



## MEMORANDUM

Memo No. 19-063

TO: Trustees  
Student Trustees  
Special Education Advisory Committee

FROM: Camille Williams-Taylor, Director of Education and Secretary of the Board  
Peter Symmonds, Superintendent, Learning Support Services  
Dorothy Baker, Superintendent, Curriculum Services

DATE: 3 May 2019

RE: **OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom Pilot and OCDSB Interest Academy Pilot**

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### Background

On 30 October 2018, the Board passed a motion directing staff to implement a pilot project, which utilizes both the i) *OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom* and the ii) *OCDSB Interest Academy: A Vehicle for Accessing the Curriculum Through Inquiry-based Learning*. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update of the implementation plan and evaluation proposal for the pilot involving both the OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom and the OCDSB Interest Academy.

The pilot programs described below incorporate the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI), as outlined in the Ministry of Education's programming guide, *Learning For All*<sup>1</sup>. These two fundamental instructional approaches are a proven, effective and interconnected means of meeting the learning needs of any group of students, including those students identified with giftedness. The UDL and DI approaches are also foundational to the District's education model for all students in our K-12 classrooms in both English and French Immersion programs.

The goal of the pilot is to examine the effectiveness of the comprehensive OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom in enhancing a teacher's ability to support students with giftedness. The OCDSB Interest Academy is an integral part of the pilot project, as it is one of many possible strategies to support all learners. Its inclusion in

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<sup>1</sup> Learning for All: A Guide to Effective Assessment and Instruction for All Students, Kindergarten to Grade 12 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013).

the pilot will enable further examination of the resource and provide specific feedback to improve this resource prior to a broader distribution District-wide.

## **Pilot Resources**

### ***The OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom***

In line with the UDL and DI approaches, this guide was developed as a comprehensive framework to assist educators with programming and planning for identified gifted students as well as other non-identified students in the regular program from grades K-12. The guide is organized into five categories including: Getting to Know Your Learners; Instructional Supports; Exit Outcomes; Student Well-Being; Other Supports; and Equity Considerations. The guide is intended to be an easily accessible resource to support staff in serving the needs of all students in the regular classroom, including identified learners with giftedness. It is intended that this framework will allow educators the flexibility to select appropriate strategies and resources to support their learners. One of the resources within this guide contains information about the OCDSB Interest Academy project that teachers can implement within their classroom.

### ***The OCDSB Interest Academy***

The OCDSB Interest Academy is an inquiry-based learning experience in which students are given class time to explore a student-selected topic of interest. Students and educators co-create project learning goals and success criteria and contribute to a learning portfolio that will serve to document and reflect on their learning. At completion of the project, students share their learning in a creative manner. This allows students to make connections between their learning and OCDSB Exit Outcomes. Beyond this, the OCDSB Interest Academy has the potential to create new relationships within a school and larger community; parents, school staff and local community members can support students to develop and share their project.

## **Pilot Timelines**

The project will commence in the spring of 2019 with initial orientation and training for staff from the three schools who have been invited to participate. Pilot implementation of the resources is planned for two junior classes within each school for the fall of 2019. Classroom teachers from the three participating schools will be invited to implement either the OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom over the course of one academic year or the OCDSB Interest Academy within the fall term. Program staff from Curriculum Services and Learning Support Services will provide ongoing support to school staff (i.e., principals, learning support teachers (LSTs)/learning resource teachers (LRTs), teachers) during pilot implementation via professional learning opportunities and site-based consultations.

## **Pilot Evaluation Plan**

The purpose of the evaluation will be to explore the effectiveness of UDL and DI strategies to support the needs of all students, including identified learners with giftedness, in the

regular classroom. Two overarching evaluation questions have been developed in consultation with program stakeholders to guide the evaluation:

1. How effectively were the needs of all students, including gifted learners, supported by the DI and/or UDL approach used in the pilot?
2. What factors influenced the implementation of the OCDSB Interest Academy and/or OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom by educators in the pilot classrooms/schools?

Given the early stages of program implementation, the evaluation will be exploratory in nature and will include mainly formative evaluation activities. Specifically, qualitative and quantitative data collection tools examining implementation issues from the perspective of staff, students and parents/guardians will be administered. A student-level outcome-based measure (e.g., Renzulli Scales) will also be field-tested for feasibility.

### Pilot Data Collection Tools

| Data Collection Tool  | OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students | OCDSB Interest Academy |
|---|---|------------------------|
| <b>Staff focus group:</b> A focus group will be held with educators in the spring of 2020 which will examine, for example, the barriers and facilitators of implementation the pilot and/or other key dimensions of interest;   | x   | x                      |
| <b>Student self-reflective assessment:</b> The student self-reflective assessment will be administered to all students with parent/guardian permission at the conclusion of the pilot. Students will be asked to reflect on their experience with the pilot resources, focusing on such factors as: engagement; motivation; and awareness of personal learning style; |   | x                      |
| <b>Parent/guardian survey:</b> The parent/guardian survey will ask participants to note any observations related to their child’s experience at school specifically related to classroom engagement and motivation resulting from participation in the pilot;   |   | x                      |
| <b>Staff survey:</b> In an effort to triangulate data sources, the staff survey will ask educators post-implementation to note any observations in a randomly selected sample of students using engagement and motivation as key dimensions of interest; and  | x   | x                      |

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|--|-----------------|-----------------|
| <p><b>Renzulli scales:</b> The Renzulli scales will also be administered to a randomly selected sample of students participating in the pilot at pre and post implementation. The use of the Renzulli scales has dual purposes: i) it will assist educators in developing the learner profiles; and ii) act as an aide to planning differentiated learning strategies.</p> | <p><b>x</b></p> | <p><b>x</b></p> |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|

Taken together, these data collection tools will allow for a better understanding of the organizational conditions which supported the implementation of both the OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom and the OCDSB Interest Academy. The data obtained from the evaluation will serve to address the overarching evaluation questions specifically related to meeting the needs of all students, including gifted learners in the regular classroom setting.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Peter Symmonds at [peter.symmonds@ocdsb.ca](mailto:peter.symmonds@ocdsb.ca) or at 613-596-8254.

cc    Senior Staff  
       Manager Board Services  
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