



SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, November 6, 2024, 7:00 pm
Trustees' Committee Room
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario

Members: Cathy Miedema (Association for Bright Children), Allison Bunney (Community Representative), Hoda Seens (Community Representative), Anthony Wong (Ottawa Carleton Assembly of School Councils), Waneek Horn-Miller (Indigenous Community Representative), Lindsay Copland (VOICE for Children Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing), Donna Dickson (Trustee), Nili Kaplan-Myrth (Trustee), Lynn Scott (Trustee)

Association Representatives (Non Voting): Catherine Houlden (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation), Melcha Wolanski (OCETF), Gaylene McCutcheon (PSSP)

Staff and Guests: Kate Stoudt (Acting Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Stacey Kay (General Manager, Learning Support Services), Deborah Lyon (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Christine Kessler (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Kathy Mak (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Call to Order

Chair Cathy Miedema called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.

2. Acknowledgement of Homelands

Chair Cathy Miedema acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Homelands and thanked the Algonquin people for hosting the meeting on their land.

3. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Trustee Kaplan-Myrth,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

4. Delegations

There were no delegations.

5. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

5.1 9 October 2024, SEAC Report

Moved by Trustee Dickson,

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee report, dated 9 October 2024, be received.

Catherine Houlden requested a list of all recognized program pathways be included in the minutes. Chair Miedema clarified that a suggested wording be sent to her through email.

Moved by Trustee Dickson,

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee report, dated 9 October 2024, be received, as amended.

Carried

5.2 Forward Agenda

The SEAC forward agenda was provided for information.

6. Discussion

6.1 Updates on Key Department Works

During discussion and in response to queries, the following information was provided:

- The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) continues to support the current service delivery model by providing a multidisciplinary team in Clifford Bowey Public School and Crystal Bay Center for Special Education (CB Sites);
- The District has a mental health team, autism developmental disabilities team, and early learning team (central teams) that can visit school sites and provide support where needed. Educators also have access to the itinerant teacher model for additional support;
- Currently there is no itinerant teacher for the gifted; however, there are learning support consultants who provide programming supports in the regular classroom;
- The central teams work on a referral basis depending on the number of support needed in the regular classroom with schedule and caseloads being assigned at the beginning of the school year;

- The wait time for a team to visit school sites is dependent on the number of referrals, the time of the school year, and the time required for approval processes;
- All schools at the elementary level have a learning support teacher, a learning resource teacher, and a multidisciplinary team to provide tiered support;
- The OCDSB has implemented the clinical services module in IOL (the online tool used by educators for special education processes) in the spring 2024 as part of the integrated technology and learning support service (LSS). The 2024-2025 school year will be the first completed year with better data to understand average times; however, additional time will be required to analyze patterns;
- Schools receive their staffing based on the student enrolment before April of each school year. A series of data is used to determine the allocation of special education teachers and educational assistants required for schools;
- Superintendent Stoudt noted that each multidisciplinary member has one dedicated weekday to attend to a school assigned from their caseload. The multidisciplinary member will meet with the team three times each year at a elementary level and bi-weekly at a secondary level to bring forward student names;
- The District has a number professional support staff allocated across the District with the ability to move across sites;
- Superintendent Stoudt noted that all Education Assistants (EAs) have attended college and obtained a degree as a development services worker (DSW) or child and youth worker. In addition, the District has built a robust EA Professional Development (PD) plan organized by program manager;
- The District has ensured that a number of unqualified EAs in the system have completed the onboarding process and additional pre-recorded training;
- System Principal Lyon noted that there is an increase of students with autism and developmental disabilities (DD), currently the District has 36 elementary autism classes with six students in each class. She added that there are a number of students with autism that remain in community schools as a result from their family's decision or the lack of space available;
- The autism classes are reviewed annually by program based on the system's needs at the time and the District has opened a

number of autism program classes at the secondary level in recent years;

- The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) members noted the additional need for transparency with class closure and better communication with families regarding the process and decisions made;
- A review was done on the family guide for the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process to create resources to help families understand the procedure. Superintendent Stoudt noted that families are welcome to reach out to LSS with direct questions;
- Currently, most program classes do not have a waitlist at the elementary level and currently there are no waitlists for any programs at the secondary level;
- Superintendent Stoudt noted the importance of inclusive education that prioritize the sense of belonging and adjusting the environment to the student's needs;
- A collaborative review was done at the two specialized Sites With families, staff, and administrators to gather data and the learning profile of the students from the two sites are shown to have a more complex medical need with intellectual disability;
- Students at the two specialized sites learn through experiential opportunities and families noted the importance of developing a communication system that can support their independence through the development of personal care and self-regulation strategies;
- Students at the two specialized sites follow alternative programming with the goal to participate actively within the community;
- The District aims to have consistency in supporting staff to develop goals that were created in consultation with families to promote a learning environment where the student's unique needs are met;
- General Manager Kay noted that the General Learning Program (GLP) Review uses research and program evaluation as a tool to create new methods in supporting students. The District was able to work on the GLP Review due to funding made available from the Ministry of Education (MOE) which allowed the expansion of the program evaluation team in LSS;

- Identity based data was used to understand student's intersecting identities and how it influenced their experience in special education. The District continues to implement innovations across school sites as additional information is gathered to ensure educators and students have the support required;
- General Manager Kay noted the importance of ensuring students with disability related needs have the same choices that are available to all students within the District;
- A number of special needs students were able to integrate within their community high school due to the implementation of secondary inclusion educators by working with a small group of students who have left GLP in grade 8. The program has expanded to five sites that are supported by the secondary inclusion teacher to further expand options for students who leave GLP in grade. 8;
- Maplewood Secondary School site is built with student accessibility as the prime focus, the District has collaborative with the facilities team to ensure all spaces have physical accommodations;
- The secondary school is a grade 7 to 12 site with elementary and secondary inclusion teachers to focus on supporting the needs of all students that live within the community. The elementary and secondary inclusion teachers work with individual students and the educational team located at the site develop strategies to create an inclusive environment for all students;
- The work of the secondary inclusion teachers was completed through a collaborative work between the GLP Review program evaluator and a team of educators. Information gathered from the 2023-2024 school year is currently being worked on and a table highlighting additional findings will be presented at a future date;
- Trustee Scott noted that Maplewood secondary school will be opening for grades 7-9. The students will have the opportunity to build the course and programs offered at the school over the years as they are the first cohort group;
- The OCDSB has used research available locally, provincially, and globally and collaborated with researchers to implement successful practices to work towards inclusive educational environment;
- The guidelines used for each specialized program class is an ongoing review that focuses on the communication and adaptive living skills to create the ideal learning environment for students with complex needs;

- Superintendent Stoudt noted that the break out conversation regarding the continuum of inclusion and sharing information with families will be deferred to the 4 December 2024 SEAC meeting; and
- A one page document will be distributed at the meeting to promote discussion.

7. Department Update

7.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Stoudt reported the following:

- The week of 28 October 2024, over 250 LSS staff gathered at the Confederation Education Center to hear guest speaker, Nick Foley, who shared his experiences and hopes for a more inclusive society; of note, he shared the creation of Bryn's Market which was created in this spirit;
- Superintendent Stoudt thanked Program Manager Leanne Forrest for organizing the first annual OCDSB EA Appreciation Day on 15 November 2024;
- The District will be hosting the Secondary Gifted Information Night virtually on 5 December 2024 at 6:00 p.m.; and
- A Virtual Parent Speaker Series will be held on 13 November 2024 featuring Matthew Johnson to discuss building healthy habits around technology. A second Virtual Speaker Series will be held on 19 November 2024 at :30 p.m. featuring Dr. Deborah McNamara to discuss bullying awareness and prevention.

7.2 Special Education Plan (Standards)

a. IPRC Process and Appeals

During the discussion and in response to queries, the following information was provided:

- It was noted that there were 607 initial IPRC reports during the 2023-2024 school year, 3906 IPRC reviews and one appeal;
- SEAC members suggested that a study regarding different cultural practices in engagement be undertaken to ensure cultural background has been taken into consideration during the IPRC process and appeals; and

- System Principal Lyon noted that the placement decision is made by the IPRC and that families can appeal the placement if they are not in agreement.

b. Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

System Principal Lyon presented the individual education plans (IEPs) and noted the purpose is to identify supports for students the steps taken to develop the IEPs.

Superintendent Stoudt noted that additional feedback regarding the Special Education Plan Standards can be provided in written format or with a telephone call.

System Principal Lyon noted that the new IEP and IPRC Parent Guides are available online for information.

8. Committee Reports

8.1 Board

There was no report from the Board.

8.2 Committee of the Whole

Trustee Scott noted that the Math Achievement Action Plan (MAAP) will be presented at the 5 November 2024 Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting.

Superintendent Stoudt suggested that Superintendent Major be invited to the 4 December 2024 Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) to present the MAAP.

8.3 Committee of the Whole, Budget

There was no report from the Committee of the Whole, Budget.

9. New Business

There was no new business.

10. Upcoming Meeting Dates

The upcoming meeting dates were provided for information.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Cathy Miedema, Chair, Special
Education Advisory Committee