



## SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

**Wednesday, February 2, 2022, 7:00 pm**  
**Zoom Meeting**

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| Members:                                        | Christine Boothby (Trustee), Rob Campbell (Trustee), Chris Ellis (Trustee), Sonia Nadon-Campbell (Community Representative), Uzma Ihsanullah (Down Syndrome Association), Jim Harris (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children), Terry Warner (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children, Alternate), Cathy Miedema (Association for Bright Children), Katherine Kacew (Autism Ontario, Ottawa Chapter, Alternate), Dr. Maggie Mamen (Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton), Mourad Graidia (OCASC, Alternate)                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Association<br>Representatives (Non<br>Voting): | Connie Allen (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, PSSP), Jennifer Titley (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation), 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), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Nancy Brady (Superintendent of Instruction), Michael Carson (Chief Financial Officer), Teri Adamthwaite, (Manager, Financial Planning), Stacey Kay (Manager, Learning Support Services), Emily Balla (Mental Health Lead), Amy Hannah (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Kate Stoudt (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Maya Rattray (Supervisor, Speech Language Pathology and Occupational Therapy), Jennifer Mbang (Human Rights Officer), Viki Holan (Learning Support Teacher), Stephanie King (Learning Support Teacher), Leigh Fenton (Board/Committee Coordinator) |

### 1. Call to Order

Chair Nadon-Campbell called the meeting to order at 7:01 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 Cathy Miedema,**

**THAT the agenda be approved.**

**Carried**

3. Delegations

There were no delegations.

4. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

4.1 SEAC Report, 5 January 2022

**Moved by Cathy Miedema,**

**THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee Report dated 5 January 2022 report be received.**

**Carried**

4.2 Forward Agenda

The SEAC forward agenda was provided for information.

In response to a query from Dr. Mamen, Superintendent Symmonds reported that Learning Support Services (LSS) is drafting a memo, to be shared with the committee in March 2022, relating to the provincial de-streaming of grade 9 mathematics.

5. Presentations

5.1 2021-2022 Budget Overview and 2022-2023 Special Education Funding Discussion (M. Carson)

Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Carson introduced Ms. Teri Adamthwaite, Team Manager, Financial Planning, who prepared the financial summaries on the special education funding.

CFO Carson outlined the documents contained in the package, highlighting that funds "enveloped" for special education may only be used for their specified purpose. Should funds remain unspent during one school year, the funds would need to be carried over to the following year's envelope. He directed members to the District website where documents provided by the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) explain the technicalities of the special education funding. For the 2021-2022 school year, the total of funding allocated to special education was approximately \$125,000,000. Approximately twelve percent of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board's (OCDSBs) budget is identified to provide specific additional support to students accessing special education services. For

the current 2021-2022 school year, the District had overspent on the special education priorities by \$10,000,000. Many new funding pressures have arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. At present, more than half of the total special education expenses relate to teacher and education assistant (EA) salaries. There are more than 600 full time equivalent (FTE) teachers assigned to support students in the special education programs and another 800 FTE EAs. Due to the national labour shortage, the District has had difficulty staffing all available roles. There are 90 Professional Services FTEs and a portion of those salaries are allocated from the operating budget. CFO Carson noted that LSS has made short term requests to supplement spending during the 2021-2022 school year. The Senior Team makes decisions such as these when unspent, unenveloped funds can be reallocated for specific initiatives.

CFO Carson noted that funding for special education has increased substantially year-over-year. On a weekly basis, staff advocate to The Ministry through the Ontario Public School Board Association (OPSBA) to provide supplementary information on the calculation used to determine specific grants that are based on local factors such as population, demographics, single-parent families, economics and education. Due to the issues and challenges with census taking, the factors stand to be re-examined to meet additional demands within the Ottawa-Carleton region. The Ministry has been responsive to a greater need to provide funding for mental health services since the provincial closure of schools in March 2020.

CFO Carson explained that two thirds of the District's budget is governed either by collective agreements or the Ministry's requirements for class sizes. Decisions on academic staffing are made annually in March; the timeline allows the process of staffing to unfold before the end of June. Typically, the Ministry does not release the budgetary funding information until the month of April. With the uncertainty of the state of the COVID-19 pandemic and steps for post-pandemic recovery, CFO Carson expressed the view that the Ministry's budget announcement will not be delivered all at once, but rather in several small announcements. During discussion and in response to questions, the following points were noted:

- Some revenue guarantees are provided by the Ministry; however, the majority of revenue stems from enrolment. Lower District-wide enrolment has an impact on special education funding. Discussions with the Ministry are occurring that highlight the requirement to increase grant funding based-on the incidence of student need;
- All school boards do not have identical frequencies for which they perform the Identification, Placement and Review Committees (IPRC);

- The Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF) provided for the continuity of mental health support programming over the summer of 2021. Announcements for further PPF funding will come in the spring;
- In the expense summary, approximately \$1,000,000 is attributed to the Special Equipment Amount (SEA) deductible for equipment claims;
- For the purposes of reporting, the District must seek funding outside of the special education envelope to support students accessing mental health supports who do not identify as exceptional. There are significant mental health services supports which exist outside of the special education budget;
- Superintendent Symmonds will follow-up with added detail on the new line-item expenditure for the 'School Resource Officer Transition Supports'; and
- In response to a request to outline the budget implications between differing costs associated with IPRCs and Individual Education Plans (IEPs), Superintendent Symmonds noted that there are various factors involved in the division of expenses, proving it difficult to formulate a financial breakdown.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that consulting with the committee on investing in common themes assists him with budgetary discussions and the alignment of spending priorities with senior staff.

SEAC members were divided into three groups with each group considering the following question: "From your association's perspective and your involvement on SEAC, identify three recurring themes to be considered in the development of the 2022-2023 budget."

Facilitators reported on the break-out room discussions as follows:

- The curriculum has been disrupted for two years in the COVID-19 pandemic. When students feel that they are unable to understand the concepts being taught in classrooms, their mental health is affected. The socialization loss during the pandemic years is significant. Impacts are even greater for students with special education needs. Capacity must be built to help teachers identify and address gaps;
- Bolster Tier 1 intervention training for staff. Students should be identified as candidates requiring added services and supports in the early years of learning;
- Establish supports and services for the de-streaming of grade 9 mathematics;

- Budget assumptions are required to successfully complete the recommendations contained in the forthcoming Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) on the Right to Read Inquiry;
- Recruit more professionals to practice in schools (Social Workers, Occupational Therapists (OT), Speech Language Pathologists (SLP), Physiotherapists);
- Revisit criteria and develop strategies for recruitment and retention of EAs. Parents with experience supporting groups of children could be trained to support classrooms;
- Newcomers to Canada may struggle with a new education system. English Language Learners (ELL) may have special education needs; however the needs are not easily identified due to the English language component for testing. In particular, secondary ELL students do not have access to timely diagnostics and interventions;
- The itinerant teacher (IT) model of support for students is an outstanding model;
- Additional funding is required for specific needs training and mentorship of EAs;
- Families of gifted students are frustrated about the long process involved to access to specialized program classes (SPCs);
- Some parents question whether teachers have the capacity to support all of the profiles of the students;
- Salaries for Professional Student Service Personnel (PSSP) members are seen as not competitive at the District, with pay gaps equating to \$20,000 - \$30,000 per year;
- PSSP members do extra work such as creating kits, training and resources in addition to their regular jobs, which leads to a work-life imbalance and eventual resignation in some cases;
- Evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the IEP to ensure that they are being implemented and followed properly;
- Implement thorough transition planning for students who may not be on a pathway to college or university; and
- Invest in ways to help parents better connect with their children's education to enable support at home for students.

CFO Carson noted that the staff recommended budget will be presented at a May 2022 (COW) Committee of the Whole Budget Meeting.

Superintendent Symmonds requested that Committee Coordinator Fenton circulate a document written by The Provincial Parent Associations Advisory Committee on Special Education Committee (PAAC on SEAC), "SEAC Resource Guide on Special Education Funding 2021".

6. Discussion

6.1 Memo No. 22-016, PPM 81 Consultation

Your Committee had before it Memo 22-016, regarding the consultation changes to Policy and Program Memorandum (PPM 81) Provision of Health Support Services in School Settings.

Superintendent Symmonds recalled that during the SEAC meeting of 5 January 2022, a letter was brought forward from the Association of Chief Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario District School Boards (ACSLP) presenting a strong case for SLPs to act solely under the Ministry of Education. Since the last meeting a memo was received from the Ministry requesting the school boards provide feedback on the draft PPM 81 in a focus group meeting or in writing by 11 February 2022. District staff are scheduled to participate in a focus group on 7 February 2022.

Superintendent Symmonds highlighted that there are some dramatic changes to PPM 81. LSS is examining the implications on the OCDSB school community, such as changes to the school-based rehabilitation services and the provision of health services pertaining to medical injections and feeding tubes.

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

- The ability for a parent or caregiver to advocate for their children becomes more complex when there are three shared services partners within the government. Determine a main interventionist for these services;
- The teachers unions are being informed of the timelines for the PPM 81 consultation, including the Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education and Clifford Bowey Public Schools;
- The College of Psychologists of Ontario has been required to register Applied Behaviour Analysts (ABAs), which means that these professionals will be governed under the *Regulated Health Professions Act*. A concern was raised regarding the proficient ability to follow the scope of practice requirements under professional legislation and the potential conflicting requirements under the *Education Act*;
- There are assumptions in the draft that may be a misrepresentation on a school board's capacity to provide health services to students;

- The funding for students should to be coordinated and centred on the needs of children, youth and their families and follow the student, rather than be split into different service providers;
- Ontario's Special Needs Strategy was a previous focus of SEAC and the model was regarded as a progressive way to support students accessing special needs support;
- There is a fragmentation of services when using community service providers. Students develop personal relationships with their professional contacts. If their contact changes, they must rebuild trust and, in turn, potentially regress in their treatment plans. Consistency of services are better aligned when services are school-based;
- The draft assumes the clinical model of SLP services fits within the educational framework; however the difference between the models is significant when attempting to ensure a tiered approach to intervention and promote a universal design for learning (UDL); and
- The revision to PPM 81 does not reflect best practices outlined in Speech-Language & Audiology Canada's (SAC) position paper on Speech-Language Pathology Service Delivery Models in Schools.

In advance of the meeting, Ms. Allen noted that she forwarded the position statement released by the Ontario Speech-Language Association (OSLA), the professional association representing Speech-Language Pathologists across Ontario. She shared that the report addresses the following:

- The need for continued integration and standardization of Speech Language Pathology in Ontario schools;
- Concerns with PPM 81 and the Inter-ministerial Guidelines for Provision of Speech and Language Services;
- Increased concerns with pre-school to school transitions; and
- Continued challenges from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Allen highlighted that the draft PPM 81 as currently written, does not address the issues raised by OSLA, the issues raised by the ACSLP, nor the issues raised by the recent letter sent to the Ministries by SEAC. The draft PPM 81 neglects to address systemic issues, across the province and across all three Ministries, in regards to funding and equity of access to services, transitions, oversight and responsibility for services, fragmentation of services, waitlists, administrative burden impacting direct services, and lack of transparency. The draft PPM 81 leaves these overarching and fundamental issues to local agencies to resolve, placing the quality and efficiency of services for students, families and educators in the District at risk. She placed importance on the ability to help parents

and guardians seamlessly navigate the education system to obtain the services required for their children and youth. She noted that the draft encourages school boards to explain to families about the procedure to acquiring services; however, the procedures have become additionally complicated to communicate.

## 7. Department Update

### 7.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Symmonds briefly reported on the following:

- Emily Balla was hired as the Mental Health Lead for the District;
- Kathryn Langevin retired from a long career in social work. The LSS Department greatly benefited from her ongoing feedback and support on the development of new strategies to support students. Emily Locke is the successful candidate for the role of Supervisor of Social Work Services; and
- Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) is expected to release the results of the Right to Read Inquiry in February 2022. The extensive report is assessing school boards against five benchmarks that are part of an effective systematic approach to teaching all students to read: universal design for learning (UDL), mandatory early screening, reading intervention programs, effective accommodation and psycho-educational assessments. LSS will share the highlights of the report with SEAC and plan a way forward to address the recommendations found within the report; and
- In-person students have returned to classrooms. Some schools have been closed due to COVID-19 outbreaks. Challenges are ever-present to find replacement staff for those educators required to isolate due to the viral infection.

#### a. Report 22-019, Integrated Transition Planning

Your Committee had before it Report 22-019, Integrated Transition Planning, to provide information and gather feedback on integrated transition planning for students with developmental disabilities to facilitate a smooth transition to post-21 pathways.

Superintendent Symmonds reported that over the last few years, the Committee has discussed available support for students who are not necessarily preparing for a college or university pathway. With the support of SEAC, LSS advocated for an increased Secondary Learning Support Consultant FTEs; however with the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic, this request was placed on hold.



The LSS workplan has placed priority on considering pathways for all complex learners and beginning transition planning at earlier time frames rather than towards the final year of secondary school. Discussions have begun with coterminous school boards on best practices.

System Principal Stoudt reviewed the integrated transition planning phases within the report and introduced two Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) leading the transition work, Viki Holan and Stephanie King. Ms. Holan and Ms. King are engaging educator teams and families to collect information on ways to support them in transition pathways. Transition checklists will be uploaded to the District website, with appropriate links to agencies that can assist with planning. The Communications Department is partnering with LSS to launch virtual symposiums for families in late winter 2022. System Principal Stoudt highlighted that at the core of the discussions is to empower students to voice their opinions and also to create a space for families to share their stories of celebration and struggle.

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

- There is a possibility that starting transition planning at the age of 15 is not timely, and the planning should begin earlier;
- Developmental Services Ontario provides information on the Passport Program, funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), that helps adults with a developmental disability be involved in their communities and live as independently as possible by providing funding for community participation services and supports, activities of daily living and person-directed planning;
- The need for capacity building in the guidance counselor role to be able to move discussions beyond pathways for college or university;
- The necessity for parents and caregivers to comprehend the French and English language is a barrier to accessing adequate support for their children. System Principal Stoudt reported that she has been working with Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Coordinator Samagh to gather suggestions on how to best reach all communities; and
- Some students are not being re-assessed by psychologists between grade eight and graduation, and access to current

assessments could prove integral to successful pathway development.

To build collective capacity, Superintendent Symmonds requested that committee members consult with their associations to bring forward additional feedback on implementing transitions for students in specialized program classes.

## 7.2 Special Education Plan (Standards)

### a. Early Identification Procedures/Intervention Strategies

System Principal Hannah reported that the standards included in the package are the last two standards to be publicly reviewed. The remaining standards were assigned for independent review in the 9 September 2021 SEAC meeting, and all feedback is requested by 28 February 2022. The final draft for the 2020-2021 Special Education Plan will be presented to SEAC on 4 May 2022 for review and approval.

The Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies Standard involves a multi-disciplinary approach to the provision of service. The District is releasing different approaches and expectations to support reading interventions, co-authored by learning support consultants (LSCs) and SLPs, working closely with the Department of Program and Learning K-12 (PAL). New reading intervention strategies and a description of assessment tools will be included in the revision of the standard.

The role of the parent and caregiver is important where this standard is concerned; much of the strategies involve information about the student from their families and how families can continue to relay progress or regressions at different stages in the intervention. More language will be added to the revision to provide further clarity on the role of families.

To be included in the new draft of the standard, The Family Reception Centre (FRC) is contributing to ideas to engage newcomers to Canada and ELL or English Literacy Development (ELD) students, along with added input from the Indigenous Education Team and other cross-departmental equity partners. Considerations from the recommendations emerging from the OHRC Right to Read Inquiry will be taken into account.

Dr. Mamen recognized that many of the children with learning disabilities have parents with learning disabilities or are ELL. She queried the number of obtainable languages for the kindergarten intake form. System Principal Hannah responded that she will follow-up with PAL. In addition, LSS is collaborating with PAL to

incorporate key questions to identify fundamental special education needs.

Dr. Mamen requested further examples to be given on the OCDSB registration form pertaining to factors that may affect the children's learning. She suggested that parental divorce may interrupt a child's ability to learn, especially in kindergarten or grade one. System Principal Hannah acknowledged the suggestion and noted that the District continues to examine how to engage in the conversation with families and pose questions in a respectful way that prioritizes a better understanding of the needs of students.

Dr. Mamen mentioned that structured or semi-structured clinical interviews may be an effective way to ascertain key clinical indicators that may impact a child's learning.

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. The standard provides information about the professionals that support special education services, including the regulatory acts that govern the work of these professionals.

Ways and means to obtain parental consent and privacy of information are reviewed in the standard. More information about waitlist expectations will be included in the upcoming revision.

8. Committee Reports

8.1 Board

There was no report from the Board.

8.2 Committee of the Whole

Chair Nadon-Campbell noted that the City of Ottawa has increased the number of after-school pop-up vaccination clinics open to everyone who requires a first dose, a second dose or a booster vaccine.

8.3 Committee of the Whole, Budget

There was no report from the Committee of the Whole, Budget.

8.4 Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Programs

There was no report from the Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Programs.

9. Information

9.1 Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) 2020-2021 Acronym List

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) 2020-2021 Acronym List was provided for information.

10. New Business

Chair Nadon-Campbell announced the resignation of Committee Coordinator Fenton and wished her success.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:43 p.m.

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Sonia Nadon-Campbell, Chair,  
Special Education Advisory  
Committee