



## **SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT**

**Wednesday, March 6, 2019, 7:00 pm  
Trustees' Committee Room  
133 Greenbank Road  
Ottawa, Ontario**

**Members:** Rob Kirwan (Community Representative), Rob Campbell (Trustee), Lyra Evans (Trustee), Cathy Miedema (Association for Bright Children), Dragos Popa (Association for Bright Children, Alternate), Katie Ralph (Autism Ontario, Ottawa Chapter), Mark Wylie (Down Syndrome Association), Linda Barbetta (Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton), Donna Owen (Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils), Terry Warner (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children, Alternate), Susan Cowin (Community Representative), Sonia Nadon-Campbell (Community Representative), Susan Gardner (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation), Connie Allen (Professional Student Services Personnel, Alternate), Kimberly Elmer (Ottawa-Carleton Secondary School Administrators' Network)

**Staff and Guests:** Donna Blackburn (Trustee), Michael Carson (Chief Financial Officer), Janice McCoy (Superintendent of Human Resources); Peter Symmonds (Superintendent 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)

1. Call to Order

Chair Kirwan called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Terry Warner,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Chair Kirwan requested that items 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 move to item 5.

Ms. Owen requested that item 8.5 become item 5.1.

**Moved by Terry Warner,**

**THAT the agenda be approved, as amended.**

**Carried**

3. Delegations

There were no delegations.

4. Member Information

Ms. Ralph noted that any questions or concerns members may have regarding the provincial government's changes to the Ontario Autism Program (OAP) could be directed to her or Autism Ontario. She noted that the changes to OAP take effect on 1 April 2019 and that Autism Ontario will be working to help direct families to service providers.

4.1 Presentation from Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton (LDAO-C)

Linda Barbetta and Dr. Maggie Mamen provided the members of SEAC with information on the Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton (LDAO-C).

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

- LDAO-C is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting awareness and respect for persons with learning disabilities (LDs). LDAO-C offer programs, supports and resources to help children, youth, adults and families with the challenges of LDs;
- LDAO-C does not have consistent funding and much of the work is done by volunteers;
- The diagnosis of LD is a diagnosis of exclusion, assessments must rule out other reasons why a child is not learning;
- Reasons why a child may not be able to read include:
  - Primary auditory/visual/language problems;
  - Global developmental delay;
  - Neurodevelopmental disorder (e.g., autism, brain injury);
  - Physical or chronic health disorders, internalizing or externalizing disorders (e.g., anxiety, depression);
  - Interrupted schooling, trauma, cultural or linguistic diversity; and
  - Lack of exposure to literacy opportunities;
- A cross-sectoral provincial task force was set up to define LD and develop guidelines for assessment. The task force identified five criteria for diagnosing LD and all five must be met:
  - A history of academic functioning below the level typically expected for individuals of the same chronological age or the need for

- excessive time or support to develop or maintain typical levels of academic functioning;
- Below average academic achievement (at least one standard deviation below the mean) in at least one of reading, writing or mathematics;
- Evidence that the difficulties in reading or writing or mathematics are logically related to deficits in psychological processes;
- At least average abilities essential for thinking and reasoning; and
- Evidence that the difficulties in reading, writing, or mathematics cannot be accounted for primarily by other factors;
- In Canadian schools, there are more children with LD than with all other exceptionalities combined;
- Early interventions by Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) and Occupational Therapists (OTs) are effective;
- Children with LD have more success with direct teaching;
- Evidence shows that focused intervention in grade one is more effective in the short and long-term than in grades two and above;
- LDAO-C advise that the District continue to provide enhanced support for early identification and intervention in kindergarten to grade four;
- LDAO-C encourage the District to provide the resources to follow up once the students are identified;
- LDAO-C suggest the District invest in professional development to ensure classroom teachers are confident in their abilities to teach children to read; and
- In response to a query from Ms. Miedema regarding Gifted LD, Ms. Mamen noted that the Ontario Psychological Association (OPA) Guidelines for Diagnosis and Assessment of Children, Adolescents, and Adults with Learning Disabilities has a section specifically related to LD and Gifted. She noted that in order for a gifted student to also be identified as LD, one achievement area must be below the standard score. Diagnosis of this type is clinically significant and will help with the programming and remediation for the child.

## 5. Action/Discussion/Information Items

### 5.1 Report from Committee of the Whole, Budget

Ms. Owen advised that the Committee of the Whole Budget met on 22 January 2019. The meeting focused on the 2018-2019 Revised Estimates, additional expenditures and the 2019-2020 budget process.

Ms. Owen noted that the District anticipates a 2018-2019 year-end surplus of \$2.8 million with a projected accumulated surplus of \$37 million.

Ms. Owen advised that the District plans to spend an additional \$6.6 million in the 2018-2019 budget year on classroom furniture, additional

emergency Educational Assistants (EAs), improvements to WiFi infrastructure and Chromebooks.

Ms. Owen indicated that staff is concerned about the current government's statements on the need for expenditure changes to reduce the provincial deficit as well as the possible elimination of Local Priorities Funding (LPF) and as a result, the District may need to use reserves in 2019-2020 to mitigate the impact of possible funding cuts.

## 5.2 SEAC and the 2019-2020 Budget

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

- The past couple of school years have ended with better than expected financial results which enabled the District's early release from Ministry's Multi Year Financial Recovery Plan (MYFRP);
- The District made several adjustments to its budget and now have a total accumulated surplus of \$37 million;
- Staff expects they will recommend a budget with a small deficit.
- Staff recommend that the Board utilize these reserves on one-time expenditures;
- The proposed changes within the academic staffing budget will be modest in response to an anticipated reduction from the Ministry;
- Suggestions regarding the budget can be discussed through the question and answer phase of the budget process;
- The Ministry plans to release further budget details on 15 March 2019; and
- The memorandum from the province dated 20 February 2019 provided a routine update on special education funding in 2018-19. The District was one of a few school boards that benefited from the change to the Special Education Per-Pupil Amount (SEPPA) due to increased enrollment.

## 5.3 Report 19-028, Academic Staffing for 2019-2020

Your committee had before it Report 19-028, Academic Staffing for 2019-2020, providing information with respect to the required and discretionary academic staffing levels for the 2019-2020 school year.

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

- The collective agreements with the unions set the timelines by which academic staffing must be approved and completed;
- Academic staffing represents approximately 59.6 percent (\$539.9 million) of the annual budget;

- Recommendations for other administrative and support staff will be determined during the budget process in May 2019;
- Mandatory teaching positions are set by either legislation or collective agreement, other positions are subject to Board decision;
- The District consistently budgets and spends more to support special education than the funding envelope provides. In 2018-2019, the District budgeted approximately \$5.9 million or 5.3 percent more than the funding provided through the Grants for Student Needs (GSNs). Staff does not anticipate this pattern changing for the 2019-2020 school year;
- A total of 20.5 FTE positions in special education (elementary and secondary) were funded through LPF and the anticipated end of that funding will require reductions. Where possible recommendations have been made to mitigate the reductions;
- Staff is recommending 2.5 FTE Learning Support Teacher (LST) positions be added to the current elementary complement;
- A 4.76 FTE contingency allocation, approved in the 2018-2019 budget, is being maintained to support the Learning Disability Specialized Integration Program (LD SIP) integration;
- The District currently has approximately 449 FTE staff allocated to special education. Staff have proposed a slight reduction in the 2019-2020 budget to approximately 443 FTE;
- 3.0 FTE Itinerant Social Emotional Learning Teachers (SELTs) were added with LPF. These positions have had a positive impact and staff is recommending that 3.0 FTE positions be added as part of the Learning Support Services (LSS) itinerant behaviour supports for at least one year;
- 5.0 FTE secondary LST positions were created with LPF and staff is recommending the continuation of 2.83 FTE LST;
- In response to a query from Mr. Wylie regarding the impact of retirees on academic staffing, Superintendent McCoy noted that it is difficult to predict the number of retirees annually. Based on the proposed recommendations and the current staffing complement, the District anticipates an overall increase in staffing levels due to enrolment. Through retirement, resignation and leave, staff are confident that any changes can be absorbed;
- In response to query from Ms. Ralph regarding changes to OAP, Superintendent McCoy noted that LSS have proposed the addition of three Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) classes. She noted that if it is determined that additional ASD support is required, the additional classes may be added during the budget process;
- Superintendent Symmonds noted that it is early to have accurate projections for September placements and staff is still trying to assess the impact of the OAP changes. Autism represents a broad spectrum

of student need. Staff will work to determine the best complement of support to ensure students are successful;

- Ms. Allen commented on the projected increases in ASD, LDSIP, Primary Special Needs (PSN) classes and the use of professional staff to support those classes. She queried whether or not the professional staff for those classes are reflected in the budget or are they part of the current complement and tasked with further cases. Superintendent Symmonds noted that senior staff within LSS have discussed the impact and are aware of the demand on professional staff;
- Trustee Lyra Evans expressed the view that the loss of LPF and future government funding reductions have an impact on students with special needs in the regular classroom. She requested that SEAC discuss whether or not integration into the regular classroom is in the best interest of students with special needs;
- Special education is estimated to have a net decrease of 5.5 FTE at the elementary level and a net increase of 4.5 FTE at the secondary level based on proposed changes to specialized program classes;
- In response to a query from Ms. Owen regarding the 7.17 FTE Secondary Program Enhancements noted on folio 35, Superintendent McCoy noted that principals submit requests for program enhancement sections and these allow secondary schools to add additional course options and pathways for students;
- Trustee Lyra Evans expressed the view that an increase in overall enrollment with the status quo compliment of FTE attributed to special education lowers the special education staff to student ratio;
- Footnote seven on folio 45 notes that the Autism Learning Support Consultant (LSC) approved for 2018-19 was subject to funding and will continue to be subject to funding. The position was added after academic staffing was approved in 2018; and
- LSS has recommended the addition of a Learning Disabilities Specialized Integration Program (LDSIP) class based on student need.

#### 5.4 Memo 19-036, 2019-2020 Specialized Program Classes

Your committee had before it Memo 19-036 providing information regarding 2019-2020 projected needs for specialized program classes to inform the Academic Staffing Report and the budget planning process.

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

- Staff did not recommend the reduction of the gifted class at Hilson Avenue Public School;
- LSS continue to review emerging needs of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) class at Woodroffe High School. The secondary staffing included the necessary support model through the utilization of

staff from the central team. The DHH class will continue at Woodroffe HS;

- 4.76 FTE of contingency staffing in LDSIP has been provided to address the unique staffing challenges that result when the student is integrated into the regular classroom;
- The location of the additional LDSIP junior class as identified on folio 53, has yet to be determined. Travel is an issue for the program's location in the far west. Staff could not comment whether there was room at A. Lorne Cassidy ES but noted they are reviewing schools in the west based on the students who currently require the program;
- The memo was prepared before the announcement of changes to OAP; and
- The 2019-2020 specialized program class recommendations are subject to change.

## 6. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

### 6.1 25 February 2019

**Moved by Linda Barbetta,**

**That the report from the 25 February 2019 SEAC meeting be received.**

**Carried**

### 6.2 Review of Long Range Agenda

The long range agenda was provided for information.

Staff agreed to provide members with a memo on the location of specialized program classes for the 10 April 2019 SEAC meeting.

Trustee Campbell requested that the draft strategic plan be added to the long range agenda.

Ms. Ralph was pleased to note the OAP update on the long range agenda. Chair Kirwan noted that the item is a placeholder for future discussions on matters related to OAP.

### 6.3 Motion/Action Tracking Report, Business Arising

The motion/action tracking report is provided for information.

Ms. Barbetta requested an update on the monitoring data from the LD program.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that Manager Kay had provided an update on the Special Needs Strategy and that the item should be removed.

Ms. Miedema requested that the location of specialized program classes be added as a new item.

## 7. Department Update

Superintendent Symmonds thanked SEAC for their input at the 25 February 2019 meeting regarding the operational review of LSS.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that there was a discussion on the changes to OAP at the 5 March 2019 Committee of the Whole meeting. LSS was tasked with gathering information that will assist in the determination of the potential impact of the changes.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that April is World Autism Awareness month and the District will be celebrating Autism Awareness Day on 2 April 2019 with a flag raising ceremony. LSS will provide all schools with a flag to encourage participation in the 'Raise the Flag' campaign. LSS will also supply schools with educator tool kits and resources to help raise awareness. The Atrium at 133 Greenbank Road will display information about autism, art portfolios and feature a demonstration of the Ozobot pilot program.

Superintendent Symmonds highlighted that principals will have an opportunity to participate in professional learning specific to Autism and Policy Program Memorandum 140 (PPM-140).

Superintendent Symmonds advised that on 23 April 2019 the District will host keynote speaker, Dr. Jonathon Weiss, at the Parent Information Night from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m at Sir Robert Borden High School. He added that Dr. Weiss will also present to LSS staff on the prevalence and effects of mental health in Autism. Ms. Ralph has agreed to host the SEAC table that evening.

### 7.1 Special Education Plan (Standards)

#### a. Equipment

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

- The Special Education Funding Guidelines Special Equipment Amount (SEA) was updated by the Ministry in the spring of 2018. The changes affect the requirements for supporting documentation for SEA per pupil amount (PPA) purchases;
- A central Learning Support Consultant (LSC) is responsible for SEA for the District and is reviewing the new guidelines to determine the possible procedural and budget-related impacts of the guidelines;
- The standard will be updated to reflect the new guidelines;
- It is the practice of the District to provide students with the equipment necessary for the student to access the curriculum,



whether they have a SEA designation or not. Itinerant Teachers of Assistive Technology (ITATs) are responsible to ensure that students who require assistive technology have the devices and platforms they need;

- Ms. Owen expressed concern regarding the implementation of the Ministry guidelines and requested an opportunity for the committee to revisit the standard;
- System Principal Hannah noted that the revised SEA guidelines were created by the previous government and that the District is waiting for further details from the current government on best practices for implementation;
- The procedure has been revised to include the new guidelines and the background work has been undertaken to prepare for the change;
- Ms. Owen expressed concern that should the overall amount of SEA be reduced due to more access to the PPA, it could translate into fewer Chromebooks for students. Staff noted that the ratio of SEA devices within schools is dependent on the school and that SEA approved equipment is funded through the Ministry. As it pertains to other devices, these are funded and provided by Business & Learning Technologies;
- SEA funded equipment is available in every school for trial;
- Ms. Owen expressed the view that the SEA process diagram on folio 2 is missing parental input;
- Ms. Miedema queried the number of students identified in the table on folio 4, System Principal Hannah responded that the total number includes new students as well as current students who require updated equipment;
- SEA equipment may or may not transition with the student. In cases where the equipment is specific and complex the equipment will follow the student. In cases where the supports are web based and accessible, the device will be provided to the student at their new school;
- Students typically have their equipment by the end of September;
- Ms. Allen commented that the changes to the guidelines will enable staff to make a recommendation for SEA equipment through the multi-disciplinary team rather than formal testing and will speed up the response to address student need;
- A SEA designation would transition with the student to post-secondary or other school boards; and
- Mr. Warner suggested that the examples of specialized equipment be further expanded to include commonly utilized equipment.

b. Educational and Other Assessments

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

- The assessments provided by the District are listed within the standard. Members queried the relevance of the list and whether or not the complete list is required by the Ministry;
- The dates of the EQAO assessments will be updated;
- The next administration of the PISA will be in the Spring of 2021;
- Trustee Campbell commented that the Ministry Standard indicates that the school board's special education plan include information on average wait times. He queried whether or not the section was updated and the data collection process had been completed. Staff agreed to provide further details on wait lists and wait times;
- The standard should further clarify the use of private assessments and explain what is and what is not an accepted assessment;
- Ms. Allan suggested that the words "regulated health professional" be included in the document. She encouraged the associations to reference appropriate and qualified assessments and providers on their websites to ensure parents are informed;
- Staff advised that the statement on folio 8 regarding the quality assurance division is inaccurate and will be struck from the document;
- Ms. Allen commented that professional support staff use their individual professional judgment when conducting assessments. Professional support staff may use tests not on the list and can assess a child without a test, if it is within their clinical capability; and
- The use of the word "difficulty" at the first bullet under Education Assessments on folio 9 is too broad.

8. Committee Reports

8.1 Advisory Committee on Equity

Ms. Campbell Nadon advised there was no report from the Advisory Committee on Equity.

8.2 Parent Involvement Committee

Chair Kirwan noted that the Parent Involvement Committee meeting of 20 February 2019 featured discussions on the recruitment of community

representatives, the OCDSB parent portal and the strategic plan consultations.

### 8.3 Board

Chair Kirwan advised that the Board established an Ad Hoc Code of Conduct Committee. He expressed the view that the advisory committees should have the ability to provide input.

### 8.4 Committee of the Whole

Mr. Wylie noted that the Committee of the Whole meeting of 5 March 2018 featured a discussion on the provincial changes to Autism funding and Academic Staffing.

## 9. New Business

Ms. Owen queried whether or not SEAC should draft a letter to the Minister expressing concern over the recent provincial announcement of changes to OAP.

Chair Kirwan noted that he will discuss the matter further with Ms. Ralph and her colleagues at Autism Ontario. He added that Chair Lynn Scott will prepare a letter to Minister Thompson, Ministry of Education, and Minister MacLeod, Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services endorsing the response prepared by the Ontario Public School Board Association (OPSBA) and requesting the Ministry reconsider the changes to OAP.

Chair Kirwan recommended SEAC delay their response until further details are provided through Ms. Ralph and Autism Ontario.

## 10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:34 p.m.

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Rob Kirwan, Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee