

## SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Wednesday, March 3, 2021, 7:00 pm  
Zoom Meeting**

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- 10. Adjournment



## **SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT**

**Wednesday, February 3, 2021, 7:00 pm  
Zoom Meeting**

Members:	Christine Boothby (Trustee), Rob Campbell (Trustee), Chris Ellis (Trustee), Sonia Nadon-Campbell (Community Representative), Susan Cowin (Community Representative), Amy Wellings (Community Representative), Cathy Miedema (Association for Bright Children), Mark Wylie (Down Syndrome Association), Lisa Paterick (VIEWS for the Visually Impaired), Katie Ralph (Autism Ontario, Ottawa Chapter), Ian Morris (Ontario Associations for Families of Children with Communication Disorders), Maggie Mamen, Safina Dewshi (Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils)
Association Representatives (Non Voting):	Jennifer Titley (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation), Connie Allen (Professional Student Services Personnel), Jean Trant (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, SSP), Catherine Houlden (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Teachers), Andrew Winchester (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Alternate), Kimberly Elmer (Ottawa-Carleton Secondary School Administrators' Network), Nancy Dlouhy (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Operations Committee)
Staff and Guests:	Lynn Scott (Trustee), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Janice McCoy (Superintendent of Human Resources), Carolyn Tanner, (Human Rights and Equity Advisor), Dr. Petra Duschner (Manager of Mental Health and Critical Services), Christine Kessler (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Stacey Kay (Manager, Learning Support Services), Amy Hannah (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Maya Rattray (Supervisor, Speech-Language Pathology), Nasra Aden (Student Senator), Nicole Guthrie (Manager, Board Services), Sue Baker (Meeting Reporter), Shafryne Sayani

### **1. Call to Order**

Chair Nadon-Campbell called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m. She acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Territory and thanked the Algonquin people for hosting the meeting on their land.

2. Approval of the Agenda

**Moved by Trustee Boothby,**

**THAT the agenda be approved.**

**Carried**

3. Delegations

There were no delegations.

4. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

4.1 6 January 2021

**Moved by Sue Cowin,**

**THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee Report dated 6 January 2021 be received.**

**Carried**

4.2 The Forward Agenda

Chair Nadon-Campbell presented the forward agenda as a draft document to guide the work of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) for 2020-2021. She noted that the Review of Police Involvement in Schools has been added to the chart at the request of Trustee Ellis as an upcoming item in the spring of 2021.

Chair Nadon-Campbell requested that the members of SEAC complete their independent review of all Standards prior to 1 March 2021.

5. Presentation

5.1 Report 20-114, Equitable Recruitment and Hiring Policy (J. McCoy)

Your committee had before it Report 20-114, Equitable Recruitment and Hiring Policy, providing a draft policy to comply with a draft Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) released by the Ministry of Education following the repeal of Regulation 274 - Hiring Practices.

Superintendent McCoy advised that for the last 7-8 years, the process of hiring teachers was directed by the Ministry of Education's Regulation 274 - Hiring Practices. The regulation required school boards to consider technical qualifications and seniority when hiring teachers. It was repealed by the Ministry in October 2020 and school boards were directed to establish their own hiring policies as outlined in a draft Program Policy Memorandum (PPM). The new hiring policy should ensure that school boards consider diversity and equity, qualifications, merit, experience of teachers from outside the District, fairness, and transparency rather than

only technical qualifications and seniority. The policy should also include mechanisms to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness. Following receipt of the final PPM and feedback from the Committee of the Whole and advisory committees, the policy will be finalized and presented to the Board for approval.

During discussion, and in response to questions, the following points were noted:

- Hiring of teachers will be reflective of the community as a whole;
- The District's Indigenous Equity and Human Rights Roadmap, approved by the Board last fall, includes an employment system review through an equity lens to collect identity-based data from employees. An equity survey for all employees will be conducted in March 2021 and will provide updated data from the last survey completed 10 years ago;
- The lived personal or professional experience of teacher candidates may be considered in the new hiring process;
- The policy and procedure will include language related to diversity on hiring panels; and
- Following approval of the policy, staff will consider whether and how it should be expanded to include staff other than teachers.

SEAC members were encouraged to provide any additional information to Superintendent McCoy via email.

## 6. Consultation

### 6.1 Breakout Rooms: Human Rights Policy Consultation (C. Tanner)

Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner advised that the purpose of the consultation on a human rights policy is to seek input on several key questions that will inform the development of the Board's human rights policy. The principles of the human rights policy will address primacy, dignity and respect, equal rights and opportunity, full participation, undue hardship, duty to accommodate, anti-oppression, anti colonialism, anti-racism, anti-discrimination, rights and responsibilities, intersectionality, competing rights, targeted universalism, effect/impact versus intent, responsive corrective and remedial action, and proactive prevention.

During the first phase of the consultation, input will be sought from students, parents and guardians, community members, and OCDSB employees to inform the principles, content and priorities of the draft policy.

SEAC members were divided into four groups with each group considering one question. Following the group work, facilitators reported on the discussions as follows:

**Group 1 Question:** *Thinking about your experience with OCDSB, what do you see as the most important human rights issues for the District to address? Why?*

*Prompts: Are there any identities that you think experience discrimination within OCDSB? In what ways are they experiencing discrimination? How can the OCDSB prevent this discrimination from happening?*

System Principal Kessler facilitated the conversation and provided the following input:

- Socioeconomic status (SES) is a barrier to education that may disproportionately impact several groups including, but not limited to, newcomers to Canada, refugees, students with intellectual disabilities, students and parents with mental health issues; students of colour, Indigenous students, and parents and caregivers with disabilities who rely on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP);
- SES relates to the ability of families to advocate for their children and participate in conversations to have their voices heard;
- There may be more barriers to participation at schools with a higher number of low-income families which can result in less parent representation;
- The system favours families who have the personal and financial resources to understand and navigate the system;
- The policy would address intersectionality (the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage) and the disproportionality of outcomes;
- There are a multitude of rights to consider when leading a school; and
- To embed human rights in all District schools and practices it will require reflection and a change in culture.

**Group 2 Question:** *Grounds protected from discrimination under the Ontario Human Rights Code include race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, record of offences, marital status, family status and disability. Are other factors that should be considered? Why?*

*Prompts: What are some of the other reasons people may experience discrimination? Should these reasons be protected from discrimination by the new OCDSB human rights policy? Why or why not? For example, what about socioeconomic status? Language? Political Beliefs? Other*

System Principal Hannah facilitated the conversation and provided the following input:

- It is important to provide clarity and understanding of what is meant by each of the "grounds protected from discrimination". For example "disability" is more than only a physical disability, such as learning and behavioural disabilities
- Should intellectual disabilities or mental health issues be included in the definition of disability? If so, they need to be identified in a respectful manner to allow persons with a disability to see themselves included in the definition;
- It may be challenging for staff to engage with parents/guardians who have intellectual disabilities or mental health issues;
- The language with respect to mental health issues in the Human Rights Code is antiquated and may not be user friendly in today's world;
- Language proficiency overlaps with ancestry and place of origin and also includes literacy. For example a student may be a member of a dominant racial group but the family may not yet have competency in English or French;
- The Human Rights Code references the parent-child relationship in Family Status. Should it also include children living in care with a guardian which could impact the family's ability to engage in the system;
- Socio-economic status can impact ability to access resources; and
- There is intersectionality among protected grounds.

**Group 3 Question:** *When someone has a human rights concern, there are many ways it can be addressed. How do you think OCDSB can receive and respond to a human rights concern in a way that makes a person feel safe, is accessible and is effective? What needs to be considered for the process to work well for everyone?*

*Prompts: How can we build trust in the process? How can we help people feel safe? What kind of process would work for students, staff or families? How can we make it accessible for Indigenous peoples, or people with*

*disabilities, for people who don't speak English or French? Other people? What kind of supports should we consider providing?*

Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner facilitated the conversation and provided the following input:

- Barriers to accessing a human rights complaints mechanism or accommodation include culture and mistrust;
- There is a need to have multiple ways to raise an issue. For example, a principal, a trusted adult, a child help line, or anonymously;
- Anonymity for complaints or complaints to a person removed from the situation were consistently raised as being necessary for feelings of safety and to build trust;
- Ideally, the complaint mechanism would be removed from the school;
- There is a need to make service providers aware about the complaints mechanisms so that they can help their clients to access it;
- The process must be streamlined, easily understood, and applied;
- It needs to be published in a variety of different languages;
- There is a requirement for interpreters and advocates to help navigate the system. For example, a Board navigator, or links to SEAC members for advice;
- Complainants, even if anonymous, should be contacted and informed about the progress of the complaint, steps taken, as well as the outcome. This is important for trust;
- People fear retaliation and retribution and these must be addressed to build trust;
- Current system that we have for accommodation for disabilities is geared to people who know the system. We really need to make it more simple and straightforward. Communication needs to be clear, in multiple languages, and without jargon or acronyms that may be intimidating;
- Newcomers may experience difficulty understanding how to lodge a human rights concern and may not immediately trust the process because of their personal experiences;
- The process of investigating complaints must be handled by an arm's-length department of the District in order to build trust and confidence in the process; and
- Barriers may include a fear that complaints will be easily dismissed.



**Group 4 Question:** *How can we help make sure that everyone understands their rights and responsibilities under the human rights policy?*

*Prompts: What is the best way to help students, families and staff understand their rights and responsibilities under the new policy when it comes out? What type of educational materials should we prepare? What types of engagement and outreach would be most effective in sharing information about the policy?*

Manager Kay facilitated the conversation and provided the following feedback:

- A variety of methods to provide information on the human rights policy may include;
  - software applications;
  - hyperlinks;
  - videos and other multimedia solutions;
  - student assemblies;
  - part of an induction program for new staff;
  - engage parents and guardians on how to write and submit complaints;
  - provide access to community and staff for resources;
  - links to curriculum;
  - make accessible from different access points;
- Review the policy annually to ensure understanding for staff who are interacting with students; and
- Ensure the policy is a "living policy" that is updated as required.

Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner thanked everyone for their participation in the group discussion.

Superintendent Symmonds invited SEAC to send any additional input to Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner.

## 7. Matters for Information

### 7.1 Demo: Online Tool for Learning Support for Students with Special Education Needs

Superintendent Symmonds advised that, at the January 2021 meeting, SEAC discussed Memo 21-001, Learning Support for Students with

Special Education Needs, providing an overview of the content and the planned release process for the online resource supporting Learning Support for Students with Special Education Needs. System Principal Hannah advised that the purpose of the online resource is to assist all educators to provide personalized and precise support to students with special needs. The components of the online resource will focus on the following topics: Class Profiles, the Tiered Approach to Intervention, Individual Education Plans, Transition Plans, Assessment and Evaluation, Assistive Technology, Specialized Program Class Information, and key look-fors by Exceptionality. It will be field tested beginning in February 2021 and launched in the fall of 2021. This resource is intended to remain in a perpetual draft format and will continue to be updated as required.

During the presentation and in response to questions, the following points were noted:

- It is expected that there will be links to alternative curriculum;
- The Program and Learning Department is working on sequencing for functional literacy and numeracy; and
- It was suggested that the database be made available to parents and association partners to help support their children's learning at home. System Principal Hannah advised that once the database is launched internally, staff will consider what aspects could be made available to the public through the District website.

## 8. Department Update

### 8.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Symmonds provided the following updates:

- Students who were attending in-person learning prior to the lockdown returned to in-person learning on Monday, 1 February 2021;
- On 2 February 2021, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) reported that approximately 85% of Covid-19 cases are contracted outside of school; however, masking, physical distancing, and hygiene protocols are still required. Although approximately 25 percent of Covid-19 cases are asymptomatic, it is still necessary to isolate while waiting for test results;
- The District has submitted information to the Ministry of Education's Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) and it is hoped that, in addition to the District's network of partners in other school districts, the Ministry will assist with the online sharing of practices to support students with special needs who require additional human resources to support both online and in-person learning; and

- The Ministry fund for the safe return to school amounts to approximately \$800 million. In addition to personal protective equipment (PPE), and access to technology, it is hoped that funding will soon be made available for programs on mental health and special needs similar to those programs that were offered in the summer of 2020. Specifically, the 2020 summer programs included a two-week transition program leading up the start of the school year, as well as summer courses for professional staff. This is different from the District's Summer Learning Program for students with autism and developmental disabilities.

a. Tip Sheets on Auditory Difficulties and Vocal Hygiene in the Classroom

Superintendent Symmonds noted one of the negative impacts on students and staff of wearing masks and face shields: a hindrance to hearing and understanding during communication between staff and students.

Supervisor Rattray advised that two tip sheets on auditory difficulties and vocal hygiene in the classroom were developed to assist students and staff with voice fatigue and strain in the classroom. The tip sheets raise awareness and provide strategies for educators and students with hearing difficulties. Principals will distribute them to their staff with a note that questions can be directed to Learning Support Services (LSS).

In response to a query regarding the use of voice amplification methods in the classroom, principals will be advised to encourage staff to consult with their doctors to determine if accommodation is required.

## 8.2 Special Education Plan (Standards)

Superintendent Symmonds recalled that as per Memo 20-139, SEAC members were asked to review a series of specific standards from the 2019-2020 Special Education Plan independently and provide feedback to LSS. The aim of this review is to publish a 2020-2021 Special Education Plan containing standards that are easily understood by all parents and guardians.

a. Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies

System Principal Hannah noted that last year's additions/clarifications with respect to English as a Second Language, early intervention, and monitoring have been incorporated into the Standard. In addition, LSS staff are working

with the Program and Learning department to provide additional information in the "Welcome to Kindergarten" section.

During discussion of the document, the following points were noted:

- Clarify that parents/guardians should share professional assessments for their child when registering their child for kindergarten;
- Include any information on whether a child's enrollment may be delayed in order to complete a transition plan, obtain additional resources, or put a safety plan in place;
- With respect to monitoring and evaluation of intervention strategies, collect information on key system level indicators used to determine a consistent model of support for students with special needs;
- Principals are responsible for assigning staff and ensuring they understand the requirements of a behaviour and/or safety plan that requires a staff member to assist a student. If the staff member is reassigned or absent, the Principal reassigns the duty to another staff person or emergency educational assistant;
- Provide the same information to parents as is provided to educators, while recognizing that some parents may be at a disadvantage if they are unfamiliar with navigating the system (i.e., tiered intervention, acronyms, etc.), not proficient in English or French, or unaware that their child's suspension may be related to a learning problem; and
- Clarify that many interventions and/or services at tiers one and two may be provided by the classroom teacher rather than a multi-disciplinary team professional or a formal Intervention, Planning and Review Committee (IPRC) process.

Any additional comments on early identification procedures and intervention strategies may be provided to System Principal Hannah.

b. Educational and Other Assessments

System Principal Hannah advised that the Educational and Other Assessments standard provides clarity on the various assessments that can be offered by the District. During discussion, the following points were noted;

- Assessment information can only be shared with outside agencies and other professionals with written parental consent or with written consent from the student if they are 18 years of age or older;
- Assessment information is collected under the authority of the Education Act, and will only be used to plan and evaluate a student's program. The information is confidential and access will be limited to those employees who have an administrative need;
- Psychological assessments are conducted by psychologists and psychological associates who are registered members of the College of Psychologists of Ontario or psychoeducational consultants who are supervised by psychologists;
- JB+ is a French language reading assessment tool that begins in grade one;
- A parent can request an assessment by talking to the child's teacher. Should the educator notice a need for assessment, the educator will raise it with the Learning Support Teacher (LST) and multi-disciplinary team. If there is no evidence of a need for assessment at the school level, the teacher will closely monitor the child's progress;
- Parents may be advised that an in-school assessment may have a two or three year wait time and they may be encouraged to consider a private assessment. A private assessment is not often a viable option for those families experiencing a lower SES.;
- Multicultural Liaison Officers (MLOs) may assist parents in navigating the process;
- Professional development may be provided to staff to help understand and consider cultural and linguistic biases;
- The Ontario psychological guidelines for the diagnosis of learning disabilities features a section on cultural differences;
- With respect to human rights and equity of access to service, some schools, depending on their location, may have a high need for resources and/or specialized classes, while other schools, located in areas of higher socioeconomic status, may have fewer students requiring assessments; and

- Smaller class sizes for kindergarten would provide more time for educators to work with parents to obtain appropriate resources for students with special needs.

Superintendent Symmonds thanked the committee for their input. He noted that Student Senator Nasra Aden left the meeting early and wished to convey her appreciation to SEAC for allowing her to participate in the meeting.

## 9. Matters for Action

### 9.1 Appointments - Board Representative

Chair Nadon-Campbell called for a volunteer to observe meetings of the Board and report back to the SEAC. There were no volunteers.

## 10. Committee Reports

### 10.1 Board

There was no report from the Board.

### 10.2 Committee of the Whole

Amy Wellings reported that the 12 January 2021 meeting of the Committee of the Whole recommended that free sanitary products be provided in school washrooms. The recommendation was approved by the Board.

The Committee also discussed the Facilities Renewal Program and Facilities Condition Index. Most of the District's facilities are accessible. Those facilities that are not fully accessible have temporary accommodations in place or make arrangements with neighbouring schools.

The Specialized Program Referral Process was not addressed due to lack of time.

### 10.3 Indigenous Education Advisory Council

Chair Nadon-Campbell advised that some teachers have received human rights training on culture in Indigenous communities. The new human rights policy will address training for all District staff.

### 10.4 Advisory Committee on Equity

There was no report from the Advisory Committee on Equity.

### 10.5 Parent Involvement Committee

Ian Morris advised that the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) spent much of their time at the January meeting discussing the PIC by-laws and the election of a Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee.

Martyn Reid and Diana Mills were elected Chair and Vice-Chair.

Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner attended the meeting for a discussion on human rights.

The District's allocation for Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grants this year was less than last year's allocation. The funding will be used by PIC for a speaker series, and each school council will receive \$500 to cover the cost of bringing in speakers.

#### 10.6 Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Programs

Trustee Ellis advised that the Committee discussed the status of the Extended Day Program and noted that the District did not close any programs due to Covid-19.

#### 10.7 Committee of the Whole Budget

The first Committee of the Whole Budget was held on 2 February 2021.

Cathy Miedema advised that the Committee was informed that there is a revenue shortfall and the Extended Day Program is operating at a deficit.. Although in the early planning stages, the budget for 2021-2022 does not include massive reductions. The District was advised that it may not receive any extra funding from the Ministry next year for Covid-19.

#### 11. New Business

There was no new business.

#### 12. Adjournment

Chair Nadon-Campbell thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:52 p.m.

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Sonia Nadon-Campbell, Chair,  
Special Education Advisory  
Committee





Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Forward Agenda 2020-2021					
SEAC Forward Agenda 2020/21	Champion high learning expectations for all students in all programs	Prioritize the dignity and well-being of students in inclusive and caring classrooms	Remove barriers to equity of access, opportunity, and outcomes	Advising the District on key initiatives	Special Education Plan Standards
9 Sept	Summer Transition Programs	Outbreak Management	Transportation of Students	Update on the re-opening of schools	
7 Oct			The Roadmap Presentation	Re-opening Plans for Special Education Delivery	Transportation
4 Nov	Memo 20-137, Location of Specialized Classrooms	Report 20-090, Consultation Plan to Review Police Involvement in OCDSB Schools	Memo 20-139, Special Education Consultation Plan 2020-2021- SEAC Revision and Consultation Process		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Education Staff</li> <li>• IPRC Process and Appeals</li> </ul>
9 Dec		Annual Report on Student Suspensions	Development of a Human Rights Policy (C. Tanner)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Board's Special Education Advisory Committee</li> <li>• Equipment</li> </ul>
<u>To be scheduled:</u>  Valuing Voices Presentation from the Identity-Based Data Collection					

<b>SEAC Forward Agenda 2020/21</b>	<b>Champion high learning expectations for all students in all programs</b>	<b>Prioritize the dignity and well-being of students in inclusive and caring classrooms</b>	<b>Remove barriers to equity of access, opportunity, and outcomes</b>	<b>Advising the District on key initiatives</b>	<b>Special Education Plan Standards</b>
6 Jan				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2021-2022 Budget Update</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The OCDSB General Model for Special Education</li> <li>Individual Education Plans (IEPs)</li> <li>Staff Development</li> </ul>
3 Feb		Equitable Recruitment and Hiring Policy (J. McCoy)	Human Rights Policy Consultation (C. Tanner)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early Identification Procedures / Intervention Strategies</li> <li>Educational and Other Assessments</li> </ul>
3 Mar			Report 21-014, Analysis of Disproportionality and Disparity in Grade 10 Credit Accumulation	2021-2022 Budget-SEAC's Priority Considerations	All Standards for 'Independent Review' due back by 1 March 2021. (Attached)
7 Apr					
5 May	Special Education Plan 2020-2021		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update on Roadmap Milestones</li> <li>Recommendations from District</li> </ul>		

			<p>Review of Police Involvement in Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on Storefront</li> </ul>		
2 June	Right to Read Inquiry Results	Summer Mental Health Supports		Learning Support for Students with Special Needs Online Tool Update	





## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC) Report No. 21-014

9 February 2021

### Student Achievement: Focus on Grade 10 Credit Accumulation

**Key Contact:** Michèle Giroux, Executive Officer, Corporate Services,  
613-596-8211 ext. 8310  
Eric Hardie, Superintendent of Instruction, ext. 8401  
Nadia Towaij, Superintendent of Program and Learning, ext.  
8573

### PURPOSE:

1. To present a report on student achievement which includes analysis using demographic data from the *Valuing Voices – Identity Matters! Student Survey* conducted in 2019-2020 to identify:
  - student success based on grade 10 credit accumulation;
  - groups of students who may be over/underrepresented in the credit accumulation data based on their Indigenous identity, race, gender identity, and disability; and
  - differences in credit accumulation rates across groups of students (disparity) based on these same demographic characteristics.

### STRATEGIC LINKS:

2. Credit accumulation data is an important indicator of student achievement and is reviewed annually. The examination of credit accumulation data in combination with identity data allows for the establishment of key strategies for how we move forward as a District to improve achievement outcomes for all students as it relates to graduation. The identification of strategies targeted at increasing the percentage of students who attain the required credits for graduation is an important factor in contributing to a Culture of Innovation and Culture of Caring through increased graduation success for all students in all programs.

### CONTEXT:

3. Research has shown that the successful completion of 16 credits by the end of grade 10 keeps students on track to graduate with their peers and less likely to drop out of school (King et al., 2005). As such, credit accumulation has served as a key indicator of the Ministry of Education's Student Success/Learning to 18 initiative since its inception in 2003. A student is deemed to be "on track" to graduate with their peers within five years of commencing secondary school if they have accumulated at least: eight (8) credits by the end of grade 9, 16 credits

by the end of grade 10, and 23 credits by the end of grade 11. A minimum of 30 credits is required for graduation from Grade 12.

4. Historically, as part of the *Annual Student Achievement Report (ASAR)*, the OCDSB reports credit accumulation rates for students completing grades 9, 10, and 11. For several years, this data has been disaggregated for specific groups of students including English Language Learners (ELL), students who identify as Indigenous (INDG), students with special education needs (SPED) and students residing in lower-income neighbourhoods (SES). This year, for the first time, the credit accumulation data has been analyzed using District-level identity data, collected during the 2019-2020 school year. Reporting this data in alignment with the requirements under the *Anti-Racism Act* and accompanying *Data Standards* allows for a deeper analysis of additional groups of students based on self-reported Indigenous identity, race, gender identity, and disability from the *Valuing Voices – Identity Matters! Student Survey*.

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

### Analysis & Reporting of Credit Accumulation Data

5. This year marks the first opportunity to be reporting on identity-based data in relation to student outcomes using the Data Standards. With each report that is generated, and through the discussions with the Technical Advisory Group, staff continue to learn through this process and to adapt our approach to analysis and reporting, as necessary. In this report, for example, there has been a shift from reporting results based on exclusive groups of students (as was the case in the suspension report) to inclusive groups.

### Collection and Reporting of Identity Based Data

6. The OCDSB has a commitment to improving equity of access and opportunity for all students. The collection of identity-based data that resulted from this commitment serves the following purposes:
  - (i) to gather demographic information about the unique and diverse characteristics of the OCDSB's student population;
  - (ii) to identify and respond to barriers to student learning and well-being; and
  - (iii) to enhance the District's capacity to serve its increasingly diverse student population and client communities.

This is the second in a series of reports that begins to look at barriers to student achievement and well-being with a view to effecting change that will result in greater support and more equitable outcomes for students who have been minoritized.

7. Data collection, analysis and reporting of identity data is governed by the *Ontario Anti-Racism Act* (2017), and the [\*Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of System Racism\*](#) (2018).

### Bringing Together the Data Sets

8. A QuantCrit framework (Gillborn, Warmington & Demack, 2018) has continued to guide the approach to the analysis and reporting of this data. Despite the multidimensional nature of identity, this initial phase of reporting focuses only on single aspects of identity – Indigenous, race, gender, and disability – and does not yet take into account intersectionality (e.g., race x gender).
9. Three years of pooled data (2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020) have been used to maximize reporting for as many aspects of identity as possible. The total number of students in the merged grade 10 credit accumulation data file was 16,472, 9,654 (59%) of whom also participated in the Valuing Voices student survey.

### Calculating Disproportionality and/or Disparity Indices

10. This phase of reporting requires the calculation of disproportionality and/or disparity indices for each unit of analysis (Standard 29). In the case of credit accumulation, both have been calculated where suppression thresholds have been met. Meaningful interpretation of disproportionality and disparity requires the selection of appropriate benchmarks and reference groups, respectively (Standards 30 and 31), as well as the establishment of thresholds (Standard 32) to support monitoring of progress over time.

### Measuring Equity: Overview of Findings

11. For the benefit of the reader, Appendix A presents more detailed results and explains some of the more detailed technical/methodological elements of analysis that are requirements under the provincial Data Standards. Highlights for the full grade 10 student population include pooled over a three-year period (2017-2018 through 2019-2020) include:
  - grade 10 credit accumulation rates have been relatively stable, with slight fluctuations ranging from a low of 79% in 2017-2018 to a high of 83% in 2019-2020 (cohort sizes are approximately 5,500 students in any given year);
  - closer attention needs to be paid to progression towards graduation for specific groups of students. Specifically, students with special education needs, ELLs, students residing in lower income neighbourhoods, and Indigenous students have a lower likelihood of earning 16 credits by the end of grade 10 compared to their peers.
12. For the first time, credit accumulation data combined with Valuing Voices Identity Matters data was disaggregated by Indigenous identity, race, gender identity and disability. This disaggregated credit accumulation data forms a baseline against which progress can be measured over time. Results of this analysis yielded the following:
  - Grade 10 students who self-identified as Indigenous on the *Valuing Voices* survey were 0.77 times less likely to earn 16 credits by the end of grade 10 compared to their peers; students from First Nation, Métis, and Inuit

communities were all underrepresented in the data relative to their representation in the population of grade 10 students;

- Grade 10 Indigenous, Black, Middle Eastern, and Latino students were underrepresented in the credit accumulation data given their relative size in the overall grade 10 student population (disproportionality rates ranging from 0.85 to 0.92, respectively). They were also less likely than other students to earn 16 credits by the end of grade 10 (disparity rates ranging from 0.85 to 0.88);
- Compared to their representation in the grade 10 student population, students who identified as trans girl/woman, not sure, gender fluid, non-binary, and gender non-conforming were less likely to attain 16 credits by the end of grade 10 (disproportionality rates ranging from 0.83 to 0.91, respectively);
- Student who self-identified as having a disability(ies) are slightly under-represented in the credit accumulation data with a disproportionality rate of 0.97 compared to students who did not identify as having any form of disability. Disparity ratios for students with specific disabilities ranged from 0.77 for students who identified as having an (undisclosed) disability to 1.10 for students who self-identified having mobility issues.

### 13. Next Steps

#### Promoting Engagement and Connectedness to Learning

As part of the Ministry of Education's Student Success/Learning to 18 initiative, students who do not successfully complete 16 credits by the end of grade 10 are at risk of leaving school prior to graduation and becoming disengaged in learning. Student re-engagement is a key strategy of the initiative and coordinated through the District's Student Success Lead whereby Student Success Teachers (SSTs) provide direct intervention support to students who are behind in credit attainment through credit intervention and credit rescue.

To foster a school culture where students' sense of belonging is promoted through a strong partnership between students, staff, and community, the District has recently implemented the following:

- Indigenous and Black Students Graduation coaches program which are showing early indications of having a positive impact on student success through increased credit accumulation and overall well-being;
- a Summer Learning Program was introduced in 2020 to support Indigenous students in the attainment of credits. The success of this program has led to an expanded focus to support Black students – this initiative will be implemented in the summer of 2021; and
- the Student Achievement Through Inquiry (S.A.T.E) project which brings children, families and communities together into the educational environment as participants and partners in the learning process, with the school becoming the "Heart of the Community."



In addition, both the OCDSB *Strategic Plan 2019-2023* and the *Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap* outline some of the key strategies that will be undertaken to foster these environments, including the:

- establishment of targets for all students to increase graduation success in all pathways;
- release of Annual Equity Report to identify and document progress made in eliminating disparity of outcomes for Indigenous, Black and minoritized students, including 2SLGBTQ+ and students with disabilities in graduation;
- establishment of an Annual Equity Accountability Report (to be included in the Annual Director's Report) that reports on some of the key accountability measures including graduation rates, disaggregated by grade, Indigeneity, race, language, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and socio-economic status.

## RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

14. Over the past two years, the District has received \$153,000 in one-time funding through Transfer Payment Agreements to support this work up to August 2020. These funds were used to hire research staff and consultant services for the facilitation of focus groups and community partner meetings. Approximately \$200,000 was allocated through the annual budget process for the 2020-2021 school year to support the governance work (e.g., establishment of data sharing agreements with First Nations communities, development of an open data policy) and extension of contract staff in the *Research, Evaluation and Analytics Division*.
15. The District receives annual funding from the Ministry of Education to support student success. Much of the funding is targeted for staffing (i.e., Student Success Lead, Student Success Teachers in each secondary school, and intermediate Student Success Teachers in sites offering grades 7 and 8), however, a portion of the funds is distributed to schools. The initiative involves ongoing monitoring of student achievement and progress towards successful completion of high school (e.g., pass rates in key subject areas and courses, credit accumulation, and completion of the compulsory community service hours and literacy requirements).
16. A Technical Advisory Group has been established to support ongoing work on reporting with identity based data to ensure alignment with the Data Standards. To date, TAG has met twice - prior to the release of the suspension report in November and prior to the release of this report. This group provides a forum for engaging community organizations in ongoing input/dialogue regarding research methodology and statistical analysis of identity data.
17. Ongoing communication about the use of the survey data to the community, particularly to participants, is a vital part of the process. Sharing the process and results, both in report format, infographic and through an open data set for public

use, increases credibility, usability and impact. It is important for participants to see how the data is treated, how their responses are being used, and the impact that their participation has on the future work of the organization.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

The following questions are provided for discussion purposes:

- What stands out for you in the data/information that is presented?
- What questions does the data/information raise?
- What actions/next steps should be considered?

Michèle Giroux  
Executive Officer, Corporate Services

Camille Williams-Taylor  
Director of Education/  
Secretary of the Board

Appendix A - Detailed Results of Findings-Student Achievement Focus on Grade 10  
Credit Accumulation

## Appendix A to Report No. 21-014

### Student Achievement: Focus on Grade 10 Credit Accumulation

As part of the *Annual Student Achievement Report* (ASAR), the OCDSB releases credit accumulation rates for students completing grades 9, 10, and 11. In addition to overall credit accumulation rates, this data is disaggregated for specific groups of students including English Language Learners (ELL), students who identify as Indigenous (INDG), students with special education needs (SPED) and students residing in lower-income neighbourhoods (SES). This is the first year that credit accumulation data has been analyzed using District-level identity data collected during the 2019-2020 school year. Reporting this data in alignment with the requirements under the *Anti-Racism Act* and accompanying *Data Standards* allows for a deeper analysis of additional groups of students based on self-identified Indigenous identity, race, gender identity, and disability as reported in the *Valuing Voices – Identity Matters! Student Survey*. The disaggregation of credit accumulation data in this way allows us to focus our examination of the data through an equity lens, assisting in the identification of patterns and trends that may indicate racial inequity. Ultimately, this serves as a basis for discussions with the broader community to develop strategies to eliminate systemic barriers and biases that may be contributing to inequitable outcomes for students.

#### Why Credit Accumulation

Credit accumulation has served as a key indicator of the Ministry of Education's Student Success/Learning to 18 initiative since its inception in 2003. A student is deemed to be "on track" to graduate with their peers within five years of commencing secondary school if they have accumulated at least: eight (8) credits by the end of grade 9, 16 credits by the end of grade 10, and 23 credits by the end of grade 11. A minimum of 30 credits is required for graduation from grade 12. The ASAR has historically included an overview of credit accumulation over a 3- or 5-year period in an effort to help identify emerging trends of student achievement over time. Where there are fewer than 10 students, data have been suppressed to protect the privacy of individuals; this practice is consistent with EQAO reporting guidelines.

The focus of this report is on grade 10 credit accumulation rates only. Data is presented in the following ways to allow for some comparability of results to previous years and to support the transition to align reporting with the *Data Standards*. Specifically:

- a) Year-over-year trends of grade 10 credit accumulation rates for the most recent five (5) cohorts of grade 10 students, and the disaggregation of 2019-2020 data by gender, for English language learners, students identified with special education needs, those residing in lower income neighbourhoods, and those who self-identify as. The reporting of this data is based on Trillium information and most closely resembles what has been reported in the ASAR in recent years.

## Appendix A to Report No. 21-014

- b) Grade 10 credit accumulation data from 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 was pooled to overcome challenges related to suppression of identity categories from the *Valuing Voices* survey where there were fewer than 10 students. Given that this information is based on a subset of the student population, additional analyses were undertaken using the full comparative population of students (Trillium) to provide additional context.

### **What we know**

Research conducted in the Ontario context has shown that students who do not attain 16 credits by the end of grade 10 are at increased risk of dropping out of school and less likely to graduate with their peers (King et al., 2005; Zegarac & Franz, 2007). More recent studies have reported that students from minoritized racial groups, students with special education needs, and gender diverse students accumulate fewer required credits compared with their peers or experience lower rates of graduation. Clandfield (2014), for example, found that students with Local IEP were falling behind in credit accumulation (7 credits by Grade 9) compared to all TDSB students, and that the cohort graduation rate was found to be lower for students with behavioral and learning disabilities. Another study conducted by the TDSB (2017) found variation in graduation rates across different racial groups. Specifically, students identifying as East Asian, South Asian, and Southeast Asian (96%, 92%, and 90% respectively) exhibiting the highest graduation rates, and those identifying as Latin American, Black, or Mixed exhibiting the lowest (76%, 77%, and 84% respectively). This study also found that heterosexual students were more likely to graduate (88%) compared to LGBTQ2S+ (78%). Using data provided by the TDSB, a study undertaken by York University (2017) found five-year cohort graduation rates of 69% for students who identified as Black, compared to 84% of those identifying as White. Black students were also twice as likely as their White peers to drop out of high school before graduating or returning for an additional year. Analyses of OCDSB data has consistently shown grade 10 credit accumulation rates to be lower for some groups of students, most notably students who self-identify as Indigenous, students with special education needs, ELLs, and students residing in lower income neighbourhoods, putting them at an increased risk of leaving school before they graduate or not graduating with their peers (ASAR, 2019). During the consultation sessions held in June 2019, we also heard from students, parents, and community members that systemic barriers make progress to graduation difficult for minoritized students.

In the United States., the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2017) found that graduation rates for students with disabilities to be much lower (67%) compared to all students (85%). Similarly, lower graduation rates were also reported for American Indian/Alaska Native (72%), Hispanic (80%) and Black (78%) students compared to White (89%). The U.S. National Education Association (NEA, 2009) has also reported that intense bullying and harassment of gender diverse students in high school led to declining academic performance and increased truancy and dropouts.

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It is important to note that while methodologies may differ across studies and regions, the trends are fairly consistent. That is, some groups of students do face barriers as they progress towards graduation. As a system, it is our responsibility to ensure that the practices and systems in place are not contributing to this inequity.

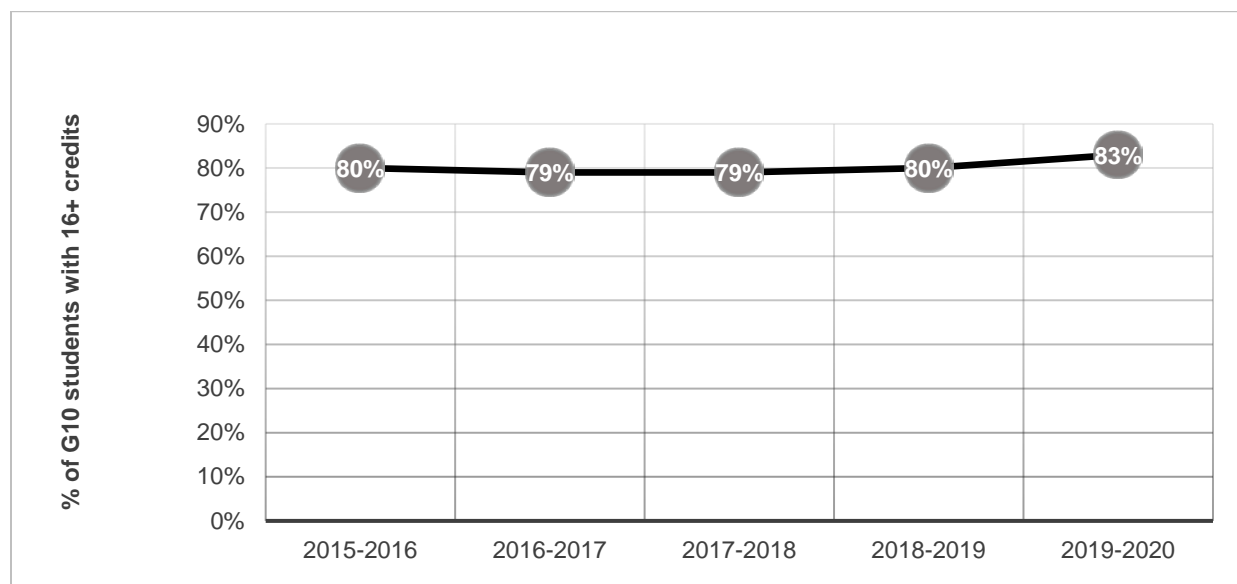
### Key Findings: Overall Results in Grade 10 Credit Accumulation

This section of the report provides an overview of credit accumulation rates for the full population of grade 10 students over a five-year period, and for specific groups of students (i.e., students who self-identified as Indigenous, those with special education needs (excluding gifted), students residing in lower-income neighbourhoods, and English language learners) in 2019-2020<sup>1</sup>.

#### Overall Grade 10 Credit Accumulation Rates

Figure 1 shows annual grade 10 credit accumulation rates for each of the past five years. Rates have remained relatively stable over this time period, ranging from a low of 79% in 2017-2018 to a high of 83% in 2019-2020 (cohort sizes are approximately 5,500 students in any given year). District rates have been comparable to provincial rates over this time period. Table 1 provides additional information.

**Figure 1. Grade 10 Credit Accumulation Trends**



<sup>1</sup> The source of data for this section is the Trillium Student Information System.

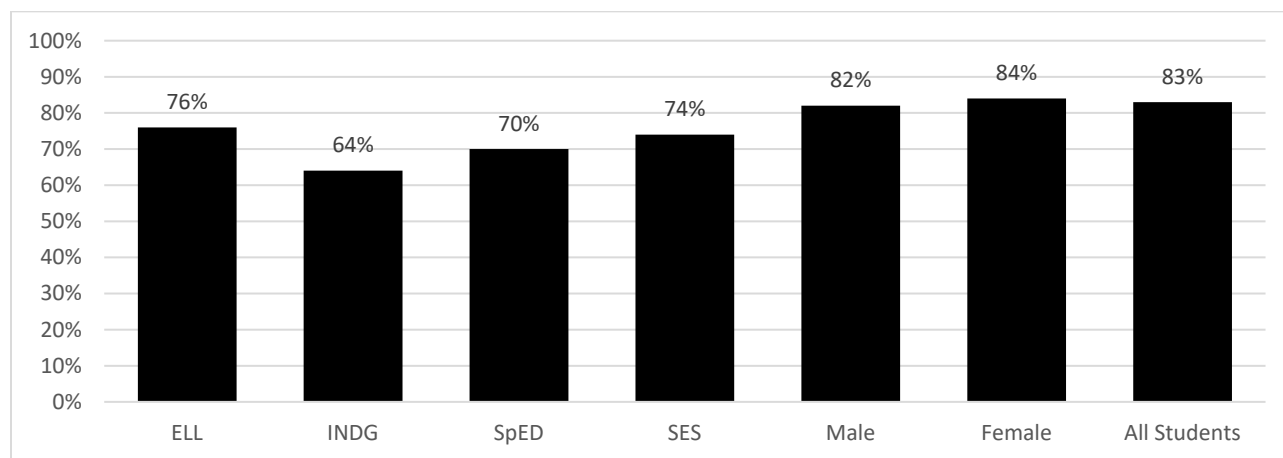
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**Table 1: Distribution of Grade 10 Students across each of Three Cohorts**

<b>Cohort</b>	<b>Grade 10 Enrollment (N)</b>	<b>Grade 10 Students with 16+ credits (N)</b>	<b>Grade 10 Students with 16+ credits (%)</b>
2017-2018	5,376	4,234	79%
2018-2019	5,495	4,389	80%
2019-2020	5,601	4,657	83%
<b>Combined 3 Cohorts</b>	<b>16,472</b>	<b>13,280</b>	<b>81%</b>

**Grade 10 Credit Accumulation Rates for Specific Groups of Students.**

When disaggregated for specific groups of students, the lowest grade 10 credit accumulation rates in 2019-2020 were found for those who self-identified as Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit and Métis; 67 of 104), those with special education needs (excluding gifted; 1,316 of 1,688), students residing in lower-income neighbourhoods (1,004 of 1,366), and English language learners (926 of 1,215) (see Figure 2). Credit accumulation rates for males (2,297 of 2,804) and females (2,360 of 2,796) were similar. Although the rates themselves have fluctuated over time, these trends have persisted.

**Figure 2: 2019-2020 Grade 10 Credit Accumulation Rates for Specific Groups of Students**

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## Through a New Lens: Measuring Equity

The analysis of credit accumulation data continues to be guided by the *Anti-Racism Act* (2017), *Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of Systemic Racism* (2018), and the QuantCrit Framework (Gilborn et al., 2018). Through the collection of identity data and application of the Standards, we have the ability to shine a light on aspects of identity that have not been available to us in the past, and to examine issues of equity in educational outcomes for students in a new way. Specifically, *disproportionality* and *disparity* indices help us to quantify the difference in student achievement and through the application of thresholds, interpret meaning:

- **Disproportionality** is a measure of a group's overrepresentation or underrepresentation in a program, service, or function, relative to their representation in the reference population. In the case of this report, it answers the question: *Which groups of students are over/underrepresented in the group of students who are on track to graduate within 5 years of starting high school?*
- **Disparity** is a measure of group differences in outcomes, and answers the question: *Which groups of students have a lower/greater likelihood of being on track to graduate within 5 years of starting high school?*<sup>2</sup>

Each of these indices offers unique insight into measuring equity. As a result, both are reported where suppression thresholds have been met and reliable estimates can be produced.

To honour the voices of all survey participants for whom we have grade 10 credit accumulation, disproportionality and disparity calculations reflect inclusive groups. This means that if a student selected more than one response option for the same question, they are reflected in each response category for that item. For disparity calculations, groups have been compared to “all other” students in the case of race and gender identity, or to a group of students who do not identify as Indigenous or as having a disability<sup>3</sup>.

### Grade 10 Credit Accumulation by Student Demographics

This section of the report examines grade 10 credit accumulation for different groups of students based on student demographics captured in Trillium, and on four dimensions of identity (Indigenous identity, race, gender identity, and disability) for the subset of students who participated in the *Valuing Voices* Survey conducted in 2019-2020.

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<sup>2</sup> Depending on the nature of the analysis, another specific group serves as a benchmark group against which comparisons are made and disparity is measured.

<sup>3</sup> Additional information can be found in the Technical Considerations section of this document.

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Results for this section of the report are based on three years of pooled data (2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020) in order to maximize reporting for as many aspects of identity as possible. The total number of students in the merged grade 10 credit accumulation data file was 16,472, 9,654 (59%) of whom also participated in the Valuing Voices student survey. This pooled data set was more heavily comprised of students who completed grade 10 in 2019-2020 (39%), followed by students who completed grade 10 in 2018-2019 (35%), and in 2017-2018 (27%). Data for the full population is presented first, followed by a spotlight on the Valuing Voices data. Additional information, including tables containing numbers, percentages, disproportionality and disparity indices for the Valuing Voices data can be found in the technical considerations at the end of this document.

### **Measuring Equity: Overview of Findings**

For many years, students, parents, and community partners have raised concerns that racialized students, students of diverse gender identities, and students with disabilities face barriers to graduation. As a key indicator as to whether or not students are at risk of dropping out of school before graduating or not on track to graduate with their peers, examination of grade 10 credit accumulation data provides an opportunity to intervene and support these students as they progress through their schooling.

The data supports these concerns and indicates that some students are at an elevated risk of not graduating within five (5) years of starting secondary school. The figure on the following page displays disproportionality indices for each group of students examined, indicating which groups are overrepresented (values greater than 1.0) and underrepresented (values less than 1.0) in the group of students who are on track to graduate within five years of starting high school<sup>4</sup>.

While thresholds have not yet been established for the OCDSB, the likelihood of producing disproportionality and disparity values that are precisely 1.0 is extremely small. For purposes of this report, staff have interpreted the data from the viewpoint of an absolute value of 1.0, but would invite the reader to consider alternate interpretations of the information. For example, if a threshold were to be established such that any value between 0.90 and 1.10 were deemed to indicate equal likelihood that a student will earn 16 or more credits by the end of grade 10, how does that alter the interpretation or narrative?

Finally, it is important to note that while trends are similar across data sources, and *Valuing Voices* results tend to mirror those of the overall student population, values do vary.

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<sup>4</sup> In this case, full population refers to: (i) students for whom we have grade 10 credit accumulation data (2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020) for the Trillium demographics; and (ii) students for whom we have grade 10 credit accumulation data for the three years under investigation and Valuing Voices data.



Compared to all students in the same cohort(s), how likely is it a student from THIS group will be "on track" to graduate (i.e., will have earned 16 or more credits) at the end of Grade 10?

**\*\*\*Note:** To provide some indication of overall trends in District-level outcomes for gender identities other than Boy/Man and Girl/Woman consistently across identity-based reports, as they are frequently subject to suppression due to small student counts, a 'Gender Diverse' group was fashioned that includes all other response options [listed above], with the exception of 'Not Sure'.

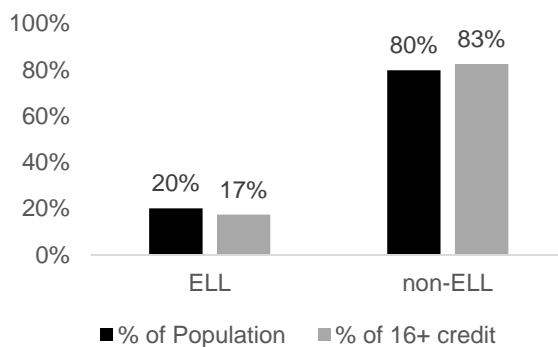
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### English Language Learners

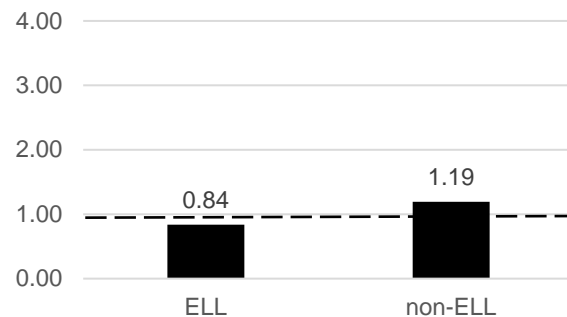
Students identified at ESL or ELD STEPS 1 through 6 in the Trillium Student Information System are considered to be ELL; all other students are not. Valuing Voices data for first language spoken has not yet been analyzed.

Based on three years of pooled data from Trillium, approximately 20% of the OCDSB grade 10 student population was identified as an English language learner (3,325 of 16,472), yet accounted for 17% (2,323) of students who achieved 16 or more credits. The overall grade 10 credit accumulation rate for ELLs was 70% compared to 83% for non-ELLs, reflecting an underrepresentation of ELLs in the grade 10 credit accumulation data<sup>5</sup>, and a lower likelihood of graduating within 5 years.

**Figure 3. Distribution of English Language Learners (2018-2020)**



**Figure 4. Disparity Ratio: Relative Likelihood of Achieving 16 or more Credits vs. All Other Students**



<sup>5</sup> The expected credit accumulation achievement rate (i.e., disproportionality rate) is "1". A disproportionality ratio of "1" reflects a perfect representation (i.e., having equal chance of achieving required credits) in the credit accumulation data based on the relative size of a specific group of students in the overall population.

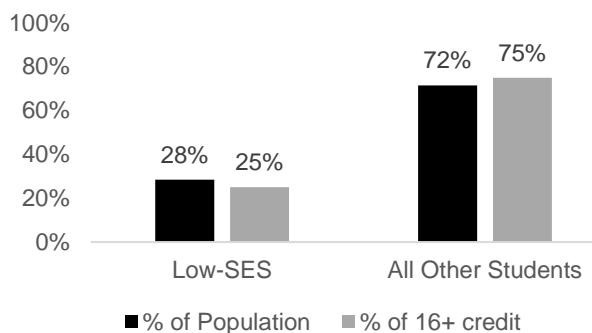
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### Students Residing in Lower-income Neighbourhoods (LowSES)

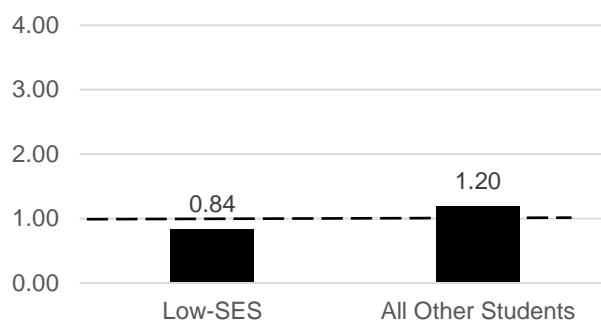
Student postal codes from Trillium were matched to 2018 Taxfiler data from Statistics Canada. Postal code groupings where the % of families with school-aged children living below the Low-Income Measure was higher than for the City of Ottawa as a whole, were classified as residing in a lower income neighbourhood.

Based on Trillium data, approximately 28% of OCDSB grade 10 students lived in lower-income neighbourhoods (Low-SES; 4,073 of 14293), yet accounted for 25% (2,768) of students who achieved 16 or more credits. Just over two-thirds (68%) of all low-SES grade 10 students earned at least 16 credits by the end of their grade 10 year, compared to 81% of other students. This reflects an underrepresentation of students from lower SES backgrounds in the grade 10 credit accumulation data<sup>6</sup>, and a lower likelihood of being on track to graduate with their peers.

**Figure 5. Distribution of LowSES Learners (2018-2020)**



**Figure 6. Disparity Ratio: Relative Likelihood of Achieving 16 or more Credits vs. All Other Students**



<sup>6</sup> The expected credit accumulation achievement rate (i.e., disproportionality rate) is "1". A disproportionality ratio of

"1" reflects a perfect representation (i.e., having equal chance of achieving required credits) in the credit accumulation data based on the relative size of a specific group of students in the overall population.

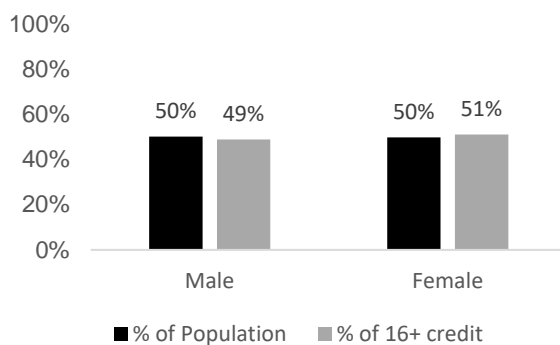
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### Gender Identity

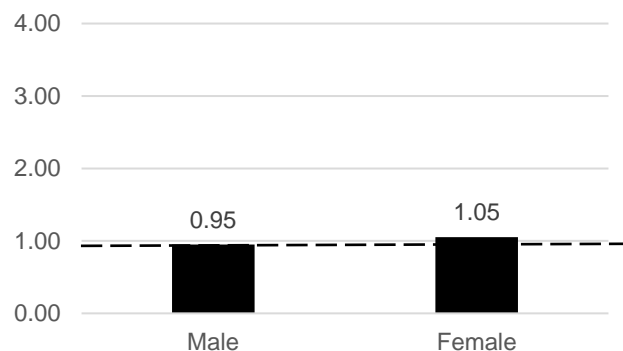
The Trillium Student Information System currently only allows for the reporting of gender as a binary construct. For reporting on additional gender identities, please refer to the Spotlight on Valuing Voices at the end of this section and on pg. 20.

The distribution of males and females in the OCDSB grade 10 student population (Trillium) was relatively even (male students=8,266; female students=8,205), with credit accumulation rates of 79% and 83%, respectively. Male students accounted for 49% (6,494) of those who achieved 16 or more credits compared to 51% of female students (6,786). This reflects a slight underrepresentation of male students in the grade 10 credit accumulation data, and lower likelihood of achieving 16 or more credits compared to female students.

**Figure 7. Distribution of Students by Gender (2018-2020)**



**Figure 8. Disparity Ratio: Relative Likelihood of Achieving 16 or more Credits vs. All Other Students**



### **Spotlight on Valuing Voices: Gender Identity**

The following highlights are based on 8,057 students who responded to the gender identity question and who had earned a minimum of 16 credits by the end of their grade 10 year (2018-2020) (additional details can be found on pg. 20):

- ☞ Students who identified as **trans girl/woman, not sure, gender fluid, non-binary**, and **gender non-conforming** were underrepresented in the group of students who were on track to graduate within five years of starting high school (disproportionality rates ranging from 0.83 to 0.91, respectively).
- ☞ Trends for students who identified as Boy/Man or Girl/Woman were similar to those for the District as a whole.

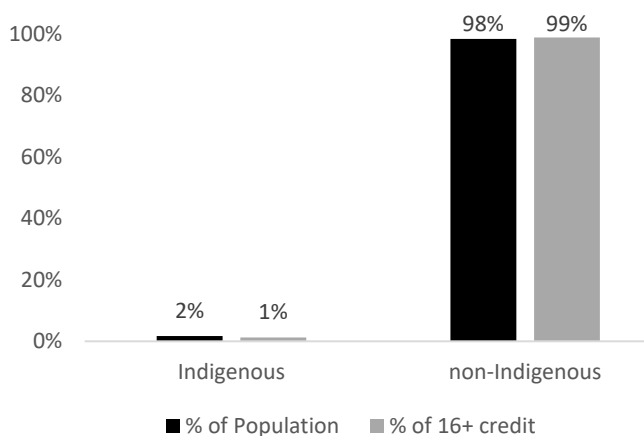
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**Indigenous Identity**

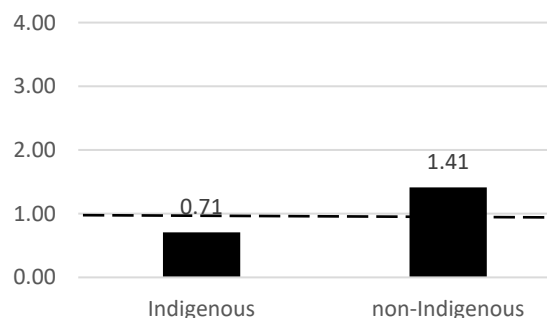
The Trillium Student Information System currently allows for the reporting of Indigenous self-identification from a single community (i.e., First Nation, Métis, or Inuit). Historical reporting has combined these communities into a single group to limit data suppression. For reporting on distinct Indigenous communities, please refer to the Spotlight on Valuing Voices at the end of this section and on pg. 19.

Between 2018 and 2020, 2% of the OCDSB Grade 10 student population self-identified as Indigenous (284 of 16,472), yet accounted for only 1% (163) of students who achieved 16 or more credits. The overall grade 10 credit accumulation rate for this group of students over this time period was 57%, compared to 81% of all others. These results reflect an underrepresentation of Indigenous students in the group of students on track to graduate within five years of starting high school, and a lower likelihood of attaining 16 credits by the end of grade 10.

**Figure 9. Distribution of Self-Identified Indigenous Students (2018-2020)**





**Figure 10. Disparity Ratio: Relative Likelihood of Achieving 16 or more Credits vs. All Other Students**



**Spotlight on Valuing Voices: Indigenous Self-Identification**

The following highlights are based on 8,175 who responded to the Indigenous identity question on the Valuing Voices survey and who had earned a minimum of 16 credits by the end of their grade 10 year (additional details can be found on pg. 19):

-  Students who self-identified as **First Nation, Métis, and/or Inuit** were underrepresented in the group of students who had earned at least 16 credits by the end of grade 10 (disproportionality rates ranging from 0.74 to 0.85, respectively).
-  Trends for the combined group of Indigenous identities were consistent with those observed in the full population of grade 10 students.

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Race***Spotlight on Valuing Voices: Race***

The following highlights are based on the 8,074 students who responded to the question about race on the survey and who had earned a minimum of 16 credits by the end of their grade 10 year (additional details can be found on pg. 20):

- ✎ Students who identified as **Indigenous, Black, Middle Eastern, and/or Latino** were underrepresented in the group of students on track to graduate within five years of starting high school (disproportionality rates ranging from 0.85 to 0.92, respectively). Similarly, they had a lower likelihood of earning 16 credits by the end of grade 10 (disparity rates ranging from 0.85 to 0.88).
- ✎ Students who identified as **East Asian, South Asian, and White** were overrepresented in the credit accumulation data (disproportionality rates ranging from 1.06 to 1.03), and had a greater likelihood of being on track to graduate with their peers (disparity rates of 1.07 for all three groups).

Disability***Spotlight on Valuing Voices: Disability***

The following highlights are based on the 7,264 students who responded to the disability question and who had earned 16 or more credits by the end of their grade 10 year (additional details can be found on pg. 21):

- ✎ Student who self-identified as having a disability(ies) are underrepresented in the grade 10 credit accumulation data (disproportionality of 0.87), and had a lower likelihood of attaining 16 credits by the end of their grade 10 year (disparity 0.85);
- ✎ Students who identified as having a **disability but chose not to disclose** details, those reporting **addiction** and/or **autism** were most underrepresented (disproportionality rates ranging from 0.71 to 0.78, respectively) and least likely to attain 16 credits by the end of grade 10 amongst the disabilities listed.

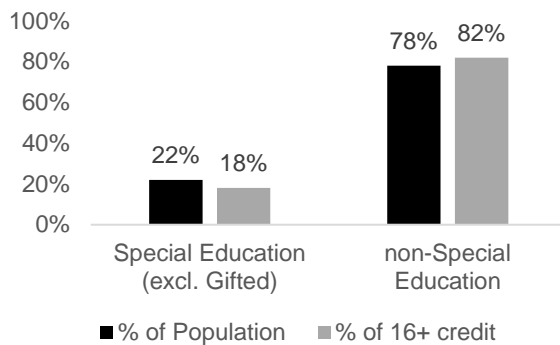
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### Students with Special Education Needs

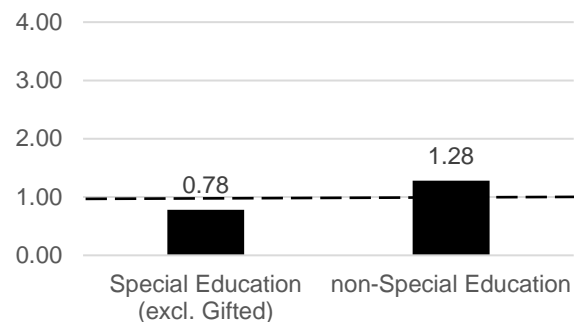
The Trillium Student Information System captures information for students who have an IEP and for those identified with an exceptionality. Historical reporting has been based on students with an IEP regardless of whether or not they have been through the IPRC process; students with a Gifted exceptionality have been excluded from this group, in alignment with Ministry reporting practices.

Students with special education needs accounted for 22% (3,620 of 16,472) of the OCDSB grade 10 student population between 2017-2018 and 2019-2020, inclusive, yet accounted for only 18% (2,395) of students who were on track to graduate by the end of the grade 10 year. The overall credit accumulation rate for this group of students over this time period was 66%, compared to 85% of students without special education needs. This reflects an underrepresentation of students with special education needs, and a lower likelihood of earning 16 credits by the end of grade 10.

**Figure 11. Distribution of Students with Special Education Needs (2018-2020)**



**Figure 12. Disparity Ratio: Relative Likelihood of Achieving 16 or more Credits vs. All Other Students**



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### Summary and Next Steps

Grade 10 credit accumulation data has been an important indicator of student success, serving as a proxy for “on-time” graduation (i.e., within five years of starting high school). As part of the Ministry of Education’s Student Success/Learning to 18 initiative, students who do not successfully complete 16 credits by the end of grade 10 are at risk of leaving school prior to graduation and becoming disengaged in learning. Student re-engagement is a key strategy of the initiative and coordinated through the District’s Student Success Lead. Specifically, the OCDSB provides programming support through Student Success Teachers (SSTs) where SSTs provide direct intervention support to students who are behind in credit attainment and at risk of not graduating high school. As part of this program, the OCDSB has received a funding allocation to support secondary schools in hiring occasional teachers to support credit intervention and credit rescue initiatives.

The analysis of grade 10 credit accumulation data in connection with identity based data from 2018-2019 reinforces the fact that a closer attention needs to be paid to progression towards graduation for specific groups of students. Specifically, students most at risk of not earning 16 credits by the end of grade 10 include those who self-identified as:

- First Nation, Métis, and/or Inuit (i.e., Indigenous identity)
- Indigenous, Black, East Asian, and Middle Eastern (i.e., race)
- transgirl, not sure, gender fluid, non binary, non conforming, (i.e., gender identity)
- having a disability, particularly those reporting addiction and autism (i.e., disability)

on the Valuing Voices student survey, as well as students with special education needs, ELLs, students residing in lower income neighbourhoods.

The OCDSB undertakes key initiatives that target narrowing gaps for specific groups of students and removing systemic barriers to their success. As one of these critical initiatives, in January 2020, a professional learning community was built to support eight secondary schools demonstrating the highest percentage of students not achieving 16 credits by the end of grade 10. School teams were established to conduct monthly meetings to collaborate on strategies focusing on specific groups of students to build learning experiences catered to the needs of these students.

#### **Creating Optimal Conditions for Learning**

A longitudinal study conducted by Niehaus, Irvin, and Rogelberg (2016) reported that feelings of connectedness and engagement have a significant impact on graduation rates in high schools. Recognizing the importance of engagement and connectedness in promoting students’ graduation success, the OCDSB commits to foster a school culture where students’ sense of belonging is promoted through a strong partnership between students, staff, and community. One initiative recently introduced in the



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OCDSB to support this work is the Indigenous and Black Students Graduation coaches program. Although recently implemented, there are early indications that this model is having a positive impact on student success through increased credit accumulation and overall well-being. Through the Continuing Education Department, a Summer Learning Program was made available to support Indigenous students in the attainment of credits this past year. The success of this program has led to an expanded focus to support Black students – this initiative will be implemented in the summer of 2021. Finally, the Student Achievement Through Inquiry (S.A.T.E) project uses factors known to contribute to successful schools to bring children, families and communities together into the educational environment as participants and partners in the learning process, with the school becoming the "Heart of the Community." This particular project involves 14 OCDSB schools (elementary and secondary) and focuses on the following factors: achievement and standards; leadership and management; teaching and learning; innovative curriculum; targeted intervention and support; inclusion; parental engagement; use of data; effective use of pupil's voice; and celebration of cultural diversity.

In addition, both the OCDSB *Strategic Plan 2019-2023* and the *Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap* outline some of the key strategies that will be undertaken to promote a stronger sense of belonging and champion high learning expectations for all students in all programs. Some of these include:

- the establishment of targets for all students to increase graduation success in all pathways;
- the release of Annual Equity Report to identify and document progress made in eliminating disparity of outcomes for Indigenous, Black and minoritized students, including 2SLGBTQ+ and students with disabilities in graduation;
- the establishment of an Annual Equity Accountability Report (to be included in the Annual Director's Report) that reports on some of the key accountability measures including credit accumulation and graduation rates, disaggregated by grade, Indigeneity, race, language, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and socio-economic status.

### **Data Analysis and Reporting**

This year marks the first opportunity to collect and explore reporting of identity-based data using the Ministry's Data Standards. With each report that is generated, and through the discussions with the Technical Advisory Group, we continue to learn and grow through this process and our approach to analysis and reporting. An example of this is the shift from reporting based on exclusive groups (as was the case in the suspension report) to inclusive groups.

Additional analyses will need to be undertaken to explore credit accumulation data for other dimensions of identity collected through the *Valuing Voices* survey (i.e., language,

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ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and status in Canada). Intersectionality across different aspects of identity also require further investigation. Deeper analyses that incorporate student perceptions as they relate to issues of school safety, engagement, and sense of belonging will also be an important consideration. Such analyses not only contribute to a more holistic understanding of our students' self-perceptions and experiences, but also help tease apart the unique contributions of various underlying factors linked to outcomes, as well as distinguish pathways and underlying root-causes. It is also important to recognize limitations to our understanding, as the *Valuing Voices* survey collected information on students but failed to capture the larger context/environment in which they exist/live (i.e., within circles of family, school, community). The complexity of this work, and our District's positioning as one of the first to pursue it with the IDB data/ leads in Ontario, along with our interest in continuing a dialogue/responding to the interests/needs of our various voices/ stakeholders/ community partners, makes this work ongoing.

It is also important to note that credit accumulation is one indicator of student success. Exploration of achievement data from multiple angles is required to gain insight into the barriers that exist for students. For example, in terms of credit accumulation, understanding which courses pose the greatest challenges for students is best understood through an analysis of pass rates and the percentage of students meeting the provincial standard in specific courses and pathways. Historically, lower pass rates have been observed in applied level courses and in some compulsory level courses at the grade 10 level (e.g., Civics and Careers) – this has been the case at both the District and the provincial level. This topic will be further explored in a spring 2021 report that looks at secondary achievement and streaming.

While Disproportionality and Disparity offer us two ways of *measuring* relative group differences (versus All and versus Another group, respectively), these indices do not indicate whether observed differences are *meaningful*, nor do they tell us what *movement* might be reasonable to expect over time. To better contextualize these indices and make them useful, cut-points referred to as *thresholds* must first be established. As we continue to investigate identity-based data, District-level thresholds will need to be determined in consultation with community partners and other stakeholders in order to identify reasonable targets and monitor progress towards addressing existing inequities. This will form part of the core work in 2019-2020 for the recently established OCDSB Technical Advisory Group: Anti-Racism Data Standards. Once thresholds have been established, monitoring progress towards some of the goals cited in the [Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap](#) (2020) will be easier.

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### Technical Considerations

This phase of reporting requires the calculation of a racial disproportionality and/or racial disparity index for each unit of analysis (Standard 29). In the case of credit accumulation, both have been calculated where suppression thresholds have been met. Meaningful interpretation of disproportionality and disparity requires the selection of appropriate benchmarks and reference groups, respectively (Standards 30 and 31), as well as the establishment of thresholds (Standard 32) to support monitoring of progress over time. The following sections provide an overview of the considerations that were taken into account.

**Units of Analysis.** Most survey questions allowed for the selection of multiple responses, honouring the multidimensionality of identity. From an analysis and reporting perspective, this adds complexity. Analysis must be sensitive to commonalities and differences in experience and treatment among persons reporting multiple responses. For example, Standard 27 (Primary Unit of Analysis) of the Data Standards describes the following considerations in terms of multiple race categories:

*“In some cases, it may make sense to count persons who report White and some other race according to the other race category selected. In other circumstances, it may be necessary and appropriate to aggregate or construct socially meaningful mixed-race categories. For example, a generic mixed-race category may be appropriate if there are insufficient or small numbers of individuals (fewer than 15) who select multiple race categories. If a generic mixed-race category might obscure significant differences, and sample sizes are sufficient, consider using specific combinations of race categories.”*

As a result, three different approaches to assigning respondents to groups were examined to better understand the influence on disparity and disproportionality calculations:

- **exclusive groups** – no overlap across response categories; respondents selecting more than one response option were combined into a “mixed group” option
- **additive groups** – includes exclusive groups for those respondents who selected one response option only, but an additional group was created for each exclusive category that included respondents who selected that category and at least one other response option (e.g., black + white)
- **inclusive groups** – all groups overlap with one another (e.g., the black category includes respondents who selected black either as a single response or in combination with at least one other race category).

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Based on the feedback from the Technical Advisory Group (TAG), credit accumulation results are being reported based on inclusive groups. This allows to reflect all voices participated in the Valuing Voices survey.

**Combining Cohorts to Reduce Data Suppression.** To overcome challenges related to suppression of identity categories with fewer than 10 students, grade 10 credit accumulation data from 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 were combined. This applies to both the population data and the subset of students who participated in the Valuing Voices student survey. In so doing, it allows us to report on more identity categories than we would otherwise be able to do with a single year of data (i.e., 2019-2020). An additional consideration is the sample size required to produce reliable estimates of disparity and disproportionality (i.e., 10 respondents with a minimum of 16 credits, 30 respondents in each response category for whom we have grade 10 credit accumulation). As an example, the following table provides an overview of the total number of respondents with grade 10 credit accumulation data for self-identified Indigenous identity response options across each of the past three years.

**Table 2: The total number of self-identified Indigenous students with G10 credit accumulation data:**

	1-year data	2-year data	3-year data
	2018-2019 data Only	+ 2017-2018 data	+ 2019-2020 data
<b>First Nation</b>	43	80	153
<b>Inuit</b>	17 (insufficient)	22 (insufficient)	36
<b>Métis</b>	30	50	85

**Benchmarks and Reference Groups.** For purposes of this report, calculations of disproportionality use the population of grade 10 students across 3 cohorts (i.e., 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020) who participated in the *Valuing Voices – Identity Matters! Student Survey* as a benchmark. After careful consideration, the most appropriate reference group for disparity calculations was deemed to be “all other” relevant respondents (i.e., any respondent not included in the target group for whom we have grade 10 credit accumulation data) yielding more stable comparisons over time.

**Calculating Disproportionality and Disparity.** Disproportionality is a measure of a specific group’s overrepresentation or underrepresentation in an outcome relative to their representation in the overall population. A disproportionality index (or rate) reflects the likelihood/risk that someone from a specific group will experience a certain outcome, relative to the risk in the entire eligible population. A value of 1.0 reflects no disproportionality. A value greater than 1.0 reflects overrepresentation. A value less than 1.0 reflects underrepresentation.

Disparity is a measure of group differences that compares an outcome for a specific group against that of another (BENCHMARK) group. There are many ways of

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measuring disparities, however, the Data Standards describe calculating a disparity index (ratio) which compares the relative risk/rate in a specific group to the risk/rate in a BENCHMARK group. It measures whether a particular outcome is lower, similar, or higher in a specific group relative to a comparison group. A value of 1.0 reflects no disparity between the risk/chance for the specific group and the benchmark group (same risk). A value greater than 1.0 reflects a higher risk/chance for the specific group. A value less than 1.0 reflects a lower risk/chance for the specific group.

Calculations of disproportionality and disparity are significantly impacted by small numbers. A general rule-of-thumb is to have minimum sample size of 10 and a population size of 30, otherwise estimates are not reliable. Consistent with the suspension report, this rule has been applied to the reporting of credit accumulation data.

**Interpreting Disproportionality and Disparity.** Meaningful interpretation of disproportionality rates and disparity ratios require the establishment of a threshold, which is an established cut-point used to identify meaningful disproportionality and disparity values. District-level thresholds will need to be determined in consultation with community partners and other stakeholders in order to identify targets and monitor progress towards addressing existing inequities/inequalities. This will be a key outcome for the OCDSB Technical Advisory Group: Anti-Racism Data by the end of June 2021.

Tables 3 through 6 below provide details about the subset of students for whom we had grade 10 credit accumulation information across the three cohorts (2017-2018 through 2019-2020) and who participated in the Valuing Voices survey. Information is presented first for all students, then for each response option. In the case of Indigenous identity, dichotomous groupings were created to facilitate disparity calculations.

**Table 3: Spotlight on Indigenous Identity**

INDIGENOUS IDENTITY	G10, 2017-'18, 2018-'19, 2019-'20 CA data				% in All students	Disproportionality (16+)	Disparity vs. Not INDG
	# Total	# of students with 16+ credits	% of students with 16+ credits	% in 16+			
<b>Grade 10 Credit Accumulation (2018-2020)</b>	<b>9,440</b>	<b>8,175</b>	<b>86.6%</b>	<b>86.6%</b>			
Not_INDG	9,144	7,980	87.3%	97.6%	96.9%	1.01	1.00
INDG	318	211	66.4%	2.6%	3.4%	0.77	0.76
First Nation	194	125	64.4%	1.5%	2.1%	0.74	0.74
Metis	117	86	73.5%	1.1%	1.2%	0.85	0.84
Inuit	57	42	73.7%	0.5%	0.6%	0.85	0.84

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Table 4: Spotlight on Race

RACE	G10, 2017-'18, 2018-'19, 2019-'20 CA data				% in All students	Disproportionality (16+)	Disparity vs. All Other
	# Total	# of students with 16+ credits	% of students with 16+ credits	% in 16+			
<b>Grade 10 Credit Accumulation (2018-2020)</b>	<b>9,307</b>	<b>8,074</b>	<b>86.8%</b>				
Black	831	632	76.1%	7.8%	8.9%	0.88	0.87
East Asian	1,101	1,016	92.3%	12.6%	11.8%	1.06	1.07
Indigenous	205	151	73.7%	1.9%	2.2%	0.85	0.85
Latino	258	206	79.8%	2.6%	2.8%	0.92	0.92
Middle Eastern	1,232	955	77.5%	11.8%	13.2%	0.89	0.88
South Asian	826	760	92.0%	9.4%	8.9%	1.06	1.07
South East Asian	374	325	86.9%	4.0%	4.0%	1.00	1.00
White	5,514	4,915	89.1%	60.9%	59.2%	1.03	1.07
Another Race Not Listed	179	158	88.3%	2.0%	1.9%	1.02	1.02

Table 5: Spotlight on Gender Identity

GENDER IDENTITY	G10, 2017-'18, 2018-'19, 2019-'20 CA data				% in All students	Disproportionality (16+)	Disparity vs. All Other
	# Total	# of students with 16+ credits	% of students with 16+ credits	% in 16+			
<b>Grade 10 Credit Accumulation (2018-2020)</b>	<b>9,283</b>	<b>8,057</b>	<b>86.79%</b>				
Boy/Man	4248	3609	85.0%	44.8%	45.8%	0.98	0.96
Gender Fluid	63	48	76.2%	0.6%	0.7%	0.88	0.88
Nonconforming	62	49	79.0%	0.6%	0.7%	0.91	0.91
Girl/Woman	4685	4159	88.8%	51.6%	50.5%	1.02	1.05
Non Binary	93	73	78.5%	0.9%	1.0%	0.90	0.90
Questioning	92	79	85.9%	1.0%	1.0%	0.99	0.99
Transboy	69	57	82.6%	0.7%	0.7%	0.95	0.95
Transgirl	36	26	72.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.83	0.83
Two Spirit	34	31	91.2%	0.4%	0.4%	1.05	1.05
Another Gender Identity Not Listed	137	123	89.8%	1.5%	1.5%	1.03	1.03
Not Sure	45	33	73.3%	0.4%	0.5%	0.84	0.84

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Table 6: Spotlight on Disability

DISABILITY	G10, 2017-'18, 2018-'19, 2019-'20 CA data				% in All students	Disproportionality (16+)	Disparity vs. No DSBL
	# Total	# of students with 16+ credits	% of students with 16+ credits	% in 16+			
<b>Grade 10 Credit Accumulation (2018-2020)</b>	<b>8,291</b>	<b>7,264</b>	<b>87.60%</b>				
No Disability	7,432	6,611	89.0%	91%	90%	1.02	1.00
Those Reporting a Disability	859	653	76.0%	9.0%	10.4%	0.87	0.85
Addiction	113	77	68.1%	1.1%	1.4%	0.78	0.77
Autism	128	87	68.0%	1.2%	1.5%	0.78	0.76
Blind	75	63	84.0%	0.9%	0.9%	0.96	0.94
Chronic Pain	87	71	81.6%	1.0%	1.1%	0.93	0.92
Deaf	56	47	83.9%	0.7%	0.7%	0.96	0.94
Developmental	46	36	78.3%	0.5%	0.6%	0.89	0.88
Learning	440	328	74.5%	4.5%	5.3%	0.85	0.84
Mental Health	333	245	73.6%	3.4%	4.0%	0.84	0.83
Mobility	38	34	89.5%	0.5%	0.5%	1.02	1.01
Physical	98	80	81.6%	1.1%	1.2%	0.93	0.92
Speech	63	52	82.5%	0.7%	0.8%	0.94	0.93
Another Disability Not Listed	108	88	81.5%	1.2%	1.3%	0.93	0.92
Undisclosed <sup>7</sup>	45	28	62.2%	0.4%	0.5%	0.71	0.70

<sup>7</sup> This includes students who indicated "yes" to having a disability, but did not provide details as to the type.



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## Key Terms

Definition	What does it mean in <i>this</i> report?
<b>CREDIT ACCUMULATION RATE</b> refers to the proportion of students who earn a designated number of credits within a specific time period. Grade 10 credit accumulation (i.e., attainment of 16 credits by the end of grade 10) is an important indicator as to whether or not a student is on track to graduate within five years of commencing secondary school.	Students who earned at least 16 credits by the end of their grade 10 year (i.e., second year of high school in 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020) are represented in the credit accumulation rate. Higher credit accumulation rates indicate a higher occurrence of students who are on track to graduate with their peers.
<b>OUTCOMES</b> can be programs, services, or functions.	In this report, our examination focuses on students who earned a minimum of 16 credits by the end of their grade 10 year, by combining data for 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020.
<b>DISPROPORTIONALITY</b> is a measure of a specific group's overrepresentation or underrepresentation in an outcome relative to their representation in the overall population.	<b>Disproportionality</b> answers the question: <i>Which groups of students are over/underrepresented in the group of students who are on track to graduate within 5 years of starting high school?</i>  A value of 1.0 reflects equal representation of earning 16 credits by the end of grade 10 (parity). A value greater than 1.0 reflects overrepresentation, while a value less than 1.0 reflects underrepresentation.
<b>DISPARITY</b> is a measure of group differences that compares an outcome for a specific group against that of <u>another</u> group, which serves as a BENCHMARK. There are many ways of measuring disparities.  <b>A DISPARITY RATIO</b> is a proportion comparing the relative risk/rate in a specific group to the risk/rate in a BENCHMARK group. It measures whether a particular outcome is lower, similar, or higher in a specific group relative to a comparison group.	<b>Disparity</b> answers the question: <i>Which groups of students have a lower/greater likelihood of being on track to graduate within 5 years of starting high school?</i>  A value of 1.0 reflects equal likelihood of earning 16 credits (no disparity) compared to a benchmark group. A value greater than 1.0 reflects greater likelihood of earning 16 credits, while a value less than 1.0 reflects a lower likelihood of earning 16 credits.
<b>A BENCHMARK</b> is a group used as a common reference point against which to measure disparities. Using the same point of reference for all specific group comparisons means the resulting disparities are comparable to each other.	Disparity calculations for the full student population make use of "all other students" as the benchmark group. When reporting on the subset of students who participated in the <i>Valuing Voices</i> survey, "all other students" was used for calculations on race and gender identity, while "does not identify as Indigenous" was used to report on Indigenous identity and "does not identify as having a disability" was used to report on disability.
<b>A THRESHOLD</b> is an established cut-point used to identify meaningful disproportionality and disparity values.	District-level thresholds will need to be determined in consultation with community partners and other stakeholders in order to identify targets and monitor progress towards addressing existing inequities.



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## **SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)**

**3 March 2021  
9 March 2021**

**Report No. 21-020**

### **Universal Screening Tool Exploration and Update**

Key Contact: Peter Symmonds, Superintendent of Learning Support Services, 613-596-8254.

Amy Hannah, System Principal, Learning Support Services, 613-596-8211 ext. 8111.

#### **PURPOSE:**

1. To provide an update to Board on the exploration activities undertaken to review the potential implementation of a universal screening tool in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB).

#### **CONTEXT:**

2. In *Report 20-110, Updates on Supports for Students with Giftedness (Elementary) in the OCDSB*, Learning Support Services (LSS) shared that they were in the initial phase of exploring the possibility of a universal screening tool in the OCDSB. The exploration of the possible use of a universal screener within the District is rooted in the ongoing work and commitment District-wide to continue to explore ways to eliminate barriers of access for all students and to support underrepresented populations.

The use of a universal screening tool is rooted in research surrounding underrepresentation in identifying learners with giftedness. In recent studies in North America, the issue of “missingness”, which is defined as the students missing from gifted identification either because they attended schools that did not identify learners or because they were under-identified in their schools that did identify learners is a growing area of research and action (M. Gentry, 2019). In the OCDSB, the current practice is to offer individual student screening via two methods; teacher nomination or parent/guardian nomination to explore student potential for giftedness. Inherent in this approach, is the potential for unconscious bias and further perpetuation of the notion of “missingness” in the identification of learners with giftedness.

The Ministry of Education defines the exceptionality of giftedness as “an unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated.” In addition to very high levels of cognitive ability (e.g., 98<sup>th</sup> percentile and above), students with giftedness are diverse and unique learners. For

example, students with giftedness can present with additional complexities such as autism, learning disability or executive function difficulties. It is important to identify and understand the unique needs of students with giftedness in order to ensure appropriate programming is provided and students remain engaged and appropriately challenged academically. When students with giftedness are not identified, educators run the risk of making inappropriate instructional decisions by mistaking the root of the challenges for what is readily observable (e.g., behaviour, disengagement).

The purpose of the ongoing exploration of a possible universal screener is to determine if there may be another tool to potentially lead to increased identification of learners with giftedness and to help the District to identify other students with other learning profiles who may not have been identified yet (i.e., learning disability, etc.).

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

3. A screening tool of this nature is an assessment which provides information about the cognitive abilities of a student. A screening tool can be universal (i.e., administered to a cohort of students) or administered on an individual basis. The use of a screening tool provides information that can inform decision-making about student learning. The District has offered universal screening in the past and currently makes a screening tool available based on teacher and/or parent nomination. While a universal screening tool may highlight students who should be provided with a more in-depth assessment to fully understand their cognitive profile, it is generally not used as a single tool for formal identification.
4. Equity  
Research has shown that disproportionality exists in special education referrals (Raines, 2012). When teachers or parents are the primary method for nominating children for further screening, it is possible that barriers for some learners arise. Universal screening may work to reduce this barrier by providing equal access to screening (NAGC, 2018). This can include minoritized or racialized students, students of lower socio-economics status, English Language Learner, etc.
5. History of Screening in the OCDSB  
The OCDSB has conducted universal screening in the past. Prior to 1999 and up to 2007, the Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test (CCAT) was administered to all grade 3 students by school-based staff. The CCAT could be administered to students prior to grade 3 if nominated by a parent/guardian or teacher. During this time, the CCAT was the main piece of information used to determine a formal identification of giftedness in line with the Ministry of Education definition for this exceptionality. The Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT) was administered on an as-needed basis in order to gather additional information if cognitive scores on the CCAT were close but did not meet the specified cut-offs.

In 2008, universal screening was discontinued but the CCAT was still administered by school staff based on parent/guardian or teacher nomination. School staff reviewed CCAT results to determine if a student could or should be

formally identified through the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) process with Giftedness. Alternatively, cognitive information provided through psychological assessment reports was also acceptable.

Since 2014 and up to the current time, additional emphasis was placed on the school multi-disciplinary teams to discuss the need for potential screening for giftedness. Referrals through teachers or parents are discussed at multi-disciplinary meetings to determine the need for a CCAT screening or a full psychological assessment. Results from the CCAT or other assessments are then reviewed by the school psychologist who may or may not request additional information to make a determination about formal identification of giftedness.

6. Environmental Scan – Universal Screening Tool in Ontario

As a part of the environmental scan, staff consulted with several other Ontario school districts in order to better understand their screening procedures. Consultations with the publisher also helped to inform the information gathered during the environmental scan.

There are many school districts within the province who have undertaken the process of universal screening using the CCAT 7 (the latest edition of the CCAT).

Most of these school districts screen all students either in grade 3 or in grade 4. The chart below details an overview of the Ontario school districts who are using the CCAT 7 and in what capacity.

Number of School Districts	Purpose of Use of CCAT 7	Grade Level
1	Universal	2 (transitioning to 3 this year)
4	Universal	3
12	Universal	4
1	Universal	4 and 7
4	Nomination	All

7. Emerging Themes from the Environmental Scan

As a component to the environment scan, other details were gathered from each district pertaining to the process and procedures surrounding the use of the universal screening. The chart below provides a summary of themes that emerged from this review.

Theme	Details
Time of year to conduct universal screening	Universal screening is usually conducted in the Fall in most districts in order to engage in appropriate program planning for students.
Post universal screening considerations and possible follow-up actions for each learner	Many school districts use the CCAT 7 as part of a process to screen for gifted learners but the CCAT 7 information is only the first step for those students who meet a certain cut-off, additional information is obtained about that

	learner (e.g., parent input, further cognitive testing, academic testing, etc.).
Multi-disciplinary team consultation	Many districts use consultation within their screening procedures in order to develop program plans for students (e.g., school support staff, school psychologist, etc.).
Professional Development and training for staff	Staff require training on how to interpret and use score information appropriately for programming.

The themes listed above are areas where further exploration will be required and will be a part of the next review activities moving forward.

#### 8. Selection of a Universal Screening Tool

The purpose of selecting a tool for universal screening is complex. Selecting an appropriate tool is important but also considering how that tool will be used in a broader context of programming and decision-making is critical. In plain terms, the use of a universal screening tool should help to inform instructional decisions for all learners including those who may require further enrichment.

During the exploratory review of possible screening tools, the following assessments have been considered:

- Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test (CCAT 7);
- Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OSLAT);
- Raven's 2 Progressive Matrices; and
- Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test-3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (NNAT3).

The CCAT 7 has many advantages. It is the most widely used cognitive screener in Canada, primarily because it offers Canadian norms. The updated CCAT 7 has also addressed issues of equity in several different ways including replacing some verbal prompts with visual prompts and addressing other language concerns within item development (e.g., removing colloquial terms). Further, the CCAT 7 scores are categorized into Ability Profiles that are then linked to specific instructional strategies to inform programming for each individual learner. For each learner, an Ability Profile score is generated, which is a summary of the student's demonstrated level of ability while providing insight into their strengths and areas for growth along with potential instructional strategies for the teacher to consider.

As with any standardized test, careful consideration needs to be taken when interpreting scores. Next steps will include an examination of the responsible use of CCAT 7 score data in the context of building individualized learner profiles. Staff are also exploring the potential of using local norms, which is possible with this tool. Local norms are a percentile ranking of a student compared to all other students in a building (school) on a standardized assessment versus Canadian norms which compare percentile rankings of a student on a national level.

9. Universal Screening Tool Project Team

A project team will be established to review the key details and considerations to inform the final recommendation on the use of a universal screener for the OCDSB. This project team will have cross departmental representation (e.g., LSS, Program and Learning (PAL), Research, Evaluation and Analytics Division (READ), Indigenous Education, Equity, and ESL/ELD team, etc.) and school-based staff. Key work of the project team will be to facilitate discussions with community and stakeholder groups.

10. Overview of Continued Exploration of Universal Screening Tool Activities

The project team will continue to undertake a variety of exploration activities to gather further information required to make a decision to move forward with a universal screening tool in the OCDSB. Significant review activities are listed below:

Timeline	Review Activity
12 March 2021	Creation of Universal Screening Tool Project Team.
February – 30 April 2021	Regular meetings with representatives from the publisher <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review implementation costs;</li> <li>• Review aggregation levels and data extraction possibilities in conjunction with READ;</li> <li>• Review staff training requirements, materials, student screening preparation materials, and tool implementation plans for school districts.</li> </ul>
February – 31 May 2021	Project team consultation with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PAL;</li> <li>• READ;</li> <li>• Business &amp; Learning Technologies;</li> <li>• Corporate Records;</li> <li>• Federations;</li> <li>• Focus Groups; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ School-based staff including multi-disciplinary teams; and</li> <li>○ LSS staff team.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• LSS psychology team members to review research surrounding grade level/cohort administration of the tool; and</li> <li>• Collaborate with Communications to explore the possibility of a speaker series on universal screening to engage parents/guardians, and the community.</li> </ul>
February – 31 May 2021	Advisory Committee Consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)</li> </ul>
31 May 2021	Completion of a Literature Review
June 2021	Update report

## RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

11. The work undertaken on this initiative continues to be substantial which will continue until the end of June 2021. LSS estimates that approximately 30 days of work will be invested by different team members in the department to complete the ongoing exploration into the adoption of the CCAT 7 to the OCDSB. Other departments and school staff selected to be a part of the project team will also be required to devote time to some of the tasks outlined previously. LSS anticipates that this in total will be another minimum total of 20 days of work.

If the CCAT 7 is selected as a universal screener, implementation costs will include test booklet bundles, administration manuals, and training. Initial exploration of the recurring annual cost of universally administering the CCAT 7 is anticipated to be approximately \$50,000.00. Consideration will need to be given to District level staffing to support the annual administration of the assessment.

## COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

12. The key focus of the project team is to ensure that the goal of eliminating barriers of access and to support underrepresented populations is achieved. In June 2021, a report will provide an update on the progress of the project team. Regular updates will be shared with the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC).

## STRATEGIC LINKS:

13. The continued investigation about the possible implementation of a universal screening tool in the OCDSB has several links to the District Strategic Plan 2019-2023 with a focus on reducing barriers to learning and providing individualized personalized support. A universal screener may help to begin to address equity concerns by identifying students who need extra support who may have traditionally been overlooked without a standardized assessment.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What additional factors should be considered to inform the exploration of a universal screener?
- How might a universal screening tool ensure equity for racialized and minoritized students?

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Peter Symmonds, Superintendent of  
Learning Support Services

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Camille Williams-Taylor  
Director of Education and  
Secretary of the Board





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