

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITY REPORT

**November 25, 2021**

**6:00 pm**

**Zoom Meeting**

- Voting Members:** Ayan Karshe (Chair), Deepika Grover (Co-Chair), Nasrin Javanfar, Elizabeth Sweeney, Bronwyn Funicello, Carrie-Lynn Barkley, Ryan Doucette (Young Leaders Advisory Council), Chandonette Johnson (Jaku Konbit), Kahmaria Pingue (Parents for Diversity), Donnielle Roman (Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization)
- Non-Voting Members:** Elaine Hayles, Bob Dawson, Said Mohamed, Meghan Wills, 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), Camille Williams-Taylor (Director of Education), Carolyn Tanner (Human Rights and Equity Advisor), Shannon Smith (Superintendent of Instruction) Shawn Lehman (Superintendent of Instruction), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Melissa Collins (System Principal, Equity), Jacqueline Lawrence (Equity and Diversity Coordinator), Lorna Evans (Equity Instructional Coach), Tess Porter (Graduation Coach for Black Students), Kusha Dadui (Trans and Gender Diverse Student Support Coordinator), Jennifer Mbang (Human Rights Officer), Christina Saad (Human Rights Officer), Lili Miller (Guest), Shilpa Rao (Student Senator), Leigh Fenton (Board/Committee Coordinator, Board Services)

### 1. Welcome

Co-chair Karshe opened the meeting at 6:04 p.m. She welcomed Student Senator, Shilpa Rao, and Director of Education, Camille Williams-Taylor. Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner introduced the newly-hired Human Rights Officers', Jennifer Mbang and Christina Saad.

Co-chair Karshe acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on the unceded, unsurrendered Territory of the Anishinaabeg Algonquin Nation, whose presence reaches back to time immemorial and to the present moment. She stated that as settlers, immigrants, migrants and visitors on their land, may the meeting participants seek to honour the Algonquin people, as the land's rightful stewards

and keepers. She highlighted the struggles of the Inuit people who have to leave their homes, families and communities and come south for opportunities and basic rights, and to the land defenders, especially those on Wet-su-weten land, who are being harmed and violated for corporate greed and national pride. She proclaimed a stance of solidarity with all First Nation, Inuit and Métis people, and subscribed to taking a more active role in efforts to support Indigenous people in every space we share.

Co-chair Karshe introduced the practice of decolonizing the Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE) meetings by removing routine motions from agenda items. She noted that the structure of the meetings is a work in progress and requested that members share their thoughts for further improvements.

## 2. Community Discussion - Open Space

Co-Chair Karshe noted that the presentation under 3.2. Educator Update from the Sankofa Summer Academy for Black Youth will appear on an ACE agenda at a later meeting date. The committee agreed to discuss the recent Ministry of Education request to provide input on the following five key areas for education funding for the 2022-23 school year:

- Mental Health Supports: Are Ministry supports helping school boards meet the needs of their students?
- The Learning Opportunities Grant: Two-thirds of funding for students who are at greater risk of poor academic achievement is currently based on 2006 Census data. What is the best way to update it, and should the demographic component be focused on specific outcomes?
- Urban and Priority High Schools: This funding currently goes to 12 school boards with a high proportion of urban schools. However, provincial demographics are changing. What factors should be considered in updating the school board list? How can the Ministry ensure the funding is spent on “academically challenged at-risk students”?
- The New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP): Currently new teachers are evaluated twice in their first 12 months of employment. Should the funding boards receive to support new teachers and teacher evaluations be updated?
- Reducing Administration Costs and "Red Tape": What more could be done to reduce red tape in the education sector, and address overlap or duplication in funding and reporting?

During discussion the following suggestions were noted:

### Mental Health Supports

- Additional funds are required to bolster staffing on the Indigenous Education Teams across the province;

- Invest in life skills training that mental health support requires, such as emotional intelligence and self-regulation;
- Specify the types of supports and services available within the broad definition of the mental health umbrella;
- Be proactive about mental health support for students during the current event anxiety of uprisings and pandemic waves;
- Expedite greater access to mental health support to promote general well-being, rather than only providing help to those experiencing immediate mental health interventions;
- Provide mental health support through the lens of community wellness; and
- Break-down the barriers that permit community partners to assist with provisions of mental health support for students.

#### The Learning Opportunities Grant

- Devise a system of assessment and accountability that ensures funding is being directed to at-risk students.

#### Urban and Priority High Schools

- Additional in-person staffing is required at Family Reception Centres to consistently support families relocating;
- Simplify school board websites to ensure everyone is able to access the necessary information; and
- Provide funding to ensure all families can access tutoring support.

#### The New Teacher Induction Program

- Introduce mindfulness and inclusivity training with social justice work;
- Use an equity and diversity lens, to examine how hires are being evaluated;
- Hire a Black, Indigenous, or People(s) of Colour (BIPOC) organization to be involved in the hiring and evaluation process;
- Study the current evaluation process for cultural biases within standardized testing; and
- During an evaluation of the current process, rate whether NTIP is effective, meets the needs of teachers and its impact on students.

#### Reducing Administration Costs and "Red Tape"

Some members commented that in order to provide feedback in this area, it would be necessary to see an organizational chart of the administration team. It was noted that requests have been made previously for an OCDSB organizational chart.

Co-chair Karshe advised that she will send the suggestions into the Ministry for consideration on behalf of ACE.

### 3. Presentations

#### 3.1 OCDSB Gender Identity and Gender Expression Guide

Equity Instructional Coach Rice delivered a slide presentation on the revised Gender Identity and Gender Expression Guide (the Guide). She acknowledged the primary staff involved in developing and actualizing the revised Guide. Trans and Gender Diverse Student Support Coordinator Dadui worked on the Guide, leveraging his extensive experience of working with trans and gender diverse youth. Equity Instructional Coach Rice noted that both she and Equity Instructional Coach Evans were a part of the team to launch the Guide. Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner is leading the formation of an accompanying Procedure for Gender and 2SLGBTQ+ Inclusivity in OCDSB Schools.

The original Guide, entitled OCDSB Gender Identity and Gender Expression Guide, was published in 2016. Over the past five years, there has been a significant shift in the approach from accommodating individual students who are “out” trans and gender diverse students to, instead, fostering gender inclusive learning environments for all students. Significant revisions to the Guide included:

- Decolonizing gender from an Indigenous perspective, written by a member of the Indigenous Education Team;
- Navigating intersectional identities;
- Letting students lead;
- Inclusive design of the school facilities;
- Neutral pronouns in the French language;
- Guide to social transition planning; and
- Five things to know about supporting trans students

Revisions to the Guide were completed through extensive collaboration between community partners, OCDSB students and staff from diverse identities and communities. The revised guide is consistent with the pillars of the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, in particular, the culture of caring and social responsibility. The Guide is aligned with goals within the Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap (the Roadmap). The Guide is digital and accessible on the website. Equity Instructional Coach Rice requested that further feedback on ways to improve the Guide be shared with her via email.

Equity Instructional Coach Rice reported that 2SLGBTQ+ people have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. She reviewed the impact of systemic oppression on the 2SLGBTQ+ population, including feelings of isolation, erasure and intergenerational trauma. She noted that without a sense of well-being, learning is stifled. Many incidents go unreported because students do not feel safe in reporting or question the benefits to reporting when remedial outcomes are not evident.

Lists of online resources and 2SLGBTQ+ community connections were shared.

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

- Equity Instructional Coach Rice confirmed that on rare occasions, when parents are not supportive of their children's identity choice, staff invites parents to engage in conversations focused on the Ontario Human Rights Code, which stipulates that all children have a right to be supported and protected in their gender identity and gender expression;
- Generally, establishing friendships and social integrations are more challenging in the elementary panel in comparison to the secondary panel. It is important that the school staff help to navigate those relationships to ensure that the student does not feel isolated when expressing their identity, such as washroom access;
- Reported incidents of harassment, bullying and micro aggressions are tracked by the school administration;
- Prepare an instructional list teaching educators about ways to uphold an inclusive learning environment to prevent vulnerable students from being harmed by the teachings in school;
- Develop a teacher 'report card' to audit the fulfillment of expectations contained in the Guide;
- On the District website, develop an accessible portal for human right complaints;
- Equity Instructional Coach Rice reported that there are three District-wide virtual hang-out spaces for trans and gender diverse students: Gender Joy, Genders & Sexualities Alliance (GSA), and Rainbow Room. The spaces are operated by young staff members. It is in those safe spaces that staff hear about events occurring in schools and those trusted adults follow-up with school administrators or escalate the matter to the Human Rights and Equity Office;
- To prevent and interrupt a possible harmful situation for a student, Equity Instructional Coach Rice and Trans and Gender Diverse Student Support Coordinator Dadui can visit any member of school

staff for special training or support at any time, not only on professional development (PD) days;

- One full page of the District website is designated for 2SLGBTQ+ resource information for students and families;
- Each school library has at least a modest set of books on the shelves that support 2SLGBTQ+ identities to help staff and students see themselves represented in literature;
- Trans and Gender Diverse Student Support Coordinator Dadui expressed his encouragement about the large number of staff he has fostered relationships with and their efforts to improve support for students with varying identities;
- The Guide stipulates that teaching professionals have a legal responsibility to support trans and gender diverse students;
- Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner advised that the current process for lodging and escalating a complaint is the following order: teacher, principal, superintendent, and then the Director of Education. She noted that cases of workplace harassment or staff misconduct are investigated through separate internal investigators. There is currently no formal process for bringing a complaint to the Office of the Human Rights and Equity Advisor. The establishment of a human rights policy and associated procedures will create a formal process for raising complaints with the Office of the Human Rights and Equity Advisor;
- Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner shared that the Human Rights Policy, currently in draft form, will be discussed and approved in the coming months by the Board of Trustees. The process for raising human rights complaints will be determined by a separate procedure under the new policy. She expressed the view that the arm's length Office of the Human Rights and Equity Advisor should not be the default mechanism for fielding complaints. Many human rights complaints can be appropriately addressed through the existing structures within the school board system. Sensitive, prompt, and caring resolutions to complaints are required. In human rights policy consultations, students attested that leveraging a relationship with a trusted adult is vital to them when raising concerns about the school community; and
- Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner confirmed that anonymous complaints can be submitted. She noted that there are concerns of how to balance the fairness of the process when a complaint is collected anonymously.

#### 4. Matters for Action

##### 4.1 The Establishment of Sub-Committees

Co-Chair Grover outlined the criteria for generating a list of potential ACE subcommittees, including alignment with the Roadmap, placing a focus on actions stemming from policy reviews and reports, and monitoring results. The process for generating the sub-committee list included dividing the six strategic actions into thematic groups.

The following chart represents four initiatives and the names of those who volunteered to support these conversations in sub-committees:

<b>Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE) Sub-committees 2021-2022</b>	
<b><u>Initiatives</u></b>	<b><u>ACE Member Volunteers</u></b>
Equity and Human Resources	Seema Lamba, Jeannine Bradley
Community Voices/Community Engagement	Nasrin Javanfar, Inini McHugh
Meeting the Needs of Underserved Students	Nasrin Javanfar, Kahmaria Pingue, Meaghan Wills
Applying Data Reports to Policy	Ryan Doucette, Said Mohammed

Though there was interest in striking an Authentic Student Learning Experience (ALSE) subcommittee, after further consideration, it was decided that the topic can be included into the Community Voices and Community Engagement Subcommittee.

In terms of a subcommittee, the 'Decolonization of Meetings' did not attract volunteer interest. Subsequently, Committee Coordinator Fenton researched best practices and subsequently offered suggestions to the ACE co-chairs.

It was reiterated that non-members of ACE may join these subcommittee discussions. Co-chair Grover asked ACE members to explore potential interest within their communities for joining subcommittees. She added that she and Co-chair Karshe appreciated the presence of the membership at ACE meetings and any additional effort and energy is welcome and honoured.

## 5. Reports

### 5.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Smith provided the committee with a pre-circulated Equity and Indigenous Education departmental report.

Equity and Diversity Coordinator Lawrence reported that on the 12 November 2021, a training session was held for secondary school educators, part of an ongoing PD series developed for staff to build and expand their capacities for inclusivity. The title of the program was “Maximizing Student Success and Minimizing Harm through an Anti-oppression Lens”. The messages included creating safe spaces for school teams, upholding the human rights of staff colleagues and students, creating learning conditions which are founded on the principles of decolonization, de-streaming, culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, gender inclusivity and being accountable to repair relationships. Educators were given the opportunity to work in groups to share lived experiences.

In alignment with the goals within the Roadmap to celebrate identity and representation in the school community, the Indigenous and Black graduation coaches piloted the Black Youth Forum’s ‘Ask Me What I Do’ Series. The series ran in parallel to the ‘Take Our Kids to Work Day’ school board endeavour. There were eight Indigenous and Black professionals who shared their professions with students, including Dr. Clyde Ledbetter, a professor who has been teaching and publishing on the subject of African World Studies for over a decade. Students from Ridgemont High School participated in the pilot by preparing some key questions and co-facilitating the event.

The Black Youth Forum course has begun, for the third consecutive year. The historical context of the development of this course began five years ago; students attending the Black Youth Forum provided the feedback that the forum could potentially transform into a course. Subsequently, a course was designed to provide a credit opportunity and an opportunity to generate volunteer hours for graduation purposes. The course began three weeks ago with 60 students enrolled and 10 students on the waiting list. As the course is offered virtually, parents have joined their children to listen to the sessions. The course is a unique, experiential learning connection that is grounded in Black history, culture and community. The Rainbow Youth Forum course has emulated the same style of teaching and will begin their first class in the 2021-2022 school year.

Equity Instructional Coach Evans noted that at the beginning of the month of November 2021, educators were sent a resource spreadsheet to use in classrooms, along with a calendar of holy days and dates of significance. These sets of communications will be sent on a monthly basis.

On 30 November 2021 from 3:30 – 4:30 p.m. a seminar will be offered on how to run a Black excellence club. Participation is expected from early childhood educators (ECEs), teaching staff and administrators.



Superintendent Smith announced the appointment of Nancy Brady, new Superintendent of Instruction. Since 2004, Ms. Brady has been a principal in both elementary and secondary OCDSB schools. Ms. Brady has demonstrated a strong commitment to understanding the needs of the school community and working collaboratively to identify and overcome systemic barriers to education. From July 2019 to July 2020, she served as president of the Ontario Principals' Council. In that role, she had influence across the province and has a generous understanding of current events in the field of education.

In response to questions or comments, the following points were noted:

- Greater emphasis on inclusivity training for teachers is required in the elementary panel because children first encounter racism and discrimination when they leave the home and enter the school system;
- Superintendent Smith noted that during the secondary educator professional development day on 12 November 2021, elementary educators were engaged in caregiver/parent to teacher interviews; however there are other opportunities throughout the year when both panels concentrate on mandatory PD. The Indigenous Education Team holds voluntary weekly drop-ins;
- Equity Instructional Coach Evans shared that the drop-in centres are available for educators or they may choose to email or connect with the Instructional Coaches by phone or video call;
- The District supports the Inuuqatigiit Bridging the Gap (BTG) program which provides critical support to Inuit students and increases the knowledge and awareness of all students about Inuit history, culture, and values. Program components include one-on-one student support, advocacy, consultation, school liaison, classroom presentations, parental support and education, cultural awareness and education workshops for teachers, administrators, and support staff;
- Director Williams-Taylor acknowledged that experiences students and families have at the beginning of their education journey in schools shape their experiences in secondary school. She reported that in PD sessions, intentional consideration is centered on human rights, equity, inclusion and accountability training for educators. Part of the challenge is to put the training into practice; therefore to supplement the training, educators are sent monthly resource newsletters and the school libraries are supplied with books and other publications. A connection must be built between the training and resource framework to become habits of mind and practice;

- Under the Superintendent's Report agenda item, a suggestion was made to, in future, include a list of new hires featuring underrepresented and/or underserved employee groups and titles of the positions. Superintendent Smith noted that she will take the suggestion under advisement;
- Superintendent Smith shared that in the selection process for the recent superintendent vacancy, she was interviewed as the Superintendent of Equity and Indigenous Education and brought forward some issues that have been raised at ACE. She reported that she is a part of a committee for the selection of principals and vice principals. Equity and Diversity Coordinator Lawrence provided training for the assessors for the selection committee. Senior administrators continue to work with the Human Resources Department to find opportunities as the staffing processes unfold throughout the year; and
- Share data on successful applicants for jobs at the District. Attention should be given to having representation for all identities, along with the spectrum of backgrounds and experiences.

## 5.2 Revised ACE Report, 27 May 2021

The Advisory Committee on Equity Report of 27 May 2021 was received.

Superintendent Smith noted that the 27 May 2021 report was amended on folio 7 to read: The student said her article led to the removal of Lord of the Flies as educational material at her school. (Update from school: Based on input from students, the school has been working in recent years to update reading lists to reflect more diverse authors. While the book cited is not currently being taught, it is still available as an option of study.)

Superintendent Smith highlighted that media coverage magnified the use of the Lord of the Flies book at the District. She noted the District's approach to decision making on the selection of meaningful books for the curriculum encourages conversations among the students and educators alike.

## 5.3 ACE Report, 28 October 2021

The Advisory Committee on Equity Report of 28 October 2021 was received.

## 5.4 Committee of the Whole Report

There was no Committee of the Whole Report.

## 6. New Business and Event Announcements

Co-chair Karshe reported that the ACE co-chairs have been invited to present their accomplishments from the 2020-2021 year at the Board meeting on 25 January 2022. Members are welcome to send emails if there are any particular items that they wish for the co- chairs to highlight during the 10 minute presentation to the trustees.

Equity Instructional Coach Evans highlighted the work of Trans and Gender Diverse Student Support Coordinator Dadui in the assembly of a webinar panel discussion for the Trans Day of Remembrance, which took place on 18 November 2021. The webinar aimed to help participants learn more about transgender identity and support for trans and gender diverse students, and was an opportunity to hear stories of resilience from transgender folks who are thriving.

### 6.1 Public Broadcasting of the Meetings for the Advisory Committee on Equity

Co-Chair Karshe raised the question of live-streaming the ACE meetings to the general public.

Members shared that there were both positive and negative reasons about publicly broadcasted meetings. Centering feelings of safety for the membership, along with community involvement in ACE meetings were deemed a priority.

Co-chair Karshe urged the committee to consider the possibility, as public broadcasting will be added to the agenda as an item on the 27 January 2022 meeting for a decision.

## 7. Closing

Co-chair Grover requested the following topics at future ACE meetings: a presentation on the content and roll-out of equity training for staff, an update on the implementation of Policy P. 146 HR Equitable Recruitment, Hiring and Promotion, including results, and a presentation of the last of the four identity-based data collection reports from the Valuing Voices: *Identity Matters!* survey results. She requested the opportunity for ACE members to connect with anti-racist educators, their allies, and affinity groups.

The meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

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Co-chair Ayan Karshe  
and Co-chair Deepika Gover

