



## PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, February 12, 2025

6:00 pm

Trustees' Committee Room

133 Greenbank Road

Ottawa, Ontario

Members: Alexandra Arraiz, Calla Barnett, Alison Telford, Tabassum Khan, Scott Walker, Alison Kinahan (Parents for Diversity), Adriana Johnston (Ottawa Network for Education), Ali Yaqub, Stacey Segal, Khalhela Zoeller, Jason Glover, Tahir Yapici, Carley Scharf, Fartun Farah

Non-Voting Members: Suzanne Nash (Trustee), Prince Duah (Superintendent of Instruction), Samah Suliman (Family and Community Engagement Coordinator)

Staff and Guests: Donna Dickson (Trustee), Lynn Scott (Trustee), Diane Pernari (General Manager, Communications & Public Relations), Emily Balla (General Manager, Learning Support Services), Kenan Omercajic (Strategic Business Analyst), Tamara Persaud (Committee Coordinator, Governance Services)

1. Call to Order

Chair Barnett called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

2. Acknowledgement of Territorial Lands

Chair Barnett 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 Agenda

**Moved by Vice-Chair Khan,**

**THAT the agenda be approved.**

**Carried**

4. Chair's Report

During the report from the Chair, the following information was provided:

- Due to the upcoming election, the Ministry of Education (MOE) Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) chair meeting has been cancelled and will be rescheduled later in the school year;
- Carley Scharf of the Osgoode Youth Association was welcomed as the new voting community member of PIC;
- PIC members interested in participating in the Mental Health Advisory Committee are encouraged to reach out to Chair Barnett for more information; and
- A PIC dinner is being held on 25 February at Pub Italia to provide members with the opportunity to socialize informally and become further acquainted with all members.

## 5. Presentations

### 5.1 Ministry Mental Health Collaboration (E. Balla)

General Manager Balla provided a presentation on the Mental Health collaboration the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) is participating in alongside the MOE and School Mental Health Ontario (SMH-ON).

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

- MOE Policy/Program Memorandum 169: Student Mental Health highlights the mental health requirements for all school boards in Ontario including a three year mental health strategy and annual action plan, suicide prevention, intervention and postvention protocols, collaboration with community organizations to ensure coordinated systems of care, and enhanced mental health literacy for students, families and staff;
- The guide for student mental health delivery in schools includes 4 tiers of intervention: Tier One is mental health promotion to all students, Tier Two involves targeted prevention and brief services, Tier Three includes specialized consultations, assessment family/caregiver support, and therapy services, and Tier Fourth incorporates intensive services such as community-based and/or in-home treatment, or in-patient/live-in treatment if recommended;
- SMH-ON is a critical resource in supporting students as they work closely with the MOE and provide training to all school boards. SMH-ON provides mental health materials for educators, students and staff in a sustainable and consistent manner;

- Recent school climate results indicate that 93% of parents/caregivers reported their child's well-being is moderate to high. 78% of parents/caregivers also reported that their child feels safe at school. It was noted that as students get older, the sense of belonging decreases over time, with many students unaware of the mental health supports available to them;
- There were five key themes that emerged from OCDSB research on student mental health that inform the Mental Health & Well-Being Strategy. These include: deepening mental health strategies for students, staff and families; increased awareness and access to school-based resources; improving access to community mental health supports; increase opportunities for student participation and agency; and enhancing access to culturally and identity relevant responsive care;
- Decision making is rooted in the three pillars of The Mental Health Strategy: belonging, building and bridging;
- OCDSB staff created an educator toolkit with information and resources to support mental health conversations in the classroom and build mentally healthy classroom environments;
- The MOE has provided mental health literacy modules mandatory for students in grades seven and eight. The updated grade ten careers curriculum also includes topics such as how to manage stress and seek support when needed;
- In collaboration with Program Services, a student re-engagement pilot was launched to work with students and families that have difficulty with engaging regularly in schools to help them earn credits in school and after hours, and support parents;
- The OCDSB received funding from the MOE for initiatives relating to student mental health, substance use and vaping. Focus groups for parents/caregivers and students will be held to gain meaningful input to develop effective strategies to support substance use. Members encouraged staff to ensure that focus group questions are created with a wide diversity of families and abilities in mind; and
- In an effort to reduce the stigma around the topic of substance use, members proposed that the language used surrounding the topic be updated to reflect a more inclusive and understanding perspective.

## 6. Discussion Items

## 6.1 Elementary Program Review Update

Superintendent Duah and Strategic Business Analyst Omercajic provided an update on the Elementary Program Review (EPR) to receive feedback from the PIC and garner engagement regarding the potential changes being proposed through the EPR.

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

- The EPR aims is to improve program quality and accessibility for all students, focusing on community-based education and inclusive learning environments. Proposed changes to streamline grade configurations and adjust school attendance boundaries are found in the EPR as well, to optimize and improve the delivery of programs and services. This will include more equitable access and fluid entry into French Immersion (FI) for the primary grades;
- 39 Specialized Program Classes (SPC) will be phased out through attrition. Students currently in SPCs will be able to finish the program they are in;
- The Enhanced English (EE) program was clarified as providing an 80/20 ratio of English to French instruction as opposed to the MOE requirement of 50/50 for FI;
- Should the proposed changes be approved, transition plans will be developed in the fall of 2025 for staff and students and in the summer of 2026, implementation preparation will begin;
- The current EPR report can be found on OCDSB Engage and has been translated into various languages to make it more accessible for parents and caregivers. Implementation of the proposed models has not been approved as yet, and there are many avenues to provide feedback that will remain available until 25 March 2025;
- Concern was raised by members regarding the current imbalanced ratio of Educational Assistants (EA) to students noting shifts caused by the EPR may further decrease the availability of EA for students who require additional support. It was highlighted that as all students are integrated into standard classrooms, teachers may not be equipped to support all students fully, specifically students with special learning needs. It was clarified that specialized programs would be phased out and integrated into community schools. EAs will be redistributed throughout community schools to provide additional support to students;
- It was encouraged that teachers, administration and EAs receive additional professional development and support to aid students in

community school integration as alternative and specialized programming is phased out and more students require support throughout the school day. Concern was expressed that without adequate educator and EA support, students will not be able to receive a fulsome academic experience, specifically students with special learning needs;

- The proposed boundary school locator tool will be made available on the OCDSB Engage website on 28 February 2025; and
- Due to the uncertain nature of the 2025-2026 school year due to the EPR, parents have raised concern about registering their child for kindergarten, as their child may need to change due to potential boundary and programming changes.

## 7. Reports

### 7.1 PIC Report, 15 January 2025

Moved by Scott Walker,

THAT the Parent Involvement Committee report dated 15 January 2025 be received.

Carried

Vice-Chair Khan assumed the Chair.

Calla Barnett requested that section 5.1 of the minutes be corrected to read, "He reported that the membership subcommittee met and selected a community organization for appointment."

Calla Barnett also requested that section 5.6 of the minutes to be corrected to read, "Chair Barnett called for volunteers for the roles of PIC representative to begin transitioning into the role to start their term in September 2025. Chair Barnett is the current PIC representative. Stacey Segal volunteered to be the PIC representative for the Policy Review Committee starting in September 2025."

Calla Barnett requested that section 5.6 of the minutes be adjusted to read, "THAT Stacey Segal be confirmed as the PIC representative to the Policy Review Committee beginning in September 2025. Carried"

Calla Barnett requested that the minutes be corrected to indicate that "Due to an emergency situation, the Chair moved immediately to items 10 and 11."

**Moved by Scott Walker,**

**THAT the Parent Involvement Committee report dated 15 January 2025 be received, as amended.**

## **Carried**

Chair Barnett resumed the Chair.

### **7.2 Superintendent's Report**

Superintendent Duah provided his report and noted the following:

- The new OCDSB website was launched on 31 January 2025. Each school council has been granted a microsite linked to the respective school websites. On 19 February 2025, there will be a 2-hour virtual training session for school councils on accessing, updating and navigating the microsites. This training will be posted online for those unable to watch it live;
- Family and Community Engagement is working with principals and school councils to create community partnership agreements between sister schools with to aid newer school councils in building capacity and fundraising. School councils are encouraged to collaborate on projects and initiatives to address disparities that impact all schools; and
- Schools are open tomorrow, 13 February 2025. However, due to the inclement weather, school buses will not be running.

### **8. Information Items**

There were no information items.

### **9. Standing Items**

#### **9.1 Updates from Board Committees**

Tahir Yapici attended the Committee of the Whole meeting on 4 February 2025. He noted that the new OCDSB website was launched and the 2025-2026 school year was approved including Professional Development (PD) days dates. Education Quality and Accountability Office assessments (EQAO) was also a topic of discussion as trustees had questions regarding student progress in relation to the assessment.

Jason Glover attended the Committee of the Whole, Budget meeting on 28 January 2025. He noted that last year, the OCDSB had an approximately \$4 million deficit due to numerous factors including changes to employee contracts and student enrollment being below forecast. The OCDSB is in debt to the MOE, for approximately \$11 million and the District is under financial supervision from the Ministry. OCDSB staff are tasked with finding \$20 million in reductions for the 2025-2026 school year and noted that student learning and well-being remain at the top of the District's priorities. School councils can play a role in offsetting cost but it was highlighted that funds raised by school councils cannot be used to

offset classroom supplies and resources that are budgeted for schools by the MOE. It was clarified that the EPR is not a cost-saving measure but is rather a comprehensive analysis to reorganize programming at the elementary level.

## 9.2 Work Plan Development and Subcommittees

Chair Barnett noted that there are five identified annual responsibilities included and voting members were encouraged to consider championing one of these areas as subcommittees and work plans are developed.

Chair Barnett proposed three subcommittees be formed within PIC including family conference planning, substance use consultation, and bylaw and governance review.

**Moved by Chair Barnett, seconded by Scott Walker**

**THAT three subcommittees be created within PIC, including family conference planning, substance use consultation, and bylaw and governance review.**

**Carried.**

Chair Barnett called for volunteers to chair each of the three subcommittees.

Chair Barnett volunteered to chair the bylaw and governance review subcommittee.

Vice-Chair Khan volunteered to chair the family conference planning subcommittee.

Stacey Seagal volunteered to chair the substance use consultation subcommittee.

## 10. New Business

Members requested a presentation at a future meeting regarding the Ottawa Police Service Community Youth Officers in schools and understanding the Safe Schools policies. Concern was raised over a potential increase in police presence in OCDSB schools.

Members also requested that a discussion item on school transportation systems be added to a future agenda to explore alternative options for students to and from school. PIC members were encouraged to speak with Ottawa Student Transportation Authority members to further develop transportation options for all students.

## 11. Upcoming Meeting Dates

The upcoming meeting dates were provided for information.

12. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

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Calla Barnett, Chair, Parent  
Involvement Committee