



ADVOCACY STRATEGY COMMITTEE

December 3, 2024, 6:00 pm
Trustees' Committee Room
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario

Members: Lyra Evans, Julia Fortey, Nili Kaplan-Myrth, Cathryne Milburn,
Amanda Presley, Lynn Scott

Staff Present Pino Buffone (Director of Education), Jesse Mark (Executive
Officer, Corporate Services), Darren Gatley (General Manager,
Board Services), Tamara Persaud (Committee Coordinator,
Board Services)

1. Call to Order

Executive Officer Mark called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

2. Acknowledgement of Territorial Lands

Executive Officer Mark acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on
unceded Algonquin Homelands and thanked the Algonquin Nations for hosting
the meeting on their land.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations made.

4. Election of Chair

Executive Officer Mark reviewed the election process.

Executive Officer Mark called for nominations.

Trustee Milburn nominated Trustee Scott.

Trustee Kaplan-Myrth nominated Trustee Lyra Evans.

Trustee Lyra Evans declined the nomination.

Moved by Trustee Milburn.

THAT nominations be closed.

Carried

**By acclamation, Executive Officer Mark declared Trustee Scott, Chair of the
Advocacy Strategy Committee.**

5. Approval of the Agenda

**Moved by Trustee Lyra Evans,
THAT the agenda be approved.**

Carried

6. Matters for Discussion:

6.1 Advocacy Priorities for 2024-2025

Your Committee had before it the proposed Advocacy Priorities for the 2024 -2025 school year. It was noted that these briefings were prepared in 2023-2024 and may require updating.

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

a. Capital Funding

- Capital funding remains a high priority as the backlog of deferred capital projects has not been addressed from previous years;
- Older school facilities are not accessible for all students and efforts should be made to update school buildings to promote inclusivity and capacity for all needs;
- Cost estimates for capital funding do not always match the reality of the timeline for the projects being funded. Advocacy should be centered on the approval timeline from the ministry and streamlining the procurement process; and
- Concern was raised that the Ministry may remove the Ontario School Boards Insurance Exchange (OSBIE). Presently, OSBIE allows school boards to pool money to cover claims and the removal of the program would be costly for the District to independently maintain insurance for its facilities.

b. Cybersecurity

- Advocacy for open sourced software was promoted as currently, the District pays for software licenses for its learning and communications tools. That money could be put towards the development of a Ministry-owned application that could be given free to all schools boards. Concern was expressed for the protection of personal information, should a Ministry owned application come to fruition.

c. Mental Health

- Approximately, 58% of OCDSB educators and staff do not feel fully equipped to respond to mental health issues;
 - There is a need for more mental health support and programming for students, and it was expressed that mental health should be a collaboration between the Ministries of Health and Education; and
 - Australia has recently banned social media for anyone under the age of 16. Some trustees expressed the desire to lobby for the same standard here in Canada as social media continues to be a source of mental health issues in young people. Concern was raised surrounding the logistics of policing such a rule.
- d. Replacement Workers
- It was suggested that the advocacy briefing from last year regarding replacement workers be updated with current information as the need for replacement workers remains the same as last year.
- e. Special Education
- Parents and caregivers have drawn attention to the implications of the cancellation of the Autism program in Ontario. It was noted that many families have expressed concern due to a lack of support for children with special needs transitioning to school.
 - Advocacy for more funding for support, programs and inclusion in community schools for students was proposed as special education continues to be an area of significant need in the District. Pressures from the community to update the special education programs are ongoing.
- f. Transportation
- OC Transpo has raised fare prices for youth passes. This increase requires the OCDSB and OSTA to take on a \$4.6 million shortage for transportation. It was proposed that trustees reach out to city councillors, OC transpo officials and directors of coterminous boards to discuss potential solutions to alleviate the financial burden; and
 - Trustees expressed interest in advocating for a more fulsome transportation system or city bus passes for all students to allow all students to participate in before and after-school activities as transportation has posed an issue for many students outside of regular school hours.

g. Other

- It was noted that the civics curriculum needs to be further developed. The importance of developing civic responsibility and understanding of government was highlighted.
- A desire to integrate the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in schools was noted. It was proposed that the Ministry develop AI teaching/learning tools and curriculum for students;
- Receiving direction from the Ministry on how to navigate AI is an area for focusing advocacy efforts as AI is a constantly evolving area of technology that can benefit students;
- Director Buffone noted that the discussion and development of AI frameworks in schools has begun and the OCDSB is part of a Canadian Collaborative on this important topic. The Ministry has begun to formulate a perspective on AI and other emerging technologies that fit the context of student engagement and learning as an approach;
- The discussion around 'flipping' classrooms, to shift towards more home-based learning with in classroom assistance from educators was also put forward;
- Trustees expressed the need for a commitment from the Ministry on matters of climate change and sustainability as well as standards for air quality and renewable resources such as limiting use of long term chemicals;
- It was noted that approximately 1000 trees had been lost in the District and it was recommended that efforts be made to recoup the loss by engaging with community partners to create a tree planting program;
- Efforts are currently being made to re-establish the environmental sustainability committee and utilizing outdoor spaces.
- Trustees expressed the need to advocate for food security and the development of a program to support students and their families; and
- Trustees were encouraged to write letters, either collectively or individually to the Ministry, Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) and city councillors to address the areas of advocacy directly. Trustees and staff also proposed addressing the media to advocate for matters that are time sensitive. Trustees were encouraged to work with the

Communications department to craft appropriate language for all areas of advocacy.

6.2 Presentation to Provincial Pre-Budget Consultation Meeting, 9 January 2025

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

- Emphasis was placed on conveying the impact on students and the school communities to create a visual representation of the valuable work being done within the OCDSB. It was put forward that it is human nature to make decisions based on emotions. By gearing the presentation towards the experiences of students and their stories of success, the acceptance of decisions in the OCDSB favour more likely;
- It was suggested that the Committee focus on three to four topics to provide a more in-depth and meaningful impact on student achievement and well-being;
- Multiple avenues can be utilized to reach the various areas of need. Not all advocacy needs to be concentrated in lobbying for money. Trustees were encouraged to seek out different areas of support such as curriculum, legislation and policy changes for the betterment of students;
- Trustees requested that another meeting be held to discuss the logistics ahead of the 9 January 2025 presentation and narrow down the topics they wish to advocate for at the Provincial Pre-Budget Consultation Meeting.

7. New Business -- Information and Inquiries

Trustee Lyra Evans noted that permissions from the Ministry of Education may delay or prevent the Elementary Program Review (EPR) timeline from moving forward.

It was also noted that changes to the OC Transpo youth pass may cost the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) \$4.6 Million. Trustees were encouraged to speak with city councillors, OSTA and OC Transpo with respect to a solution or exception to youth bus pass price increases for the remainder of the school year. Based on the urgency of the need, it was proposed to utilize the media to advocate for the transportation needs of students.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Lynn Scott, Chair, Advocacy Strategy Committee