



**OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**



Learning



Well-being



Social
Responsibility

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)
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Consultation Report on the Elementary Program Review

**Primary Contact: Pino Buffone, Director of Education/Secretary to the Board, 613-596-8211 ext. 8219
Janice McCoy, Executive Officer, Corporate Services
Nadia Towaij, Superintendent, Special Assignment
Kenan Omercajic, Strategic Business Analyst**

PURPOSE:

1. To provide a summary of the input received through the spring consultation related to the Elementary Program Review.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

2. The OCDSB Strategic Plan makes a strong commitment to improving program quality and accessibility. Building on the feedback received during the strategic plan consultations, a comprehensive elementary program review was initiated in the Spring of 2024. The first significant step of this review was to gather input from the community on current elementary program offerings, experiences of students, staff, and families, as well as identify issues and opportunities to inform improvements to program quality and accessibility.

CONTEXT:

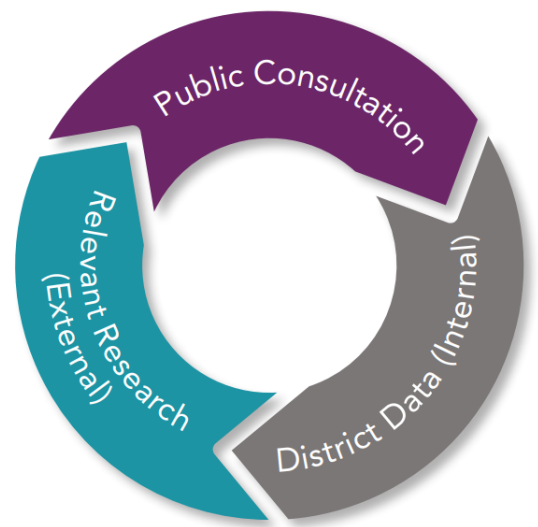
3. The OCDSB offers fulsome elementary programming. Over the past twenty-five years, the number and placement of programs has grown considerably, resulting in a medley of school configurations, grade structures, and program offerings. In that same period, there has been considerable population growth outside of the Greenbelt, and some redistribution of population within the Greenbelt. The demographics of the community have changed and Ottawa now benefits from a much more diverse population. Over that same time period, the District's understanding of pedagogy has become much richer, more inclusive, more aware

of the socio-emotional importance of education, as well as the systemic and structural barriers which adversely impact some groups of students.

In 2023, during the consultation process for the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, the OCDSB invited students, parents/caregivers and staff to share their thoughts about public education in Ottawa. Their feedback highlighted the value our community places on program quality and accessibility. In many respects, what was heard was a call to action. While the programming currently in place has served the needs of the community over the past quarter-century, what was made clear by the District's communities was that there is an immediate need to review and rethink what the District offers, how and where it is offered, whose needs are being served, and how the District might redesign its schools to better meet the needs of current and future generations.

The extent of the District's program offerings, enrolment data, school configuration data, along with achievement data are described in further detail in "Navigating the Future: 2024 OCDSB Elementary Program Review" (Appendix A). This document served as the foundation for situating the elementary program review to support and facilitate understanding about current program offerings. It was also used to inform the initial input process with the OCDSB community regarding how these programs are serving the community and where they may require reconfiguration or reconsideration.

Ultimately, this consultation report serves as one of three fundamental sources of data that will provide an in-depth, inclusive analysis of the current program offerings at the OCDSB. The three sources that will inform the elementary program review, and subsequent implementation of any changes, are: 1) public consultation; 2) District data (internal), and 3) relevant research (external). This report reflects only the input from the public consultation itself. The subsequent report – to be presented on October 8, 2024 – will include both the District data (internal) and relevant research (external) to further inform the elementary program review process and triangulate any decisions made regarding the development of elementary program models. A final report that outlines the District's recommended action(s) is planned to be presented on December 3, 2024.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

4. Consultation Timelines and Methodologies

The initial stage of consultation was a dynamic process that was a tremendous undertaking involving numerous key stakeholders who supported the process. This stage was strictly designed to gather an understanding of the community's views and thoughts on current elementary programming. The input campaign took place from April through June 2024 and provided numerous consultation pathways to facilitate and procure input from the District's broader community in order to inform program modeling. A district-wide announcement was circulated via email, newsletters, and social media platforms to inform students, parents/caregivers, staff and community members about the upcoming elementary program review. This announcement provided a brief overview of the objectives and timelines of the review process along with the consultation pathways. Below, the consultation pathways are identified and explained:

1. Presentations to Advisory Committees:

- Presentations were delivered and led by Director Pino Buffone to District advisory committees (i.e., Advisory Committee on Equity, Indigenous Education Council, Parent Involvement Committee, Special Education Advisory Committee, Alternative Schools Advisory Committee, along with Student Senate). These presentations provided committee members with an overview of the program review process and solicited their input and recommendations based on current elementary programming and their key considerations for potential models.

2. Principal Consultations:

- Principals were provided two separate opportunities to share their thoughts and provide input on the elementary program review. The first opportunity was a ThoughtExchange where they shared their thoughts and questions around the program review itself. The subsequent opportunity was a working session where they shared their thoughts on current programming and what changes they'd like to see implemented through a Stop, Start, and Continue activity.

3. School Board Trustee Zone Meetings:

- School board trustees collaborated with one another and hosted seven zone meetings in their respective communities and one virtual meeting

(that was added following community request). These meetings served as opportunities for trustees to engage directly with constituents, gather ideas and input, and answer questions about the program review process. Principals, in particular, played a notable role as facilitators during these meetings where they led focus groups and engaged the community in meaningful conversations where input was recorded. Appendix A and Appendix B were distributed during these sessions to provide further insight to attendees about the District's current program offerings.

4. Student Achievement Through Equity (SATE) Engagement Sessions:

- Sessions were facilitated by Community Education Liaisons for SATE Inquiry schools where a high proportion of students face educational challenges and systemic barriers associated with race, ethnicity, language and socioeconomic status. Families were invited to attend these sessions to provide input regarding their experiences in the elementary program with translation services offered and provided.

5. Engage OCDSB Online Survey:

- An online engagement opportunity was provided from April to June 2024 that allowed participants to share and prioritize thoughts and ideas. This virtual engagement opportunity served as an avenue for participation for students, parents/caregivers, staff, and community members who could not or did not want to attend a meeting, but wanted to voice their opinions, ask questions, and engage in meaningful dialogue about the elementary program review.

6. Learning Support Services:

- Learning Support Services (LSS) was also surveyed and provided responses to the same questions that were posed to staff in the Engage OCDSB survey. These responses were collected and submitted by LSS independently and coded and themed separately from the Engage OCDSB survey.

7. Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) and Student Support Professionals (SSP) Town Halls

- Three town hall meetings were held for ETFO members, two of which were in person and one was virtual. In addition, a virtual session was held for SSP members. These sessions, led by Director Pino Buffone, allowed opportunities for members to ask questions, clarify concerns, and provide

advice regarding current elementary programming and future modeling options.

Regular communication and updates were maintained throughout the phase of the program review process and the conduct of the consultation pathways via email, newsletters, social media, and the district website. Further information was provided about upcoming events, progress reports, and opportunities for input and participation and the District was receptive to public feedback on adding more sessions, such as a virtual session for the Trustee zone meetings.

This expansive consultation was a tremendous undertaking and resulted in a successful endeavour to facilitate and collect input from the District's community. The input that was collected resulted in rich information to be considered. The community shared openly and honestly their experiences with current elementary programming, which included their successes, challenges, concerns, and hopes for the future throughout this consultation, which will be pivotal and vital in the development of the proposed model(s).

The collaborative nature of the consultation enhanced the conversations and input gathered. The leadership exhibited by the Director, Board of Trustees, and Principals significantly and positively impacted the success of this consultation process that resulted in the sharing of rich insights and lived experiences from the OCDSB community.

A consultation process as complicated and nuanced as this one required numerous tools and resources to support its implementation. Among those were the aforementioned elementary program review booklet (Appendix A) that offered key insights regarding current programming at the District, a two-page simplified overview of the programs that was disseminated throughout the consultation (Appendix B), translation services, and the development of tools, such as a Facilitator's Guide to support principals in their work during the zone meetings.

The numerous consultation pathways and the many voices who supported the process along with the participation of the District's community resulted in significant input and the development of the consultation report (Appendix C). This report congregated key themes per consultation pathway through thematic analysis (described in further detail below) and resulted in numerous interconnected themes.

This was the first stage of consultation with the community. In October 2024, the

District will return to the community for feedback on model(s) that are developed, taking into account the consultation report.

5. **Participation**

Collectively, there were 4,294 respondents engaged throughout the entire consultation process. It's important to note that this is not reflective of unique participants; individuals may have been counted more than once if they attended numerous sessions or consultation pathways. Each consultation pathway had a unique focus, and therefore, it was important to allow for the community to attend as many sessions as they wanted to share unique lived experiences and perspectives. For example, the SATE sessions were largely composed of parents/caregivers whose children attend SATE Inquiry schools where a higher number of students face challenges and systemic barriers associated with race, ethnicity, language and socioeconomic status. However, sessions were also hosted for educators and union members (e.g., ETFO and SSP). Each of these sessions yielded different perspectives, lived experiences, and insights. As a result, the consultation report is structured by presenting each consultation pathway and its emergent themes to respect the unique contributions provided within each consultation method.

6. **Process for Data Review/Theming**

The expansive qualitative data was analyzed using a coding and thematic analysis approach to identify patterns and clusters of meaning in respondents' comments. Thematic analysis is a research method used to identify and interpret patterns or themes in a data set. This process of analysis involves six key steps: 1) familiarization with data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes among codes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) producing the final report. Ultimately, the approach for this report was an inductive thematic analysis that relied on identifying patterns of recurring ideas from the data that were then grouped into broader themes. The themes within each consultation pathway were then further grouped into overarching, broader themes that covered the most prevalent across the entire consultation. As such, the themes present are the most common that emerged as a result of this process.

While thematic analysis is typically accompanied with a theoretical or interpretive framework to extrapolate implications and meanings, the goal of this consultation was strictly to present the themes as they emerged. These are known as semantic themes. The themes within the consultation report (Appendix C) present the content of the data as communicated by the respondents. As expected, thematic

contradictions can be observed in some of the themes. By sharing thematic contradictions, this approach minimizes the potential for confirmation bias from thematic analysis as it presents numerous lenses that provide a fulsome view of lived experiences. Further, thematic analysis was conducted through collaboration between the Strategic Business Analyst and the Research, Evaluation & Analytics Department. This collaboration allowed for corroboration of themes and addressing any potential biases that might emerge from developing thematic categories.

Through this coding and thematic analysis process, over 290 themes were extrapolated across all consultation pathways, and all of these themes were coded into seven overarching themes that were consistent across all pathways. All of these themes are presented in the attached consultation report. The seven key, overarching themes across this initial stage of consultation were the following:

1. Accessibility and Inclusion
2. Administration and Structure
3. Communication
4. Language Acquisition
5. Program Quality
6. Resources and Support
7. Special Education

While the input received from the community was robust and fruitful in what it was able to provide with respect to experiences within the current elementary program model, the breadth of qualitative data was certainly challenging to parse through and congregate into overlapping themes. The significant amount of qualitative data requires some future considerations about how tools and strategies are leveraged to better facilitate the data collection and analysis process in the future, particularly as another consultation is planned with the community in October 2024.

7. **Engage OCDSB**

This year, the District implemented and utilized a new comprehensive online platform that facilitates meaningful and accessible engagement. While this tool has been used primarily for feedback on policies that the District is reviewing or developing, its use for the elementary program review has been the largest use of Engage OCDSB yet with over 2,300 responses submitted.

Engage OCDSB provided a productive platform to collect feedback from numerous demographic groups with specific questions. The District's community was able to indicate the demographic group(s) they identified with, and complete a set of

questions that were specific to that group. If a respondent fell into more than one group, they were able to complete the survey more than once as the questions differed from group to group.

With a significant number of submissions, the data was excerpted and reviewed on a weekly basis to ensure that the quantity of responses could be realistically managed. Further, the analysis of this data was broken down into two time periods (April 12 through May 1 and May 1 through June 28). This approach allowed the District to gauge how public responses shifted over time, while also ensuring that the analysis of the data was manageable over a shorter period of time with an exceptional amount of qualitative data.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8. Costs were incurred to support community engagement and to collect community input. These costs were managed within existing budgets, such as printing costs and supplies required to carry out various consultation opportunities, and consultation tools for supporting engagement. Review and analysis of the input required dedicated staff resources, particularly from the Strategic Business Analyst as established by the [consultation proposal](#), with additional time invested during the analysis stage.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

9. The community engagement strategy was designed to ensure there was opportunity for input from all OCDSB community members in order to inform decision-making processes. The use of multiple communication channels to reach and engage with the community – including emails, newsletters, social media platforms, school websites, and community forums – was effective and encouraged expansive and fulsome input.

The report on the consultation, attached as Appendix C, provides a summary of the input collected from stakeholders and synthesizes key themes and insights. The report was published on August 30, 2024.

Following the publication of this consultation report, the District will develop models informed by the input summarized within this report, along with District data (internal) and relevant research (external). Once the models have been developed, feedback will be solicited and collected from the community on the recommended models. Lessons from this consultation phase will be employed to develop the

strategy for the subsequent consultation around the models. As the next consultation process will focus on feedback over input, the methodology will be more focused on a combination of qualitative and quantitative data to inform and support decision making.

In this round of consultation, there was sparse engagement from students. While input was received from Student Senate along with a select few responses in the Engage OCDSB survey, a more coordinated approach will be developed for the next round of consultation to procure more student voice and feedback around the proposed model(s).

Numerous consultation pathways are available following the presentation of the second report on October 8, 2024. This report will present the proposed model(s), along with District data (internal) and relevant research (external), that will further inform the development of the model(s). As a result, consultations will be held to facilitate feedback on the proposed model(s). The details of these pathways include:

Consultation Pathway	Dates:
Online Survey	October 11, 2024 – October 31, 2024
Advisory Committees	October 9, 2024 - Special Education Advisory Committee October 10, 2024 - Student Senate October 16, 2025 - Parent Involvement Committee October 17, 2024 - Indigenous Education Council October 24, 2024 - Advisory Committee on Equity October 28, 2024 - Alternative Advisory Committee
Community Consultation Sessions	October 21, 2024 – Earl of March Secondary School October 23, 2024 – Brookfield High School October 30, 2024 – Gloucester High School November 4, 2024 - Virtual Session
Student Engagement Day(s)	TBD

Parent Conference Session	November 2, 2024
Delegations	November 7, 2024

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

10. The following questions are provided to support the discussion of this item by the Committee:

- How does the consultation report inform thinking about the current state of elementary programs?
- What themes or quotes from the consultation report stand out as surprising or particularly insightful?
- What lessons can be learned and taken forward from this consultation report to improve District program offerings?
- How does the input gathered align with the insights about the elementary programs that were shared during the strategic plan consultation?
- How has this input deepened/enhanced the District’s understanding of the experiences and perspectives shared in the strategic plan consultation who called for improved access and program quality?

Janice McCoy
Executive Officer, Corporate Services

Pino Buffone
Director of Education and
Secretary of the Board

Nadia Towaj
Superintendent, Special Assignment

Kenan Omercajic
Strategic Business Analyst

Attach.

Appendix A – [Navigating the Future](#)

Appendix B – [2 Page Program Summary](#)

Appendix C – Consultation Report: 2024 OCDSB Elementary Program Review