

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Thursday, September 9, 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), Jim Harris (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children), Terry Warner (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children, Alternate), Lisa Paterick (VIEWS for the Visually Impaired), Dr. Maggie Mamen (Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton), 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, Alternate), Jean Trant (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, School Support Personnel), Catherine Houlden (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Teachers), Andrew Winchester (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Alternate), Kimberly Elmer (Ottawa-Carleton Secondary School Administrators' Network)

Staff and Guests: Lynn Scott (Trustee), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Amy Hannah (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Kate Stoudt (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Emily Balla (Mental Health Lead, Learning Support Services), Stacey Kay (Manager, Learning Support Services), Joan Oracheski (Manager, Research and Analytics Division), Kathryn Langevin (Supervisor Social Work Services, Learning Support Services), Sue Baker (Acting Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Call to Order

Chair Nadon-Campbell called the meeting to order at 7:15 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. Information

3.1 Policy P.019.GOV Special Education Advisory Committee

Policy P.019.GOV Special Education Advisory Committee was provided for information.

4. Delegations

There were no delegations.

5. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

5.1 2 June 2021 SEAC Report

Moved by Trustee Campbell,

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee Report dated 2 June 2021 report be received.

Carried

5.2 Forward Agenda 2021-2022

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) forward agenda was provided for information.

Superintendent Symmonds requested that members of SEAC review the forward agenda and advise staff if there are any additions and/or updates.

6. Presentations

6.1 Report 21-046, Examination of Elementary and Secondary Program Pathways and Achievement Outcomes (M. Giroux)

Manager Joan Oracheski and Superintendent Symmonds presented Report 21-046, Examination of Elementary and Secondary Program Pathways and Achievement Outcomes.

The report examines enrolment distribution in elementary and secondary programs and student achievement outcomes in relation to demographic data collected through the Valuing Voices – Identity Matters! Student Survey conducted in 2019-2020. The information presented seeks to address the following questions:

- What is the representation of students across elementary programs (English with core French, early French immersion, middle French immersion) and secondary pathways (academic, applied, locally developed)?

- How well is the system doing to support students in meeting high expectations in French, language, and mathematics (elementary panel) and English, math, and science (secondary panel).

The report aligns with the OCDSB 2019-2023 Strategic Plan; Indigenous, Equity, and Human Rights Roadmap (2020); Grade 9 de-streaming of mathematics; the Annual Student Achievement Report (ASAR); the Anti-Racism Act (2017) and accompanying Data Standards (2018), and the QuantCrit Framework (Gilbert et al., 2018).

The report shows the program enrolment distribution for elementary students in grade 1 to 8, and mathematics for grades 9-10. For each group, enrolment patterns were similar over the past three years.

Disproportionality measures a group's over-representation or under-representation in a program, service or function. relative to their representation in the reference population. A value of 1 means equal representation relative to their representation in population.

In the Early French Immersion (EFI) program, representation was lower amongst the English Language Learners (ELLs), identifying as Indigenous, students with special education needs, students identified as Middle Eastern, students who identified as trans boy/man or two spirit, students with disabilities including addiction, autism, blind/low vision, developmental, learning, mobility, and speech impairment.

In the secondary applied mathematics group, representation was disproportionate for low-socio-economic status (SES) students, students identifying as Indigenous, Black, students who identified as gender fluid, gender non-conforming, non-binary, and two spirit, and all disabilities with the exception of developmental and mobility.

Conversely, when looking at the elementary and secondary in the English and core French programs, the representation was higher for the same groups over the past three years. Both groups met the provincial standards.

Disparity measures group differences in outcome. Disparities in achievement outcomes were most pronounced for students with special education needs (excluding gifted). French (writing) showed the greatest variation and mathematics showed the least variation in outcomes across groups. Outcomes were generally higher for South Asian and White (race), and generally lower for Indigenous, Black, Latino, Middle Eastern, and disability groups. In the secondary panel, there was great variation in English, mathematics and science with locally developed courses having the lowest outcomes.

Central departments, including Learning Support Services (LSS), Program and Learning, and Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights, are using an equity lens and sharing responsibility for the work.

Learning and Support Services is taking the lead to reinforce conditions for learning to create positive relationships with a focus on mental health, and ensuring a safe, warm and welcoming environment.

Key strategies and next steps to support students in their learning includes the following:

Program and Learning Department:

- grade 9 de-streaming of mathematics and other compulsory subjects;
- detailed scope and sequence in all curricular areas in grades 1-8;
- literacy assessment field tests for grades 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, and 9;
- introduction of the intensive reading intervention program (kindergarten to grade 9) as part of the Summer Learning Program; and
- Student Achievement Through Equity (SATE) inquiry to look at factors contributing to student success and creating situations to overcome barriers;

Learning and Support Services Department:

- implementation of the Third Path - A Relationship-based Approach to Student Well-Being and Achievement;
- online resource to support the development of quality IEPs; and
- mental health promotion and prevention (including Culturally Response Social-Emotional Learning Resource);

Indigenous, Equity & Human Rights Division:

- expanded partnership with Inuuqattigiit education hubs for Inuit students;
- expansion of Indigenous Speakers Series and credit-bearing courses for Rainbow Youth Forum and Black Student Forum;
- hiring of a Gender Diverse and Trans Student Support Coordinator;
- expansion of reach ahead and summer courses to support Indigenous students, Black students, and English Language Learners (ELLs); and
- introduction of Indigenous Languages (elementary and secondary).

Innovation & Adolescent Learning Department:

- creation of multi-credit packages for English as a Second Language/English Language Development (ESL)/ELD students (grade 8 secondary schools);
- experiential learning to promote student engagement and create school-community partnerships;
- collaboration with the Indigenous Education team to create a multi-credit package to include land-based and language learning; and
- support new Canadians for granting credits for educational experiences that have occurred outside of Canada.

Identity-based data will be used to identify patterns and trends. A system-wide capacity to understand disproportionality and disparity and how to address these issues will be developed. Developing strategies which recognize the unique learning needs of students and shifting conditions to support the learning needs of all students is critical.

In response to queries from SEAC members, the following points were noted:

- staff has prioritized the work on intersectionality for this year along with the establishment of thresholds and identifying systemic barriers to success and unintended outcomes of placement in specialized program classes to help with program planning for students with special needs;
- with respect to the lower outcomes for students with special needs, LSS will work with staff to identify specific strategies to support learning such as ensuring teachers in specialized program classes have current information to improve practices in schools;
- some instructional coaches, multi-disciplinary team members, psychologists, speech language pathologists, a community engagement worker and the Research and Analytics Division will support the work of the Student Achievement Through Equity (SATE) initiative;
- the Right to Read inquiry will help educators look at evidence-based reading instruction;
- the District has received funding for a math project in grades 4, 5 and 6 to support students in achieving provincial standards for math. The project will focus on lagging skills and early intervention;
- the grade 9 math de-streaming documentation has explicit expectations about monitoring student achievement; and

- students with lagging speech skills can be successful in EFI with support. The school multi-disciplinary team may identify an appropriate intervention.

Chair Nadon-Campbell thanked Manager Oracheski and Superintendent Symmonds for their presentation.

7. Matters for Action

7.1 Election of a SEAC Representative for the Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE)

Chair Nadon-Campbell called for a volunteer to represent the Special Education Advisory Committee at meetings of the Advisory Committee for Equity.

As there were no volunteers, Chair Nadon-Campbell advised that this item will be brought back to the next meeting.

8. Discussion

8.1 Memo 21-093, Students Requesting Remote Learning from Specialized Program Classes (P. Symmonds)

Superintendent Symmonds provided an overview of Memo 21-093 with respect to students requesting remote learning from specialized program classes.

During the 2020-2021 school year, students in specialized program classes were supported through a blended model of remote and in-person learning. Many strategies used to support students in specialized classes did not work well in a virtual environment without additional funding. For the current 2021-2022 school year, specialized program classes will be only offered in-person; however, 24 students who would have normally been placed in specialized program classes have requested virtual learning. These students will be supported by learning support teachers, educational assistants, and LSS central supports in regular classes in the Ottawa-Carleton Virtual (OCV) school. They will not lose their spot in a specialized program class; however, they may not be able to return this year if there are no existing vacancies.

9. Department Update

9.1 Superintendent's Report

a. Launch of School Year 2021-2022

Superintendent Symmonds welcomed everyone back to SEAC and expressed the hope that everyone had a good summer break. He introduced System Principal Kate Stoudt who is replacing Christine

Kessler, and Mental Health Lead Emily Balla who is replacing Petra Duschner to lead the mental health support division.

Superintendent Symmonds advised that staff had three professional development (PD) days prior to the start of school on 9 September 2021. PD focussed on establishing connections and creating conditions for learning in a safe, warm and welcoming environment, normalizing the return to school, health and safety requirements to keep children in school for as much as possible, and literacy and numeracy instruction. Staff is aware that students have had varying experiences over the pandemic and are taking an asset-based approach on what students are now bringing to the table. LSS is working on ensuring Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports are in place for consultation, direct support and referral.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that the Board has mandated that staff, volunteers and coaches must provide proof of vaccination against COVID-19 by the end of September unless an exemption for medical or religious/creed human rights reasons has been granted. All staff and students in kindergarten to grade 12 must wear a mask and the District is required to report on the requirement for vaccination status.

The Ministry of Education's Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) 81 sets out responsibilities for school staff and nurses for the provision of school health support services. There is currently a nursing shortage across the province and some students who require nursing procedures such as tube feeding may not be able to attend school if there is no nurse available. Nursing services in schools are the responsibility of Home and Community Care Support Services (HCCSS) which is currently being transferred from the Local Integration Health Network (LIHN) to CHEO. Staff are aware of fewer than 5 students who are unable to attend due to the nursing shortage. Staff continue to collaborate with CHEO for the provision of nursing services and with schools to maintain connection and support programming while students remain home.

There is currently a shortage of yellow school bus and small vehicle drivers necessitating the cancellation of some transportation runs. This situation is similar in all school districts and the District is assessing whether students who currently receive individual transportation in a small vehicle are still in need of it or if they can be transported with other students on a yellow school bus. If transportation is not available, the student may be marked as absent with the same code used for missing school due to the cancellation of busses in inclement weather.

b. Summer Transition Programs

System Principal Amy Hannah advised that the District received funding from the Ministry of Education for a summer transition program for students with high special education needs. Approximately 100 elementary and 22 secondary students participated virtually in the program. Learning was individualized for each student depending on their requirements and early reports indicate that the program was successful. The program ended on 2 September 2021 and further information about the program will be provided in a memo in late September.

Manager Stacey Kay advised that 50 speech and language assessments and 50 psychoeducational assessments were conducted over the summer. Staff did not have the same opportunity to complete assessments over the past school year because of the pandemic, and they will continue to monitor the impact of last year as LSS utilizes support staff this year.

System Principal Kate Stoudt reported that one elementary and one secondary evidence-based social skills program was provided virtually for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The students were recommended by the central ASD team and the program has received positive feedback.

c. Continuity of Mental Health Supports

Mental Health Lead, Emily Balla, advised that mental health support was provided by psychologists and social workers. The support consisted of wellness checks, weekly meetings with students, groups for stress management for students in grades 7-11, and support for summer transition programs. Three drop-in sessions were held for parents wishing to speak with mental health professionals on supporting their children when returning to school. Students were identified by psychologists and social workers and parents of identified groups including Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour (BIPOC) students were invited by email to register for support groups.

Chair Nadon-Campbell advised that the Wabano and Odawa centres also provided summer programs for families and camps for students over the summer.

Trustee Ellis suggested that SEAC discuss mental health oversight at a future meeting and that this topic be added to the Forward Agenda for SEAC.

9.2 Schedule for the Review of the Special Education Plan (Standards)

System Principal Hannah advised that the schedule for the review of the Special Education Plan (Standards) was provided for information. The process that was used last year will continue for 2021-2022. Some standards will remain unchanged and some are out of the District's purview, for example, health supports. Staff will be looking for feedback from SEAC members via independent review or discussion at upcoming SEAC meetings.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that some of the content is provided to the District and cannot be changed, but having SEAC review the standards and providing feedback to staff on the readability and accessibility of the information to the community is very much appreciated. He encouraged the members to read the standards and provide feedback as they come forward to SEAC.

10. New Business

Chair Nadon-Campbell advised that the Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC) did not meet in June 2021. She noted that the Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE) needs a representative from SEAC. Terry Warner and Trustee Ellis represent SEAC on the Advisory Committee for Extended Day and Child Care Programs.

Mr. Warner advised that Chief Financial Officer Carson will replace Superintendent Duah as the Director's designate on the Advisory Committee for Extended Day and Child Care Programs.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Sonia Nadon-Campbell, Chair,
Special Education Advisory
Committee