



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITY REPORT

**September 29,
2022
6:00 pm
Zoom Meeting**

Voting Members: Deepika Grover (Co-Chair), Ryan Doucette (Young Leaders Advisory Council), Nasrin Javanfar, Chandonette Johnson (Jaku Konbit), Seema Lamba, Elizabeth Sweeney, Inini McHugh (Indigenous Education Advisory Committee), Kathryn Owens (Youth Services Bureau), Katia d'Argencourt (Tungasuvvingat Inuit), Jessica Knoyle (Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools)

Non-Voting Members: Said Mohamed, Yazhuo Zhang, Edil Adan Ahmed

Staff and Guests: Lynn Scott (Trustee), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Jacqueline Lawrence (Equity and Diversity Coordinator), Marva Major (System Principal, Equity), James Proulx (Executive Officer, Information Technology and Digital Transformation), Lorna Evans (Equity Instructional Coach), Tess Porter (Family and Community Engagement Coordinator), Kusha Dadui (Trans-Gender/Diverse Student Support Coordinator), Christian McCuaig (Coordinator of Communications), Mellissa Applewaithe (Board Committee Coordinator)

1. Welcome

Acting Chair Lawrence called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

Superintendent Farrish acknowledged that the meeting was taking place on the unceded, unsundered territory of the Anishinaabeg Algonquin Nation. She extended deep gratitude and sought to support and affirm their rights as the land's stewards and keepers.

Superintendent Farrish noted that the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) respectfully connected to the Day of National Truth and Reconciliation when students, family members, staff members and trustees come together.

Acting Chair Lawrence acknowledged the work from previous co-chairs, Ms. Karshe and Ms. Grover, saluting their tenacity in creating a space to examine processes.

2. Membership Update

2.1 Selection Process for Chair, Vice-Chair, Representatives and Sub-Committee Chairs, December 2022- November 2024

Acting Chair Lawrence requested that members refer to the information provided in the agenda package which outlines the responsibilities and guidelines for the November 2022 election process. She invited members to support the Advisory Committee for Equity (ACE) by submitting an application for chair or co-chair by 14 October 2022.

In response to a query on next steps in the event that there was no interest in the chair vacancy, Acting Chair Lawrence noted that the issue would be brought before the ACE and that she would cover the vacancy in the interim. She noted that she hoped to have enough nominees to also have alternate members to assist achieving quorum.

Acting Chair Lawrence advised that Ms. Lamba is the current ACE representative to the Committee of the Whole (COW) and it was noted that COW will meet twice a month from January 2023 onwards. It was noted that the ACE representative to COW provides an equity lens to matters dealt with by COW and also provides feedback to ACE.

She noted that the COW Budget representative position is vacant and similarly the ACE representative would attend COW Budget meetings.

Acting Chair Lawrence advised that voting members interested in the position of chair should demonstrate the reasons of their interest within their submission. If there is only one submission for the position of chair, that person would be acclaimed and if there are multiple submissions, the candidates present statements to ACE members for review. Members will ask questions for clarification and the position will be selected by consensus.

In response to a query on how ACE can overcome the challenges faced by the previous chairs, Acting Chair Lawrence noted that the Board anticipates the review of COW policy and she believes ACE will be consulted for feedback at that time.

2.2 Community Organization Membership Vacancy

Acting Chair Lawrence advised that ACE is awaiting a replacement Parents for Diversity representative.

She noted that assessments have been completed to identify possible organizations to fill community organization vacancies and demonstrated that Arabic and Q10 student population groups have been particularly affected by COVID-19. Acting Chair Lawrence noted that there are already two Indigenous member groups in ACE, the Inuugatigit Centre and Tungasuvvingat Inuit and invited members to share organizations from their recommended groups.

ACE members suggested several community groups for consideration including the Odawa Native Friendship Centre, Minwaashin Lodge, Aisilu Collective and an unspecified Muslim organization. Acting Chair Lawrence requested that members send her the details of the recommended community groups.

Members raised concerns that there are gaps in representation for both students with disabilities and the Jewish community.

3. Staff Report - 2022-2023 Upcoming Priorities

Superintendent Farrish introduced herself and expressed her gratitude for the ACE leadership over the years and to past superintendents involved with the committee. Superintendent Farrish expressed her wish to work with the committee to enable change and noted that the Director of Education has intentionally framed the 2022-2023 year with a theme of renewal. She added that she is looking forward to working towards renewal with ACE and reminded the committee that while she will be providing monthly updates, ACE is a community space for members. Superintendent Farrish recognized the committee's ability to motivate and support others.

Superintendent Farrish noted her support for those remembering the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on 30 September 2022 and for the work of the Indigenous Education Council (IEC) to prepare the District to honour the day.

Superintendent Farrish introduced the System Principal of Equity, Major who noted her appreciation for the work previously done by ACE. System Principal Major added that her lived experience as an educator, administrator and immigrant to Canada will assist her in learning and growing with ACE. System Principal Major noted that the prioritization of equity supports the continued work of ACE and the Equity Team.

System Principal Major reported on an initiative under the Student Achievement Through Equity (SATE) program where coaches are sent to high needs schools to work with educators and administrators on delivery of literacy and development and noted that de-streaming is a key priority within the OCDSB. She advised that her department is working with Program and Learning Support Services (LSS) to develop training material for the professional development (PD) Day on 7 October 2022.

System Principal Major reported that in November 2022, the District will examine the gaps in work that has been undertaken under the 2020-2023 Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap (Roadmap), review what has been accomplished, the impact, and determine next steps. She noted that she looks forward to engaging ACE in these conversations and will provide the date in the future.

4. Community Discussion - Open Space

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

- Resources will be shared with educators for the October 2022 Islamic Heritage month and that virtual weekly drop-in sessions will be available to students who identify as Muslim;
- Virtual Black Excellence clubs will resume in October 2022;
- Volunteer spiritual-care workers will be trained to visit schools to allow students access to a caring and supportive presence;
- There are Elementary Rainbow Clubs at some schools and Genders and Sexualities Alliances (GSA) leadership support is being made available to students interested in starting a GSA club at their school;
- In response to a query on what Superintendent Farrish and System Principal Major envision the ACE role to be, Superintendent Farrish noted that her understanding was that the mandate of the committee is to identify barriers hindering bias-free education and that the committee can examine practices and advise on policies and programs. She noted that in partnership with the Board, a key role for ACE is liaison with community stakeholders, engaging parents/guardians/families and community partners to assist in creating a sustainable, safe and inclusive learning environment. System Principal Major added that the committee should be mindful and alert and should not hesitate to ask difficult questions;
- Jordan's Principle is an initiative for First Nations children and Child First is a program for Inuit children's specific needs. Families can apply to these programs for federal funding to support their child concerning social, emotional, physical or educational support;
- It was noted that students with disabilities should have access to shared spaces in schools and members queried whether families have access to similar resources as those provided to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans-Gender (LGBTQ) students. The importance of inclusion, empowerment and identity were noted;
- Acting Chair Lawrence reported that there is significant work underway to equip system leaders with the tools to build a representative workforce

under the Equitable Hiring Policy. The Equity Team is working in partnership with Human Resources (HR) to deliver training sessions. Acting Chair Lawrence will provide an update at the ACE meeting on 27 October 2022;

- In response to a query on how new immigrant families can access support to learn how to become involved in their children's education, Acting Chair Lawrence noted that the work currently being done is dependent on the location of the student population. Brookfield High School (HS) and Ridgemont HS have specific staff members to support these students and a significant part of their work involves relationship building with families;
- The Student Achievement Through Equity (SATE) program is expanding to increase the flow of information to families and provide a point for questions to be asked. Approximately three community liaison officers work under the SATE program to reach out to those communities who may not traditionally have school connections;
- The Family and Community Engagement Coordinator (FACE) works to build sustainable partnerships between home and school, creating places and avenues for families in the school system who are traditionally underserved;
- It was noted that the FACE coordinator works closely with the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) and the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), which addresses students' special educational needs. It was suggested that ACE should consider working with these advisory committees who are already involved in work that interests ACE to avoid duplication of work;
- It was noted that it is important to consider equity around COVID-19 measures for vulnerable members of the school community and that the District follows the advice of Ottawa Public Health (OPH);
- In response to a query on how trustee actions that are perceived to be questionable are handled, Trustee Scott advised that the Board is governed by policy and a code of conduct. As elected officials, complaints against trustees are dealt with under the code of conduct which is overseen by an Integrity Advisor. If a trustee is consistently contravening the code of conduct, further measures may be taken;
- Ms. Owens, the new representative for the Youth Services Bureau noted that she will be attending meetings and will listen and learn to what ACE and their community partner needs are to support her organization work toward equity and decolonization; and

- Ms. Knoyle, the new Spiritual Care representative noted that her program liaises with principals and teachers to provide interfaith spiritual care to students.

5. Reports

5.1 ACE Report, 24 March 2022

Moved by Elizabeth Sweeney,

THAT the Advisory Committee on Equity Report of 24 March 2022 be received.

Carried

5.2 ACE Report, 9 June 2022

Moved by Katherine Owens,

THAT the Advisory Committee on Equity Report of 9 June 2022 be received.

Carried

6. New Business and Event Announcements

It was noted that the Inuugatigit Centre will hold their Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 19 October 2022 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and that details will be circulated to members.

FACE Coordinator Porter noted that there is an in-person Parent Conference on 5 November 2022 where a range of workshops will be held for families on mental health, equity and navigating the education system. Details will be provided to members at a future date.

7. Upcoming Meeting Dates

The upcoming meeting dates were provided for information.

Acting Chair Lawrence noted that there will be a discussion at a future meeting regarding in person and virtual meeting platforms.

8. Closing

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

