



**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE PUBLIC REPORT**

**Tuesday, April 2, 2024, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Board Room**  
**Administration Building**  
**133 Greenbank Road**  
**Ottawa, Ontario**

Trustees Present: Alysha Aziz, Justine Bell (electronic communication), Donna Blackburn, Donna Dickson, Lyra Evans, Nili Kaplan-Myrth, Jennifer Jennekens, Matthew Lee, Cathryne Milburn, Suzanne Nash, Amanda Presley, Lynn Scott, Emma Hong (Student Trustee, electronic communication), Malaika Kamanzi (Student Trustee, electronic communication)

Staff Present: Pino Buffone (Director of Education), Michele Giroux (Executive Officer, Corporate Services), James Proulx (Executive Officer, Information Technology and Digital Transformation), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Paula Hall (Superintendent of People, Culture and Leadership), Shawn Lehman (Superintendent of Instruction), Richard Sinclair (General Counsel), Shannon Smith (Superintendent of Instruction), Stacey Kay (General Manager, Learning Support Services), Sandy Owens (General Manager, Business & Learning Technologies), Diane Pernari (General Manager, Communications & Information Services), Jacqueline Lawrence (Diversity and Equity Advisor), Juliet Robinson (System Principal, Equity and Inclusive Initiatives), Courtney O'Halloran (Principal), Nicole Guthrie (General Manager, Board Services), Michael Guilbault (Central Audio/Visual Technical Specialist), Kathy Mak (Board/Committee Coordinator)

Non-Voting Representatives Present: Lili Miller (IEC), Deepika Grover (ACE), Jennifer Capitani (OCEOC), Stephanie Kirkey (OSSTF-TBH), Susan Gardiner (OCETF), Tom Holloway (OCASC)

1. Call to Order - Vice-Chair of the Board

Vice-Chair Milburn called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Acknowledgement of Territorial Lands

Vice-Chair Milburn acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Homelands and thanked the Algonquin Nations for their stewardship of these lands since time immemorial.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were filed.

4. Approval of Agenda

**Moved by Trustee Dickson,**

**THAT the agenda be approved.**

**Carried**

5. Briefing from the Chair of the Board

During the briefing from Chair Scott, the following information was provided:

- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced on 1 April 2024 the Federal Government's intention to fund a National School Food Program with an investment of \$ one billion over five years;
- Director Buffone attended a local event in Ottawa regarding the food program announcement on 1 April 2024;
- The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) welcomed Christopher Richardson, a current trustee and former chair from Vancouver School Board to observe the Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting;
- The nomination deadline for the Community Recognition Awards is 4 April 2024 at 4:00 p.m.;
- Families and members of the community are encouraged to share recommendations on the OCDSB annual budget through the Engage OCDSB website; and
- Trustees expressed interest in sending out a public letter announcing the approval and introduction of the National School Food Program.

6. Briefing from the Director

During the briefing from Director Buffone, the following information was provided:

- The month of April is Autism Awareness Month and 2 April 2024 is World Autism Awareness Day;
- The District will host a speaker series event on 4 April 2024 featuring presenter Judy Endow;
- Staff will be offered a number of professional learning opportunities in April and May 2024;
- The OCDSB has joined other Ontario school boards to start legal action against social media companies seeking safer products and

compensation for the disruption to the District and to support student well-being;

- The Valuing Voices - Identity Matters Student Survey will be held on 11 April to 10 May 2024 and is voluntary and confidential. Families will receive an information letter in late March detailing the survey and consent process. The full survey will be emailed on 11 April 2024 and is available in other languages;
- All schools and OCDSB operated Extended Day Programs will be closed to students on 8 April 2024 due to solar eclipse; and
- Director Buffone noted that he would follow up with the Ministry of Education to clarify any possible initial miscommunication regarding litigation costs.

7. Delegations

There were no delegations.

8. Matters for Action:

8.1 Report 24-052, Elementary Program Review (P. Buffone)

Your Committee had before it Report 24-052, Elementary Program Review, seeking approval for the initiation of an elementary program review to commence in the spring of 2024. The program review process at the elementary level (grades 1-8 inclusive) is the first of four stages. The other stages will be addressed in subsequent school years.

Moved by Trustee Blackburn,

THAT an Elementary Program Review be undertaken, as outlined in Report 24-052, beginning in April 2024 with the intent of implementation beginning in September 2025.

Trustee Blackburn noted the importance of community participation and consultation as it will enable the OCDSB to efficiently support student academic and well-being.

Trustee Lyra Evans voiced her concerns about the time and resources needed to undertake community consultations to potentially receive negative feedback regarding change. She further noted that the way the consultation is presented to communities and methods used to analyze data should be taken into consideration as it will impact the OCDSB implementation procedure.

Director Buffone shared that the majority of the community voiced their desire for change through the consultation process in regards to the renewed strategy plan. During spring of 2024, the Board will be actively listening to the community's feedback to formulate options through the summer and continue to modify it over the fall season.

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

- The information provided for trustees to host zone meetings will include elements of the three guiding principles, learning, social responsibility and well-being. Currently there is no toolkit developed for the active community engagements; however, the information outlined in the report will be used for those sessions;
- The OCDSB will be ready to launch the Engage OCDSB page to organize information, documents and other inquiries;
- Support staff will be assigned to collaborate with trustees with an opportunity to have an independent zone meeting or be partnered with a co-terminus zone;
- The District will identify the key materials that needs to be available in additional languages through the use of a new interpretation and translation service program;
- Members of the community have varying interests and OCDSB needs to determine the nature of information the community will be provided so an informed decision can be made. The community should not be expected to do Program Review but rather inform OCDSB of what they value in the educational system and be reflective of the community's values with methods for a more efficient implementation; and
- Trustee Scott commented on the diversifying programs inherited from OCDSB's two predecessor boards and the responsibility trustees have towards students and their future education as unpopular decisions may be made.
- Director Buffone commented on the guiding principles which are intended to recognize, respect and integrate Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, skills and teachings throughout the curriculum and school practices to honor cultural diversity and promote cultural competency;
- He further added that the goal is to gather input from voices who may not always be heard within the community;
- Director Buffone noted that one of the driving forces for the program review is to have greater equity of access and opportunity, experience and outcomes, with a priority emphasis on community-based schooling, so that all students can benefit;

Trustee Lee assumed the chair.

- The intent of the program review is not to layoff staff but rather to address structural issues caused by streaming issues which happens at a young age for students;
- The review will involve the trajectory of learning and determining the greatest benefit for students in special education;
- The review will consider a number of specialized program classes and the students served in an integrated setting to determine the best program and service for all; and
- Trustees noted the importance of community engagement as the input on different models, ways to address concerns at the onset, and methods to implement the changes are an integral part of the review.

Trustee Milburn resumed the chair.

- The OCDSB aims to make the initial process of the review accessible and accountable through the use of networks;
- Director Buffone noted that he will be attending meetings of each of the District's advisory committees to share the elementary program review and receive feedback;
- Trustees have noted the importance of reaching out to religious community groups for feedback to support marginalised voices;
- The potentially difficult decisions have been anticipated as communities may have opposing views and be impacted in an unforeseen way;
- Trustees noted the importance of considering community feedback; however, concerns were also expressed that the OCDSB may risk setting unrealistic expectations by making commitments to community ideas and additional support;
- The consultation is framed to properly communicate the limited resources the OCDSB has, and the Board must make decisions that are both efficient and effective to support current and future students;
- In the review, a number of factors will to be considered for student transitions including the structure of a given school;
- There is minimal preparation needed for the consultation process as communications are being worked on internally by staff, therefore the cost will be absorbed from April to June 2024. Any future cost as work progresses will be brought forward to the Board through the usual budgetary process;

- There will be a balance of qualitative and quantitative information used as consultation is only one element of the process;
- The OCDSB will use the program review as an opportunity to address equality issues and trustees have noted the importance of making decisions informed by pedagogy and data, not just public opinion;
- Trustee Scott expressed concern as English language learners in Ottawa are not encouraged to enrol in French Immersion as students are required to attend different schools if they wish to be in the program;
- The OCDSB will have an online platform for school engagement across the system to hear student voices, including the graduating class, to receive additional feedback on their experiences;
- The importance of continuing to develop Indigenous education initiatives was highlighted;
- The benefits of programs and services in place will be accessed through an environmental scan and an external consultant will be hired to provide a third party objective view with the goal to optimize learning and wellness;
- The aim for the program review is not to open or close schools but for the District to best serve the needs of students. The OCDSB will work with the pupil accommodation review guideline that is in place and a moratorium on school closure;
- Trustees voiced the importance of honest communication and transparency from the OCDSB throughout the review process;
- It was noted that the Board may receive contradicting feedback as some communities will advocate for certain school closures while others may be opposed to it;
- Director Buffone voiced the need for the review as the current system and structures place young students on pathways that are difficult for them to change without a significant amount of work; and
- Trustees voiced their concern with the time needed to implement the review as this may result in more students experiencing inequalities within schools due to the large disparity between English and French immersion schools.

**Moved by Trustee Blackburn,**

**THAT an Elementary Program Review be undertaken, as outlined in Report 24-052, beginning in April 2024 with the intent of implementation beginning in September 2025.**

**Carried**

9. Report from Statutory and Other Committees

9.1 Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), 7 February 2024

**Moved by Trustee Kaplan-Myrth,**

**THAT the report from Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), dated 7 February 2024, be received.**

**Carried**

9.2 Indigenous Education Council (IEC), 15 February 2024

**Moved by Trustee Presley,**

**THAT the report from Indigenous Education Council (IEC), dated 15 February 2024, be received.**

**Carried**

\*\*\*Vice-Chair Milburn called the meeting into recess at 8:36 p.m.\*\*\*

\*\*\*Vice-Chair Milburn called the meeting back to order at 8:47 p.m.\*\*\*

10. Matters for Discussion:

10.1 Report 24-040 Progress Update on Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap (S. Smith)

Your Committee had before it for discussion, Report 24-040 Progress Update on Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap (Roadmap).

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

- The OCDSB continues to work with the Research, Evaluation and Analytic Division (READ) team and continues to develop the Roadmap based on the foundational work completed in the first Roadmap to demonstrate movement and momentum;
- Data collection provides a sense of the necessary fundamental systematic shifts required to ensure the support the full diversity of our student population;
- The OCDSB has applied the Anti-Hate Toolkit and in depth training to support system leaders and educators to identify and address discrimination. The aim is to continue providing additional focused training tools;

- The District aims to expand staff capacity to identify the different ways students understand safety through their lived experience and to create a safe environment;
- Superintendent Smith noted that the work to identify and address systemic barriers is not solely the work of the equity team or the Indigenous Education team but rather this requires collaboration amongst departments;
- Superintendent Farrish noted that staff continue to do this work through a human rights and equity lens and to work alongside the Indigenous Education Counsel (IEC);
- The Roadmap will include indicators to measure progress of the goal areas. Anecdotal data collected thus far indicates that Students have noted slight changes within their schools. The District aims to track the impact and outcome it has on students in terms of access to opportunities, experiences and outcomes;
- The Office of Human Rights and Equity Advisor (O-HREA) report will be a source document in the development of the Roadmap goals. The path for policy revision is through the established procedure and feedback pertaining to changes to policy will be brought forward to the senior team to be considered within the Policy Review Cycle as part of the procedure directives;
- The everyday experience of students, what we have been referring to as 'street data' when working to define and collect sources of data and assess existing data sets, must be considered to ensure learning conditions are equitable as school site data informs the practices used to transform the learning conditions;
- A four year plan is being developed that builds on the previous Roadmap to generate a tracking process for human rights issues and to determine where foundations, building capacity and expansions are required;
- The gap between Indigenous student graduation rates and the greater student population has been noted and the collected data will provide insight on areas that require concrete strategies to address the issue as early as possible. The OCDSB continues to build staff capacity to serve Indigenous students in the classroom by raising cultural awareness and understanding perspectives;
- It had been noted that the information gathered from staff survey and experiences through exit interviews are done consensually, the data from surveys and interviews will be used to support staff in the future and provide instructive guidelines during the hiring process;



- The District provides opportunities for educators to move between school sites within the District. Staff relocating to different school sites may be due to personal decisions or assignments; however, it is also possible educators feel there is not adequate mentorship and support;
- Data gathered from educators transferring between locations are often obtained through informal conversations with supervisors. The District aims to ask staff about their experience in the District in ways that are responsive and reflective of their identities so that they may feel more comfortable providing feedback that can be implemented for future improvement;
- Trustee Scott noted the misinterpretation of the OCDSB's intent is often due to the varying definitions of equity between individuals. The Board requires additional data regarding human rights incidents to implement further support and training to enable the District to aid students in reaching their potential;
- It has been noted that previous Valuing Voices Survey had provided valuable information regarding school climate and the District aims to generate a report and information from this year's survey;
- Trustee Scott suggested that a mechanism could be implemented to track issues that students face in schools which would complement the school level dashboard;

Trustee Lee assumed the chair.

- It has been noted that the creation of a student equity advisory committee is shown as having a 0% completion rate in the report and does not reflect the impact that student voice has on the Board's decision in terms of addressing goals and creating responsive opportunities; and
- Trustees suggested adding additional columns for 2024 to 2028 strategic action in Appendix A of the report to provide a comparative analysis over the years. The items marked completed on the Roadmap will be carried over to the next 2024-2028 Roadmap and beyond as this sets the space for work to continue and new milestones to be created.

Trustee Milburn resumed the chair.

Trustee Kaplan-Myrth called point of order requesting that Trustee Bell refrain from talking about international events.

Trustee Bell clarified that educators need to support having difficult conversation to create a safe learning environment for students

It was noted that a group of administrators within the District called the Hard Conversations Group create safe spaces to conduct difficult conversations.

11. Information Items:

11.1 Report from OPSBA (if required)

Trustee Jennekens reported the following from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA):

- The Annual General Meetings (AGM) is on 4 July 2024 with Educational Professional Development opportunities;
- The OCDSB will host the Canadian School Boards' Association Congress and National Trustee Gathering on Indigenous Education from 3- 5 July 2024; and
- The Canadian Association of the Practical Study of Law in Education (CAPSLE) is scheduled from 28 April to 30 April 2024.

11.2 OSTA Update (if required)

Trustee Lee noted that the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) had no long term route cancellations in the past two weeks and continues to work through operational items on a daily basis for short term coverage.

12. New Business - Information and Inquiries

Director Buffone noted that the adult learning program is part of the Elementary Program Review and there are no major plans to cut back on the program.

In response to a query from Trustee Aziz, staff agreed to reissue a past guidance memorandum to provide clarification regarding expressions of identity and rights.

Director Buffone commented on the data collection surrounding disciplinary actions in regard to antisemitism and noted that the OCDSB is in need of a tracker for incidents that occur.

The Safe Arrival application is a legislative requirement to have staff confirm the arrival of elementary students in schools. It has been noted that this program is available on School Messenger which is an online platform providing communication between the District and families. A privacy assessment has been done and a privacy agreement has been put into place with data only shared to authorized third party vendors after a privacy impact assessment has been completed.

13. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

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Cathryne Milburn, Chair