



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE PUBLIC REPORT

Tuesday, April 15, 2025, 7:00 p.m.

Board Room

Administration Building

133 Greenbank Road

Ottawa, Ontario

- Trustees Present: Justine Bell (electronic communication), Donna Blackburn, Donna Dickson, Lyra Evans, Julia Fortey, Jennifer Jennekens, Nili Kaplan-Myrth, Matthew Lee, Cathryne Milburn, Suzanne Nash, Amanda Presley (electronic communication), Lynn Scott
- Staff Present: Pino Buffone (Director of Education), Randy Gerrior (Associate Director, Business Operations), Jesse Mark (General Counsel - Governance & Legal Services), James Proulx (Executive Officer of Technological Support Services), Reg Lavergne (Superintendent of Program Services), Shawn Lehman (Superintendent of Employee Services), Kate Stoudt (Superintendent Learning Support Services), A.J Keene (Superintendent of Education), Janice McCoy (Elementary Program Review Project Team Member), Sandy Owens (General Manager, Business & Learning Technologies), Diane Pernari (General Manager, Communications & Public Relations), Andrea Rahim (General Manager, Research Evaluation & Analytics Division), Darren Gatley (General Manager, Governance Services), Kenan Omercajic (Strategic Business Analyst), Michael Guilbault (Central Audio/Visual Technical Specialist), Kathy Mak (Board/Committee Coordinator)
- Non-Voting Representatives Present: Jamieson Dyer (OCEOTA), Jean Fulton-Hale (OCSSAN), Anthony Wong (SEAC), Justin Shilman (OCEOC), Chris Walsh (OSSTF), Thomas Holloway (OCASC), Lili Miller (IEC), Stephen Skoutajan (OCEFTO)

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

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

2. Acknowledgement of Territorial Lands

Chair Milburn 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. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were filed.

4. Approval of Agenda

Moved by Trustee Nash,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Trustee Lyra Evans requested that information item 11.1, 2 April 2025 Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Partial Report be moved to item 8.2.

Trustee Scott noted that information item 11.1, 2 April 2025 Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Partial Report is a matter for information as there is no action to be taken.

Moved by Trustee Nash,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

5. Briefing from the Chair of the Board

Trustee Scott reported the following:

- Registration is open for the summer language classes and camps for students in kindergarten to grade 8. The camps and language classes will take place in seven locations across the District with both in-person and virtual options available; and
- School Mental Health Ontario is offering a free webinar series, By Your Side, from 22 April 2025 to 22 May 2025 to help parents and caregivers navigate topics related to substance use and addictive behaviours. The details were shared in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) Parent and Caregiver Update sent on 11 April 2025.

6. Briefing from the Director

Director Buffone reported the following:

- The Rotary Club of West Ottawa is hosting '*Prepared & Positive*,' on 3 May 2025, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m to discuss the mental health of children and youth. The details were shared in the District's parent and caregiver update sent on 11 April 2025; and
- Schools will be closed this Friday, 18 April 2025 and Monday, 21 April 2025. The District would like to extend our best wishes to those in our community observing Good Friday, Holy Friday, Easter, Orthodox Easter and Ridvan.

7. Delegations

There were no delegations.

8. Report from Statutory and Other Committees

8.1 Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), 5 March 2025

Moved by Trustee Dickson,

THAT the report from the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), dated 5 March 2025, be received.

Trustee Kaplan-Myrth request that the 5 March 2025 SEAC report, item 9 “New Business” second paragraph be revised to read “Members expressed the need to add potential changes to the Alternative program and the specialized program classes as a discussion item at the 2 April 2025 meeting agenda, as concerns were raised”

Moved by Trustee Dickson,

THAT the report from the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), dated 5 March 2025, be received, as amended.

Carried

9. Matter for Action

9.1 Notice of Motion Re: New Elementary Program Review Proposal (Trustee Kaplan-Myrth)

Your Committee had before it Notice of Motion Re: New Elementary Program Review Proposal, seeking to improve program quality, accessibility, address disparities and provide French Immersion (FI) to Arch Street Public School, Hawthorne Public School, Featherston Public School, and Charles Hulse Public School.

Moved by Trustee Kaplan-Myrth,

WHEREAS the Elementary Program Review (EPR) was undertaken by the OCDSB to improve program quality and accessibility, with a focus on community-based education, dynamic, bilingual teaching and learning environments, and a continuum of inclusion;

WHEREAS OCDSB data demonstrates that under the current elementary program model disparities exist between schools that offer French Immersion and those that do not;

WHEREAS the revised EPR proposal in Report 25-022 does not add French Immersion to Arch Street Public School or Hawthorne Public School;

WHEREAS Arch Street Public School and Hawthorne Public School have a higher percentage of racialized and lower socioeconomic populations than most OCDSB schools; and

WHEREAS OCDSB data demonstrates that under the current elementary program model racialized and lower socioeconomic students have disproportionately lower academic outcomes;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

THAT the Board hereby directs that, at the 6 May 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting, the Director shall present the Board with recommendations for Arch Street Public School, Hawthorne Public School, Featherston Public School, and Charles Hulse Public School that achieve both of the following:

- A. Making French Immersion available at each of the identified schools; and
- B. Maintaining either a K-6 or K-8 grade configuration at each of the identified schools.

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

- Trustees expressed concern regarding the racialized and lower socioeconomic communities in the Alta Vista area who are unable to advocate for themselves. They urged the District to address the disparities present within the system by providing French Immersion (FI) and maintaining the current kindergarten (K) to grade 6 and K to grade 8 grade configuration at the identified schools;
- The District aims to improve equity of access to programs and services; however, there are a number of factors that must be considered including grade configuration. Director Buffone noted that offering FI at each of the identified schools while maintaining either junior kindergarten (JK) to grade 6 or JK to grade 8 configuration is not feasible in the Alta Vista area;
- It is possible that the District can consider implementing FI to identified schools if conditions change such as the notion of a moratorium on school closure or a change in student population;
- The District must ensure there are a sufficient number of students within a boundary who can attend the dual track schools prior to implementing the program;
- Director Buffone noted implementing dual track at Arch Street Public School and Hawthorne Public School will put other schools with dual track at risk as students will be taken from those sites;
- In response to a query regarding the possibility of triple grade English classes, Director Buffone noted that the District must be mindful of the low class sizes, some with less than five (5) students

in each grade, and will need to consider the quality of programs offered;

- It was suggested that implementing grade 1 FI class starting in 2026 with annual implementation will allow 50-50 JK and senior kindergarten (SK) students the opportunity to attend FI at grade 1 and increase the success of the Elementary Program Review (EPR);
- Director Buffone clarified that phasing in FI annually starting with grade 1 in 2026 will be difficult as the Alta Vista area has more pupil spaces than pupils;
- The District had engaged with the Charles H. Hulse Public School, Featherston Drive Public School and Alta Vista Public Schools communities to survey interest in the introduction of dual track and feedback, which indicated there was significant interest. This data aligns with the District overall trends for interest in FI as 70% to 72% of students enter EFI system wide;
- Trustee Scott noted that communities expressed concerns regarding mixing grades in EFI program as students will have various levels of language acquisition in French;
- Staff had considered models that offered English only sites at a nearby school outside of low-income sites to offer dual track in socioeconomically challenged communities; however it was determined that this is not possible to achieve; and
- Trustees expressed concern that the moratorium on school closures will be removed in the foreseeable future and the disparities will not be addressed.

Moved by Trustee Blackburn,

THAT debate be closed.

Defeated

- Strategic Business Analyst Omercajic noted that staff continue to analyze feedback received through the online survey and currently staff received positive feedback regarding the reversal of the K to grade 3, and grade 4 to grade 8 configuration;
- Families with students currently attending Hawthorne Public School can request that a student enroll in FI; however this may not occur in their school or community;
- Director Buffone noted that the District will send additional communications to notify families of the possible pathway options for students prior to registration;

Trustee Jennekens assumed the Chair.

- It was noted that there were a number of families who prefer the original EPR model that offered dual track at all school sites; and

Trustee Milburn resumed the Chair.

- Director Buffone noted that it is not possible to revert to the original K to grade 3, and grade 4 to grade 8 proposal for Arch Street Public School and Hawthorne Public School to offer dual track as these schools are tied to a number of other sites such as Vincent Massey Public School, Pleasant Park Public School and Riverview Alternative School through multiple capacities.

Moved by Trustee Kaplan-Myrth,

THAT the Board hereby directs that at the May 6, 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting the Director shall present the Board with recommendations for Arch Street Public School, Hawthorne Public School, Featherston Public School, and Charles Hulse Public School that achieve both of the following:

- A. Making French Immersion available at each of the identified schools; and
- B. Maintaining either a K-6 or K-8 grade configuration at each of the identified schools.

Defeated

10. Matters for Discussion:

10.1 Report 25-015, Student Learning Update: Student Engagement and Well-Being (B. Reynolds, A.J. Keene, and K. Stoudt)

The meeting recessed at 8:15 p.m. and resumed at 8:20 p.m.

Your Committee had before it for discussion Report 25-015 to provide an update on student attendance, suspension and perceptual data that is aligned with direction provided from the Ministry of Education (MOE) to monitor student engagement and well-being.

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

- The Ministry has identified indicators for student engagement and well-being, including attendance - the proportion of students grades 1-8 in present for 90% or more instructional days; suspensions - the proportion of students grades 4-12 suspended at least once; and survey data - the proportion of students who report knowing about the supports that are available if they have questions or concerns about their mental health; in addition we've included data from our

Valuing Voices Survey, looking at student sense of belonging, safety, and well-being;

- Based on provincial data, the OCDSB attendance rate is 4% higher than the provincial average. Based on internal data, there is a 15% increase compared to the previous year;
- 3.2% of Grade 4-12 OCDSB students were suspended during the 2023-2024 school year, a rate that is slightly higher than last year but lower than before the pandemic. Suspension rates for OCDSB students continue to be slightly below the provincial average. The number of discretionary suspensions is similar to the previous year, but the number of mandatory suspensions has increased;
- Students respond to a question about awareness of mental health support on the EQAO Questionnaire. OCDSB students' responses are closely aligned with overall provincial results, which show greater awareness of students in older grades;
- Through the School Climate Survey in spring 2024, 93% report moderate-high well-being, and 78% report feeling safe at school. Although most school climate domains saw improvement since the last round of surveys, students from underserved communities continue to have less favourable experiences at school. An analysis of results related to sense of belonging, relationships with adults at school, bullying, and feeling represented at school, including disaggregation by identity-based data, is included in the Appendix to the report;
- General Manager Rahim noted that the attendance data reported is based on students who were present during the 31 October enrollment calculation, and are still present at the end of the school year to ensure data is not affected by those who are inactive for a large portion of the year. The District is working to improve the data collection to gather the number of days students are active during the year and the number of days they were physically present;
- There are a number of initiatives to support Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and other sexual orientations and gender identities (2SLGBTQIA+) students such as a parent support group that provides resources and enables students to support their peers through school;
- General Manager Rahim noted that students who identified as transgender, non-binary, and/or gender diverse had a 29% attendance rate in the 2022 to 2023 school year and this rate had increased to 44% in the 2023 to 2024 school year;

- Superintendent Stoudt noted that she will collaborate with Superintendent Riddell to bring forward additional information regarding Indigenous student disproportionality;
- The Student Senate is collaborating with Research Officers to create a student-led initiative to survey students regarding mental health experience and supports;
- There are a number of mental health supports for students such as The Mental Health Champion Symposium, a recommendation from the Youth Action Committee for Mental Health, a number of wellness days for the student body, and distributing kits with affirmation statement cards with a QR code to a link mental health support resources;
- In response to an inquiry regarding the gray chart sections in Appendix B to Report 25-015, General Manager Rahim clarified that this represented a low count for their respective section and data should be interpreted with caution as it may be less reliable;
- Bullying data is collected anonymously and cannot be integrated into suspension data;
- Superintendent Keene noted that there are a low number of suspensions as a result of bullying due to the District's progressive discipline, mitigating circumstances and the definition of bullying as a repeated occurrence;
- The District recognizes the disproportionality of students suspended in schools and staff collaborate with community partners to address repetitive suspensions and repeated principal investigations; however, the District currently does not have targeted implementation supports in place;
- The District had a number of presentations from Safe School leads and Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) to discuss radicalization in young students and also aim to present these at six (6) school sites in the upcoming months;
- In response to an inquiry regarding data on schools reaching out to the Children's Aid Society (CAS), General Rahim clarified that this data is currently not available;
- The policy and procedure for reporting to CAS is being updated and will be brought forward in upcoming months;
- There is mental health support provided through Safe Schools and the suspension program, and students who are suspended for a long duration will be able to attend Support During Suspension Program (SDSP) school. The District will collaborate with social

workers and psychologists to support the suspended student and aid them in understanding the cause of the issue;

- Restorative practices and restorative conferencing trainings are ongoing for school-based teams and multidisciplinary team members;
- It was noted that families have expressed concern regarding a recurring suspension cycle for students and unnecessary CAS involvement;
- The District engages with Indigenous support workers and Indigenous specific social workers in schools to raise the level of engagement to ensure Indigenous students feel safe and create a welcoming space for Indigenous students;
- Staff aim for an attendance strategy for the District to be implemented in the 2025 to 2026 school year, and collaborate with school principals to further understand students with chronic absenteeism. The District is legislated by the MOE to engage with attendance counselors at the fifteen (15) day absent mark; however, it is the principal's responsibility to engage with school teams and families when trends in student absenteeism appear;
- Report 25-015 is focused on the MOE metric to determine the students physically present for instructional time; however, the District recognizes there may be excused absences for students (some with special education needs) that may be coded differently in the system;
- The District ensures suspension policies are applied equitably by applying coaching principals to understand student baseline behaviours and mitigating factors that may result in a pause for safety as opposed to discipline;
- The MOE requires the District to provide reports on the effectiveness of mental health support;
- Chair Milburn noted that a memorandum will be provided to trustees in the upcoming weeks containing pause of safety data; and
- General Manager Rahim noted that surveys distributed to families are pre-populated with the student name and grade to indicate each student has a personal form to submit data that is used in a number of District initiatives. Data submitted through surveys are presented in community newsletters and infographic designs that are shared on the District website and social media.

10.2 Report 25-023, Comprehensive Report on the EPR: Implementation Considerations and Planning (P. Buffone)

Your Committee had before it for discussion Report 25-023, seeking to provide an overview of implementation planning for the Elementary Program Review (EPR) in support of the overarching principles and proposal shared.

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

- Applications for an exemption provision related to the EPR will be considered centrally based on communicated criteria; however, space and program impact for sending and receiving schools must be taken into consideration. Families will be notified of their application status on 6 December 2025 prior to the end of the calendar year;
- All before and after school child care programs are dependent on licensing capacity and the District will collaborate with the District's programs or third party providers to best accommodate families looking to transfer;
- All licensed child care programs have a standard fee throughout Canada due to the *Early Learning and Childcare Agreement* and is dependent on cost recovery as it is a not-for-profit program;
- Families unable to afford a childcare fee have the option to reach out to the City of Ottawa through the child care registry and apply for a subsidized space to access funding throughout the City;
- Director Buffone noted that there will be a waitlist for the extended day program and staff is collaborating with the City of Ottawa to expand the capacity;
- The waitlist for subsidized space has decreased substantially due to the MOE funding children from age 0 to 6. Families may receive full or partial coverage of the fees;
- Staff is currently working on the potential transfers based on sustainability of their schools and will bring forward the information upon completion;
- The District currently offers daycare at the majority of elementary schools and many will remain intact;
- It is difficult for staff to predict availability for the childcare program as it is dependent on the number of registrants currently and the licensing capacity for the OCDSB;

- Concerns were expressed regarding sufficient staff support at Cambridge Street Community Public School. General Manager Cyr clarified that the District was able to meet the demands of the site and currently have no wait list. Staff will continue the work to anticipate the number of registrations for the upcoming year and hire accordingly to the number of K classrooms;
- There are a few number of schools that will be required to have refreshed resources as the majority of the sites are currently dual tracked and there is ample data indicating families' vision to have students enter the Immersion program at an early age;
- There was an increase in professional development (PD) for French language educators to strengthen their foundational literacy skill at the primary level and various strategies are being developed in the English program to support students;
- The ability to streamline four (4) programs into two (2) over time will allow the reallocation of resources to address the ineffectiveness the District is currently experiencing with four (4) programs offered at the elementary level;
- During the 2025-2026 school year, staff will bring forward quarterly reports to provide an update on the EPR implementation;
- The majority of specialized programs will remain in place and the purpose of a collaborative classroom support model is to provide additional clarity on the appropriate specialized program referral the student requires;
- Superintendent Stoudt cautioned against implementing Individual Education Plans (IEP) with modifications as an intensive area of support without relying on further assessment material as this will alter a child's educational program and affect the trajectory of learning;
- It was noted that a student with complex needs should have the choice to access a specialized program or the option to stay within the community school in the regular classroom and have those needs met;
- The District aims to disperse resources from the specialized program classes throughout the system to ensure students are supported, and educators may be tasked to provide individualized programming that not only benefits the particular student in need but also support throughout the classroom;
- Director Buffone noted that there are a number of schools that are over 100% capacity and the revised proposal provided a more

balanced model between sites with extreme high and low numbers of students;

- It was noted that members of SEAC expressed the view that there is a lack of evidence that indicates the EPR implementation will be successful; and
- The District will engage with school based teams, the multidisciplinary teams, system principals, EAs, social workers and psychologists to build individualized plans for students.

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

At the time of adjournment, items 11.1 2 April 2025 Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Partial Report, 11.1.a Recommendation: Elementary Program Review, 11.2 Report from OPSBA Update, 11.3 OSTA Update and 12 New Business were not dealt with.

Cathryne Milburn, Chair