



## SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

**Wednesday, January 11, 2023, 7:00 pm**  
**Trustees' Committee Room**  
**133 Greenbank Road**  
**Ottawa, Ontario**

**Members:** Cathy Miedema (Association for Bright Children), Lori-Anne Bradley (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network Expertise (FESD/ONE)), Allison Bunney (Community Representative), Susan Cowin (Community Representative), Safina Dewshi (Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils (OCASC)), Sonja Elliot (Autism Ontario, Ottawa Chapter), Lillian Kitcher (Easter Seals Ontario), Dr. Maggie Mamen (Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton (LDAO-C)), Terry Warner (VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children, Alternate), Jess Whitley (Inclusion Action in Ontario), Donna Dickson (Trustee), Nili Kaplan-Myrth (Trustee), Lynn Scott (Trustee)

**Association Representatives (Non Voting):** Connie Allen (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, PSSP), Catherine Houlden (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Teachers), Hoda Seens (Community Representative), Jennifer Titley (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation), Andrew Winchester (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Alternate), Adrian Darling (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation)

**Staff and Guests:** Suzanne Nash (Trustee), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Emily Balla (Manager, Mental Health/Critical Services), Stacey Kay (Manager of Learning Support Services), Deborah Lyon (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Dr. Kristin Schaub (Supervisor of Psychology), Kate Stoudt (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Melissa Chung (Acting Supervisor Social Work), Maya Rattray (Speech Language Pathology and Occupational Therapy), Teri Adamthwaite (Manager, Financial Services), Mellissa Applewaihte (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Call to Order

Chair Miedema called the meeting to order at 7:20 p.m.

2. Land Acknowledgement

Chair Miedema acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Homelands and thanked the Algonquin people for hosting the meeting on their land.

3. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Sue Cowin,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Superintendent Symmonds requested that introductions for the Learning Support Team be added after Delegations.

**Moved by Sue Cowin,**

**THAT the agenda be approved as amended.**

**Carried**

4. Delegations

4.1 Noor MacGee, re Education Practices and Autism Spectrum Disorder

The delegate was not present.

Superintendent Symmonds addressed some of the Policy Program Memoranda (PPM) referenced in the delegation and noted the following:

- All school districts in Ontario are required to follow PPM requirements but can create operational models based on individual district approaches. Additional information on PPMs can be found in the Special Education Plan;
- The Ministry issues PPMs to provide guidelines and direction to school districts' approaches to providing programs and services for special educational needs;
- PPM 8 relates to the Definition of Learning Disability and provides information on supports and services for students with Learning Disabilities;
- PPM 11 relates to the Early Identification of student's Learning Needs;
- PPM 181 relates to the Identification Placement Review Committee;
- Additionally, Superintendent Symmonds provided the following two PPMs for reference:

- PPM 140 relates to the application of the principles of Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) for students with autism
- PPM 156 relates to the support of transitions for students with special educational needs; and
- Superintendent Symmonds noted that he had been unable to locate PPM 180.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) Special Education Plan, which is reviewed annually, contains references to the above PPMs. He added that the OCDSB does not provide therapy, and application for the principles of ABA is not the provision of therapy. The OCDSB role aligns with ABA principles by, for example, collecting data, monitoring collected data, prompts, task analysis and the provision of reinforcement and visual schedules. Superintendent Symmonds noted that experience has demonstrated that the application of ABA principles are also beneficial to students without Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). For example, a visual schedule can support students with ASD and also students with other learning difficulties that include challenges with executive function.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that some families have expressed hesitation about ABA and that the OCDSB is working to address this by working with families and multi-disciplinary supports to provide individual approaches and supports that will enable students to be successful in school. He noted that since autism is a spectrum disorder, children are affected by a broad range of presentations resulting in a variety of needs.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that the ultimate goal for the OCDSB is to build maximum independence for each student, adding that Learning Support Services (LSS) has identified that integrated transition planning to adult programming needs to begin earlier than age 19 or above for students with complex needs. Superintendent Symmonds explained that the OCDSB aims to apply best practices while implementing an individualized approach to each student's particular needs during this time.

## 5. Selection of Non-voting Representatives/Observers for Other OCDSB Committees

### 5.1 Committee of the Whole, Representative

Chair Miedema- called for volunteers for the role of Committee of the Whole Representative.

Ms. Cowin and Ms. Mamen volunteered to share the role of Committee of the Whole Representative equally.

**\* Ms. Cowin and Ms. Mamen were declared the equal Committee of the Whole Representatives.**

5.2 Advisory Committee for Extended Day and Child Care Programs, Representative

Chair Miedema called for volunteers for the role of Advisory Committee for Extended Day and Child Care Programs Representative.

There were no volunteers.

5.3 Board, Observer

In response to a suggestion that the SEAC trustee could take the role, Chair Miedema noted that a trustee's capacity in Board meetings is as a Board trustee only.

Superintendent Symmonds added that trustees in the past have provided SEAC with informal feedback from Board meetings.

Chair Miedema called for volunteers for the Board Observer.

There were no volunteers.

5.4 Parent Involvement Committee, Observer

Chair Miedema called for volunteers for the Parent Involvement Committee Observer.

Ms. Whitley volunteered herself.

**Ms. Whitley was declared the Parent Involvement Committee Observer.**

5.5 Advisory Committee on Equity, Observer

Chair Miedema called for volunteers for the Advisory Committee on Equity Observer.

Ms. Cowin volunteered herself.

**Ms. Cowin was declared the Advisory Committee on Equity Observer.**

6. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

6.1 SEAC Report, 7 December 2022

**Moved by Ms. Cowin,**

**THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee Report dated 7 December 2022 be received.**

**Carried**

## 6.2 Forward Agenda

The SEAC forward agenda was provided for information.

Following discussion and in response to questions, Superintendent Symmonds noted the following:

- Superintendent Symmonds noted that he would follow up with Program and Learning to advocate that the expected de-streaming report be brought forward;
- De-streaming is not currently on the forward agenda concerning strategic planning as it is a recurring item for discussion. Superintendent Symmonds explained the process of consultation for the Strategic Plan and noted that a footnote for de-streaming could be added for consideration during the consultation stage between the Board and trustees;
- De-streaming could be added as an agenda item to strategic planning; and
- Superintendent Symmonds will follow-up at a future meeting on the effectiveness of the tutoring programs for special needs students.

## 7. Presentations

### 7.1 Finance Update (T. Adamthwaite)

Manager Adamthwaite presented a financial update.

- In response to a query on why the Supports for Students Fund (Teachers) has decreased to just over \$2,000,000, Superintendent Symmonds noted that the fund is based on negotiations by the bargaining unit that represents the OCDSB and negotiations regarding the current collective agreements are still in progress;
- Priorities and Partnership Funds (PPF) is special funding from the Ministry of Education (MOE) for specific projects, and the 2022-2023 amount is approximately \$565,000. The MOE is no longer funding PPFs for COVID-19 related issues;
- The MOE and union bodies negotiated a provincial-wide benefits trust program which the MOE provides funding towards. The OCDSB proportionally allocates the funding of approximately \$4,168,519 based on full-time equivalent (FTE) positions in special education;
- The funding amounts are final, and no further amounts can usually be requested. Superintendent Symmonds noted that some SEACs across the province had taken action in the past by requesting the

creation of a motion or a letter from the chair. He suggested that the current OCDSB trustees could discuss how to address that possibility;

- The projected total amount for special education expenses is approximately \$137,422,159, meaning that the amount of the expenses is approximately \$9,000,000 over the revenue amount; and
- The OCDSB receives other MOE funding that is utilized following Ministry requirements and school-related agreements. Left over funding is eligible for redistribution, and it is planned to direct the redistribution toward special education expenses.

## 8. Discussion Items

### 8.1 Strategic Plan Toolkit

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

- Establishing lines of communication and collaboration between student's homes, school and community is important to determine areas for assistance. It was noted that the relationship between parents, teachers and schools could be viewed as a triangle with a continual flow of communication;
- The OCDSB should continue to establish their approach from an equity lens to serve families with a variety of needs, including a significant number who have English as a second language and who require additional support to navigate the school system;
- The OCDSB should adopt a consistent approach in listening to parents, carers and children from kindergarten to Grade 5;
- French Immersion should not automatically be inaccessible to students with special needs;
- There are concerns regarding the streaming model. The OCDSB should continue to track student's academic achievements;
- The OCDSB should focus on building on the collaborative work that takes place inter-departmentally to ensure there are no silos or duplications of work;
- Empower is a reputable learning program with a proven track record. It requires specialized training and could be utilized more by the OCDSB;

- Open conversations in classrooms should be encouraged to discuss differences from a positive lens and to discover how students feel about school;
- There can be a disconnect between elementary and secondary school, and the importance of valuing different pathways, skills, abilities and learning styles is essential. The OCDSB should examine opportunities to celebrate differences and provide encouragement for the different pathways;
- It was suggested that surroundings for students could be more welcoming;
- Additional educational assistants are required to increase support;
- The OCDSB should continue to prioritize the focus on equity, mental health, self-esteem and well-being of students, staff and educators;
- The OCDSB should investigate the flexibility to reduce wait time for students approved for placements; and
- The OCDSB should have increased supports in place to provide resources and meet the needs of students starting school, during transitions or at other times during the student school journey.
- It was agreed that Superintendent Symmonds and System Principal Stoudt would try to review the information and provide a thematic summary to the Committee via email for their review prior to submitting it.

## 9. Department Update

### 9.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Symmonds reported that on 20 January 2023, a Professional Activity Day is planned for elementary teachers. LSS will coordinate professional development for approximately 425 EAs.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that System Principal Stoudt is closely involved in current planning to support Integrated Transition Planning. The Integrated Transition Plan is a written plan which outlines what a student will need to live, work and play as an adult. In 2022, a small group of learning support consultants went through a series of resources and checklists for families through four evenings of a virtual workshop.

Superintendent Symmonds reported that System Principal Stoudt will host three Question and Answer (Q and A) sessions in February, 2023 and an in-person Transition Information Fair on March 1, 2023 at 6pm at

Confederation Education Centre. Community agencies will be present to answer questions and student voices will be highlighted.

Superintendent Symmonds announced that the OCDSB has been seeking accreditation through the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) for internships in Professional Psychology. The detailed program development and application process included site visits by Program Lead Dr. Gillian Stanley and Supervisor of Psychology, Krisin Schaub, independent meetings between Superintendent Symmonds and Director Williams-Taylor and an independent review by the accreditation panel.

The OCDSB is the first school board in Canada to be accredited for internships. The accreditation letter noted the attention that LSS paid to wellness training, the level of support that the OCDSB provides to interns, the strong focus on anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices and the work LSS undertakes with marginalized and equity deserving groups.

The CPA internship program matches interns with placements giving the OCDSB access to highly skilled interns, future recruitment opportunities and the ability to contribute to advancement in school psychology.

## 9.2 Special Education Plan Review

### a. SEAC Role and Composition

This item was deferred to the 1 February 2023 meeting. Superintendent Symmonds suggested that members read through the information provided so the SEAC could discuss how to adjust the plan at the next meeting.

### b. IPRC Process and Appeals

This item was deferred to the 1 February 2023 meeting. Superintendent Symmonds suggested that members read through the information provided so the SEAC could discuss how to adjust the plan at the next meeting.

## 10. Committee Reports

### 10.1 Board

There was no report for the Board.

### 10.2 Committee of the Whole

There was no report for the Committee of the Whole.

## 11. New Business

In response to a query on how student support is determined, Superintendent Symmonds noted that special educational supports are the responsibility of the



school principal in association with the superintendent of instruction. The procedure allows for student retention, and the individual needs of students are examined in consultation with the school team, multi-disciplinary team and other relevant individuals. Superintendent Symmonds noted that programs modified through Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are utilized in earlier grades, but the implications at grades 7 or 8 should also be considered, in addition to the impact at age 21 in relation to integrated transition.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that the subject requires complex conversations and that multiple solutions may need to be considered.

12. Upcoming Meeting Dates

13. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

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Cathy Miedema, Chair, Special  
Education Advisory Committee