



Delegation to the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

Good evening, I am Julie Altomare-Di Nunzio, President of TECT, and I represent over 5000 elementary teachers. Also delegating tonight is Anthony Bellissimo co-chair of the TECT-TCDSB Special Education Committee.

The Board document, *Model for Special Education* states: “Inherent in these beliefs is the recognition that all students, regardless of exceptionality, are entitled to education in the most enabling environment.”

In early October, Senior Management began to implement a hybrid Special Education delivery model whereby, in most cases, in-school Special Education teachers would be responsible for supporting exceptional students in both the brick and mortar schools and in St. Anne Catholic Academy, School of Virtual Learning.

On a without prejudice or precedent basis, TECT offers the following:

This hybrid model is not the most “enabling environment” for our students with Special Education needs.

This approach is inequitable as most students are either taught virtually or in the brick and mortar school – not within the hybrid model.

Special Education Teachers are now required to reduce teacher-student contact time by dividing instructional blocks between online and in-school students. When the teacher attempts to instruct in-school students and St. Anne students simultaneously, the expectation of more personalized instruction may be compromised.

Scheduling is also difficult as the timetable at St. Anne may not be aligned with that of the brick and mortar school. Cohorting requirements have already created scheduling challenges when programming for exceptional students. These challenges are amplified within this model.

With the ongoing cancellation of Special Education classes in the brick and mortar schools, the continuity of instruction for students, including St. Anne, is not guaranteed. The current practice for tracking these cancellations is cumbersome. TECT recommends the implementation of an electronic tracking process with both the teacher and administration reporting the cancellation of special education classes. This strategy would better safeguard the continuity of programming.

TECT recommended on October 6, that a pause be placed on the current hybrid model to allow for dialogue between the Board and the Association. This collaborative strategy may have resulted in the development of a better approach to support our most vulnerable students. This recommendation was not acted upon.

TECT continues to make this recommendation to Senior Management and is now making this recommendation to SEAC.

Our teachers are committed to addressing the needs of our exceptional students and TECT believes that if these recommendations are implemented, meeting these needs will be better achieved.