

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL REPORT

Thursday, April 18, 2019, 6:00 pm
Gloucester High School
2060 Ogilvie Road
Ottawa, Ontario

Attendees Present	Sytukie Joamie, Raiglee Alorut, Inini McHugh, Nina Stanton, Romaine Mitchell, Chris Ellis, Donna Blackburn, Junior Ittusardjuat, Jesse Paypompee-Kavanaugh, and Jordyn Hendricks.
Staff Present	Superintendent Dorothy Baker, Vice-Principal Jody Alexander, Instructional Coach Kris Meawasige, Educational Assistant Lili Miller, and Committee Coordinator Amanda Rock.
Non-Voting Representatives Present	Trustee Wendy Hough.

1. Opening Prayer/Song

The meeting was called to order at 6:11 p.m. Sytukie Joamie gave an opening prayer with Jesse Paypompee-Kavanaugh leading a smudging ritual.

Vice-Principal Alexander advised that Métis Elder Jo MacQuarrie passed away. A moment of silence was held. Vice-Principal Alexander advised that a celebration of life is planned for the first week of May and will send Committee Coordinator Rock the information to circulate to the IEAC.

2. Approval of the 21 February 2019 IEAC Minutes

There were no errors or omissions to the IEAC minutes of 21 February 2019.

3. Identity-Based Data Follow-Up Questions/Concerns (Oral Update)

Superintendent Baker recalled the identity-based data collection discussion from the 21 February 2019 IEAC meeting.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- The Inuit Nunangat (Inuit regions of Canada) education systems are significantly different from the curriculum of the OCDSB;
- The District may want to consider exploring the root causes of low graduation rates among Indigenous students;

- There are communication issues between the Children's Aid Society (CAS) in Inuit Nunangat and CAS in Ottawa;
- It is difficult for students to adapt to the new environment; and
- Students transitioning from the North to schools within the District often have not formally learned English before grade 3 and may be many grade levels behind their peers.

In response to queries, the following information was provided:

- There may be gaps in some areas of the identity-based data collection as it is voluntary;
- There are significant challenges in providing support for students who are arriving from Inuit Nunangat; and
- The Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre (OICC), Tungasuvvingat Inuit (TI), and the OCDSB work collaboratively to provide supports to students.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were noted:

- In Inuit Nunangat, students are given a "social passing" to move on to the next grade level regardless of their academic performance;
- There are a significant number of Indigenous students who require supports;
- Students who have come from Inuit Nunangat often have social issues that have been compounded by difficult situations that have occurred in their homes;
- The OCDSB, in collaboration with its community partners, may want to consider discussing systemic issues with the Inuit Nunangat governments to address and better anticipate students' needs.

Student representative Jordyn Hendricks noted that different education systems have different priorities for specific cultural reasons.

Romaine Mitchell noted the following:

- Pre-emptive measures may need to be considered for students to receive the supports they need upon arrival to the District;
- Statistics and data may indicate the high demand for supports and services; and
- The District may need to become more proactive in its approach with students coming from Inuit Nunangat.

Trustee Ellis stated that it may be helpful for the IEAC to know the different stages of student registrations and assessments in the District. He noted that, as the District advocates with the province for funding, it is important to know where the District has been successful and the areas that require improvement.

In response to a query, Superintendent Baker clarified that the identity-based data collection is voluntary. The District also obtains data from student registrations and its community partners.

Inini McHugh expressed concern over the following points:

- Registration protocol and paperwork can be a barrier to moving the registration and assessment process forward in a timely manner;
- There may be a language barrier between students' parents and a social worker/parent advocate; and
- School teachers and administrators may need to work more closely with social workers and parent advocates to address issues and have a common understanding.

Superintendent Baker advised that students arriving from Inuit Nunangat may have multiple, complex needs that the District is not aware of when they register. She stated that more centralized wraparound services may be needed to address these students' unique needs. Mr. McHugh highlighted that CAS Ottawa has created hubs for certain Indigenous groups. He stressed that the OCDSB Indigenous team needs their own support team.

Superintendent Baker recalled the motion that was passed at the Committee of the Whole 16 April 2019 meeting:

A. THAT the Board direct staff to explore and report on funding to support mental health through an equity lens, with initial focus on students who self-identify as First Nations, Métis, Inuit and for male students of African descent.

B. THAT the Board direct staff to evaluate, through an equity lens, barriers to access mental health services within the OCDSB, especially for students who self identify as First Nations, Métis, Inuit and for male students of African descent.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were noted:

- The District has recognized that there is a need for more focused exploration of mental health supports and referrals for certain groups of students;
- The motion will be presented to the Board for approval at its meeting of 23 April 2019;
- The motion is not meant to be exclusive of other student groups;
- The IEAC may be helpful in identifying barriers for students to access mental health supports;
- The focus on male students of African descent was discussed at the Black Youth Forum where there was a workshop on mental health with students raising their concern for black male youth who may not be able to express themselves; and
- It is important to acknowledge and understand lived experiences of students and not address every student the same way.

Student representative, Jordyn Hendricks, noted that Indigenous students and students of African-descent have a similar history. They noted that the District may need to consider the history and its impacts to fully explore the barriers to accessing mental health supports.

In response to a query from Raiglee Alorut, Superintendent Baker recognized that the District cannot be certain if there are a significant number of Indigenous students dropping out of high school. She noted that the District depends on the students who self-identify to gather their statistics on graduation rates.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were noted:

- Self-identification is about trust;
- Students need to feel comfortable and safe to share information with educators;
- The OCDSB Indigenous team is reaching out to students who have not self-identified.

Jordyn Hendricks noted that students are self-identifying to be placed in the data collection and also to be given opportunities.

4. Standing Recommendations

4.1 Respectful language and communication

Vice-Principal Alexander recalled the discussion from 21 February 2019. She shared that the OCDSB Indigenous team created one-page documents that educators can reference and noted that there is a document for creating safe spaces and one that outlines ideas that educators need to unlearn.

Trustee Ellis submitted that many people do not understand why certain language is offensive.

Vice-Principal Alexander and the Indigenous Education Team has worked with student success teachers (SST) across the District to discuss the one-page documents and start capacity building. Inini McHugh mentioned that students want to feel a sense of belonging and become disengaged when they sense that they do not belong.

Vice-Principal Alexander shared her observation of what is important for success among Indigenous students as the following:

- Pride in their identity;
- A sense of belonging;
- Basic needs (food, shelter, clothing); and
- Trusting an adult in their respective school.

Mr. Jaomie expressed frustration that certain words can be used but in the right context. Student representative Jordyn Hendricks added that the use of slurs is subjective and dependent on individual comfort levels.

4.2 Safe spaces for Indigenous students in all four areas of Ottawa

This item was not discussed and will be dealt with at a later date.

4.3 Leverage data from community partners

This item was not discussed and will be dealt with at a later date.

4.4 Leverage technology to connect Indigenous youth

This item was not discussed and will be dealt with at a later date.

4.5 Conduct supported student-led presentations at schools across the District

This item was not discussed and will be dealt with at a later date.

4.6 Intentional hiring practices to ensure Indigenous representation

This item was not discussed and will be dealt with at a later date.

5. Board Action Plan Update

Vice-Principal Alexander noted that the Board Action Plan set supporting Indigenous students and their transition into Ontario schools as a priority. She asked Jordyn Hendricks to provide an update with respect to student presentations.

Student representative, Jordyn Hendricks, advised that they and Falicia Green are working with Instructional Coach, Nancy Henry, to conduct presentations in schools. The first presentation will be 26 April 2019. They noted that there will be presentations on cultural appropriation in the future.

6. IEAC Annual Report

Superintendent Baker advised that the IEAC is obligated to present a report to the Board of Trustees in June. She indicated that there will be a draft to share with the IEAC at the 16 May 2019 meeting. She explained that the report is an opportunity for the Council to share with the Board of Trustees what is most important to them.

7. Closing Prayer/Song

Superintendent Baker reflected that another action item was explored during the discussion with regard to exploring wraparound services for students arriving from Nunavut.

Vice-Principal Alexander mentioned that she created a draft of smudge protocols and will share them with the IEAC to have initial discussions.

Mr. Joamie requested that the IEAC's meetings not take place the evening before a holiday weekend.

Romaine Mitchell gave a closing prayer.

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.