



## ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITY REPORT

May 30, 2024  
6:00 pm  
Zoom Meeting

- Voting Members: Deepika Grover, Carrie-Lynn Barkley, Inini McHugh (Inuuqatigit Centre)
- Non-Voting Members: Jacqueline Lawrence (Diversity and Equity Advisor), Bob Dawson, Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Donna Dickson (Trustee), Nili Kaplan-Myrth (Trustee)
- Staff and Guests: Steven Massey (System Principal, Program and Learning-Secondary Team), Juliet Robinson (System Principal, Equity and Inclusive Initiatives), Marnie Patterson (System Principal, Safe Schools), Nicole Guthrie, (General Manager, Board Services), Lorna Evans (Instructional Coach, Equity and Inclusive Initiatives), Engy Abdel Masieh (Policy Analyst), Oksana Kravets (Communications Coordinator), Susan Baker (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Welcome and Grounding Statement

Co-Chair Lawrence called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. and offered a grounding statement.

2. Acknowledgement of Territorial Lands

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

3. Delegations

3.1 David Sachs, re Antisemitism at the OCDSB

David Sachs advised that the Jewish Federation of Ottawa (JFO) is a non-profit organization that provides oversight for Ottawa's Jewish institutions and community. It has been in existence for 90 years and has been working with the District for the last three years to respond to issues around antisemitism in schools. He advised that while approximately 11% of the Ottawa is Jewish, 27% of Ottawa hate crimes target Jews which is significantly higher than religiously-based hate crimes directed at Catholics, Muslims, or other religious groups.

Mr. Sachs submitted that Jewish students are attending school in fear with many students taking days off and hiding their Jewish identity. Five students in Ottawa were charged with antisemitism in the last two years, including terror and attempted murder. He also provided some more recent examples of over 40 antisemitic incidents that have occurred in schools since 7 October 7 2023. Students are feeling harassed, isolated, mocked and threatened with serious consequences for their mental health. Mr. Sachs offered to work with ACE and champion the safety and well-being of Jewish students.

In response to a query from Trustee Kaplan-Myrth with respect to the process for the Jewish Federation of Ottawa to become a voting member of ACE, Co-Chair Lawrence advised that a membership campaign will be launched in the Fall of 2024 and the Jewish Federation of Ottawa would be invited to apply for membership.

#### 4. Community Discussion - Open Space

During a community discussion, the following information was provided:

- Mr. McHugh queried the feasibility of establishing an advisory committee on suspensions to provide better support for students through the use of restorative justice.

#### 5. Presentations

##### 5.1 Student Achievement Plan (S. Massey)

System Principal Massey provided a presentation on the Student Achievement Plan. During discussion and in response to queries, the following points were noted:

- The Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and Well-Being (BIPSAW) is an annual plan that sets direction for major initiatives across the District and informs the School Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and Well-Being (SIPSAW);
- The SIPSAW identifies learning goals for literacy, numeracy and well-being. Each school prepares a SIPSAW that focuses on a group of underserved students;
- Three updates on student achievement were presented to the Board during 2023-2024. The first report addressed core academic skills, the second report addressed preparation of students for future success, and the third update addressed student engagement and well-being;

- EQAO data is available for multilingual learners, students with special education needs, students who identify as Indigenous, and students residing in low-income neighbourhoods;
- Results show that additional support is needed for elementary multilingual learners; secondary multilingual learners performed better than their provincial counterparts, and students in low-income neighbourhoods were less likely to be successful across EQAO assessments;
- Over the past 5-6 years, efforts have increased to recognize lived experiences outside of the classroom as authentic learning experiences eligible for credits for graduation;
- The system principal for the Family Reception Centre is working on ways to better support families and place students in the neighbourhood schools wherever possible; and
- In response to a query regarding efforts to engage Indigenous students and assist them in returning to school, Superintendent Farrish advised she would ask the Indigenous Education Team to provide a response at a future IEC meeting.

## 6. Matters for Discussion

### 6.1 Report 24-032 Report on Student Suspensions for the 2022-2023 School Year (S. Lehman)

Your Committee had before it Report 24-032 providing information on student suspensions for the 2022-2023 school year. Superintendent Lehman and System Principal Patterson provided an overview of the report.

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

- Suspension rates are higher in the secondary panel;
- 85% of suspensions were discretionary;
- The majority of suspensions of 5 days or longer were mandatory;
- Students who reside in lower income neighbourhoods, students who identify as transgender, non-binary, or gender diverse, students who identify as Indigenous, Black, or Middle Eastern, and students with special education needs are suspended at a higher rate than other students;
- Mitigating factors include the student's ability to control their behaviour, understand the consequences, unacceptable risk to

safety of others, mental health and well-being, system bias, and discrimination;

- Suspension reduction strategies include improving the conditions for learning, restorative practices, student agency, identity affirming and culturally representative staff, community supports, anti-hate tool kit, equity-centred and trauma-informed approach, regular review of suspension data, and ongoing professional development and training for staff;
- Procedure PR.660.SCO Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour outlines the continuum of interventions, supports, and consequences to address inappropriate student behaviours and promote positive behaviours;
- Safe Schools staff work with the Indigenous Education team to create conditions in the classroom where everyone feels a sense of belonging while learning about restorative Indigenous practices, for example, restorative conferencing. Training on restorative justice practices is offered to assist in laying the foundation for restorative circles;
- Ms Grover suggested that suspensions be discontinued in order to encourage alternative disciplinary measures that do not shame or isolate students; and
- In recent years, the Ministry directed that students in Kindergarten to Grade 3 no longer be suspended. The District continues to create conditions where dysregulated behaviours are discouraged.

## 6.2 Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap

Your Committee had before it draft Report 24-087 providing an update on the status of the renewed Roadmap for Indigenous Equity and Human Rights for 2024-2028.

Co-Chair Lawrence provided an overview of the report and noted the following highlights:

- An analysis of data was undertaken to identify the systemic structures needed to remove barriers that have resulted in disparities;
- The 2024-2028 Roadmap will build upon the foundational equity work accomplished during the 2020-2023 Roadmap;
- Key areas include securing accountability, the importance of identity, building staff awareness and capacity, increasing

representation, programming and supports for students, and engagement and connectedness;

- There is a need to focus on practices to decrease disparities including: improving attendance, increasing graduation rates, credit recovery, improving a sense of engagement and belonging, and improving relationships with student, families/caregivers, and staff;
- Goals identify current systemic barriers that impact access, opportunity, and outcome for OCDSB students, families, and staff;
- Compass destinations in the Roadmap setting out the direction for change will help to focus the work of all employees;
- Roadmap markers identify changes and/or practices that cause a shift in access, opportunity, and outcomes;
- Key indicators provide areas that will be tracked or evaluated to show movement in achieving goals.

### 6.3 Discussion of ACE Policy

Your Committee had before it the Board's current policy P.008.GOV Advisory Committee on Equity.

General Manager Guthrie advised that the Board has an established policy review cycle to review all policies, every five years where possible, to ensure they reflect current practices. Although some feedback on the ACE policy P.008.GOV has been received to date, it is insufficient to support substantive changes to the existing policy. She invited the Committee to provide additional input prior to seeking feedback from the Ad Hoc Policy Review Committee on 6 June 2024. General Manager Guthrie also suggested that a survey be distributed to all ACE members to ensure that everyone's voice is heard, particularly with respect to the ACE membership.

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

- ACE members were expecting to receive a draft revised policy that reflects all input provided to date. Staff noted that a draft policy would be prepared following discussion of the current policy at the upcoming Ad Hoc Policy Review meeting. A revised draft policy will be brought forward in the Fall of 2024 that incorporates feedback from ACE and the Ad Hoc Policy Committee;
- The current policy lists the composition of voting and non-voting members as well as the criteria for membership and community organizations that may be represented on ACE;

- Ms Grover expressed the view that it is not necessary to update the list of organizations to include the Jewish Federation of Ottawa or any other groups. She added that ACE has an "open door policy" and does not wish to put a limit on voices at the table;
- Speaking as a member of ACE and the Ad Hoc Policy Committee, Trustee Kaplan-Myrth clarified that ACE is a committee of the Board, and the Board wishes to ensure that everyone is represented in an equitable way. One of the roles of the Ad Hoc Policy Committee is to review the policy requirements for all committees that report to the Board;
- Ms Grover submitted that ACE drafted the current policy which was approved by the Board. She advised that ACE is satisfied with the current policy and it does not need to be revised. Ms Grover added that the Board has commended ACE in the past for being strong and hard-working and queried whether Trustee Kaplan-Myrth had "an agenda";
- Trustee Kaplan-Myrth queried why she was asked about having an agenda, and noted that she was not speaking as a Jewish woman nor on behalf of the Ad Hoc Policy Committee but rather as a Trustee of the Board whose role is to review all Board policies and, in particular, to ensure that minority groups on advisory committees are represented accurately. She added that the membership of ACE has evolved over time;
- Co-Chair Lawrence noted that ACE is always looking for groups who may not be represented on ACE and a membership campaign will be launched in the Fall of 2024. She added that the list of community organizations in the policy is not exhaustive, and that as the work of ACE evolves, so does the membership;
- Ms Barkley suggested that this was an opportunity to "decolonize" by taking out the hierarchies, maintaining the co-chair structure, and use consensus rather than voting. The list of members is confusing, and ACE needs to speak for parents who are unable to attend ACE meetings;
- In response to a query from Trustee Dickson regarding the necessity of a review of the policy if everyone is welcome to attend ACE meetings, it was noted that the policy was on a list of policies slated for review, and the Ad Hoc Policy Review committee is a new structure formed for this purpose;
- Ms Grover submitted that discussion of committee structures is triggering as it was her understanding that ACE was trying to move

away from a formal committee structure that requires a vote to approve minutes; and

- Co-Chair Lawrence requested that she be given an opportunity to review the feedback on the policy to ensure an equity lens has been applied.

## 7. Reports

### 7.1 Staff Report

System Principal Robinson provided the following information:

- The 2024 Rainbow Youth Forum for students in Grades 9-12 took place on 23 May 2024;
- The seventh annual Black Youth Forum took place on 29 May 2024 at the University of Ottawa to share their learning and lived experiences through the theme: Black Unity Through the Senses;
- Dr. Aisha Sherazi and Rabbi Menachem Blum were the 2023-2024 recipients of the Excellence in Equity Community Recognition Award;
- The 2023-2024 Excellence in Equity Staff Awards were presented to Hermina Brutus, Teacher, Woodroffe High School and Jasmine Doig, Indigenous Graduation Coach, Ottawa Technical Secondary School;
- The last community consultation session on the Elementary Program Review is taking place on 30 May 2024; and
- The ACE membership campaign will be launched in the Fall of 2024.

### 7.2 ACE Report, 25 January 2024

The Advisory Committee on Equity Report dated 25 January 2024 was not formally received due to lack of quorum.

### 7.3 ACE Report, 8 April 2024

The Advisory Committee on Equity Report dated 8 April 2024 was not formally received due to lack of quorum.

### 7.4 Committee of the Whole

There was no report from the Committee of the Whole.

### 7.5 Advisory Committee Updates

There were no advisory committee updates.

8. New Business and Event Announcements

There was no new business.

9. Upcoming Meetings

The 2024-2025 meeting dates for the Advisory Committee on Equity were provided for information.

10. Closing

The meeting adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

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Jacqueline Lawrence, Co-Chair