

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITY REPORT

**March 30, 2023
6:00 pm
Zoom Meeting**

Voting Members: Carrie-Lynn Barkley, Ryan Doucette (Young Leaders Advisory Council), Maria Teresa Garcia (Ottawa Community Immigrant Services), Chandonette Johnson (Jaku Konbit), Seema Lamba, Elizabeth Sweeney

Non-Voting Members: Bob Dawson, Inini McHugh, Lili Miller, Yazhuo Zhang, Nili Kaplan-Myrth (Trustee), Jessica Knoyle (Spiritual Care Secondary Schools)

Staff and Guests: Lynn Scott (Trustee), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Jacqueline Lawrence (Equity and Diversity Coordinator), Marva Major (System Principal, Equity), Lorna Evans (Teacher, Program & Learning), Teri Adamthwaite (Manager, Finance), Emily Balla (Mental Health Lead, Learning Support Services), Oksana Kravets (Communications Coordinator), James Baker (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Welcome

Chair Doucette called the meeting to order at 6:22 p.m. Due to a lack of quorum, Chair Doucette acknowledged that matters requiring consensus would not move forward.

2. Acknowledgement of Territorial Lands

Chair Doucette acknowledged that the committee is presently meeting on the unceded, unsurrendered Territory of the Anishinaabeg Algonquin Nation whose presence in Canada reaches back to time immemorial. He extended deep gratitude and sought to support and affirm their rights as the land's stewards and keepers.

3. Community Discussion - Open Space

3.1 Input, Feedback and Questions

During a community discussion, the following information was provided:

- Staff acknowledged the ongoing discussion regarding the Committee's obligation to conduct meetings in a manner that is open to the public;
- Staff advised that legal counsel had been consulted and learned that the District could help to mitigate the risks during online meetings as the meeting would be in a webinar format (no audience participation) and that members could chose to turn their cameras off and name themselves with initials (making sure that Board services staff knew who they were);
- Concerns were expressed about personal safety and the desire to continue conducting meetings virtually;
- The work of the Committee and its subcommittees are made public through the minutes of the main committee meeting. Verbal sub committee updates are shared during main committee meetings and so get included in the meeting minutes;
- Staff advised that continuing virtually or adopting a hybrid meeting model is acceptable;
- Staff agreed to determine how other districts in the province are approaching their meetings while fulfilling their obligations under the *Education Act*;
- Regarding the impact of having cameras off and the lack of sense of community among members when cameras are off;
- Staff advised that the use of a camera is not mandatory;
- Staff advised that all records are, and always have been public. The minutes of each meeting are submitted at Committee of the Whole where the names of participants and their respective roles are available; and
- The Ottawa Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) is a public institution and the general public have the right to know who is advising the Board of Trustees.

4. Presentations

4.1 Budget Update (T. Adamthwaite)

Manager Adamthwaite provided an update on the budget.

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

- In response to concerns regarding reductions in special education, staff advised that the budget for academic staffing had been recently approved and that the Superintendent of Learning Support Services had been successful in reallocating resources to maintain services for students while reducing costs;
- Concerns were expressed that cost reductions were being made through attrition. Staff advised that the District is awaiting confirmation from the Ministry of Education with respect to the actual deficit. The conversation among senior staff was that there was confidence in the approach that was used to try to minimize impacts on students in the process of finding savings;
- Concerns were expressed regarding the impact on students with special needs as the demographic has higher rates of not completing school and they are less likely to self advocate. Staff advised that there are contractual obligations with academic staffing and the reductions being implemented were considered for their impact on the classroom being implemented would not have an impact in the classroom, but would be implemented at the administrative level;
- Concerns were expressed that the staffing recommendations were not viewed through the equity lens and that decisions would have been different had lived experiences been considered;
- Staff highlighted that the current reductions are approximately \$2 million as the goal is to minimize the impact on students in special education programs; and
- The COVID-19 pandemic created a landscape that is abnormal. An expectation exists that additional Priority and Partnerships Fund (PPF) grants will be received to support equity concerns.

4.2 Mental Health Strategy (E. Balla)

Mental Health Lead Balla provided a presentation on Mental Health Strategy for consultation and to build a plan that is meaningful and that supports students.

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

- A focus needs to be placed on culture in order to meaningfully support Indigenous students;
- There are currently four identity specific support workers, one of which is dedicated to Indigenous needs. Conversations continue to support all communities;

- There is a high demand for support and student needs continue to be evaluated in order to build capacity and to diversify staff; and
- Concerns were expressed regarding the availability of support for those who fall within the low income and newcomer demographics. Staff advised that the information in the presentation are highlights of a strong program that includes many partnerships that are designed to meet the needs of all students.

5. Reports

5.1 Staff Report

During the Staff Report, System Principal Major provided the following information:

- A professional learning seminars occurred in March 2023 regarding equity and anti-oppression was presented by Nicole West Burns, and was well received;
- A toolkit has been created to address bias, discrimination, and hate. It is designed to provide administrative protocols and staff protocols to disrupt and address incidents that will best support students;
- In February and March 2023, staff were provided with training sessions to address antisemitism;
- Training sessions are ongoing for staff and parents to address phobias as they relate to the 2SLGBTQ+ community; and
- An in-person Ashoa (sic) event will be taking place at the National Holocaust Monument on 18 April 2023.

5.2 ACE Report, 8 February 2023

Due to a lack of quorum, the 8 February 2023 report could not be received.

5.3 Committee of the Whole Report

Lili Miller reported that the policy review on field trips was presented and approved.

In response to concerns whether the policy was equitable, staff advised that the policy does state that decisions shall ensure equity of access and that the Director of Education has the authority to implement procedures that involve equity.

5.4 Committee of the Whole, Budget

No report was provided.

5.5 Advisory Committee Updates

No report was provided.

6. New Business and Event Announcements

There was no new business.

7. Upcoming Meeting Dates

Upcoming meeting dates were provided for information.

8. Closing

The meeting adjourned at 8:52 p.m.