



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE PUBLIC REPORT

Tuesday, May 21, 2024, 7:00 p.m.

Board Room

Administration Building

133 Greenbank Road

Ottawa, Ontario

- Trustees Present: Alysha Aziz (electronic communication), Justine Bell, Donna Blackburn, Lyra Evans, Nili Kaplan-Myrth (electronic communication), Matthew Lee (electronic communication), Cathryne Milburn, Suzanne Nash, Amanda Presley, Lynn Scott, Emma Hong (Student Trustee), Malaika Kamanzi (Student Trustee)
- Staff Present: Pino Buffone (Director of Education), Brett Reynolds (Associate Director of Education), Randy Gerior (Associate Director, Business Operations), James Proulx (Executive Officer, Information Technology and Digital Transformation), Richard Sinclair (General Counsel), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Stacey Kay (General Manager, Learning Support Services), Claire Reynolds (Program/Evaluation Officer), Christine Kessler (Occasional Principal), Sandra Owens (General Manager, Business & Learning Technologies), Diane Pernari (General Manager, Communications & Information Services), Nicole Guthrie (General Manager of Board Services), Michael Guilbault (Central Audio/Visual Technical Specialist), Kathy Mak (Board/Committee Coordinator)
- Non-Voting Representatives Present: Melodie Gondek (OSSTF), Tom Holloway (OCASC), Lili Miller (IEC), Seema Lamba (ACE), Steven Spidell (OCSSAN), Stephanie Kirkey (OSSTF), Meredith Willis Vautour, Alicia Vrieswyk, Jennifer MacDonald, Sonja Elliott,

1. Call to Order - Vice-Chair of the Board

Vice-Chair Milburn called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Acknowledgement of Territorial Lands

Vice-Chair Milburn acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Homelands and thanked the Algonquin people for their stewardship of these lands since time immemorial.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were filed.

4. Approval of Agenda

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

Carried

5. Briefing from the Chair of the Board

During the briefing from Chair Scott, the following information was provided:

- Chair Scott thanked members of the community who attended the Elementary Program Review, the next opportunity will be on 22 May 2024 at D. Roy Kennedy Public School and Glashan Public School. Following this, the next date will be 29 May 2024 at Longfields-Davidson Heights Secondary School, Sawmill Creek Elementary School, and Avalon Public School. There will be a virtual session held on 30 May 2024; and
- Public feedback on the Review can be submitted online through Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) Engage and staff will review the feedback and propose recommendations in the fall for further public consultation.

6. Briefing from the Director

During the briefing from Director Buffone, the following information was provided:

- The OCDSB hosted the annual Director's Citation and Employee Recognition Awards to recognize the remarkable contributions of educators, support staff, and administrators on 21 May 2024;
- The Ministry issued guidance for school districts on personal mobile device use in schools and vaping. Changes are expected to be implemented by September 2024;
- The OCDSB encourages community members to provide feedback through the Engage OCDSB platform regarding a number of policy and procedure updates;
- Gaelin Elmore will be presenting at the Speaker Series event on 22 May 2024 at 6:00pm, additional information and registration can be found on the OCDSB website;
- The OCDSB will be hosting the 2024 Rainbow Youth Forum for Grade 9 to 12 on 23 May 2024. This will provide an opportunity students to contact their school's gay-straight alliance or gender and sexuality alliance (GSA) leader or guidance counsellor for additional details and registrations; and

- On 29 May 2024, African, Black and African-Caribbean students in Grades 9 to 12 are invited to join the seventh annual Black Youth Forum. Students will gather at the University of Ottawa to share their learning and lived experiences.

7. Delegations

7.1 Meredith Willis Vautour, re General Learning Program (GLP)

Meredith Willis Vautour expressed the need for the General Learning Program (GLP) as this program allows higher needs students to learn math, literacy and life skills. She also noted that the life skills taught in the GLP should hold the same value as earning credit in schools as this fosters independence.

In response to a query from Trustee Scott regarding earning school credits, Ms. Willis Vautour noted that critical life skills can be more important than a post secondary diploma as this creates the opportunity for students to be independent.

7.2 Alicia Vrieswyk, re General Learning Program (GLP)

Alicia Vrieswyk expressed concern regarding the poor performance indicators and that the GLP evaluation findings do not align with the three priority areas of the Board. She further noted that the Ministry's definition of mild intellectual disability does not align with the proposed changes to the GLP as there hasn't been considerable support services.

7.3 Jennifer MacDonald, re General Learning Program (GLP)

Jennifer MacDonald expressed concern regarding the GLP being integrated into mainstream programs and suggested that this would hinder inclusivity. She expressed the view that this will lead to students to experience loneliness, lack of social opportunities, no opportunity to learn life skills and limit the interaction with similar students in local schools. She urged the Board to continue to expand the GLP as this program fosters an inclusive learning environment which teaches life skills to students which will provide opportunity for employment in the future.

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

- The Ministry has not announced the cancellation of the GLP;
- It was noted that students in GLP connect with students outside of the program during lunch hours; however, students in the GLP tend to spend the majority of their time with their program peers; and
- Students in the GLP are able to participate in extracurricular activities that are modified for the program.

7.4 Sonja Elliott, re General Learning Program (GLP)

Sonja Elliott expressed the need for the GLP as this program creates a safe learning environment that promotes confidence and support for students in the program, which is not a focus in regular classrooms. She noted that students being in the GLP rather than a regular classroom does not hinder the student, but rather provides the necessary learning environment to allow students to progress at their own pace.

In response to a query from Trustee Kaplan-Myrth, Sonja noted she experienced educators not having the resources and tools to provide the necessary support within the regular classroom.

8. Report from Statutory and Other Committees

8.1 Parent Involvement Committee (PIC), 17 April 2024

Moved by Trustee Nash,

THAT the report from the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC), dated 17 April 2024, be received.

Carried

9. Matters for Discussion:

9.1 Report 24-068, General Learning Program Process Evaluation (P. Symmonds)

Your Committee had before it for discussion Report 24-068, to present the findings of the General Learning Program (GLP) evaluation and considerations to inform the continued growth of practices and structures to support students with Mild Intellectual Disability (MID).

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

- Superintendent Symmonds noted that a significant amount of resources are dedicated to the specialized program class model. If there was a change, all those resources would need to be reallocated to support students in regular classrooms. There has been success in the OCDSB supported sections model and in the inclusion teachers' work; however, additional work is still be required and the District continues to reassess to ensure that the disability related needs of students are met;
- The OCDSB had the opportunity to provide a targeted professional development opportunity for educators in GLP classes to focus on key areas such as evidence-based structured literacy and the development of executive functioning skills;
- The District reviews the number of specialized program classes annual and aims to ensure that pupil spades are used efficiently;

- Currently the Board is receiving feedback from community stakeholders regarding this change and it was noted that this decision is not due to factors related to budget;
- The geographic location of the majority of the GLP classes was not a specific trend studied in this report; however, the District adheres to a geographic model with respect to the placement of the specialized program class to ensure there are different classes located throughout the District. It was noted that students in rural communities tend to travel a longer distance to access programs;
- Learning Support Services (LSS) continues to collaborate with colleagues in Program, Learning & Innovation partners in the program to have additional opportunities for students to access their community secondary school;
- The District has invested to provide the supported sections model in three additional secondary schools for the 2024-2025 school year in Ridgemont High School, John McCrae Secondary School, and, Longfields-Davidson Heights Secondary School;
- It was noted that special education models have inadvertently created learning environments that may not result in the same level of expectations seen in regular program classes. There are many paths that are based on ableist structures that are inherently part of the education structure;
- The District considers the cohort of students transitioning from intermediate GLP class and their high school with the aim to create additional options for students and families to consider. In some cases, students will have the opportunity to join a GLP class or access the regular program with a differentiated level of support and additional teacher sections will be provided at each of those sites;
- The demographic data is an important factor as there are a number of multilingual learners in the GLP that are enrolled into the specialized programs. In addition to the complex structure related to special education, the language barrier proves to be another challenge as it is difficult to communicate complex processes to families and there is a potential for misunderstanding with regard to the students' success in class;
- Trustee Scott noted that in the former Carleton Board of Education, there was a program similar to the GLP where there were a range of students with varying needs who were served in their community school in specialized classes that included students with mild intellectual disabilities (MID). Each student was provided services based on their need;

- It is increasingly clear that there are similarities between students in the regular program class and those who access specialized program classes, and the District aims to work with the inclusion team to present and to understand what levels of support are necessary;
- Program Evaluation Officer Claire Reynolds noted that there were 15 participants for this study as the evaluation team had one high school participating as a focus group. To increase the amount of student voice, a secondary set of data was provided by educators who interviewed students and created profiles as a supplement of student voices. Due to the value of qualitative data to have insight on student experiences, consultation was undertaken with other staff;
- General Manager Stacey Kay stressed the important distinction between integration and inclusion. She further added that the structure of the learning environment often contributes to the disability of the student as the structures are not necessarily meeting their needs;
- LSS is working to create additional models to be considered, providing more options for students and families and improving access to community schools. The District aims to develop structures that support a diverse range of learners so that there may be additional future pathways students can pursue;
- The District has made additions to the social work complement to build capacity with guidance and student success while supporting mental health;
- General Manager Key noted that support within the classroom could minimize the feeling and idea of students being singled out. The additional support within the classroom will normalize the process and acknowledge that additional support is not just for students identified with an exceptionality, or different learning style;
- The study has shown that there is an inconsistency in program delivery across the GLP classrooms and educators have reported on feeling isolated in the specialized programs. The District prioritizes bringing together the group of GLP educators to focus on key work that will advance learning in classrooms;
- Superintendent Symmonds noted that there are a number of resolution mechanisms and processes in place including the complaint resolution procedure, OHREA and appeals through the IPRC process;

- There are a variety of processes around the IPRC as it is highly regulated. After a decision has been made from the IPRC, there is an option for families to reach out to the Special Education Appeal Board if families disagree with the decision. The District has recently updated the IPRC guide so families can further understand their options;
- It was noted that there are specific diagnoses that result in large numbers of students enrolling in the District. The OCDSB have taken steps to implement a range of supports to help students whose families are electing programs and services in the regular classrooms over specialized programs;
- Superintendent Symmonds expressed the need to layer the special education support that the District currently has, into schools and regular programs. There will be opportunities in the revision of the model that allows resources to be used to support students based on their individual needs;
- Director Buffone noted that the GLP discussion is broader than the Elementary Program Review and additional foundational work will need to be brought forward to ensure all classes are prepared to handle a greater diversity of student needs before conceptualization of program models or changes can be considered;
- Director Buffone noted that the District will need to ensure the high yield instructional practices will be prioritized in working classrooms and the Fall reports will outline some level of support for every classroom with the implementation of instructional practices. The change will be a multi-faceted, multi-phased approach if status quo is not maintained;
- Superintendent Symmonds clarified that the LSS does not track classroom evacuations due to disruptive behaviour; however, the multi-disciplinary team are involved to develop programs and strategies to address the behaviour;

Trustee Jennekens assumed the Chair.

- General Manager Kay noted that the District will reach out to educational assistants who support the GLP classes as well as families and caregivers with children in the program. Additional input will contribute to understanding the key group values and potentially what a re-envisioned model could look like;
- General Manager Kay expressed concern in regard to effectively communicating complex special education processes and support

mechanisms for families whose English is not their first language.
The District continues to adjust the method of consultations;

Trustee Milburn resumed the Chair

Vice Chair Milburn called the meeting into recess at 9:15 p.m.

Vice Chair Milburn called the meeting back to order at 9:25 p.m.

- General Manager Kay clarified that the work done in The Indigenous, Equity, and Human Rights Roadmap 2020-2023 (The Roadmap) had created a foundation to work with staff and school teams, and improving the Special Education Model will take time as the District continues to learn, analyze, and adjust classroom models;
- Superintendent Symmonds noted that the Model may disproportionately impact students in various ways, the difficulty of the task should not dissuade future changes but instead, compel the District to continue to ensure equity goals are met on a District and systemic level;
- Staff clarified that 5% of the students coming in from outside the District represent a small number of students who attend other programs or streams especially when the particular entry point of the GLP is specifically at Grade 4;
- It was reported that students in all three of the GLP secondary sites have earned credits and the strategies used by educators are consistent across the three sites;
- The District aims to continue working with principals and school leaders to ensure families are well informed of the specialized program classes and the likely outcomes of the model;
- A communication plan is being developed to regularly provide updates about new learning and best practices across the District. The District collaborates with learning support consultants to create a communication script for families to ensure information is being conveyed accurately and consistently throughout school sites;
- General Manager Kay noted that an essential element of a new model involves a full team approach as this guards against the feeling of isolation educators may experience as this creates a responsibility for a whole school rather than solely the educator;
- Staff confirmed that the report looked at structures that were limiting opportunities for integration of students from GLP into regular programs. It was further noted that two of three sites that host secondary GLP classes are at adaptive sites;

- There is a capacity of 17 students in the regular program classes at on some sites and some classrooms may not currently have the space to welcome students from the GLP;
- This year, administrators at the secondary GLP sites were provided with increased flexibility in staffing allocation to the GLP and the option of providing additional courses for students both in the GLP and outside;
- It is complex work to integrate students in regular classrooms who are two or more years behind their grade level, however, educators from elementary and secondary teams will be brought together to analyze the critical skills needed for a student to experience success; and
- Director Buffone noted that self contained classes may be influential for learning as there is an absence of peer modeling on some behaviours, competencies, skills and knowledge that students need. He acknowledged the delegate's concerns as students in specialized program classes do not always connect with their peers in integrated settings, as they should.

9.2 Report 24-078, Developmental Disabilities Program (DDP) Review of Crystal Bay and Clifford Bowey Report (P. Symmonds)

Your Committee had before it for discussion Report 24-078, to present the Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education and Clifford Bowey Public School Developmental Disabilities Program (DDP) Review report, including recommendations for consideration.

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

- Superintendent Symmonds noted that the specialized schools are currently full right now with no room to expand. The schools have a range of complex equipment to support students with sensory issues, mobility, physical and occupational therapy needs. Additional space, educational assistant support and educators will be required if there is to be a change in the teacher to student ratio;
- Occasional Principal Kessler stressed the importance of understanding the individual learning needs of each student as the District needs to ensure that students are to learn communication, functional literacy, and numeracy to the best of their abilities in addition to skills that allow them to be independent;
- While some students may benefit from a smaller teacher to student ratio, this may not be the case for all of the students. The focus

should be on ensuring educators have access to the tools needed to differentiate instruction;

- Occasional Principal Kessler noted the importance of combining differentiated instruction with an instructional approach to understand their learning profiles and needs so that a meaningful IEP can be created;
- The District had released the LSS Guide for Students with Special Education Needs and this serves as a tool for educators to help inform their decisions relating to programming for students based on their exceptionality;
- It was noted that the District has added communication disorder assistants as well as speech language pathologists to assist in the development of programming that would support the individual needs of students. In addition, there has been an increase in the number of itinerant teachers;
- The District has taken steps to improve the central resources available to staff. for example, educational assistants (EA) allocation to support staff, and a variety of multidisciplinary professionals who are consulted to help inform educators at a school level to ensure a safe school environment;
- Superintendent Symmonds noted that additional classes would have to be established in community schools and this would create a sense of community. He expressed concern regarding the issue of accessibility as there would need to be adequate room for the storage of required equipment to support students' needs. Educators, EA staffing, and transportation will also need to be taken into consideration;
- It has been noted that currently there is a gap between what the school offers and positive student outcomes. Superintendent Symmonds expressed concern as the system may not be ready to welcome high need students at this time; and
- The timeline for full integration of the two sites is dependent on the Elementary Program Review and staff capacity. Currently there is no estimate but the District continues to build its understanding of ableism.

The 10:30 vote did not obtain unanimous consent to continue the meeting

At the time of adjournment, items 10.1 Report from OPSBA, 10.2 OSTA Update, 11 New Business were not dealt with.

Cathryne Milburn, Chair