



SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, January 8, 2025, 7:00 pm
Trustees' Committee Room
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario

Members: Cathy Miedema (Association for Bright Children), Sonja Elliott (Autism Ontario), Lori-Ann Bradley (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder/Ontario Network Expertise (FASD/ONE)), Jess Whitley (Inclusion Action in Ontario), Lindsay Copland (VOICE for Children Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing), Donna Dickson (Trustee), Lynn Scott (Trustee)

Association Representatives (Non Voting): Catherine Houlden (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation), Susan Rab (Ottawa-Carleton Secondary School Administrators' Network), Suzanne Nash (Trustee)

Staff and Guests: Kate Stoudt (Superintendent, Learning Support Services), Deborah Lyon (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Claire Reynolds (Program Evaluation Officer, Learning Support Services), Samantha Hamilton (Teacher, Learning Support Services), Tamara Persaud (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Call to Order

Superintendent Stoudt acknowledged the absence of quorum and recommended that the meeting proceed with an informal discussion on matters listed on the agenda. She advised that no binding decisions could be made without quorum. Discussion began at 7:09 p.m.

2. Acknowledgement of Homelands

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

3. Approval of the Agenda

Due to a lack of quorum, the agenda could not be approved.

4. Delegations

There were no delegations.

5. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

Skipped

5.1 4 December 2024, SEAC Report

The SEAC Report of 4 December 2024 could not be approved due to a lack of quorum.

5.2 Forward Agenda

The SEAC forward agenda was provided for information.

6. Presentations

6.1 Update on Inclusion Initiatives (Dr. Claire Reynolds)

Dr. Claire Reynolds and Samantha Hamilton provided an update on inclusion initiatives being undertaken in Learning Support Services. During discussion and in response to queries the following information was noted:

- In the fall of 2022, LSS applied for funding through the Removing Barriers grant through the Ministry of Education. Two inclusion teachers were hired to support inclusion and a program evaluator was hired to review the General Learning Program (GLP). In 2023-2024, Ministry funding was used to support further work for inclusion initiatives. There are three types of inclusion teachers at the OCDSB, including itinerant inclusion, elementary inclusion and secondary inclusion teachers;
- The Universal Design for Learning perspective was utilized in the development of the inclusion initiatives as it respects the diversity of needs that students have within the Board and, identifies barriers that might prevent students from having a fulsome academic experience;
- Understanding the interconnected approached of learning outcomes for students, strengthening classroom community, increasing student engagement, and fostering educator collaboration are used to create a shared understanding of inclusion and improving access to learning for all students;
- Resource development and implementation of effective systems to support individual needs allows for classrooms to be organized in a student-centered way. Through this, staff has noticed positive changes such as increased levels of peer modeling, reduced stigma, student understanding of goals, and improved transition support for students between activities, classes, grades and schools;
- Through the collection of evidence, it was found that creating clear learning goals, collaborative classrooms, flexibility in classroom

models and instructional approaches, and increasing targeted support have improved student learning outcomes;

- Development of executive function and social emotional skills remains a priority for students with special needs. Student voice and strength remain at the forefront at decision making;
- In recent years, more focus on the development of executive functioning skills and a shift to a more flexible model of education has become more apparent. LSS has worked with a multidisciplinary team to determine that executive functioning needs to be explicitly taught for students post-pandemic and inclusion initiatives include embedding this type of learning throughout the school day;
- Concern was raised that finding time for professional development for educators and education assistants. Many school staff have utilized time during staff meetings to hold workshops to develop skills and abilities regarding executive function;
- The goal of the inclusion initiatives is to implement the research and resources from Learning Support Services in schools to ensure students are learning while feeling safe and secure;
- SEAC members expressed the need to highlight challenges associated with inclusion initiatives as they provide a more fulsome perspective on the strategies being utilized;
- Assessment tools are used to determine student strengths and needs, including formal tests, in-class activities, and conversations with students and their families. Data collected is then used to understand student capabilities, build support strategies, and measure progress; and
- Individual Education Plans (IEP) are one tool schools use to help set goals and build transition plans for students.

7. Discussion Items

7.1 DRAFT- Protocols for Responding to Inquiries from Parents and Caregivers (K. Stoudt)

Superintendent Stoudt introduced the draft protocol for responding to inquiries from parents and caregivers as directed by the Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) 170. Members were encouraged to submit feedback to Superintendent Stoudt via email.

8. Department Update

8.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Stoudt reported the following:

- Gratitude was expressed for Justin Shulman who has joined SEAC as a Principal of Learning Support Services (LSS) and Christine Lanos who has temporarily stepped into the role of General Manager Role for LSS;
- The upcoming Professional Development day for Educational Assistants will provide an opportunity to hear to Dr. Michael Cheng on the appropriate use of technology in schools, as well as a choice of other topics including, restorative practices, trauma informed practices, supporting students with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), and technology to support student learning. Appreciation was extended to Leanne Forrest Program Manager for Education Assistants, for organizing the professional development days;
- On 13 February 2025, a Resource Fair will be held at Confederation Education Centre to support transition planning for students with intellectual disabilities. Students and their families are encouraged to attend to learn about options, services and resources for their students after high school. This event is being held in collaboration with the Ottawa Catholic School Board;
- Kindergarten information nights will be held across the District in January and February 2025 for students and families to have an opportunity to meet staff and tour facilities;
- Play, Learn, Grow boxes will be distributed to all OCDSB kindergarten classrooms in the coming weeks. The boxes contain activities to engage students who require early developmental support. These activities are intended to promote the development of language abilities and play skills through one on one interactions. Play, Learn, Grow boxes will also include a comprehensive resource booklet for educators that provide clear targeted descriptions on how to build skills, key vocabulary and creative play ideas;
- Preparations have begun for World Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month in April. Events and programming will be scheduled to increase awareness for Autism Spectrum Disorder and Neurodiversity. A guest speaker will be invited to discuss culturally responsive health care models in the areas of neurodiversity; and
- Committee members were encouraged to review the special education standards for the Special Education Plan and provide feedback to System Principal, Deb Lyon.

9. Committee Reports

9.1 Board

There was no report from the Board.

9.2 Committee of the Whole

There was no report from the Committee of the Whole.

9.3 Committee of the Whole, Budget

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

10. New Business

There was no new business.

11. Upcoming Meeting Dates

The upcoming meeting dates were provided for information.

12. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Cathy Miedema, Chair, Special
Education Advisory Committee