SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, November 14, 2018, 7:00 pm
Trustees' Committee Room
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario

Members:	Rob Kirwan (Community Representative), Tina Morden (Community Representative), Sonia Campbell-Nadon (Community Representative), Terry Warner (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children), Ian Morris (Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders), Dana Somayaji (Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils), Donna Owen (Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils), Mark Wylie (Down Syndrome Association), Katie Ralph (Autism Ontario, Ottawa Chapter), Keith Penny (Trustee), Anita Olsen Harper (Trustee), Linda Barbetta (Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton), Samantha Banning (Autism Ontario, Ottawa Chapter), Jim Harris (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children)
Non Voting Members:	Catherine Houlden (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (Teachers)), Jean Trant (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (SSP)), Kimberly Elmer (Ottawa-Carleton Secondary School Administrators' Network), Nancy Dlouhy (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Operations)
Staff and Guests:	Lynn Scott (Trustee), Chris Ellis (Trustee), Donna Blackburn (Trustee), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Stacey Kay (Manager of Learning Support Services); Amy Hannah (System Principal of Learning Support Services), Jenny Dewan (System Vice-Principal of Learning Support Services), and Nicole Guthrie (Board/Committee Coordinator).

1. Call to Order

Chair Kirwan called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Trustee Penny,

That the agenda be approved.

An amendment moved by Linda Barbetta,

That the agenda exclude item 6.1

Defeated

Moved by Trustee Penny,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

3. Delegations

There were no delegations.

4. Member Information

Ms. Barbetta advised that in June 2018 the Ontario Psychological Association released its Guidelines for Diagnosis and Assessment of Children, Adolescents, and Adults with Learning Disabilities. She advised that the guidelines help ensure the alignment of assessment and evaluation. She added that the LD presentation in December will focus on the new working definition of LD.

On behalf of SEAC, Chair Kirwan thanked Trustee Olsen Harper for her support and dedication to SEAC over the past year and wished her well in her future plans.

Principal Symmonds advised that at the 05 December 2018 meeting SEAC members will be asked to volunteer to represent SEAC on other committees of the Board. He encouraged the members to consider the positions. He noted that it is helpful to have the voice of people with knowledge of special education lend their experience to the discussions at those committees.

4.1 VOICE Suggestions for Improving in-classroom supports for deaf and hard of hearing students

Further to a delegation by Derek Meester regarding Educational Assistants (EAs) and interpreter support gaps for deaf and hard of hearing students provided at the 9 May 2018 SEAC meeting, Principal Hannah advised that the District was able to increase the staffing for Deaf and Hard of Hearing to 10.3 FTE. Learning Support Services (LSS) central administration were also able to review staff portfolios, monitor effectiveness and re-target support staff to increase the District's ability to provide direct instruction. The District is providing newcomer students who present as deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) with direct instruction.

Principal Hannah advised that recruiting EAs with high-level sign language skills continues to be a challenge. She was pleased to report that she will be interviewing two candidates with these skills in the coming weeks. The new Director of Human Resources is aware of the need for trained staff and the and has made liaised with Algonquin College, Sign Language Interpreters Associates Ottawa and the Ontario Association of Sign Language Interpreters in an effort to attract and promote the need for skilled staff.

Principal Hannah noted that the congregated class for DHH students at Woodroffe High School presently has five students. Central LSS staff is working closely with the new principal to address concerns.

In response to a query from Mr. Harris regarding a recruitment plan, Principal Hannah responded that while there is no official plan, the Human Resources (HR) department take staff recruitment seriously and have attended job fairs to attract qualified EAs. The HR department has also actively marketed to Toronto based college graduates in an attempt to lure qualified staff to Ottawa.

In response to a query from Ms. Dlouhy regarding salaries, Principal Hannah advised that the salaries are the same for all EAs but those certified in American Sign Language (ASL) qualify for a skills shortage allowance.

5. Department Update

Superintendent Symmonds advised that the 30 October 2018 Board meeting featured a discussion on the work of the Gifted Advisory Group. The Board passed a motion to stand down the Gifted Advisory Group, to direct staff to implement a pilot program which utilizes both the OCDSB Guide for Supporting Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom and the OCDSB Interest Academy. The Board also directed staff to undertake an operational review of the process for identification, needs assessment (including the use of tiered interventions as a support for all students, and as identification and placement evidence), and placement for all exceptionalities. A report with an outline and timeline for the operational review is to be provided to the Board no later than February 2019. An operational review will identify a work plan for LSS to better meet the needs of exceptional learners.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that the 30 October 2018 Board motion also requested that staff produce a series of updates detailing the number of application and the number of children receiving assessment and placements in all congregated programs by exceptionality at both the elementary and secondary levels. The updates should also provide details of waitlists.

Superintendent Symmonds advised that the Ontario Municipal elections were held on 22 October 2018 and that the following new trustees were elected:

Wendy Hough - Zone 4, Rob Campbell - Zone 5, Jennifer Jennekens - Zone 7, and Lyra Evans - Zone 9. He noted that all trustees will be undertaking an orientation and which includes an LSS element.

Superintendent Symmonds announced that the District's annual Rainbow Youth Forum will be held on 15 November 2018 at the Confederation Education Centre and encouraged members to attend.

5.1 Special Education Plan (Standards)

a. Special Education Staff

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

- Ms. Owen expressed concern on the allocation of Educational Assistants (EAs) for safety, medical or behavioural issues. She advised that bullet three on folio 2 be revised to include a statement regarding the allocation;
- Mr. Harris requested that the other special education teachers listed on folio 8 be further categorized into the specific numbers of itinerant teachers of Blind/Low Vision and Deaf and Hard of Hearing;
- The District was able to add two new positions to the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) team, an Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Coordinator and a Board Certified Behavioural Analyst (BCBA);
- With support from the Ministry, the District received a grant to implement a pilot project to improve school-based supports for students with ASD. A dedicated space within First Avenue Public School was created for external ABA providers to provide in-school ABA services to assist families with support and care. The pilot is available to any child who attends First Avenue PS, has a diagnosis of ASD and is receiving ABA service;
- In response to a query from Chair Kirwan, Principal Hannah advised that the development and implementation of Individual Education Plans (IEP) is a task performed by all the teams. She noted that the text could be revised to include both the general tasks and the tasks specific to the particular staff or team;
- Mr. Morris suggested that the Speech-Language Pathology section on folio 7 include a reference to the provision of services to parents, EAs and teachers;
- Ms. Dlouhy suggested the role of the classroom teacher include a reference to tiered interventions, particularly tier one;

- In response to a query from Chair Kirwan regarding Itinerant Educational Assistants (IEAs), Principal Hannah advised student safety plans and safe plan development is one the primary roles of the IEA. Sh noted their input is a valuable component to the work of the Multi-Disciplinary Team and their development of the student work plan;
- The Ontario College of Teachers offers an additional two-part Special Education course (Specialist). The specialist course is in addition to regular teacher training received concurrently or through the standard Bachelor of Education process. Teachers without the specialist designation would have a base knowledge of special education learners. The specialist courses are designed specifically to enhance professional practice in the area of special education;
- The staffing levels and qualifications outlined on folios 8-10 are provided as a result of Ministry requirements, and reflect the staffing numbers approved during the 2018-2019 budget process; and
- Trustee Penny advised that the staffing levels within the 2018-2019 Special Education Plan include a specific reference to the year.

b. <u>The Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) Process and Appeals</u>

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

- Principal Hannah recognized that the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) Process and Appeals section of the Special Education Plan can be challenging for the parent audience. She noted that, due to Ministry requirements some of the language is not negotiable and must be included. She added that she has created a sub-committee of staff that are in the process of reviewing the section in an effort to find solutions to make it more user-friendly;
- Staff hope to include screenshot images of the reports and a completed sample of the IEP;
- Ms. Elmer suggested that the language throughout this section referring to he/she and parent/guardian be made consistent;
- In response to a query from Ms. Ralph regarding psychological assessments, Principal Hannah responded that a psychological assessment is not required by the legislation for an IPRC, however, the IPRC needs to review and consider all relevant information. She provided an example indicating that it would

be difficult to diagnosis a Severe Learning Disability (SLD) without a psychological assessment;

- Superintendent Symmonds noted that most parents have sought supporting documentation when seeking a diagnosis. Long before the IPRC process commences, information on the student is gathered by the Multi-Disciplinary team to help build the case for a particular diagnosis. Often there is enough information in the student's file based on input from teachers and parents to begin the implementation of strategies to assist the student (i.e. use of assistive technology);
- Principal Hannah noted that information on the IPRC is provided to families when they request an IPRC. The pamphlet is sent directly to the parent and outlines the process. An online version is available on the District website. She noted that a revised version has been created and should replace the content currently available;
- Superintendency Based (SB) IPRC is available although there were no requests for an SB IPRC in the 2017-2018 school year. Members suggested the language of the SB IPRC be further clarified;
- Members suggested more information be provided on the process to waive an IPRC review. Staff noted that should parents waive the IPRC review, the IPRC will still convene to review the students' areas of need and strengths. Staff will continue to work on making the information more clear for parents;
- In reference to a comment by Ms. Owen regarding the use of tiered intervention strategies prior to a referral to an IPRC, staff noted that it is not a requirement and that parents may request an IPRC. The use of tiered-interventions is a way to begin to address some of the learning challenges noted by the school team;
- The principal must wait for the IPRC decision to place the student. An IPRC is not held until placement is available to ensure students are not on a waitlist;
- Ms. Barbetta noted that it would be helpful to combine the IEP and the IRPC. She also noted that information on the IPRC should be contained in the information on the IEP to ensure parents are aware that there is another process available to them. She suggested that a visual diagram noting the process may be a helpful addition to parents;
- Staff noted that they are working with the Communications department to improve the way information is communicated from LSS;

- Ms. Holden expressed the view that common language be used to refer to the student or pupil and that the use of the word "child" be limited;
- Staff advised that parents may only appeal the identification or the placement and noted that in both 2017-2018 and 2016-2017 there were zero complete appeals.
- In response to a query regarding the IPRC appeal process, Principal Hannah advised that she was unaware of any cases where the matter was not settled. She noted that there would not be minutes in cases which were settled; and
- IPRCs typically occur in the spring after the multi-disciplinary team, parents and teachers have had the opportunity to work on strategies for improvement. The appeal process begins after the formal IPRC process and happens towards the end of the school year and over the summer months. Through mediation at the school level, families issues are often resolved;

c. Transportation

Manager Kay advised that there would be no substantive changes to the Transportation section of the District's Special Education Plan for 2018-2019. Changes were made to the 2017-2018 plan to address single and solo transportation and modifications were made to walking distances. She advised that the document is shared with the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) and they review, comment and modify the standard as required. The District will be utilizing a new software application, a specialized transportation module, that will help to improve the process of transportation of special education students.

Ms. Houlden praised the support her staff receives from both LSS and OSTA in the arrangement of transportation for students with special needs.

d. Staff Development

Principal Hannah advised that LSS is committed to ongoing professional development for all staff but the District continues to face challenges due to an occasional teacher shortage. The District and LSS have had to be creative in the delivery of training for staff. Workshops offered by the District are listed on folio 26 and 27 of the agenda.

The District continues to invest in the Empower reading program. The release time costs dedicated to Empower outlined on folio 24, relate to the mandatory training required by the program. Staff implementing the Empower program must be trained by Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) staff in a three-day off-site session.

In response to a query regarding the IEP Online training, staff advised that the amount represents the budget for the 2017-2018 school year and that a large amount of training coincided with the program launch in the fall of 2017. Training on the new software occurred centrally and in each school. The amount listed was for release time to enable further onsite training. Additional training was funding through the school operating budget.

Ms. Houlden noted that there was budget related to the development and work on the Quality Performance Indicators (QPI). Staff advised that they are developing best practices documents for each exceptionality and more information will be provided to SEAC for discussion and input.

Ms. Owen noted that the ways in which staff provide input for the plan are not provided in the text.

In response to a query regarding cost-sharing arrangements, Principal Hannah advised that the District often works with local partners, as outlined on folio 28 and 29, in the delivery of several special education-related programs and services. This includes the delivery of Section 23 programming through the M.F. McHugh Education Centre in partnership with the Ottawa Catholic District School Board.

In response to a query from Chair Kirwan regarding the term ePLC as noted on folio 28, Principal Hannah advised that ePLC is the name of the software platform used by the District to monitor and input requests for professional development. The ePLC platform also provides staff with a listing of available professional development (PD) opportunities. Staff is also informed of PD opportunities through system-wide memorandums.

6. Action/Discussion/Information Items

6.1 Minority Report Regarding Report 18-100 presented at October SEAC 2018

Your committee had before it a minority report regarding Report 18-100 presented at the 10 October 2018 SEAC which was prepared by Ms. Somayaji. In the report, Ms. Somayaji outlines her issues with both Report 18-100, the Gifted Advisory Group and the response to the volunteer members of Gifted Advisory Group. The minority report was provided as information.

Ms. Morden queried whether or not it should be called a minority report given that no decision was taken on the original report. She noted that the report had been distributed to trustees and labeled as a minority report on

behalf of the members of SEAC yet SEAC members were only provided with the report as a part of the 14 November 2018 agenda.

Ms. Somayaji argued that it was a minority report citing that SEAC did vote and make a decision on Report 18-100. She noted that she and several other members did not vote in favour of the motion. For that reason, she felt compelled to document her involvement in the process of the Gifted Advisory Group leading up to Report 18-100. She noted that she shared the report with trustees and requested that it be added to the 14 November 2018 SEAC agenda so that it would be shared with SEAC.

Ms. Morden expressed concern with the reference to the violation of the OCDSB Complaint policy outlined at the top of folio 32. Ms. Somayaji indicated that, after the initial letter of complaint from several members of the Gifted Advisory Group was submitted to the District in August of 2018, they did not receive a response until Report 18-100 was published on 5 October 2018 as part if the 10 October 2018 SEAC agenda. At that time she had two and half business days to address the response contained within Report 18-100.

Mr. Barbetta queried the intent of the minority report and the purpose of sharing it with SEAC. Ms. Somayaji indicated that she wished to alert the entire SEAC membership to the fact that the input of the SEAC members to the Gifted Advisory Group was ignored. She highlighted that the staff response to the process did not meet the mandate as specified in the motion passed by the Board on 20 December 2016. She expressed concern that the other members of SEAC passed a motion at the 10 October 2018 meeting that several of their own members disagreed strongly with.

Ms. Somayaji indicated that she would like an apology from both staff and SEAC. She noted that both staff and the other members of SEAC did not take the consideration of its members seriously and expressed the view that there had been a breach of trust. Ms. Barbetta suggested that Ms. Somayaji submit a formal complaint to staff. Ms. Somayaji advised that several members of the Gifted Advisory Group made a formal complaint in August of 2018 and that the only response they received was Report 18-100 which was received in October 2018 and violates the District's own Complaint Resolution Policy.

Ms. Somayaji acknowledged that some of the issues noted within in the minority report were based on personal experiences, but expressed the view that SEAC has been impacted by the process. SEAC ignored the recommendations and advice of its own members and that has implications for future consultations and work with other exceptionalities.

Trustee Penny advised that the minority report serves as a reminder that Board motions must be clear on deliverables and include time frames to ensure that expectations are understood and attainable.

Ms. Barbetta noted that the District uses restorative justice techniques to address matters within schools and proposed that SEAC use a similar process to restore communication.

Ms. Campbell-Nadon shared that Indigenous cultures use a talking circle, often facilitated by an Elder, to share their feelings. She noted that it is an excellent way to heal and bring the community together. She noted that SEAC may consider a similar process to help rebuild a collegial atmosphere. Ms. Somayaji indicated that she would welcome an opportunity to undertake a process to help amend and address the issues.

6.2 Memo 18-129, Response to Notice of Motion re: Tiered Interventions for Elementary Students with Giftedness

Memo-18-129, Response to Notice of Motion re: Tiered Inventions for Elementary Students with Giftedness, was provided for information.

6.3 Storefront Program Update

Principal Hannah noted that the Storefront program enables exceptional students between the ages of 19 to 21 the opportunity to participate in a co-operative education program combining life skills development and work experience outside of the school environment to develop community connections for their future. Presently, the life skills development portion of the day is provided separately in a commercial building, near the St. Laurent Shopping Centre.

In the 2017-2018 school year, LSS regained the oversight of the Storefront program including the referral process. The program application process allows students from across the District to be placed in the program via a Central Selection Committee and an Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process. The Storefront program is a specialized class placement for the General Learning Program (GLP).

The landlord, Morguard Properties, continues to offer the space to the District at reduced/lowered rent for the 2018-2019 school year and the program will remain at its location near St. Laurant Shopping Centre for the near future.

The Storefront teacher and educational assistant (EA) have been attached to the program for a number of years and an additional Learning Support Consultant (LSC) was added to the team for the 2018-2019 school year.

LSS is reviewing the Storefront Program and analyzing the space and leasing arrangements as well as program delivery. LSS is aware of the need to maintain and retain the program. A plan will be prepared and presented to SEAC. No date has been established for decisions related to the Storefront Program.

The District does not have any qualitative measures for the program's success rate. Anecdotal evidence from families and former students as presented at the 6 March 2018 Committee of the Whole meeting suggest it is an effective program.

Ms. Houlden noted that the Storefront Program teacher and EA are dedicated and passionate about the students and can provide information on the success rate of the program. She expressed concern about the stress these employees are under without a definitive plan or permanent location for the program. She requested that the item remains on the long range agenda.

7. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

7.1 10 October 2018

Moved by Mark Wylie,

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee report, dated 10 October 2018, be received.

Ms. Somayaji requested the last sentence of paragraph 3 of folio 68 be revised to read "The Letter was submitted to the Director and other staff in August and the only response the signatories received was Report 18-100."

Moved by Mark Wylie,

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee report, dated 10 October 2018, be received as amended

-Carried-

7.2 Review of Long Range Agenda

The long range agenda was provided for information.

Ms. Barbetta queried how long LDAO-C would have for their presentation in December. Chair Kirwan advised the group could have 15 minutes.

Ms. Barbetta noted that the LDAO circular has a number of items that they recommend be added to SEAC agendas for discussion. She noted that she will share the circular with the members. Possible discussion topics for upcoming meetings could include the Ministry's Consultation on Education and the Ontario Human Rights Commission's Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities.

7.3 Motion/Action Tracking Report, Business Arising

Superintendent Symmonds advised that Manager Kay will provide an update on the Special Needs Strategy at an upcoming meeting.

Ms. Houlden noted that item 4 should remain on the motion/action tracker. The recently released Annual Student Achievement Report (ASAR) does not include locally developed information. Chair Kirwan advised that the ASAR and the Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and Well-Being (BIPSAW) will be discussed at an upcoming meeting.

8. Committee Reports

8.1 Advisory Committee on Equity

Trustee Olsen Harper noted that the Advisory Committee on Equity is working on a recruitment campaign to attract new members.

8.2 Committee of the Whole

Chair Kirwan advised that the 16 October 2018 COW meeting featured a discussion on the congregated elementary Gifted program delivery and Report 18-100, Update to the Elementary Gifted Review.

8.3 Parent Involvement Committee

Ms. Campbell-Nadon noted that the PIC held their first meeting on 17 October 2018. PIC discussed the parent conference on 3 November 2018 and hosting a workshop at the conference to provide a PIC response to the Ministry of Education's Consultation: Education in Ontario. The next meeting is scheduled for 21 November 2018.

8.4 Board

Chair Kirwan advised that the 30 October 2018 Board meeting dealt with the standing down of the Gifted Advisory Group and the implementation of the Pilot Project as well as Trustee Boothby's notice of motion concerning changes to the congregated elementary Gifted program delivery. At that meeting, the motion referenced in Superintendent Symmonds Department Update, was passed.

9. New Business

Mr. Harris advised that VOICE may issue a notice of motion at an upcoming SEAC meeting to request that additional qualified teachers for Deaf and Hard of Hearing be included in the 2019-2020 budget.

Chair Kirwan reminded association representatives to provide Board Services with the names of their primary and alternate members so that the Board may approve the appointments at the inaugural meeting on 3 December 2018.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:07 p.m.

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Rob Kirwan, Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee