WHEREAS the SEPRC Process has been used by TDSB for well over a decade to ensure that the child’s special education needs are understood, identified and supported, and that the child may be placed in an appropriate classroom with appropriate supports from the first day of school;

AND WHEREAS the process of a SEPRC meeting is the most efficient and humane approach to supporting children’s needs, and also prevents immeasurable stress, for the child, the family, their classmates, their teacher, and the entire system;

AND WHEREAS this informative, simple, effective, and efficient planning step is very important to the child’s academic, social, and emotional development, and mental health;

AND WHEREAS TDSB staff have made undisclosed significant changes to drastically restrict the SEPRC Process;

AND WHEREAS these changes have been attempted without prior disclosure to and consultation with SEAC and its representatives, and consideration of their input, advice, and recommendations;

NOW THEREFORE IT IS RESOLVED THAT:

All of the preamble (“WHEREAS”) statements above are included as part of this “IT IS RESOLVED” and recommendation section of this motion;

AND IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

SEAC supports and endorses TDSB’s previous successful SEPRC process, policy, and procedures (collectively herein called the “SEPRC Process”) and strongly advises and recommends that the SEPRC Process continue as it previously has, to fulfill the same important need that it has for well over a decade, and so that all parents who wish to initiate and use the SEPRC Process continue to have full, unfettered access to and use of the SEPRC Process, without any predetermined bias or limitations or any restrictions on any parents’ access to the SEPRC Process.

Appendix C