



SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, February 1, 2023, 7:00 pm
Trustees' Committee Room
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario

Members: Cathy Miedema (Association for Bright Children), Allison Bunney (Community Representative), Susan Cowin (Community Representative), Sonja Elliot (Autism Ontario, Ottawa Chapter), Lillian Kitcher (Easter Seals Ontario), Dr. Maggie Mamen (Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton (LDAO-C)), Hoda Seens (Community Representative), 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), Nancy Dlouhy (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Operations Committee), Kimberly Elmer (Ottawa-Carleton Secondary School Administrators' Network), Catherine Houlden (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Teachers), Andrew Winchester (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Alternate)

Staff and Guests: Suzanne Nash (Trustee), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Stacey Kay (Manager of Learning Support Services), Deborah Lyon (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Kate Stoudt (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Maya Kishida (Supervisor of Speech-Language Pathology), Kristin Schaub (Supervisor of Psychology), Claire Reynolds (Program Evaluation Officer), Mike Fairbrother (Program Evaluation Officer), James Baker (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Call to Order

Chair Cathy Miedema called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.

2. Acknowledgement of Territorial Lands

Chair Cathy 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 Trustee Kaplan-Myrth,
THAT the agenda be approved.**

Carried

4. Delegations

There were no delegations.

5. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

5.1 SEAC Report, 11 January 2023

Moved by Trustee Scott,

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee Report dated 11 January 2023 report, be received.

Carried

Maggie Mamen noted that on page 4 of the report, the two Committee of the Whole representatives should be listed as “Maggie Mamen” and “Sue Cowin”.

Hoda Seens noted that the attendance incorrectly displayed some voting members as non-voting members.

Moved by Trustee Scott,

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee Report dated 11 January 2023 report, be received.

Carried, as amended

5.2 Business Arising From the Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes.

5.3 Forward Agenda

The SEAC forward agenda was provided for information.

During a discussion, the following information was provided:

- Concerns continue to exist with respect the de-streaming of grade 10 math and the negative impact on students with learning challenges;
- Concerns were expressed regarding impacts to students created by the COVID-19 pandemic and now a new destreamed math curriculum has been implemented;

- The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario has highlighted the need for data on a provincial level in order to identify challenges and to adopt strategies to support learners;
- Challenges persist in the analysis of data and the need to provide a fulsome report for review; and
- LSS continues to collaborate with Program and Learning (PAL) and the Research Evaluation and Analytics Division (READ) who are taking the lead on gathering and analyzing the data.

6. Presentations

6.1 Community Organization Presentations

Chair Meidema suggested creating a standing agenda item which would allow each community association to make a five to ten minute presentation about their organization and the relevant exceptionalities that they represent.

7. Matters for Discussion

7.1 Report 23-010, Specialized Program Class Referral Information 2022-2023 (P. Symmonds)

Your Committee had before it Report 23-010, Specialized Program Class Referral Information for the 2022-2023 school year.

During the discussion and in response to queries, the following information was provided:

- Challenges were experienced during the pandemic requiring a shift in focus to urgent planning;
- Policy and Program Memorandum (PPM) 81, allows for consultation, observation and demonstration between private therapists and school teams in developing education programs;
- PPM 81 was out for consultation and feedback is now being reviewed by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. Once a revision is received, the Learning Support Services (LSS) team will be able to review its third party provider procedure;
- The data, going back several years, shows that overall, wait lists for specialized program classes are low. This is a result of a considered planning process that sees the annual opening, closing and relocation of classes;

- More recently, it has been necessary to open two to three new secondary ASD classes each year to accommodate students transitioning from elementary to secondary schools;
- A continued priority has been to ensure specialized program classes (SPCs) are geographically distributed across the District;
- Distribution of SPC across schools has been a challenge. Schools with lower utilization rates in some cases have larger numbers of specialized program classes.
- Transportation associated with SPCs is another challenge. In recent years there have been challenges associated with the driver shortage. In addition, transportation costs are increasing. Funding from the Ministry has allowed for contracting of our own OCDSB professional staff resulting in an additional 80 psychological and 60 speech/language assessments completed in the summer and outside of regular work hours;
- Our methods for collecting wait time information related to professional assessments is limited at the present time. LSS continues to work towards implementation of the Clinical Services module of the Special Education technology platform IEP Online (IOL). Once implemented LSS should have more tools to capture this information.
- Perception has been that special education needs are only met with SPC, assumptions need to change as all schools are supported by a multidisciplinary team and alternate ways to intervene other than the use of an SPC; and
- Consideration is being given to the high demand for psychological assessments and the streamlining to remove barriers while providing the necessary support.

7.2 Supporting Students with Disabilities: Elementary/Secondary General Learning Program (GLP)

Manager Kay noted the addition of one Program Evaluator to the LSS team and outlined their roles and provided an overview of the attached memorandum and appendix.

During a discussion and in response to queries, the following information was provided:

- There are two schools in the District that are adaptive high schools, Ottawa Technical Secondary School and Sir Guy Carleton Secondary School, which have a large number of GLP classes;

- Work with inclusion educators is in its early stages - more is to be learned about integrating students from GLP to regular classes and what this looks like; and
- Information is still being gathered with respect to the necessary supports, for success, to all secondary school students.

Following a break at 8:51 p.m. the meeting was called to order at 8:58 p.m.

8. Department Update

8.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Symmonds noted that he had distributed the information regarding the Strategic Plan to members and added that if anyone had any additional input it can be provided through the OCDSB website.

Superintendent Symmonds advised that the month of April is World Autism Awareness Month (WAAM), and noted that members have the month of February to highlight events and provide input.

System Principal Lyon advised that the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) team has been working to provide educators with a number of courses as a part of WAAM. System Principal Lyon advised of an event with Shelley Moore, author of *One Without the Other: Stories of Unity Through Diversity and Inclusion*. She noted that the District would be purchasing 200 of Ms. Moore's books to distribute among the schools and staff.

System Principal Lyon advised that LSS is working to arrange a speaking event for parents with Peter Vermeulen. She added that Mr. Vermeulen has been working with ASD for over 30 years. The event is anticipated to be on the subject of neurodiversity and neuropsychology and will have a question and answer component. System Principal Lyon highlighted that a recording of the presentation will be available on the OCDSB website for the month of April.

In response to a query, System Principal Lyon noted that school based WAAM related activities may be able to be offered in various languages, however, the speaking presentations will be conducted in English.

8.2 Special Education Plan Review (Standards)

a. Identification Placement and Review Committee Process and Appeals

Superintendent Symmonds advised that the Special Education Standards are available. He added that he had received feedback with respect to the Identification Placement and Review Committee and Education Standards but welcomes more.

System Principal Stoudt advised that the Special Education Plan is available on the OCDSB website. The purpose of the document is to have staff and the community provide feedback to ensure the material is clear.

System Principal Stoudt noted that the transportation and special equipment standards had been reviewed early in the year. She noted that the IPRC is a formal committee that is established to determine who is exceptional and outlined the available supports for students. The committee focuses on the strengths and needs of students. A case conference can be called after the IPRC to help inform the Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The committee provides a determination record and also oversees a process for review if families wish to appeal a decision.

In response to queries, the following information was provided:

- The information provided in the attached report reflects new referrals, the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process is being reviewed;
- The COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the number of reviews that could be conducted; and
- The OCDSB has been up-to-date on IPRC reviews over the last several years.

b. Individual Education Plan

System Principal Stoudt highlighted the distinction between the IEP and IPRC and noted that a student may have an IEP but not an IPRC review. She added that the IEP is created in consultation with families as a collaborative process in order to meet the educational needs of students.

System Principal Stoudt advised that a frequently asked questions document for educators is being compiled as part of the learning support guide. She added that the IEP is a working document to ensure that all accommodations are reflected.

During a discussion and in response to queries, the following information was provided:

- Families who feel that their child's IEP is not being followed are encouraged to share their concerns with the school support team before reaching out to their respective Superintendent of Instruction - additionally there is a complaint procedure available on the OCDSB website;

- The Ministry of Education has provided a document titled "Shared Solutions: A Guide to Preventing and Resolving Conflicts Regarding Programs and Services for Students With Special Education Needs";
- There are approximately 2,000 students in the District that are placed in a specialized program class relative to approximately 14,000 students out of 16,000 students who have an IEP and receive support in regular classrooms;
- IEPs are created to focus on key elements for learning, the language in the document could be made less complicated to ensure student comprehension;
- Concerns exist regarding the formal language used in IEPs and generalizations creating misunderstandings with students and families;
- Historic IEPs are secured and archived where educators can access them; and
- Student outcomes are not documented on the IEP but are reported on student report cards and alternative reports, if necessary.

c. SEAC Role and Composition

System Principal Stoudt noted that the current role and composition of SEAC was reviewed during the orientation presentation at the 7 December 2022 meeting. The information in the attached report will be updated to reflect the current membership.

9. Committee Reports

9.1 Board

Trustee Scott and Trustee Kaplan-Myrth noted that the Board meeting was short and that all recommendations carried forward from the Committee of the Whole meeting.

9.2 Committee of the Whole

There was no report from the Committee of the Whole meeting.

9.3 Committee of the Whole, Budget

The next Committee of the Whole, Budget meeting will be taking place on 21 February 2023.

10. New Business

There was no new business raised.

11. Upcoming Meetings

The upcoming meeting dates were provided for information.

12. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:44 p.m.

Cathy Miedema, Chair, Special
Education Advisory Committee