Building Brighter Futures Together at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)   **9 May 2023**
Report No. 23-030

Update on Student Achievement and Program Pathways

Key Contact: Brent Smith, Superintendent of Program and Learning, 613-596-8211 ext. 8573
Reg Lavergne, Superintendent of Instruction, ext. 8401
James Proulx, Executive Officer, Information Technology and Digital Transformation, 613-596-8211 ext. 8268

PURPOSE:

1. To provide an update on student achievement outcomes and program pathways. The information presented seeks to address the following questions:
    ● What is the representation of students across elementary programs (English with core French, early French immersion, middle French immersion) and secondary pathways (academic, applied, locally developed)? How has this changed over time?
    ● How well is the system supporting students in meeting high expectations in French, Language, and Mathematics (elementary panel) and English, Math, and Science (secondary panel)? How has this changed over time?
    ● What impact has the destreaming of Grade 9 Mathematics had on student enrolment and achievement?

STRATEGIC LINKS:

2. The OCDSB Strategic Plan 2019-2023 has three main objectives designed to drive a cultural shift to build and promote a culture of innovation, caring and social responsibility. This report is directly linked to goals that focus on the system's responsibility to foster positive learning conditions for students and allow them to reach their full potential, including:
    ● championing high expectations for all students in all programs;
    ● prioritizing the dignity and well-being of students in inclusive and caring classrooms; and
    ● removing barriers to equity of access, opportunities and outcomes.

    The disaggregation of program enrolment data and achievement outcomes by student demographics provides insight into who is being served within each

program and how well they are being supported by the system. Where there are differential outcomes for groups of students, identifying and dismantling the barriers or biases of oppression that could be contributing to these outcomes becomes a critical component to our work as a District, as outlined in the Importance of Identity and Programming and Support for Students sections of the *Indigenous, Equity, and Human Rights Roadmap, 2020-2023*.

CONTEXT:

3.   The OCDSB undertakes regular monitoring of student achievement data. The Research, Evaluation, and Analytics Division (READ) has a data support model which ensures that school principals and superintendents have a dedicated point of contact to support the use of data. Prioritizing the data support model is essential to ensuring that the focus of research and data analysis is at the student and school level. The READ team also prepares summary reports of student achievement data at a district level. These district level reports are used by superintendents to inform strategy and system guidance, and are used by the Board as a monitoring tool for progress on student achievement.

This report provides an analysis of program enrolment and achievement data for the 2021-2022 school year. Using enrolment, EQAO, credit accumulation, report card, and identity based data at key points helps to identify patterns and trends. These patterns and trends are explained in the letter of transmittal, and more visually detailed in the appendix. In reviewing this data, the context of the time period is important; for much of this time, learning was interrupted in a variety of ways due to Covid-19.

Notwithstanding, the data shows general stability in achievement. However there continues the data continues to indicate that disproportionate representation and differential outcomes persist for some groups of students - most notably for those who self-identify as Indigenous, students with special education needs (excluding gifted), and those who identify as being from racialized/minoritized communities.

Some progress has been made in the secondary panel, however, where efforts to disrupt streaming practices are contributing to more inclusive classrooms that are more representative of the student population, where achievement outcomes remain high, and access to all pathways remain open. The results from this first year of destreaming are encouraging in the District's effort to remove barriers and support more students to graduate from secondary school and pursue post secondary pathways of their choice.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

4.   Learning Context

In the OCDSB, there are several programs available to students in Kindergarten through Grade 12. In the elementary panel, for example, families have access to: English with core French (through regular or an alternative program), early French immersion (EFI), and middle French immersion (MFI; beginning in Grade 4). Although French immersion and core French continue to be available in the secondary panel, students are able to choose amongst a range of course levels (e.g., academic, applied and locally developed in grades 9 and 10; university, college/university, college, and workplace in grades 11 and 12).

Although not the focus of this report, students identified with an exceptionality may be placed in a specialized special education program class, depending upon the complexity of their needs – this occurs in both elementary and secondary panels. There are also several District-level programs at the secondary level (e.g., Adaptive, Alternate, Arts, High Performance Athlete, International Baccalaureate) offering even more choice for students and parents.

Under the Ministry of Education's direction, Ontario school districts began the process of "destreaming" in September 2021 with the introduction of Grade 9 destreamed Mathematics[1]. As part of this process, the Ministry requires school districts to undertake comprehensive monitoring of program enrolment and outcomes, particularly for students who have historically been underserved by the system. A key component of this work was the establishment of baseline measures of disproportionality and/or disparity against which progress can be measured.

In addition to destreaming, the last few years have seen other changes to the education system that need to be considered when interpreting the information presented in this report. Specifically, the 2019-2020 school year was interrupted by the pandemic which resulted in a transition to virtual learning, increased mobility as students transitioned between virtual and bricks-and-mortar schools, and added social, emotional, financial, and technological burden to students and their families. The impacts of the pandemic are still being felt and are evident in increased mental health needs. Also of note is the introduction of a new elementary Mathematics curriculum in September 2020 and the roll-out of web-based EQAO provincial assessments.

5. <u>Collection, Analysis & Reporting of Student Demographic & Identity-Based Data</u>

This report primarily focuses on student achievement data for 2021-2022 and measures change in relation to 2019-2020. Consistent with the previous

---

[1] During the 2021-2022 school year, the Ministry of Education announced the expansion of destreaming. In addition to Grade 9 mathematics, all remaining Grade 9 compulsory courses would be destreamed in September 2022.

report, data is presented for the full population of students, as well as for the subset of students who participated in the *Valuing Voices - Identity Matters! Student Survey* in 2019. While disaggregation and reporting for specific groups of students may appear to be similar, District-level reporting is based on information available in the student information system, whereas reporting groups derived from the *Valuing Voice*s survey are based on self-reported information from one of four questions related to Indigenous identity, race, gender identity, and disability, which are aligned with the Anti-Racism Data Standards; see Report 21-046 and the accompanying appendix for more information).

Despite the multidimensional nature of identity, this update focuses on the aspects of identity that were included in the original report and follows the same methodology to assign students to a particular group – Indigenous identity, race, gender identity, and disability – and does not take into account intersectionality (e.g., race x gender).

The use of survey data in years subsequent to its collection is predicated on its continued reliability and validity. At the time of *Valuing Voices* collection (Fall 2019), parents of children in K-6 completed the survey on behalf of their child (response rate of 32%), while students in grades 7-12 completed their own survey (response rate of 63%). Some aspects of identity may change over time (e.g., gender identity, disability) and in relation to who is providing the information. As a result, caution is warranted when interpreting results based on this reduced sample.

6.   Calculating Disproportionality and Interpretation of Results

Reporting of outcomes in relation to identity data collected under the *Anti-Racism Act* requires the calculation of disproportionality and/or disparity indices. Since Report 21-046 was released, there has been a provincial shift towards reporting on disproportionality (i.e., whether or not a group is over- or under-represented in a program/service/function relative to their representation in the population). By doing so, there are no direct comparisons made between groups of students.

The calculation of disproportionality may be influenced by something other than the elimination of barriers and/or biases (e.g., the number of students in a reporting group/population, changes in aspects of identity over time, who provided the information, loss of data over time as students progress through the education system). From a statistical perspective, caution is advised when interpreting disproportionality indices derived from data where there are fewer than 30 total students and/or fewer than 10 students being reported for a particular outcome.

7.   Overview of Findings: Enrolment and Achievement

Valuing Voices data was available for 53% of students in grades 9 and 10 (a drop from 64% in 2019-2020) and for 26% of students in grades 1 to 8 (a drop from 40% previously). For transparency, all data for the subset of students for whom there is *Valuing Voices* data are provided in Appendix A, immediately following the reporting of results. The following summarizes key observations:

Elementary

Program Enrolment:

- Elementary enrolment has increased since 2019-2020 with Early French Immersion accounting for the highest proportion of students at 53% (grades 1 through 8 in 2021-2022). The most significant change occurred in English with Core French, which rose from 38% in each of the previous two years to 40% in 2021-2022. At least part of this difference may be attributable to the fact that immersion programs were not offered in virtual schools during the pandemic.
- Since 2019-2020, representation of multilingual learners, students residing in low-income neighborhoods (Low-SES), males, students self-identifying as Indigenous, and students with special education needs (excluding gifted; SPED) has remained relatively stable in the various programs, with these groups being disproportionately enrolled in the English with core French program.
- For the subset of students enrolled in the English with core French program for whom *Valuing Voices* survey data is available, the following groups of students were amongst the most over-represented:
    - Indigenous identity - First Nations, Inuit
    - Race - Indigenous
    - Disability - Autism, Developmental, Learning, Mental, Physical, Speech Impairment, and another disability not listed.

Achievement Outcomes:

- The percentage of elementary students meeting or exceeding the provincial standard in 2021-2022 ranged from 76% in French (across both Reading and Writing) to 83% in Language-Reading. With the exception of Mathematics where the percentage of students who met the provincial standard dropped from 86% in 2019-2020 to 82% in 2021-2022[2], minimal changes were observed.
- Lower achievement outcomes were observed in Mathematics and Language (Reading & Writing) for the English with core French program; immersion programs tend to yield higher outcomes - a trend that has remained fairly consistent over time.
- Differential outcomes for specific groups of the student population continue to exist, with females achieving the provincial standard at higher rates than the District, and students who self-identify as Indigenous and those with special education needs (excluding gifted)

---

[2] A revised mathematics curriculum was introduced in 2021-2022.

being less likely to do so. Some improvements towards narrowing the achievement gap for students with special education needs (excluding gifted),however, are evident.

● For the subset of students for whom *Valuing Voices* data is available, trends in achievement outcomes were, for the most part, similar to those observed in 2019-2020. Compared to the general population, elementary achievement rates were higher for students who self-identified East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, White, or girl or woman, and <u>lower</u> for students who identified as First Nation, Métis, Black, Inuit, Middle Eastern, Latino/Latina/Latinx, or with a disability.

Secondary

Program Enrolment:

● In 2021-2022 the process of destreaming began with the introduction of Grade 9 Mathematics. Consequently, in this first year of destreaming, a significant shift towards higher enrolment in academic-level courses in grades 9 and 10 English (88%) and Science (85%) was also observed.

● Since 2019-2020, academic-level course enrolments have become more representative of the student population, with smaller gaps in enrolment rates for specific groups of students (e.g., multilingual learners, students who self-identify as Indigenous, students with special education needs (excluding gifted), and students residing in lower income neighbourhoods) compared to the general population.

● For the subset of students enrolled in academic-level courses for whom *Valuing Voices* survey data is available, the following groups of students were amongst the most under-represented in academic-level English, Math and Science courses during the 2021-2022: students who self-identify racially as Indigenous, those who self-identify as First Nations and students who self-reported having Autism, a learning or a mental disability.

Secondary Achievement (Grades 9 and 10 English, Math, and Science):

● In general, secondary achievement outcomes in grades 9 & 10 have remained relatively stable over the past three years with a modest decline in academic-level and destreamed mathematics. Consistent with previous years, achievement outcomes continue to be highest in academic-level courses.

● Differential outcomes for specific groups of the student population continue to exist, with females achieving the provincial standard at higher rates than the overall District, and students who self-identify as Indigenous and those with special education needs (excluding gifted; SPED) being least likely to do so. In comparison to the 2019-2020 academic year, some progress has been made towards meeting this benchmark for multilingual learners, students residing in low-income

neighborhoods (Low-SES) and male students.

- For the subset of students for whom *Valuing Voices* data is available, trends in achievement outcomes were similar to those observed in 2019-2020. Compared to the general population, achievement rates across academic-level English, Math and Science were lower for students who self-identified as First Nations or Métis; racially as Black or Indigenous; and students who self-reported having a learning or a mental disability.

Focus on Grade 9 Destreamed Mathematics:

- In 2021-2022, 95% of grade 9 students were enrolled in the destreamed mathematics course. This shift in enrolment is particularly encouraging for students residing in low-income neighbourhoods (Low-SES), students who self-identity as Indigenous, and students with special education needs (excluding gifted). As a result of destreaming, 1,000 more students currently have all pathways available to them[3].
- Achievement outcomes in destreamed Grade 9 were slightly higher than combined rates across applied and academic mathematics in 2019-2020. The percentage of students meeting the provincial standard has risen from a combined rate of 69% in 2019-2020 to 71% in 2021-2022. Pass rates have remained stable over the same time period. There is evidence to indicate, however, that more attention is required to close gaps in achievement, particularly for students who self-identify as Indigenous and those with special education needs (excluding gifted).
- For the subset of students for whom *Valuing Voices* data is available, higher proportions of students who identified as Black, Middle Eastern, Latino/Latina/Latinx, or Southeast Asian met the provincial standard in 2021-2022 compared to 2019-2020. There were also larger proportions of Black, Latino/Latina/Latinx and students who self-identified with a mental disability earning their Grade 9 math credit over the same time period. Conversely, students who identified racially as Indigenous; Métis or First Nations; and/or with a Learning disability experienced lower outcomes in this new course.

7. <u>Current Initiatives and Next Steps</u>

The OCDSB has a number of key initiatives underway which are intended to narrow achievement gaps for specific groups of students and remove systemic barriers to their success. Many of these are detailed in the *Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap* which provides a framework for work that is actively underway and/or planned. The following is an

---

[3] This is equivalent to the number of students who would have previously been enrolled in applied-level courses.

overview of some of the current key initiatives.

Equity:
- Developed an anti-hate toolkit for staff on addressing bias, discrimination and hate in schools to create respectful and safe conditions for learning;
- Provided professional learning for instructional coaches focused on building competency in addressing inequities, discrimination and bias and embedding culturally responsive practices in classrooms;
- Expanded reach ahead and summer courses to support Indigenous, Black and 2SLGBTQ+ learners;
- Introduced two Identity specific guidance coaches focused on providing culturally appropriate practices and building capacity with guidance teams to support historically underserved students; and
- Piloted gender inclusive physical education classes in several high schools this year which will continue to be available for students to access in the upcoming school year.

Indigenous Education:
- Provided Indigenous students with the opportunity to interact with Indigenous educators, peers and community through land-based and community supported learning;
- Supported staff in creating respectful and safe learning conditions for Indigenous students and their families;
- Supported capacity building amongst educators through training and commitments to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action;
- Increased the size of the Indigenous Education Learning Team; and
- Continued collaboration with Indigenous partners and community.

Innovation and Adolescent Learning:
- Continued partnerships with Algonquin College to support students in earning a high school diploma (e.g., School Within a College - SWAC) and high school/college credits (e.g., Dual Credit Program);
- Expanded the Authentic Student Learning Experience (ASLE) Tool to support credit accumulation by accounting for student interests and pathway goals;
- Increased opportunities for students to earn credits as a result of: their lived experience (in partnership with the Family Reception Center (FRC)), expansion of eLearning, and the creation of culturally relevant learning experiences (e.g., Indigenous Learning Experience program);
- Engaged students in innovative learning, while connecting schools with community partners through Experiential learning projects;
- Co-created two Black studies courses (one grade 11 and one grade 12) to prioritize and celebrate Black history;
- Administered a course selection survey to identify courses of interest

that were not currently being offered; this resulted in a change to course offerings at all schools based on student interest and pathways; and
- Expanded co-op to include part-time, full-time, paid, and virtual options to enhance work related experiences and build student capacity and skills.

Learning Support Services
- Implemented *The Third Path - A Relationship-Based Approach to Student Well-being and Achievement* to reinforce setting the conditions for learning by creating intentional and responsive relationships across several key areas (e.g., identity, safety, belonging, etc.);
- Continued to explore the use of a Universal Screener to assist educators in identifying emerging student needs and determining appropriate instructional strategies to support students;
- Developed an online resource, *Learning Support Guide for Students with Special Education Needs (The Guide)*, that provides educators and administrators with comprehensive information about supports for students with special education needs. An online parent resource is being designed to provide direct links to useful resources (i.e.: IEP and IPRC parent guides) and processes to support parents in navigating special educations resources;
- Undertaking a special project to learn more about supporting students with Mild Intellectual Disabilities (MID), with a particular focus on the inclusion of students in our General Learning Programs (GLP), including pathway planning for students in Grade 8; and
- Continuing to build social emotional learning skills (e.g., identifying and managing emotions, healthy relationships, coping skills and problem solving skills) through mental health promotion and prevention, helping to reduce the likelihood of mental health problems developing or reduces the intensity of pre-existing mental health difficulties.

Student Achievement Through Equity (SATE) Inquiry:
- Supporting collaborative work in 11 OCDSB elementary schools where educators and SATE Learning Coaches work together to ensure that every student succeeds academically and develops a positive sense of well-being; and
- Building meaningful learning partnerships between SATE school teams, families and community organizations, with the support of Community Education Liaisons (CELs), by: supporting caregivers/parents in meetings with educators; facilitating family literacy learning sessions; and connecting families to health and community resources.

Program and Learning:
- Developed a detailed Scope and Sequence in all curricular areas in grades 1-8 which is currently being employed across the system;
- Established District and school-based destreaming cross departmental

teams to lead the work in establishing and promoting inclusive classrooms;
- Worked in partnership with Learning Support Services to procure (and provide to every school) a new reading intervention application, Lexia;
- Contacted all parents of Grade 8 students who registered for Grade 9 locally developed courses to share key information and make them fully aware of the pathway options based on their course selections, graduation rates based on course pathway, etc. These phone calls resulted in increased enrolment in Academic-level courses in Grade 9;
- Established an Intensive Reading Intervention Summer Learning Program in 2022 to address identified reading gaps for students in Kindergarten to Grade 9; and
- Introduced a universal literacy screening tool (DIBELS) and a variety of new diagnostic tools to the system in 2022.

COMMUNICATION:

8. The information presented in this report is an important component of District level monitoring efforts to create more inclusive classrooms in both the elementary and secondary panels, and remove barriers and support more students to graduate from secondary school and pursue post secondary pathways of their choice.

District level results also provide important context against which school level efforts can be measured. A cross-departmental approach to examining student achievement data at key time points throughout the year (e.g., progress/mid-term reporting in the fall; Term/Semester 1; end of year) helps to facilitate conversations between Superintendents of Instruction and school administrators about student learning, with the initial review being undertaken by staff from Program and Learning, Innovation and Adolescent Learning, Learning Support Services and Research, Evaluation & Analytics.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

9. Since 2018-2019, the District has received $344,510 through Transfer Payment Agreements to support the collection, analysis and reporting of identity-data up to August 2023. These funds were used to hire research staff and consultant services for the facilitation of focus groups and community partner meetings, and ongoing analysis and reporting of identity data in relation to student outcomes and access to programs and services.

Payment Agreements to support the collection, analysis, consulting, and Since January 2021, staff (READ, LSS, Strategic Business Analyst) have been engaged in learning through *We All Count*. This has included a full day of professional learning in applying a data equity framework to project

planning and implementation and more than 20 hours of strategic consultation sessions with the founder, allowing for a deeper understanding and application of the work. Costs associated with this portion of the work were approximately $12,500 and were absorbed by the operating budget.

The District receives annual funding from the Ministry of Education to support student success. Much of the funding is targeted for staffing (i.e.,Student Success Lead, Student Success Teachers in each secondary school, and intermediate Student Success Teachers in sites offering grades 7 and 8), however a portion of the funds is distributed to schools. The initiative involves ongoing monitoring of student achievement and progress towards successful completion of high school.

Funding received from the Ministry of Education through the Supporting Students with Disabilities Grant has been used by LSS to learn more about supporting students with MID across the District. This has included staffing a Program Evaluator and two teachers whose focus is on the inclusion of students in our GLP (specifically pathway planning for students in Grade 8).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

10.   The following questions are provided for discussion purposes:
- What stands out for you in the data/information that is presented?
- What questions does the data/information raise?
- What actions, next steps and/or resources should be considered?

_____   _____

Brent Smith   Michèle Giroux
Superintendent of Program and Learning   Director of Education/
                                                                     Secretary Secretary of the
                                                                     Board

Appendix A: Visual Report and Detailed Tables