



SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Monday, February 25, 2019, 7:00 pm
Trustees' Committee Room
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario

- Members:** Rob Kirwan (Community Representative), Christine Boothby (Trustee), Rob Campbell (Trustee), Lyra Evans (Trustee), Cathy Miedema (Association for Bright Children), Mark Wylie (Down Syndrome Association), Linda Barbetta (Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton), Ian Morris (Ontario Associations for Families of Children with Communication Disorders), Donna Owen (Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils), Safina Dewshi (Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils, Alternate), Jim Harris (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children), Terry Warner (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children, Alternate), Sonia Nadon-Campbell (Community Representative), Susan Gardner (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation), Jean Trant (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, SSP)
- Staff and Guests:** Lynn Scott (Trustee), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Stacey Kay (Manager of Learning Support Services), Amy Hannah (System Principal of Learning Support Services), Christine Kessler (System Principal of Learning Support Services), Nicole Guthrie (Board/Committee Coordinator), Sean Popal (OAFCCD), Joyce Mortimer (OAFCCD)

1. Call to Order

Chair Kirwan called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Trustee Boothby,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Trustee Boothby requested that item 7 be moved to item 6.

Moved by Trustee Boothby

THAT the agenda be approved, as amended

Carried

3. Delegations

There were no delegations.

4. Member Information

4.1 OAFCCD Presentation

Ian Morris, Sean Popal and Joyce Mortimer provided the members of SEAC with information on the Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders (OAFCCD).

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

- The OAFCCD is a small organization with local chapters distributed across the province;
- The OAFCCD vision is that all children will have access to a continuum of speech and language services to support their successful participation at home, in school and in the community;
- The OCDSB provides support ranging from Learning Language Disability (LLD) classes (Tier 3) to regular classroom support provided by the Learning Resource Teacher (LRT) to teachers (Tier 1);
- The OAFCCD works to increase public awareness on the need and benefit of speech-language services through the provision of support and information;
- The OAFCCD works with community partners to enhance speech and language services, and advocates with government and provincial organizations for adequate public funding;
- A communication disorder is a persistent difficulty in the understanding and use of spoken or written language;
- Communication disorders fall into two categories: speech impairment and language impairment;
- A speech impairment includes impairment in the area of articulation, voice, stuttering and Apraxia;
- Language impairment is characterized by a deficit in acquiring, using or understanding any aspect of language;
- Communication disorders are the most common handicapping condition for school age children, with up to 30 percent of children in junior kindergarten to grade 1 having this disorder to some level of severity;
- Six to ten percent of the overall school population are affected with a language impairment;

- Speech and language impairments are commonly part of many other exceptionalities;
- Students with communication disorders frequently have difficulty with social skills, are at risk being bullied and often have problems with organizational and study skills;
- Speech language pathologists (SLPs) in the District play a key role in the provision of social and academic strategies;
- Language disorders are life long and can result in poor life outcomes. Early intervention is critical for student success and improves social and learning outcomes;
- Speech and language services in the schools contribute to higher scores, gains in reading skills and vocabulary use, improvements in reading accuracy, improved problem solving and the reduction of the drop-out rate at the secondary level;
- The District's Special Education Plan permits parents and staff with the opportunity to request up to four SLP Intervention Demonstration therapy sessions per year. The sessions are important opportunities for parents and staff to share information and receive insight on effective strategies;
- The provincial advocacy efforts of OAFCCD are concerned with recent announcements regarding possible changes to class size, funding for speech and language services and caseloads, the importance of school based SLP services and a single coordinated window of access;
- In response to a query from Trustee Lyra Evans regarding the relationship with the Local Integrated Health Networks (LHIN) and the impact their removal by the province might have, Manager Kay confirmed that the services from the LHIN have been transferred to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) and any changes will have no impact on the school support program;
- Manager Kay noted that many intervention demonstration sessions are requested annually and it is an integral part of the SLP delivery model. Any student receiving the support of an SLP qualifies for an intervention demonstration as a form of follow-up. As indicated in the District's Special Education Plan, SLPs provide assessment, consultation and programming/demonstration sessions for students from year two kindergarten through Grade 12, who may present with a wide range of speech-related disorders. SLPs also provide training to support teachers and parent(s)/guardian(s) in their work with children who have speech disorders; and
- Superintendent Symmonds noted that staff often work with families directly depending on the nature of the challenge and support required but there is no formal opportunity for parents to request a demonstration.

5. Department Update

Superintendent Symmonds welcomed System Principal Christine Kessler to the Learning Support Services (LSS) team. He noted that the position of System Vice Principal of Learning Support Services has been reclassified to System Principal.

Superintendent Symmonds confirmed that Chief Financial Officer, Michael Carson will be in attendance at the 6 March 2019 SEAC meeting to provide further information on the provincial memorandum regarding changes to special education funding.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that he has received no news or direction from the Ministry regarding recent announcements to possible funding changes to the Autism program. He indicated that he would share information as it becomes available.

5.1 Special Education Plan (Standards)

a. Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies

Principal Hannah advised that the Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies standard will be undergoing revisions for clarity of language and will include updates and departmental changes.

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

- Reference to the Special Needs Strategy will be removed and the IEP form will not be included;
- Trustee Lyra Evans expressed the view that a timeframe should be added to the tiered intervention overview flowchart;
- System Principal Hannah advised that it would be difficult to suggest or recommend a timeline as the process differs for each student and is dependent on the nature of their concerns;
- Superintendent Symmonds clarified that there are a range of special education programs and services and tiered approach to intervention is not intended to funnel students to a particular specialized class;
- Superintendent Symmonds advised that the use of the word “tiering” causes confusion. The language should be altered to “a tiered approach to intervention” to better reflect the intention;
- Ms. Owen noted that the description of the tiered approach to intervention on folios 2 and 3 imply the approach is linear which may be a source of confusion to parents;
- Ms. Owen queried whether or not the revised standard should include a reference to the early, literacy and numeracy

observation tool. System Principal Hannah noted that Curriculum Services and the Research, Evaluation and Analytics Division (READ) are working to implement the pilot and that it will be included;

- In response to a query from Trustee Boothby regarding the removal of the Development Indicators for the Assessment of Learning, fourth edition (DIAL-4) and Reaching In...Reaching Out (RIRO), Manager Kay noted that DIAL-4 is now a standard assessment tool that is available in all schools with a kindergarten program and is included in the list of assessment tools utilized by the District. RIRO is now under the direction of Dr. Petra Dushner and a part of the District's mental health initiatives;
- Trustee Boothby expressed the view that it would be helpful if the standard include examples of how the District reviews the needs of all students;
- Trustee Boothby expressed the view that the tiered intervention overview flowchart should acknowledge parental input;
- Mr. Morris emphasized the importance of parents in the process as well as the ongoing need for capacity building of teachers in the regular classroom;
- Chair Kirwan encouraged staff to revise the text to ensure a broader comprehension of the subject of the tiered approach to intervention by parents;
- Trustee Lyra Evans expressed concern about not recording general strategies in the IEP. She noted the importance of the record of successful strategies following the student into subsequent years;
- Superintendent Symmonds noted that if the strategy is particular to the student it is recorded;
- Ms. Nadon-Campbell expressed the view that all tier one strategies that are effective be documented in a student's IEP to ensure they follow the student. She added that the IEP should also reflect conversations with parents; and
- Superintendent Symmonds advised that teachers utilize a variety of strategies in the regular classroom to meet the needs of struggling students and those strategies are not necessarily documented. Once a particular student has reached a level of concern which warrants discussion with the school team, those meetings are documented at the school and, if appropriate, included in the IEP.

6. Action/Discussion/Information Items

6.1 Memo 19-025, Learning Support Services Operational Review of the Process for Identification, Needs Assessment and Placement

The committee worked in small, independent groups to formulate key questions and goals and deliverables with respect to the process of identification, needs assessment and placement.

Process of Identification

Key questions

- Are teachers provided the necessary training and tools to be able to screen and assess common exceptionalities or initiate the escalation of a formal assessment;
- Can parents understand the language used in the process;
- What is the fundamental purpose of identification and why does the District identify students;
- Apart from legislation, what are the functional differences, if any, the District would like to see between Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) and non IPRC on a spectrum of service;
- How is special education progress measured;
- What about families that cannot afford private assessments;
- What types of messages are provided to staff regarding IPRC;
- How does the District build teacher capacity and provide continual support to teachers;
- What tracking and other data is provided at a system level of the discouragement of IPRCs and IEPs, and how does the District fill this gap; and
- Who communicates the option and value of an IPRC.

Key goals and deliverables:

- Staff and parents understand the purpose of identification;
- Early identification; and
- Easily understood communication and information provided to parents that convey an IPRC is an option.

Tiered Intervention Process

Key questions:

- How is need being defined and how are the needs met;
- Are tiered interventions used, what is the evidence of their application and are they applied consistently;

- Can a teacher/parent refer back to the tiered interventions attempted and review results;
- How is the effectiveness of an intervention monitored and measured;
- Are the interventions being documented and if so where;
- Are the results of the interventions being documented; and
- Are there important service level inequities between English and French Immersion programs and schools.

Needs Assessment

Key questions:

- How do we reach all families to help them understand the available resources and process;
- What is the feedback loop to parents:
- Is a professional assessment required to access services; and
- Are we assessing too soon.

Key Goals and deliverable:

- Validation of the effectiveness of assessments against outcomes;
- System breakdowns identified; and
- Specify average wait times and costs.

Placement

Key questions:

- How does the District arrive at the placement decision;
- What is the role of the parent in the placement decision and how much weight is given to parental preference;
- Is there accurate and consistent information regarding the various placements available across the District;
- Are placements restricted by resources (e.g. budget, staff, school structures and system structures);
- Is placement support available in both English and French;
- Do parents understand the range of placement offers and the available options:
- Are placement decisions consistent, equitable and transparent; and
- How are decisions to have a less restrictive placement made:

Key goals and deliverables:

- Identification of what is known about the connection between placement and outcome and what is not, with a plan to fill gaps;
- Equitable outcomes for students with special education needs in the regular classroom; and
- Identification of appropriate and available cohort data by exceptionality to evaluate placement effectiveness.

The 10:30 vote obtained the required 2/3 majority to continue the meeting.

7. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Reports

7.1 5 December 2018

Moved by Trustee Lyra Evans,

THAT the report from the 5 December 2019 SEAC meeting be received.

Trustee Boothby requested the following corrections:

- The last sentence of paragraph 2 on folio 13 be revised to read "Legally, a conflict of interest is pecuniary; however people often disclose an interest based on the perception of bias."; and
- The spelling of the word "Health" in the first bullet on folio 19 be corrected.

Moved by Trustee Lyra Evans,

THAT the report from the 5 December 2019 SEAC meeting be received, as amended.

Carried

7.2 16 January 2019

Moved by Cathy Miedema,

That the report from the 16 January 2019 SEAC meeting be received.

Carried

7.3 Review of Long Range Agenda

Trustee Lyra Evans requested that an update of the Ontario Autism program be added to the long range agenda.

Mr. Harris requested that item 5 be removed from the long range agenda.

Ms. Barbetta requested that an update on the Empower reading program be added to the long range agenda.

7.4 Motion/Action Tracking Report, Business Arising

In reference to the fifth bullet on folio 16, Trustee Boothby requested that Manager Kay investigate the possible use of Communication Disorder Assistants (CDAs) to provide initial support to students.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:37.

Rob Kirwan, Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee