



SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, April 10, 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), Katie Ralph (Autism Ontario, Ottawa Chapter), Samantha Banning (Autism Ontario, Ottawa Chapter, Alternate), Mark Wylie (Down Syndrome Association), Sean Popal (Ontario Associations for Families of Children with Communication Disorders, Alternate), 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), Susan Cowin (Community Representative), Sonia Nadon-Campbell (Community Representative), Susan Gardner (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation), Nancy McLaren Kennedy (Professional Student Services Personnel), Nancy Dlouhy (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Operations Committee), Jean Trant (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, SSP), Catherine Houlden (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Teachers)
- Staff and Guests: Donna Blackburn (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)

1. Call to Order
Chair Kirwan called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.
2. Approval of the Agenda
Moved by Trustee Boothby,
THAT the agenda be approved.
Carried
3. Delegations

Jennifer MacIntosh expressed her concern regarding the Board Policy for service dogs and how the request for accommodations is handled. She noted that her son, following several incidents of elopement was assigned a support dog. The District recently denied the family's request for the dog's admittance to her son's school. She noted that she was not made aware of the District's concerns in its response and was only informed that staff could not be handlers for the support dog.

In response to queries from members, Ms. MacIntosh noted that, Lynard is an Assistance Dogs International (ADI) trained support dog that provides her son with needed companionship and support and helps resolve his issue of elopement. Lynard is trained to disappear into the background of any situation. Through the use of commands and the leash and tether, Lynard will prevent her son from leaving school sites alone. Lynard is also trained to calm and provide pressure to soothe her son's sensory overload issues. All staff working with her son would require minimal training in the commands Lynard is trained to obey as well as leash handling. She added that before Lynard, the family had to hire an aid to respond to her son's incidents of elopement.

Superintendent Symmonds advised that the District relies on Procedure PR.686.SCO Use of Service Dogs for Students to direct its process concerning service animals in schools. The procedure was implemented in November of 2017 and is expected to be revised in the coming months owing to an upcoming Ministry consultation on the subject. He added that he could not speak to the specific details of Ms. MacIntosh's case but noted staff has been in communication with the family.

Ms. MacIntosh advised that part of her reason for speaking to the committee was to raise awareness of the issue.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that service dogs introduced to OCDSB facilities must be certified and licensed in Canada and accredited by the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) or Assistance Dogs International (ADI) or a for-profit organization that uses the "Mehgan Search and Rescue Standard in Support of Accessibility" (MSAR) training standard. He noted that service animals present complex challenges within schools and that many issues require consideration before the policy is developed and the procedure updated.

4. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

4.1 6 March 2019

Moved by Mark Wylie,

THAT the Report from the 6 March 2019 SEAC meeting be received.

Carried

Ms. Miedema, speaking on behalf of Ms. Owen, requested that the changes to the Special Education Funding Guidelines Special Equipment Amount (SEA) be added to the long range agenda or the action tracking report to allow for further discussion.

Superintendent Symmonds clarified that Learning Support Services (LSS) used SEA funding to purchase trial equipment.

In response to a query from Trustee Campbell regarding private assessments, Manager Kay advised she would provide further information at a future meeting of SEAC.

4.2 Review of Long Range Agenda

The long range agenda was provided for information.

In response to a query from Trustee Boothby, Chair Kirwan noted item seven was added as a placeholder and he was hopeful that it could be addressed at the 15 May 2019 meeting.

4.3 Motion/Action Tracking Report, Business Arising

The motion action tracking report was provided for information.

Superintendent Symmonds advised that he would speak to the Research, Evaluation, Analytics Division (READ) team regarding items one and two and provide further updates at the 12 June 2019 meeting.

Manager Kay noted that item three will be discussed in the context of the Board budget deliberations and that she would provide a status update at the 15 May 2019 SEAC meeting.

In response to a query from Trustee Campbell regarding item five, Superintendent Symmonds noted that staff is unable to glean this information from the new Individual Education Plan (IEP) Online (IOL) tool. Manager Kay added that the data is not captured within IOL. She added that LSS is working with the developer to include a clinical service module, but it is still in the development stage.

5. Action/Discussion/Information Items

5.1 Memo 19-054, Location of Specialized Program Classes

Your committee had before it Memo 19-054, providing information on the number and location of specialized program classes throughout the District.

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

- Ms. Miedema queried whether or not the location of specialized program classes is a detriment to application and enrollment and noted that a visual representation of class locations would be helpful. Superintendent Symmonds advised that the grade level of the classes was not included and that classes and locations shift from year to year;
- Staff has been shifting to the geographic model gradually at convenient transition points, but it has been challenging as many schools across the District are at capacity and have no room for additional classes;
- Ms. Miedema expressed concern at the shrinking enrollment of the gifted program and whether or not transportation and class location are a factor;
- All blind, low vision students are integrated into the regular classroom;
- Trustee Boothby requested that staff make every effort to limit transitions for special education students. She advised that when placing programs at the intermediate level that grades 7 through 12 high schools be given preference to lessen the number of transitions;
- Staff advised that there are challenges with the 7 to 12 models, in particular, the agreements with the elementary and secondary teacher federations which do not allow for mixed groupings of students. The intermediate grades turn over at a higher rate than the secondary, and as a result, there is limited ability to accommodate students within secondary schools. Class movements may have a negative impact on a specific cohort. Staff are working with labour relations and having discussions with the federations about options;
- Schools may not have a grade 8-9 split class. Staff advised that in some cases a grades 7 to 9 class may serve students well, but staff cannot place intermediate students into secondary school classes. The low ratio of numbers in some of the classes also impact its provision as operating a class for two students is not cost-effective;
- Staff indicated that the District does not compel students to move to their closest specialized program class should a space become available and that this has an impact on other student placements;
- Known staff reductions for the 2019-2020 school year were included in the narrative of the Academic Staffing Report and that a final report outlining final class numbers and locations will be provided to SEAC at the May or June meeting;

- Mr. Harris thanked staff for all of their work on the Deaf and Hard (DHH) classes at the Secondary level; and
- Trustee Boothby expressed the view that while the accommodation and area reviews are still in a moratorium. Trustees have recommended that future discussions and reviews attempt to reduce the number of models and configurations to reduce student transitions.

5.2 Report 19-031, Learning Support Services Operational Review of the Process for Identification, Needs Assessment and Placement

Your committee had before it Report 19-031 outlining the plan including the scope of work for the LSS Operational Review of the process for identification, needs assessment, and placement for all exceptionalities.

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

- Chair Kirwan expressed the view that while there was no formal motion made at the 2 April 2019 COW, it was implied that staff would further investigate the comments and suggestions made by the trustees and provide further information to SEAC;
- Ms. Miedema expressed the view that the goals and deliverables seem to indicate that the problem is communication and she suggested that additional text be added to broaden the scope. She expressed concern that a consultant may take the document literally and their work would be limited in nature as a result;
- Ms. Dewshi expressed concern over the focus on communication and queried the bullet on page 23 which states that updates will be made to SEAC at key review milestones. Staff noted that part of the decision to utilize the services of an external consultant was their ability to offer advice and guidance. SEAC can be assured that they will be provided updates at regular intervals. The consultant will provide further guidance and input on the process and will determine the key milestones. The department update can be used to communicate project details;
- Mr. Harris expressed the view that many consultants have scoping exercises and suggested that staff consider the option to have SEAC be a part of the interview process to ensure that some of the concerns expressed by members are reflected in the final methodology. Superintendent Symmonds noted that staff have not yet begun the draft of the request for proposal and that it will include language that requests the consultant demonstrate and articulate their process;

- Trustee Campbell expressed the view that time is taken in the draft of the scope statement to ensure it accurately reflects the project needs and queried whether or not the statement would be provided to trustees and members of SEAC. Superintendent Symmonds noted that staff is now directed to prepare the request for proposal based on the discussions held at SEAC and COW. He added that the recent procurement announcement by the province may limit activity, but any issues would be brought to the attention of trustees and SEAC members;
- Trustee Campbell commented that the key goals and deliverables reflect the input from SEAC and understand the staff decision to narrow the scope, but he was unsure whether or not stakeholders would find the results satisfactory. He added that the key performance indicators (KPIs) are an important element in determining whether or not the delivery and placement models are effective; and
- Superintendent Symmonds proposed that the outcome of the operational review will help define the work of LSS moving forward.

5.3 Letter to the Minister Regarding the Ontario Autism Program

The letter to the Minister regarding the Ontario Autism Program was provided for information.

5.4 Integration and Support for Special Education Students

Trustee Lyra Evans advised that she has heard complaints from many families who feel their children are not receiving the support they need in the regular classroom. She raised the matter at the 6 March 2019 SEAC meeting and requested further discussion at the 10 April 2019 meeting. She proposed the committee discuss and determine the level of support required for students who are integrated in the regular classroom to ensure their success.

Trustee Boothby expressed the view that an exercise similar to the process used at the 25 February 2019 SEAC meeting would help reach consensus on the subject. She noted that the District is still waiting for budget information from the province and that it will be an essential element of the discussion. She requested that more information and details be provided in a memo or letter of transmittal to help the members understand the keywords and concepts related to integration. She noted that information such as the number of EAs supporting students in the regular classroom, how are they deployed, the role of the EA, the role of Learning Support Teachers (LST), the role of Learning Resource Teachers (LRT) and how many students have IEPs would be critical to ensure the discussion is productive.

Ms. MacLaren-Kennedy expressed the view that qualitative data and the student's voice should be a part of the conversation.

Trustee Campbell commented that many of the questions raised by parents may be answered in the operational review. He suggested that an environmental scan could help with the discussion but expressed the view that it will not provide further answers as to whether or not the available resources are optimally deployed for effectiveness. He noted that without key performance indicators there is no way to measure the efficacy and that the discussion would be a shadow conversation to the operational review. Superintendent Symmonds advised that the conversation will overlap with the operational review and there may be an opportunity to feed the information back and forth.

Chair Kirwan encouraged the members to discuss the subject with their respective associations and provide ideas and input to him via an email. He added that an additional meeting of SEAC might be required.

6. Department Update

Superintendent Symmonds advised that there continue to be changes to the Ontario Autism Program (OAP). The Ministry of Education has announced that it will: fully subsidize the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) course for teachers; double the funding to the Geneva Centre for Autism to provide training for educators and Educational Assistants (EAs) including the Registered Behaviour Technician (RBT) course; fund behaviour expertise and student supports; expand after school skills development programs for students with ASD; support students transitioning into school through the Connections for Students model; and fund school boards for each newly enrolled student with ASD to an average of \$12,300.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that on 22 March 2019 the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services announced that it will extend existing Ontario Autism Behaviour Plans for six months. He noted that details on the revised OAP are still not available. Ms. Ralph confirmed that extension will be effective from the end date of a family's existing plan.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that the Minister also committed to a consultation to gather input on how best to support children with complex autism needs, focusing on students under the age of six and those preparing to transition out of school.

Superintendent Symmonds advised that the Board approved a policy resolution for the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) at the 26 March 2019 Board meeting. The resolution included recommendations for funding for staffing including an Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Coordinator, funding for Board Certified Behaviour Analyst (BCBA), continued training for teachers, Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and Educational Assistants (EAs) for the RBT

course, funding for a centrally assigned educator to support students with IEPs and transition planning, funding for Professional Support Staff, funding for additional EAs to support students with ASD in the regular classroom and those in congregated as required, and funding to continue targeted autism programs such as “Art of Play”, “Art of Conversation” and “PEERS”. The resolution was submitted to OPSBA for consideration at its Annual General Meeting in July 2019.

Superintendent Symmonds expressed concern that the District may have reduced funding as a result of the reformed OAP and its impact on the targeted Autism programs. He added that the District is forging its relationship with the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario to ensure information sharing and planning.

Ms. Gardner commented that 4082 violent incident reports have been filed since September 2018. She expressed concern over the potential influx of students with Autism, many of whom may not be ready to attend school due to behaviour issues. Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teacher's Federation have grave concerns about the funding in education to support ASD students.

Trustee Boothby thanked Superintendent Symmonds, Vice-Principal Dewan and Ms. Ralph for their efforts in the preparation of the resolution for OPSBA. She queried the province's commitment to extend behavior plans and whether or not it speaks to new plans. Superintendent Symmonds indicated that he could not provide a response without further details on the Ministry's plans for the OAP. Superintendent Symmonds noted that staff are meeting with CHEO and may be able to provide a response after those meetings.

In response to a query from Trustee Lyra Evans, Superintendent Symmonds noted that prior to the OAP, ASD teams worked to support and provide robust services for ASD students. Manager Kay noted the District utilizes an innovative intake process. The Multi-Disciplinary Team meets with the child and family after registration to determine the student's needs and work with the school team and the family to ensure the supports are in place to meet the needs.

In response to a query from Ms. Ralph regarding the OPSBA resolution, Trustee Boothby advised that should the resolution be accepted by OPSBA, it will become a part of the work plan and advocacy efforts for provincial discussions and lobbying.

Ms. Gardner queried whether or not the the \$12,300 announced by the Ministry was new funding. Superintendent Symmonds suggested that the funding may be new owing to the the inclusion of a count date but could not be sure.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) issued a professional advisory regarding supporting students with mental health concerns. He noted that he had attended a session on the subject and that resources were provided to all teachers through their OCT magazine

mailing. He noted the messaging from OCT was that teachers are key observers and supporters of childrens' mental health, but they do not diagnose.

Superintendent Symmonds commented on the success of the 2 April 2019 Autism Awareness Day and thanked the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) team for their efforts. He invited members to attend the Parent Information Night on 23 April 2019 which will feature keynote speaker, Dr. Weiss who will address mental health in students with ASD.

Principal Hannah advised that VOICE will be hosting an event to showcase Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) students in the library of Vincent Massey Public School on 11 April 2019. The event is open to all.

6.1 Special Education Plan (Standards)

a. Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

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

- All of the revisions made to the standards over the course of the 2018-2019 year will be provided for SEAC review when the Special Education Plan is presented in June;
- Staff indicated that a complete re-write of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) standard is required;
- The revised standard will include all of the elements required by the Ministry;
- The Ministry outlines five specific phases of the IEP process:
 - Gathering information
 - Setting the direction
 - Developing the IEP as it relates to the student's special education program and services
 - Implementing the IEP
 - Reviewing and updating the IEP
- The process for dispute resolution is a required element and will be expanded with additional resources;
- The board's results of the ministry's review for the previous year, along with the board's plans for a response to these results is also a required element of the standard;
- The IEP template must also be included in the Special Education Plan;

- The revised section will better define and provide clarity to the terms special education programs and services;
- The members agreed that the glossary of items that can be found within an IEP as outlined on pages 45-57 are helpful and should be a part of the revised standard. The information is useful for families, teachers and students. The list should include a caveat that they are subject to change and not an exhaustive list;
- Trustee Boothby commented that the language used on page 31 describing the purpose of the standard is too narrow;
- Trustee Boothby expressed the view that that word "may" be removed from the second bullet on page 31;
- Trustee Campbell noted discrepancies and inconsistencies within the 30-day service level agreement and suggested further clarity in the revised standard;
- Trustee Campbell requested clarity on the transition planning paragraph on page 33;
- IEP reviews are undertaken, and the principal may randomly or specifically select the IEPs. The review ensures that the IEP is following the legislation and have all of the required elements;
- The Ministry provides the list of exceptionalities noted on page 45;
- Ms. Nadon-Cambell recommended that the word "may" be removed from the paragraph regarding communication on page 31; and
- Ms. Miedema expressed the view that the IEP template should indicate which sections may or may not be included in a student's IEP. She noted that many Gifted students' IEPs only specify the course of the accommodations and do not provide other information.

b. The OCDSB Model For Special Education

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

- The standard will be revised to include a reference to the Ministry requirements;

- The standard will outline the board's philosophy and service-delivery model for the provision of special education programs and services;
- The standard must demonstrate how it complies with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Education Act;
- Staff recognized that parts of the current standard require revision for clarity and broader understanding;
- The members agreed that the acronyms should remain within the standard;
- Trustee Campbell requested clarification with respect to the guiding principals as outlined on page 61, particularly bullets three and seven. Superintendent Symmonds noted that the list is a verbatim copy of the special education policy. System Principal Kessler added that the wording in bullet seven was taken directly from the Ontario Human Rights Code;
- Ms. McLaren-Kennedy queried whether or not the District is utilizing Section 23 or Care and/or Treatment, Custody or Correctional (CTCC). Principal Hannah advised it is CTCC, and the standard will be revised to reflect; and
- Trustee Boothby expressed concern regarding the definition of the delivery model, specifically the wording "are generally at the discretion of the Board and the senior administration." Superintendent Symmonds noted that the delivery model and the decisions made regarding the model is at the discretion of the Board of Trustees and Senior Administrators. The two determine the model. It is an argument in law as to whether or not that is sufficient to meet the child's needs which would invoke undue hardship. Trustee Boothby requested that staff review the definition of the delivery model and revise if necessary.

7. Committee Reports

7.1 Advisory Committee on Equity

Ms. Nadon-Campbell noted that the Advisory Committee on Equity recommended the following motion at its 27 March 2019 meeting:

"THAT the Board explore funding to support mental health through an equity lens especially for students who self identify as First Nations, Inuit and Metis and for male students of African descent."

7.2 Parent Involvement Committee

There was no report from the Parent Involvement Committee.

7.3 Board

There was no report from the Board.

7.4 Committee of the Whole

Vice-Chair Wylie noted that Committee of the Whole discussed changes to the OAP and the LSS Operational Review.

8. New Business

Trustee Boothby requested that the members have an opportunity to discuss the impact of Occasional Teacher shortages on special education students at an upcoming meeting of SEAC.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:32 p.m.

Rob Kirwan, Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee