



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITY REPORT

February 24, 2025

6:00 pm

Trustees' Committee Room

133 Greenbank Road

Ottawa, Ontario

- Voting Members: Ali Shaker, Mohammed Zakir Khan, Jason Glover, Chris Moran, Tejas Srinivas, Amy Awad (Muslim Association of Canada), David Sachs (Jewish Federation of Ottawa), Soufiane Koussih (Palestinian Canadian Congress), Rachel Hincke, Menasheh Speevak-Sladowski, Aisha Sherazi (Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools), Inini McHugh (Inuuqatigit Centre), Tabassum Khan
- Non-Voting Members: Donna Blackburn (Trustee), Donna Dickson (Trustee), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Education)
- Staff and Guests: Jesse Mark (General Counsel, Governance and Legal Services), Kenan Omercajic (Strategic Business Analyst), Kathy Mak (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Acknowledgement of Homelands

Superintendent Farrish acknowledged that the meeting is being held on the unceded, unsurrendered Homelands of the Anishinaabeg Algonquin Nation whose presence in Canada reaches back to time immemorial. She extended deep gratitude and sought to support and affirm their rights as the land's stewards and keepers.

2. Welcome

Superintendent Farrish called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

3. Approval of Agenda

Moved by Soufiane Koussih,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

4. Matters for Action

4.1 Election of Co-Chairs

Jason Glover and Chris Moran nominated themselves.

By acclamation, Superintendent Farrish declared Jason Glover and Chris Moran as Co-Chairs of the Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE).

The meeting recessed at 6:12 p.m. and resumed at 6:18 p.m.

Jason Glover and Chris Moran assumed the Chair.

4.2 Appointment of Committee Representatives

a. COW

Chair Glover provided a description and requirements of the Committee of the Whole (COW) representative and called for nominations.

Menasheh Speevak-Sladowski nominated himself. By acclamation, Chair Glover declared Menasheh Speevak-Sladowski the COW representative.

b. COW (Budget)

Chair Glover provided a description and requirements of the Committee of the Whole (COW) Budget representative and called for nominations.

Inini McHugh nominated himself. By acclamation, Chair Glover declared Inini McHugh the COW Budget representative.

c. Policy Review

Chair Glover provided a description and requirements of the Policy Review Committee representative and called for nominations.

Tejas Srinivas nominated herself. By acclamation, Chair Glover declared Tejas Srinivas the Policy Review Committee representative.

It was noted that Governance Services will update the email distribution list to ensure that ACE representatives receive the agenda package for the committee meetings.

Chair Glover noted that committee representatives may choose an alternative representative at the upcoming 24 April 2025 ACE meeting.

5. Discussion

5.1 Elementary Program Review (EPR) Consultation

Superintendent Farrish provided an overview of the current phase of the Elementary Program Review (EPR) with the intention of receiving feedback from ACE regarding the proposed EPR model. This overview is

the content contained in the file for the EPR item attached to the agenda package.

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

- The proposed EPR model will allow students in Grades 1 to 3 to enter the French Immersion (FI) program at any time at all OCDSB schools. The EPR model will have fewer grade configurations, and ensure that cohorts of students will be kept together during transitions;
- The proposed EPR model will decrease the number of students transitioning throughout the District in the long term following a large, one-time transition during the implementation phase;
- The District will phase out certain specialized program classes, the Alternative program and the Middle French Immersion (MFI) program. Students currently in the phased out programs will have the opportunity to graduate from the program in Grade 8;
- Superintendent Farrish provided the details of which specialized programs will be remaining and phased out;
- Confirmed the principles of the EPR: to provide equitable opportunities for students and clarifies that it is not to reduce the budget;
- ACE members expressed concern integrating students with special needs into mainstream classrooms and noted the various levels of learning and support required;
- The District included research in the board reports that demonstrate the benefits of an inclusive model and improved outcomes and pathway opportunities;
- Strategic Analyst Omercajic noted that the feedback from communities has demonstrated limited access to FI and that students are required to travel longer distances to access the program;
- Information pertaining to the EPR can be found on the Engage OCDSB webpage on the District website and is available in multiple languages;
- Staff will continue to bring annual reports regarding student achievement, well-being, suspension rates and school climate data to the Board to further understand the impact of the EPR and student achievement;

- The District will continue to build instructional capacity through Professional Development (PD) for staff focussing on differentiated instruction, universal design for learning, and culturally relevant pedagogy;
- There will be a greater collaboration between English and FI educators as students will be learning English and Math together, and supports that have not been readily available to FI students will now be available to all students in both program offerings;
- It was noted that the EPR will provide pathway choices for students and ensure equity of access. In addition, the elementary Alternative sites were not intended to become a special education program but more of an introduction to bringing a child-centered education method into schools;
- The EPR focused on public consultation, internal District data, and external research to inform the development of this model;
- Strategic Analyst Omercajic invited ACE members to provide their feedback on the proposed EPR model through the thoughtexchange platform prior to 9:00 a.m. on 28 February 2025. ACE members may also email trustees to provide additional feedback;
- The District will continue to use a geographic model to determine the location of specialized program classes;
- ACE members expressed concern regarding barriers and equity of access during the public consultation. Strategic Analyst Omercajic clarified that the District collaborated with translators to reach out to schools and communities with a higher population of underserved students and families to gather feedback. In addition, the District offered opportunities for staff to provide their input through an online forum, and virtual and in-person trustee zone meetings were held across the District;
- Superintendent Farrish noted that the District's Family and Community Engagement (FACE) department has also been active in organizing multiple consultations;
- The District aims to improve learning conditions in classrooms through the use of relationship based approaches that prioritize the well-being and learning of students; and
- Chair Glover requested that an update regarding the EPR proposed model be provided at a future meeting.

5.2 Protocol for Responding to Inquiries from Parents and Caregivers

Superintendent Farrish provided an overview of the draft Protocol for Responding to Inquiries from Parents and Caregivers.

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

- Staff are required to respond or acknowledge an inquiry from the public within two (2) business days and provide a resolution or substantive answer within five (5) business days. It may take additional time to resolve the request depending on the nature of the inquiry;
- ACE members expressed concern as it may be difficult for staff to respond within the required days depending on their availability. Superintendent Farrish noted that this protocol is a requirement from the Ministry of Education (MOE);
- There is a mechanism in place, including lodging a formal complaint, pursuing a complaint resolution process, and contacting the Ontario Ombudsman if an individual experiences a breach of protocol;
- Chair Glover requested an update on the public distribution and implementation of this protocol; and
- Chair Glover suggested the District distribute physical copies of the infographics to school sites.

5.3 Overview of OCDSB Budget Process and Details

Superintendent Farrish provided an overview of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) budget process and details.

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

- There are various criteria for the use of and reporting on funding received from the MOE;
- ACE may advise the Board to consider various ways to allocate resources in the budget;
- Superintendent Farrish clarified that 'responsive education program' funding may not be available or consistent every year, whereas 'core' funding is a permanent funding source based on annual enrolment;
- The District is required to report enrolment to the MOE on 30 March 2025 and 30 October 2025;

- The maximum deficit the District is permitted to carry is up to 2% of cumulative reserves to a maximum of two consecutive (2) years and currently the District has exceeded the threshold;
- The District is required to regularly report to the Ministry on specific actions taken to reduce the deficit;
- Currently the District is in a deficit and will need to cut approximately \$20 million dollars to balance a budget and build reserves;
- The funding provided to the District must be used in a way that is directly connected to the purpose of the funding source;
- The District generates funds through the community use of schools and the Ottawa Carleton Education Network (OCNET) for international student programs; and
- The presentation on the OCDSB Budget Process and Details will be distributed to ACE members.

6. Reports

6.1 ACE Report, 30 January 2025

Moved by Tejas Srinivas,

THAT the Advisory Committee on Equity Report, dated 30 January 2025, be received.

Carried

7. New Business and Event Announcements

Menasheh Speevak-Sladowski spoke about some issues reported to them that presented safety concerns.

Superintendent Farrish indicated that she would follow up directly with them to learn more and address them accordingly.

Chair Glover suggested that a number of subcommittees could be established to discuss topics such as the EPR, the budget, and other items that fall within the scope and role for the Trustee advisory committee.

8. Upcoming Meeting Dates

The upcoming meeting dates were provided for information.

9. Closing

The meeting adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Jason Glover and Chris Moran, Co-Chairs