



SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, December 4, 2024, 7:00 pm
Trustees' Committee Room
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario

Members: Cathy Miedema (Association for Bright Children), Susan Cowin (Community Representative), Hoda Seens (Community Representative), Sonja Elliott (Autism Ontario), Lori-Ann Bradley (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network Expertise (FASD/ONE), Uzma Ihsanullah (Down Syndrome Association (DSA), Anthony Wong (Ottawa Carleton Assembly of School Councils), Lindsay Copland (VOICE for Children Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing), Donna Dickson (Trustee), Nili Kaplan-Myrth (Trustee), Lynn Scott (Trustee)

Association Catherine Houlden (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Representatives (Non Federation)
Voting):

Staff and Guests: Kate Stoudt (Acting Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Suzanne Nash (Trustee), Stacey Kay (General Manager, Learning Support Services), Deborah Lyon (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Christine Kessler (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Justin Shulman (Principal, Knoxdale Public School), Steven Massey (System Principal, Program Services), Kathy Mak (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Call to Order

Superintendent Stoudt called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

2. Acknowledgement of Homelands

Superintendent Stoudt 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 Dickson,
THAT the agenda be approved.**

Carried

4. Election of Chair

Superintendent Stoudt reviewed the election process and called for nominations.

Trustee Dickson nominated Cathy Miedema. Cathy Miedema accepted the nomination.

By acclamation, Superintendent Stoudt declared Cathy Miedema as Chair of SEAC.

5. Election of Vice Chair

Sue Cowin nominated herself.

By acclamation, Superintendent Stoudt declared Sue Cowin as Vice-Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC).

6. Delegations

6.1 Jessica Scallen, re Lisgar Collegiate Institute Accessibility

Jessica Scallen noted the lack of accessibility at Lisgar Collegiate Institute and other school sites and requested that the Board prioritize accessibility at school sites within a specific time-frame.

In response to queries the following information was provided:

- Trustee Kaplan-Myrth noted that schools in central downtown are the least accessible and the urgency for accessible accommodations may require that renovations be implemented immediately;
- Jessica Scallen noted that accessibility renovations are completed on an as needed basis for students and expressed the view that special needs accommodations are not always visible or planned. She suggested that the District adopt a newer model to ensure school sites are accessible to students at all times; and
- Jessica Scallen noted the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* and urged the District to focus on the Act. Trustee Scott clarified that all new school buildings are designed to be accessible; however older buildings may have asbestos and other harmful factors to be considered. She noted that a report discussing school condition improvements will be presented to the Committee of the Whole (COW) on 10 December 2024.

7. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

7.1 6 November 2024, SEAC Report

Moved by Trustee Dickson,

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee report, dated 6 November 2024, be received.

Carried

7.2 Forward Agenda

The SEAC forward agenda was provided for information.

8. Presentations

8.1 Math Achievement Action Plan (M. Major)

System Principal Massey provided an overview of the Math Achievement Action Plan (MAAP).

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

- The MAAP is aligned with the learning pillar of the District's Strategic Plan with a focus on raising student achievement in math and will include clear goals, strategies for math instruction at the District, school and classroom level, and key performance indicators to measure progress and ensure accountability;
- Ontario has a strong curriculum recognized for its cohesion and the OCDSB aims to implement the continuum of the curriculum where concepts taught in previous grades are the foundations for concepts in later ones;
- System Principal Massey noted the importance of differentiated instruction whereby educators may adjust their teaching to implement a mix of support and challenge by understanding the student;
- During the 2023-2024 school year, the District had seven (7) instructional and math coaches that were dedicated to supporting 30 ministry-identified schools in grade three (3), six (6) and ten (10);
- This 2024-2025 school year, the District has 14 math instructional coaches supporting 30 schools who work with educators to plan lessons, teach together, and use student and assessment data for the provision of targeted support;
- High impact instructional practices are implemented through small groups focussing on specific skill building, conducting math discussions, practicing hands-on learning, and providing extra support where needed;

- System Principal Massey noted that the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) tests indicated that students continue to perform above the provincial average including students receiving special education support;
- The District is focused on moving forward and understanding the current way to teach math. Students are encouraged to learn in collaborative groups using digital tools and teaching methods are adapted to suit the learning needs of students;
- Workshops for teachers have been expanded to focus on the progression of major concepts in the curriculum, supporting multilingual learners and students with special needs;
- At the recent family conference organized by the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) and the Family and Community Engagement (FACE) team, the Student Achievement Through Equity (SATE) group shared hands-on mathematical activities that families can do at home. The District will be adding resources to a dedicated web page to provide additional math support to families and students;
- Principals are required to select literacy or numeracy goals for their schools commencing with the next cycle of school learning plans. The District aims to focus on creating performance indicators for students who are multilingual learners, have special education needs, and who identify as Indigenous;
- The Ministry of Education (MOE) monitors EQAO scores, report card indicators and modified programs to determine the number of schools and students that require additional support;
- Trustee Kaplan-Myrth expressed concern as students with disabilities, racialized students, and those with low socioeconomic status often fall below the provincial standards and urged the District to provide additional support to families; and
- Superintendent Stoudt noted the importance of creating accessibility to learning through the use of tools, representations, math talk, and high impact practices to create entry points for students to extend their learning.

9. Discussion

9.1 Small Group Discussion - Continuation from November Presentation

Superintendent Stoudt led a small group discussion and SEAC members expressed the following views;

- The importance of inclusion, communication between families and the school, and the value of differentiated classroom instruction that is responsive to student needs was noted;
- A more inclusive classroom environment may not be suitable for students attending Clifford Bowey Public School and Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education;
- It was suggested that additional professional development (PD) be provided to staff to support a more inclusive model throughout the District;
- SEAC members noted the importance of students working together to achieve greater independence and reaching their potential is unique to each students and families;
- General Manager Kay noted that some PD days are set by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to focus on broad themes. The materials are created centrally and disseminated to principals who lead the PD; and
- The District has central teams and educational assistants (EAs) who work with educators in the classroom to provide coaching and modelling to ensure the needs of students and educators are supported. In addition, release time is provided for the central team to spend time with educators.

10. Department Update

10.1 Superintendent's Report

During Superintendent Stoudt's report, the following information was provided:

- General Manager Kay was thanked for her 23 years of work with the District, and congratulated her on her new position at the Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) as the general manager and chief administrative officer. She welcomed the interim General Manager, Christine Lanos, effective 9 December 2024;
- Justin Shulman will take over as system principal on 6 January 2025 and Superintendent Stoudt thanked System Principal Kessler for her support and wisdom over the last few months;
- The Welcome to High School virtual event took place in late November 2024 and Learning Support Services (LSS) staff spoke about special education, support and mental health;
- The Secondary Gifted information night virtual event will take place on on 5 December 2024; and

- The LSS team is preparing for the in person Transition Fair at the end of February 2025 in partnership with the Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB). This event brings together family community partners for students and families with support focused on life beyond high school for students with developmental disabilities.

Trustee Dickson expressed concern regarding student absences in schools and General Manager Kay noted the complex nature of the issue and noted that the District is currently working to better understand student re-engagement with early interventions implemented for chronic absences. General Manager Kay added that the District aims to create a welcoming approach to ensure students feel they are part of the school community.

In response to a query regarding student exclusions, General Manager Kay clarified that a plan for a safe return to school is attached to the exclusion letter.

Trustee Kaplan-Myrth noted the relationship between mental health and school absences. She suggested a mechanism be implemented to allow physicians to reach out to the Board in the event additional support is required.

10.2 Special Education Plan (Standards)

a. Transportation (S. Kay)

General Manager Kay provided an update for the Special Education Plan, Transportation and provided an overview of the legislation, regulation and standards for specialized transportation for students with special needs.

It was noted that OSTA provides transportation services for the OCDSB and the Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB) with funding provided by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to the school boards.

b. OCDSB Model for Special Education (S. Kay and D. Lyon)

System Principal Lyon provided an overview of the OCDSB Model for Special Education and noted the Board's philosophy and service-delivery model for special education programs and services. She noted SEAC members may provide feedback on the model through email and it is the intention of LSS to complete the model by July 2025.

11. Action

11.1 Selection of Non-Voting Representatives/Observers for Other OCDSB Committees

a. COW

Chair Miedima provided a description and requirements of the COW Observer and called for nominations.

Anthony Wong nominated himself and by acclamation, Superintendent Stoudt declared Anthony Wong the COW observer.

b. COW Budget

Chair Miedima provided a description and requirements of the COW Budget Observer and called for nominations.

Anthony Wong nominated himself and by acclamation, Superintendent Stoudt declared Anthony Wong the COW Budget observer.

c. PIC Observer

Chair Miedima provided a description and requirements of the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) Observer and called for nominations.

With no nominations made, no PIC representative was appointed to this role.

d. ACE Observer

Chair Miedima provided a description and requirements of the Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE) Observer and called for nominations.

With no nominations made, no SEAC representative was appointed to this role.

12. Committee Reports

12.1 Board

There was no report from the Board.

12.2 Committee of the Whole

There was no report from the Committee of the Whole.

13. New Business

There was no new business.

14. Upcoming Meeting Dates

The upcoming meeting dates were provided for information.

15. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:34 p.m.

Cathy Miedema, Chair, Special
Education Advisory Committee