

SEAC Equity Plan Consultation

Identify barriers to serving students with special needs.

Barrier	Recommended Action to Address Barrier
1. Technology/SEA Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students are not given opportunities to access assisted technology support in a systematic way. If students have successful parent advocacy, students gain supports but it depends on the knowledge base of the parent, financial resources and their understanding of the school system and how to navigate it. Technology supports should be accessible to all students with exceptionalities not just those who have been formally identified as exceptional• Board provided technology and equipment is limited leaving it up to the individual school bloc budgets or parent councils to fundraise for this shortfall. This system in itself provides a barrier for students attending schools in non-affluent neighborhoods who can benefit from technology supports
2. Support and Training of Technology/SEA Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support and training of students, families and teaching staff on the use of technology tools if students get access to technology resources training and understanding on how to use those tools isn't equitably available as many of the teachers themselves do not understand the programs and cannot support the technical needs of the student. This means longer transition time to academic success even with the appropriate tools.• When SEA equipment is provided students have mandatory training (3hours) with the device, the teachers are able to go with the student for training provided they have classroom coverage and they want to attend the training. It is not mandatory for the teacher to attend training.• Reading/Writing programs for students are not user friendly and editing scanned documents are not easy to format, this makes it difficult for

	<p>students to access curriculum and complete assignments electronically</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are not allowed nor encouraged to bring home their SEA equipment this makes it difficult for the student to learn how to use and practice on their device, accessing materials and homework and be able to practice typing skills • All boards within Ontario should share their applications, software and tools used for SEA assistive technology on a public site so students transferring in and out of boards can access equal levels of education quality
3. IEPs	<p>Demonstrated consistency in deploying IEP in school. Many parents find that the IEP plans are not being administered in full. Components are being followed but often lack of resources, follow up through the process and leaves areas that are not being adopted. Teachers often note lack of supports and expertise within the school/school admin or school board for this barrier</p>
4. Psycho-Educational Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints from parents that board documents are difficult to understand and not tangible enough for them to undertake. They require formal supports to understand what is being said by board psychologists as we (LDATD) often end up having to explain and support transition with many students who are new to the IEP process. Also, many parents experience their own LDs or language barriers which further compounds the situation • For many years LDs has been the highest percentage of exceptionality in the TCDSB but recently numbers have been declining, is this because there are now less students who have LDs or less students having board psycho-educational assessments provided therefore having the decrease in LD identifications • Waitlists for board psycho-educational assessments continue to be a problem in some areas. Families with single incomes, without high range income or families without extended health care benefits may not be able to afford their own psycho-educational assessment and rely heavily on the school board to provide one for them or families rely heavily on the advice of the school and school based support team to refer a student for one

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All psycho-educational assessments prepared by the board should automatically include a SEA recommendation for assisted technology
5. Age Barriers	<p>Parents call us as they have concerns about a child in kindergarten or grade 1 and are often told by schools that the student is "too young to test and receive resources". Research supports early interventions as crucial. Parents and teachers often see when children are struggling first but in some cases LD students are not being formally identified or supported until they are several grade levels below or if at all</p>
6. Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certain programming is not available to all students with LDs despite most of those programs being offered to the students with more severe learning disabilities exclusively in ISP classrooms (Jump Math, Empower, Lexia Reading, SEA equipment training) • Programs like Empower require a student to have an IEP in order to attend the program, however those students do not have access to board paid transportation unless they have been formally identified with an LD please note that Empower programs start as early as grade 2 and psycho-educational assessments are normally completed when a student is in grade 3 or 4 • Students who have been formally identified as gifted are the only students within the board who do not have access to paid board transportation despite them qualifying for the gifted program and being identified this limits accessibility for those who want to attend the program but do not have the means to travel to a different school, please note that these children start this program as early as grade 5 • JUMP Math is a newer math program that has been supported by the TCDSB and has proven to be of great assistance to students with LDs this program is not available to all schools unless the individual school can pay for materials and certifying staff to teach the program. This system again

	<p>leaves it up to the individual school bloc budgets or parent councils to fundraise for this shortfall. This system in itself provides a barrier for students attending schools in non-affluent neighborhoods who can benefit from the programming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech programming for younger students are not being referred for services at the school level unless parent advocacy is involved. This leads to students being referred in later grades when early interventions are crucial. More PD should be provided to teachers and staff to educate them on what a speech and language problem and disorders sound like so students can be referred earlier for services
7. Afterschool Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afterschool programming should be allowed with the proper paperwork in place. The need to have school staff on site while afterschool programming is being run by an outside agency is not beneficial to students and their needs, programs are often not run at all at schools as board employees will not stay to "supervise" these programs
8. Association Relations and Access to Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents do not have the access to the different Associations SEAC represents unless they are directly contacted by the parent themselves and provided information by the SEAC representatives. Parents are unaware of the supports within their communities' pre and post identification leaving them lost and frustrated in the system until a diagnosis or placement has been made. The board does not communicate or share viable information to their parents about programming and services available outside of their own educational institutions and their own limited resources. • The board needs to start looking at respected associations as community partners and be open to dialogue to improve student success • The TCDSB website is not an effective tool to search or find information • SEAC minutes are motion records only they are not verbatim and a lot of

	<p>important dialogue is missed being captured at these meetings, these minutes could serve as another resource for parents looking to access information on special education. If the board does not want to provide verbatim minutes then perhaps they can record our meetings and post them on the TCDSB website</p>
<p>9. Student Safety and Supports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual school agendas should be AODA and made available for students to access through their SEA equipment in a manner that allows them to edit and make notes on • Parents, teachers, principals and school admin would benefit from taking mandatory PD training on sensitivity to help them properly communicate with parents and other staff about their children and their exceptionalities. Parents have communicated stories where students are being bullied, written off, made fun of and being talked down to by staff and other students • All elementary schools should have a full time counselor/social worker present at the school to support student's needs, achievement and overall wellbeing. • Educational assistants/child and youth workers are needed more and more as classroom sizes increase, the needs of the students are ever changing any additional support within a school is beneficial. Having children lost or running off school property is a huge safety concern for students and principals do not have the means to provide this level of supervision without additional staffing • Schools that have specialty classes (like ME) should be in new or converted accessible buildings with elevators and ramps, some of these classes are being held in older buildings that are not accessible to students. There have been times when students are being moved up and down flights of stairs in wheelchairs by hand by the EAs or CYWs