



**Ad-Hoc Policy Review Committee
Report No. 24-072**

20 June 2024

**UPDATE ON THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITY POLICY
REVIEW**

Key Contact:

PURPOSE:

1. To update the Ad Hoc Policy Review Committee on the consultations for Policy P.008.GOV Advisory Committee on Equity and seek to identify issues and consider possible improvements to the policy.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

2. The revision of existing policies helps support the goals and objectives within the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan. Specifically, the policy review process aligns with good governance practices under the Social Responsibility pillar and the OCDSB's commitment to the Indigenous, Human Rights and Equity Roadmap.

CONTEXT:

3. The Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE) was created to support the Board of Trustees in fulfilling its commitment to fostering an equitable and inclusive learning and working environment within the district. Since its inception it has played a vital role in addressing equity-related challenges, advocating for marginalized communities and driving systemic change. The policy that provides the framework for the committee, Board [Policy P.008.GOV Advisory Committee on Equity](#) (the policy) attached as Appendix A, was last reviewed in 2018 and could benefit from some refinements to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in meeting the evolving needs of our diverse student population and the community.

The review process to date has included several conversations with the committee, a conversation with the ACE policy sub-committee as well as a public consultation on the EngageOCDSB platform. A subsequent conversation with ACE on the policy to collect their input was held during their 30 May 2024 ACE meeting. The valuable feedback received from ACE, combined with insights from the Ad Hoc Policy Review Committee, will be instrumental in shaping potential policy amendments.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

4. Comparative Analysis

In order to inform potential changes to the existing policy, staff conducted a comparative analysis with other school boards in Ontario, including Waterloo Region, Toronto, York Region, Grand Erie, and Simcoe County District School Boards. Overall the mission and vision of their equity committees are similar to the OCDSB. One noteworthy difference in the OCDSB policy is the inclusion of a specific and detailed list of organizations who can participate on the committee. Other districts use language in their policies to support the inclusion of a broad spectrum of community members representing marginalized communities. Another difference worth noting is the term of office, which in some cases is longer in duration than the OCDSB which allows for a four year term (if reappointed). The contemplation of a longer term may be reflective of the recognition of the time it takes to implement change.

5. ACE Policy Review Subcommittee

On 18 April 2024, a sub-committee of the Committee convened to discuss the current policy and potential revisions. Key questions raised included the impact of membership criteria on quorum challenges, how to center the voices of parents and students, and the effects of a rotational committee model on continuity and efficiency. The meeting also reviewed whether the existing voting membership model, recommended by legal counsel, remains effective and considered the potential shift to a consensus-based decision-making model.

The sub-committee identified new practices to be embedded in policy, such as Indigenous land acknowledgements, grounding practices, and creating spaces for community input. Discussions focused on balancing community engagement with prioritizing member voices during meetings. There was a robust debate regarding the representation of the Ottawa Police Service (OPS), with some members advocating for a ban on police presence and others for representation. Concerns were raised about an overrepresentation of trustees, administrators, and teachers compared to parents and students, as well as the need for increased LGBTQIA+ and diverse community representation.

General notes highlighted various viewpoints, including critiques of the Committee's "Colonial model" and the desire for more inclusive practices. Members supported the idea of in-person meetings and suggested an ACE policy retreat for focused policy work. Concerns were also expressed about the underrepresentation of Jewish, Muslim, and Arab communities within the Committee. Overall, the discussions reflected a commitment to improving inclusivity and ensuring diverse voices are heard in the Committee's decision-making processes.

6. ACE Policy Review - Current Policy and Practice

ACE was created by the Board through policy, and as the Board updates this policy, it actively seeks input from the current committee to inform these changes. Discussions on the policy at ACE demonstrate a strong commitment to the committee, the importance of the work of the committee, an acknowledgement of the evolution of the role of the committee, as well as the need for greater clarity about the process for approval of policy changes. While there is a need for ACE to continue discussions on potential policy changes, it is also important that the Ad Hoc Policy Committee have an opportunity to discuss the policy, understand the feedback received to date, and identify potential areas for further consideration as part of the review process.

The following table provides an overview of the current practices outlined in the ACE policy, along with potential areas for contemplation and revision. This comparison aims to highlight specific aspects of the policy that may benefit from updates or changes based on recent feedback and evolving needs within the district. By examining these, the committee can better understand the existing framework and identify opportunities for enhancing the committee's effectiveness, inclusivity, and alignment with the district's strategic initiatives and community expectations.

TERMS OF REFERENCE	
Current Policy and Practice	Questions and Reflections to Support Change
<p>The formal role of the Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE) includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing strategic advice to support equitable education access, student well-being, and citizenship development. • Advising the Board on the review, implementation, and monitoring of policies, equity strategies, and programs. • Identifying and addressing systemic barriers; • Engaging parents and community partners to help create and maintain a safe and inclusive learning environment. • Advising the Board on budget implications that impact equity and inclusion commitments. 	<p>Do these roles and responsibilities reflect the current reality of the work of the committee?</p> <p>What more could be added <u>or</u> clarified to ensure that the role of the committee and its members is clearly defined and understood?</p>

MEMBERSHIP	
Current Policy and Practice	Questions and Reflections to Support Change
<p><u>Community Membership</u> The policy allows for 7 voting members who represent community organizations, agencies or groups who are representative of communities experiencing systemic barriers and marginalization, with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Membership should include a variety of organizations that reflect the district's demographic composition and align with its equity and inclusive education priorities.</p> <p>The policy identifies: ACORN, Children’s Aid Society, Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centers of Ottawa, Family Services Ottawa, Lebanese and Arab Social Services Agency, Ottawa Chinese Community Service Center, OCISO, OLIP, Ottawa Police Service, Pathways to Education, Rainbow Alliance arc-en-ciel, Somali Center For Family Services, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, and Youth Services Bureau and suggests that the list may be adjusted over time to ensure it continues to represent the diverse needs and priorities of the community. However, the list has not been updated since 2018.</p> <p>Only 4 community organizations are currently active on the committee, only 1 of the 4 is an organization specifically listed in the policy.</p>	<p>In other districts with similar committees, specific organizations are not listed. Instead, language could be more general but support the inclusion of a broad spectrum of community members representing marginalized communities.</p> <p>What is the optimal number of members to ensure diverse representation while maintaining efficiency and effectiveness in decision-making processes?</p> <p>What community organizations are missing from this list?</p> <p>How do we ensure other underrepresented groups are included?</p> <p>Would there be value in developing clear criteria and guidelines for selecting community groups to ensure comprehensive and inclusive representation?</p> <p>Recognizing quorum can sometimes be a challenge - what is the optimal number of members to ensure diverse representation while maintaining efficiency and effectiveness in decision-making processes?</p>
<p><u>Individual Membership</u> The policy allows for 4 individual voting members of the following identities: creed-based, disability, Indigenous, immigrants, 2SLGBTQ+, and racialized groups.</p>	<p>Having individual voting members can be appropriate if these individuals bring valuable perspectives and experiences that contribute to the committee's mission. Ensuring a balance between organizational representatives and individual</p>

<p>All of the individual members were appointed through the 2019 membership campaign process. Individual members have an “alternate member” provision, that is not contemplated within the policy. However, this arrangement is available for community organizations.</p>	<p>members can enhance the committee's effectiveness.</p> <p>The policy does not provide details on the selection process for individual members. Some consideration should be given to the development of a transparent and fair selection process to ensure that individuals chosen to serve on ACE represent the district's diversity and have the necessary expertise and commitment to equity.</p> <p>Is it appropriate to have individual voting members?</p> <p>What directives should guide recruitment and terms of office for individual members who bring unique perspectives and experiences to our discussions and decision-making processes?</p> <p>Should the “alternate individual voting member” approach be defined in the policy?</p> <p>What is the appropriate balance between staff and non-staff members within ACE to ensure that the perspectives and interests of both groups are adequately represented?</p>
<p><u>Non-Voting Membership</u> The non-voting members of ACE include trustees, the Superintendent of Instruction, and the Diversity and Equity Coordinator and may include a student senator, 2 federation members and a member from a local post-secondary institution.</p> <p>The current membership composition features a “member at a large” category of non-voting representatives. This is not a part of the policy at present.</p>	<p>The OCDSB Equity team has increased significantly since 2018, what should the staff compliment on the committee look like?</p> <p>How do we ensure a balance between community, individual and staff perspectives?</p> <p>Should the “member at large” category be defined in the policy?</p>

OPERATIONAL ELEMENTS	
Current Policy and Practice	Questions and Reflections to Support Change
<p><u>Term of Office</u> Voting members of the Committee serve a two-year term with a maximum of two consecutive terms for individual members. While community organizations or agencies can serve multiple consecutive terms, their representatives are also limited to two consecutive terms. Non-voting members are appointed annually.</p> <p>The current membership complement has been in place since 2019.</p>	<p>Is the two-year term the most effective start date for the Committee's work cycle?</p> <p>Should the term limits for voting members be extended or reduced to ensure continuity and fresh perspectives?</p>
<p><u>Appointment of Members</u> To address membership needs, a Membership Sub-Committee will be formed which includes the Chair, Vice Chair, and up to three other members. This Sub-Committee ensures a fair selection process for new voting members and then recommends new members to the Committee.</p>	<p>What improvements can be made to the Membership process within the policy to enhance transparency and inclusivity?</p>
<p><u>Meetings</u> The Committee meets six or seven times during the school year. The meeting must be open and accessible to the public. Meetings typically follow OCDSB By-Laws and Standing Rules and members have been using consensus for decision making.</p> <p>All meetings have been held by Zoom since the pandemic. Although public participation is encouraged at the Chair's discretion, meetings are held by invitation only. Only those on the distribution list receive the meeting link and can engage.</p>	<p>Are there other more equitable and collaborative approaches to meeting management the committee could adopt?</p>
<p><u>Leadership</u> The Committee should elect a Chair and Vice Chair from its eleven voting members.</p>	<p>Would it be advantageous to formally integrate the co-chair structure into the policy?</p>

<p>The committee operates with a co-chair arrangement rather than the chair and vice chair arrangement contemplated by the policy.</p>	
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RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7. There are no resource implications to potential revisions to the ACE policy.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

- 8. The policy was shared on EngageOCDSB, and feedback from the community, the ACE committee, and the Ad Hoc Policy Review Committee will be used to inform a draft policy. The draft will be shared with all stakeholders in the fall, to obtain approval by October 2024.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- Using the questions shared above, are there any additional considerations that would help inform revisions to the ACE Policy?

Michèle Giroux
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