

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITY REPORT

September 23, 2021

6:00 pm

Zoom Meeting

- Voting Members:** Ayan Karshe (Chair), Deepika Grover (Co-Chair), Nasrin Javanfar, Seema Lamba, Bronwyn Funicello, Carrie-Lynn Barkley, Larrisa Silver, Maria Teresa Garcia (Ottawa Community Immigrant Services), Chandonette Johnson (Jaku Konbit)
- Non-Voting Members:** Elaine Hayles, Said Mohamed, June Girvan, Yazhuo Zhang, Inini McHugh (Indigenous Education Advisory Committee), Edil Adan Ahmed, Rob Campbell (Trustee), Justine Bell (Trustee)
- Staff and Guests:** Donna Blackburn (Trustee), Lynn Scott (Trustee), Shannon Smith (Superintendent of Instruction), Prince Duah (Superintendent of Instruction), Tess Porter (Community Education Liaison), Sherwyn Solomon (Principal, Le Phare Elementary School), Melissa Collins (Principal of Equity, ESL/ELD K-12, Family Reception Centre and OCDSB/OCISO MLO Liaison), Chantel Smith (Vice-Principal, Robert. E. Wilson Public School), Sandy Owens (Manager, Business & Learning Technologies), Nicole Guthrie (Manager, Board Services), Sharan Samagh (Student Achievement Through Equity (SATE) Learning Coach), Jessica Munharvey (Student Achievement Through Equity (SATE) Learning Coach), Lorna Evans (Equity Coach (Anti-racism Focus)), Joanna Jackson Kelly (ESL/ELD Coach Itinerant, Equity), Sait Atas (Research Officer, Research, Evaluation & Analytics Division), Jacqueline Lawrence (Diversity and Equity Coordinator), Susan Gardner (President, Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation), Lisa Levitan (Guest), Lili Miller (Guest), Sharon Martinson (OCDSB Educator), Christian McCuaig (Communications Coordinator), Mike Guilbault (Audio/Visual Technician), Sue Baker (Acting Committee Coordinator)

1. Welcome

Chair Ayan Karshe called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m. She acknowledged that the committee is presently meeting on the unceded, unsundered Territory of the Anishinaabeg – Algonquin Nation whose presence here reaches back to

time immemorial. We extend our deepest gratitude for the ability to build our lives and meet on their land. We seek and will continue to seek to support and affirm, in whatever way possible, their rights as this land's rightful stewards and keepers.

On behalf of Co-Chair Grover and herself, Chair Karshe expressed the hope that all participants speak with compassion and intention, and that staff and trustees note the inherent power imbalance when they speak and that they speak from a place of ownership and accountability. Chair Karshe expressed the hope that "while we seek to change schools for the better, we also create space for those of us who, in the here and now, have experienced the consequences of white supremacy and systemic racism. Your lived experience is an asset here, everything you say or feel is valid and please know that I am immensely grateful for your presence in whatever capacity you have tonight and throughout the school year". It is also hoped that the Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE) moves forward from feelings of frustration and stagnation towards progress and aspirational action. She urged the members to speak up if there are issues, concerns or questions.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Larissa Silver,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

3. Community Discussion - Open Space

There was no community discussion.

4. Presentations

4.1 Family and Community Engagement (FACE) (P.Duah)

Superintendent Duah provided an overview of the Family and Community Engagement department (FACE) that was established to cultivate partnerships between schools and families. Some families may not feel welcome in their child's school or may not have opportunities to access information or contribute to their child's education. Where there are partnerships based on trust and practices that are respectful, partners can work together to support student achievement. One of the challenges is that educators may not have been exposed to training on family engagement practices. Some families have not been exposed to engagement with their child's school or may have had a negative past experience and not feel invited to become involved. Some parents may feel disrespected, unheard or not valued.

FACE will focus on building relational trust and linking to asset-based learning and development. It will look at policy and programming goals

and consider organizational and systemic conditions that may be present. FACE will work on skills and knowledge, build networks, share beliefs and values, and develop self-efficacy. Evidence of success is when families are seen as co-creators, supporters, encouragers, monitors, advocates and models of engagement. The District is hiring a FACE coordinator who will work with schools and central departments to share information with families and communities.

The District uses a Resource Allocation Index based on Socioeconomics (RAISE) index using data collected on poverty, family/community, mobility, cultural/linguistic diversity, and readiness to learn, to identify schools that will receive additional funding based on their need to mitigate barriers to learning.

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

- Staff is working on a comprehensive framework for FACE which will be shared with ACE when completed;
- FACE is working with other central departments and community agencies to prepare a list of existing resources that can be accessed by parents;
- Principals are sharing their experiences with family and community engagement with their staff and other principals, for example, somebody is brought into the school to explain terminology and programs to parents when report cards are issued;
- Various groups in the community (i.e., Equity Ottawa, a local immigrant organization, Britannia Woods Community House) have offered their services in supporting students and families. This information has been shared with principals and teachers;
- With respect to monitoring the impact of the FACE initiative over time, staff will establish annual goals and success indicators for schools. Some of these goals can be found in the District's 2020-2023 Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap, and the Board's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan;
- Recognizing that some school councils may not be fully representative of the school's demographics, staff will seek informal feedback from parents and community groups in addition to input from school councils;
- In the next few weeks, schools will work on their equity plans for the year and identify parent engagement as part of their work and track their progress in this area;

- One of the goals of FACE is to ensure that schools are reaching out and making schools more accessible, for example, holding school council meetings at a time and location convenient to the members;
- With COVID-19 safety measures restricting parents' access to schools, schools will reach out to parents and families to provide information or seek input;
- A family and community liaison committee will be established and interested people who are willing to help reach out to people would be welcome to join in;
- A job description for the permanent position of community coordinator has been developed and sent to Human Resources for review and salary classification. The job description will be shared after it has been approved by Human Resources;
- The job posting, screening of applicants, interview process, and selection of the successful candidate will be done in compliance with the Board's new policy on equitable recruitment and hiring;
- In response to a query regarding any internal process that may have been conducted to determine if there are underrepresented groups with lived experiences or designating the position for a particular marginalized community, Superintendent Duah advised that this is a new position without any comparators;
- At this time, the position does not require the successful applicant to be Indigenous or a person of colour;
- There may be a need to designate the position for a particular marginalized community for employment equity purposes based on a comparison with all other positions at the same level and pay scale;
- Qualifications for the position include, but are not limited to, having an equity lens and positive asset-based approach, familiarity with the community, and how to access resources;
- With respect to targeting specific minorities or schools, Superintendent Duah advised that there are many groups of families who are under-represented and some schools that may have a particular demographic. The goal is to remove traditional and historical barriers for anyone who is accessing resources and opportunities without any prioritizing of particular minority groups; and

Speaking in support of focusing on particular groups, Elaine Hayles noted that, through discussion, ACE favoured a focus on Black and Indigenous students.

4.2 The Student Achievement Through Equity Inquiry (P. Duah)

Superintendent Duah and some members of the Student Achievement Through Equity (SATE) team provided a presentation on the SATE Inquiry which will launch in October 2021. SATE is a pilot project in 11 OCDSB elementary schools to reduce barriers, overcome emotional and psychological hurdles, and create effective learning conditions by bringing children, families and communities together into the educational environment as participants and partners in the learning process.

Sharan Samagh advised that the SATE priorities include building capacity of educators to implement innovative, culturally relevant and responsive curricula within an anti-colonial, anti-racist and anti-oppressive framework; improve academic achievement and well-being for underserved students through early targeted intervention and support; foster teacher efficacy by using data to inform teaching and learning; cultivate inclusive school leaders who are committed to student achievement and well-being; create welcoming and inclusive classrooms and schools; establish strong school-parent/caregiver partnerships; and recognize, value, integrate, and celebrate diversity of the school and community.

Sherwyn Solomon advised that 11 English program schools were selected for the SATE inquiry based on provincial, district and school demographic data; scores on the Resource Allocation Index based on Socioeconomics (RAISE) index using data collected on poverty, family/community, mobility, cultural/linguistic diversity, and readiness to learn; input from instructional and graduation coaches, the Indigenous Education Team, the Equity Team; University of Ottawa teacher training program, and other external partners.

Tess Porter noted that she works with principals to establish a network of local agencies, residents and parents/caregivers, and school representatives to provide advice, support, and resources to the identified schools and their community. She establishes positive relationships and models effective cross-cultural communication. She also collaborates with schools and local agencies to establish community-based programs to support elementary students' literacy and numeracy skills.

Sharan Samagh noted that SATE work will focus on Tier 1 of the tiered intervention model with equity at the core to build a safe and collaborative learning community, deepen understanding for teaching and learning, and explore the interaction among teacher, students and content.

Chantal Smith advised that indicators of success include:

- Shifts in educator mindsets, language and instructional focus;
- Educators can identify the strengths and needs of students;

- Educators work collaboratively to meet the needs of students;
- Increase in teacher/student efficacy; and
- Building learning partnerships with students and families.

Jessica Munharvey advised that quality implementation depends both on the development of knowledge and skill and the companionship provided by peers as the new knowledge and skills are used to change the students' learning environment and as the effects on those students are studied.

Superintendent Duah advised that a learning network hub is a facilitated, peer-to-peer learning approach that builds capacity by leveraging the group's collective efficacy. Key features include purpose and focus, relationships, collaboration, inquiry, leadership, accountability, and capacity-building and support. Approximately 70% of the work is working with students learning through practice, 20% is collaborating with peers, and 10% is intentional learning.

The collective work will champion high learning expectations for all students; promote collaborative environments which foster reflection, inquiry and partnership with parents, caregivers and communities; ensure the breadth and depth of Tier 1 instructional practices are utilized and documented before moving to Tier 2; innovate instruction and administrative processes; and participate in the learning hub work in collaboration with SATE learning coaches.

Data will drive the work and be examined with an equity lens to learn who is underserved and what instructional actions will be taken. A school improvement plan will be a focus for SATE inquiry.

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

- Diversity and Equity Coordinator Jacqueline Lawrence is a member of the SATE Inquiry team. She noted that this work is representative of ACE's requests over the past 10-15 years to expand pathways for underserved students;
- It is not mandatory for all teachers in the SATE Inquiry schools to take the training program. Each principal will identify three teachers who, along with the principal or vice-principal and central instructional coaches, will take part in the learning and share their training with their colleagues;
- Substitute teacher coverage will be provided for teachers who are taking part in the learning during the school day;

- If the project is successful, it will be offered at a later date to other principals who have expressed interest;
- Nasrin Javanfar expressed the opinion that culturally appropriate learning materials can resonate with diverse families and connect them to the school. Sharan Samagh noted that culturally relevant resource materials can be harmful if the educator has not learned how to work appropriately with them;
- The first Wednesday in November is “Take Our Kids to Work Day”. Nasrin Javanfar suggested that students whose parent(s) are unable take them to work, be matched with professionals in the community who might be willing to host a student at their workplace;
- Hub work is part content and part practicing new strategies with a set group of students over five sessions. The hub focus will be the school’s focus as outlined in their school improvement plan;
- The intent of the learning is to “go deep” in order to make transformative change, and principals will consider the teachers’ work on equity and community engagement when assessing their performance;
- ACE members were asked to share this information with their communities;
- Parents will be informed about the SATE Inquiry in written communications, as well as being offered an opportunity to participate in virtual sessions to learn more;
- While expressing support for the SATE Inquiry, Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers’ Federation (OCETFO) Representative Susan Gardner expressed concern about asking teachers who are already working hard to keep their students safe during the pandemic, to do more; and
- The OCDSB Facilities department is negotiating price reductions for community use of schools to encourage basketball programs and coaches to use the District’s schools, when permitted.

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

Superintendent Smith and Research Officer Atas 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 (ENG), Early French Immersion (EFI), Middle French Immersion (MFI) 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 grades 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 EFI program, representation was lower amongst the English Language Learners (ELLs), students 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, 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 ENG program, 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 K-12 , and Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights, are using an equity lens and sharing responsibility for the work.

LSS 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 K-12 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;
- Student Achievement Through Equity (SATE) inquiry to look at factors contributing to student success and creating situations to overcome barriers;

Learning 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 Individual Education Plans (IEP);
- mental health promotion and prevention (including Culturally Responsive 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 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);
- introduction of Indigenous Languages (elementary and secondary);

Innovation & Adolescent Learning Department:

- creation of multi-credit packages for English as a Second Language (ESL)/English Language Development (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 members of the Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE), the following points were noted:

- In response to a query with respect to whether staffing allocations have increased to support the workload of teachers with a high number of students with special education needs, Superintendent Smith advised that, as well as interrogating structures, the mindset needs to change to see learners as bearers of strength rather than bearers of deficit;
- Noting that mathematics is very language-based, Nasrin Javanfar suggested that a different approach be taken when teaching mathematics, for example, using the Kumon approach of repetitive number drills for students whose first language is not English;
- Elaine Hayles queried whether data for particular groups could be shared with community groups for their analysis and possible suggestions for improvement. Staff advised that the full report, attached as Appendix A to Report 21-046, contains the disaggregation of data for every community group that was surveyed. The data is not disaggregated by race. He noted that the District is developing a policy regarding the sharing of identity-based data with the community;

- Hayles expressed the opinion that the OCDSB is failing Indigenous students, students with special needs, and students of race, and that she requires simplified data to bring to the community for their information;
- Lili Miller expressed the view that the data demonstrates racism in the education system because Black and Indigenous students may be perceived as less intelligent than White students. She added that this perception needs to be addressed as soon as possible;
- Superintendent Smith noted that there are many ways that parents and students receive messaging that guides their decision-making with respect to programs and courses;
- Equity Coach Lorna Evans noted that a grade 9 Reach Ahead course was offered to Black and Indigenous students over the summer where they learned about their culture and background;
- Indigenous Education Advisory Council Representative Inini McHugh noted that the graduation rate for Indigenous students is 60%. He contended that the educational system is failing these students and they need land-based teaching on language, culture and community for them to be successful;

Trustee Lynn Scott reiterated the need to provide information to teachers to help them provide advice to parents on course and program selection. She submitted that interested students who express an interest in a particular program or course should be allowed to pursue their interests.

5. Matters for Action

5.1 The Establishment of Sub-Committees

Co-Chairs Karshe and Grover proposed that ACE strike the following seven sub-committees:

1. Equity and Human Resources
2. Data Reports
3. Governance of Equity
4. Equity in Curriculum Design
5. Equity in Policy Design
6. 2SLGTBQ+
7. Community Outreach

Co-Chair Grover submitted that ACE members are committed to investing time in ACE if they can see results in equity. They are looking for the Indigenous, Equity, and Human Rights Roadmap to deliver results quickly, for policy reviews to achieve their intended impact, and ways for ACE to drive the equity conversation and propose recommendations to the Committee of the Whole. Some members have expressed concern about how ACE stays connected to community perspectives.

Co-Chair Grover and Chair Karshe expressed the view that these sub-committees could provide an opportunity to increase community engagement if they are open to ACE non-members. It is their intent to send out a newsletter to ACE members with more information, and call for members to select one or more sub-committees that are of interest to them.

Ms. Hayles, expressed concern that the list of proposed sub-committees includes only one group (2SLGTBQ+) and excludes all other groups, including the Black community. She requested that the 2SLGTBQ+ group be eliminated so that other groups can be represented.

Lisa Levitan expressed the opinion that Jewish people are dealing with antisemitism and oppression of their religious freedoms. She noted that Jewish people are not only white and include many races from around the world. Many are living in fear and hiding their identity, and they need protection.

With respect to Jewish representation on ACE, Diversity and Equity Coordinator Jacqueline Lawrence noted that ACE has had Jewish members in the past.

6. Reports

6.1 Superintendent's Report

Due to the lateness of the hour, Chair Karshe requested that the Superintendent's report be added to the newsletter.

6.2 27 May 2021, ACE Report

Receipt of the 27 May 2021 ACE report was deferred to the 28 October 2021 ACE meeting.

7. New Business and Event Announcements

There was no new business.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

Ayan Karshe