



**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)**  
**Report No. 19-059**

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**Supporting Indigenous Learners at the OCDSB**

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**PURPOSE:**

1. This report will provide an update to Trustees with respect to Indigenous Education within the OCDSB for the 2017-2018 school year.

**CONTEXT:**

2. The OCDSB's vision and work in supporting Indigenous Education is grounded in the Ministry's vision and the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The District's commitment to engaging with and supporting Indigenous students' achievement and well-being is focused on prioritizing their emotional, physical, social, and intellectual development by taking actions in these three key areas:
  - i. building relationships of trust within the Indigenous community to work together to improve student achievement and well-being;
  - ii. establishing a process so that more students and their families feel comfortable in the self-identification process, providing the capacity to measure progress in closing the achievement gaps; and,
  - iii. providing learning opportunities for all students and staff to build knowledge, appreciation and a deeper understanding for Indigenous traditions, cultures, perspectives, and roles in Canadian history.

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board had 1480 (ONSIS March, 2018) self-identified Indigenous students in the 2017-2018 school year. This number has slightly increased from the 2016-2017 school year and the District has continued making efforts to ensure that the number of self-identified students better reflects the demographics of the community.

In 2007 the Ministry released the Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Policy Framework. In 2014, the Ministry of Education released the Implementation Plan for that document, confirming the Ministry's three primary goals:

- Improve student well-being and achievement for Indigenous students;
- Close achievement gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students; and
- Increase public confidence.

Annually, the OCDSB develops a Board Action Plan (attached as Appendix A) and submits it to the Ministry. The following strategies are woven throughout the work of the OCDSB's Indigenous Educational Learning Team to support the Ministry's three primary goals:

- Using Data to Support Student Achievement;
- Supporting Students;
- Supporting Educators; and,
- Engagement and Awareness Building

## **KEY CONSIDERATIONS:**

### **3. Improving Student Well-Being and Achievement for Indigenous Students**

The Indigenous Education Learning Team is working with students and educators with a goal of supporting movement along a learning continuum that begins by building awareness, leads to engaged learning, and ultimately to embedding Indigenous pedagogy as part of practice. This team is also working closely with educators to ensure that Indigenous students see themselves and have a voice in their community schools.

In the 2017-2018 school year, the Indigenous Student Success and Re-Engagement Coordinator (ISSRC) supported 30 schools (K-12), worked directly with 353 students, facilitated 60 student circles, held 77 parent/guardian meetings, and met with 191 school staff. Additionally, the ISSRC provided intensive and ongoing support to students and staff at Gloucester High school to assist in the transition of students from Rideau High School and with Ottawa Technical Secondary School which has one of the highest representation of self identified Indigenous students in our District. This role has made a difference with students and staff by building relationships and fostering a culture of trust that is evident in the increasing number of students and educators who seek to engage with the ISSRC and who seek support from the ISSRC to further their learning as a school community. During the 2017-2018 school year, the ISSRC made referrals to several community agencies and established a waiting list as he was unable to keep up with the increasing demand. This reality reinforced our need to explore options to increase staffing in order to provide greater support for students and educators.

In 2017-2018 the Indigenous Education Learning Team expanded to include an Indigenous Itinerant Teacher (IIT) serving students and educators K-8. The IIT embedded professional learning in classes with educators to develop, model,

co-plan, and co-teach programming designed to build awareness and confidence. This work made a difference in building staff confidence and capacity while developing student awareness and allowing Indigenous students to see themselves reflected in their learning. Although very closely engaged at the beginning, the IIT was able to step back and serve more as a resource as teachers took on a greater role in developing and implementing programming. Over the year, additional teachers in schools reached out to the IIT to further their learning and embed Indigenous perspectives in their classes. The difference for students was observed when they shifted from a place of receiving information to a place of requesting additional learning; asking to learn more about Indigenous issues (such as water issues, access to health care, etc.) and asking to further engage in matters around social justice. The difference for Indigenous students was observed when they expressed validation and pride in seeing themselves and their cultures reflected in their learning. Learnings from this experience reinforced the need to engage with more schools.

#### 4. Closing the Gap

The work facilitated by the Indigenous Education Learning Team in supporting Indigenous students' achievement and well-being is foundational to seeing changes in data; specifically in the narrowing of learning gaps. Provincial and District data continues to show a gap in measurement indicators in achievement for students who self identify as Indigenous. In 2017/2018, achievement gaps for students who self identified as Indigenous narrowed in 7 of the 10 EQAO Assessments. A three year trend analysis showed that the largest gaps appear in primary reading, writing, and mathematics and in junior mathematics. This data is detailed in Appendix B. The Indigenous Education Learning Team piloted several initiatives in 2017-2018 to respond to these gaps.

In 2017-2018 our Indigenous Instructional Coach worked with students and educators at the junior level to focus on mathematical learning through beading. While building mathematical skills, this experience provided an opportunity to bring greater awareness to students and educators about Indigenous ways of knowing, while also building cultural competency through discussions on how to welcome and work with Knowledge Keepers in our school communities. The instructional coach facilitated connections between community partners and educators to develop and facilitate beading experiences. The community partners led the beading instruction while the instructional coach and teachers focused on, highlighted and reinforced mathematical concepts such as multiplicative thinking, algebraic reasoning, and patterning. This work made a difference for Indigenous students who expressed greater confidence in their mathematical ability. They took pride in their culture by seeing elements of their culture as a central part of their learning and in taking on leadership roles, working directly with and supporting their peers' learning. All students expressed a greater awareness of the application of mathematical thinking in different and authentic settings.

Successful transitions can be the first step in setting students up to be successful in their learning. To support this priority, the instructional coach facilitated community connections to develop a collaborative inquiry with community partners and educators focused on supporting increased Inuit cultural understanding and transitions for Inuit students at the primary level. Through this inquiry, best practices were developed and resources were identified to support greater awareness of Inuit cultures and perspectives that were used to create a more smooth transition for Inuit students. Through this experience, further embedded professional learning was identified as a need by the participants in the collaborative inquiry to ensure that this learning could be shared with other educators seeking to support transitions for Inuit children.

5. Increasing Public Confidence: Engaging with Indigenous Students, Parents, and Community Partners

Prior to 2017-2018 and through the relationships developed by the members of the Indigenous Education Learning Team, Indigenous parents/guardians and community partners had shared a desire to increase Indigenous voices, content, and perspectives while further embedding an accurate portrayal of history in their children's learning experiences. Additionally, students reinforced that they would like to celebrate who they are, know that someone is listening to them, and see themselves reflected through better Indigenous content and more Indigenous perspectives. These voices informed several priorities for the work: the development of Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC), embedding Indigenous perspectives in specific curricular areas, and further engaging with student voice to promote student leadership.

The policy and framework to establish the Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC) were developed alongside Indigenous students, families and community partners to ensure the creation of an advisory group designed and structured to respect and honour Indigenous voices and ways of knowing. The policy was approved in June 2018 (P.140.GOV) for implementation in 2018-2019. Initial priorities for this group included engaging with partners, students, families and educators to be part of this advisory group, and establishing relationships that support capacity building in listening and engaging in meaningful communication and shared learning.

The OCDSB has partnered with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers and community partners to create rich, relevant learning opportunities through the development of the English - Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis and Inuit Voices (NBE3U/C/E) course. Nine secondary schools requested to be part of this planning to offer the NBE course as the compulsory grade 11 English course for the 2018-2019 school year. Participating schools benefited from the knowledge shared with the OCDSB by Indigenous partners both at the planning stages and at the implementation phase through continued Indigenous cultural competency learning, diving deeper into the revised Indigenous Studies curriculum, developing a compilation of resources, and the introduction of a

virtual learning environment. Teachers have expressed an increased confidence in co-learning alongside their students and an increased comfort in reaching out to community partners to support learning for all students.

The Indigenous Education Learning Team has sought out the voices of Indigenous students to better understand how to support the students' learning journey and build their confidence in their own voices. The Indigenous Youth Symposium in March 2018 provided the opportunity for attendees to listen to Indigenous student voices and learn that they want and need to:

- have opportunities to get together;
- have opportunities to lead;
- have opportunities to celebrate who they are;
- have the opportunity to share their stories;
- know someone is listening to them;
- know that there will be action on their concerns;
- know that they are not alone;
- have more and better Indigenous content in their learning;
- stop being called on as experts in Indigenous Education;
- stop feeling unsafe in school; and
- learn from Elders and Knowledge Keepers.

These learnings were shared with educators through professional learning opportunities and applied to the planning for our work in supporting Indigenous student well-being and achievement and in efforts to close learning gaps. The learnings were also used as the foundation for the enhancement and/or creation of various experiences and student led initiatives including the Indigenous Leadership Camp, the Gloucester High School Pow Wow, Mamawii Together, and the OCDSB Date with Diversity. Indigenous students led learning at the OCDSB Rainbow Youth Forum and provided insight to teachers around the importance of seeing themselves in the curriculum; sharing their stories and experiences. This learning reinforced the need to further empower Indigenous students as leaders and difference makers in the OCDSB.

#### 6. Learning and Next Steps

Each experience and initiative resulted in enhanced awareness, capacity building, and movement into greater engagement of Indigenous pedagogy and Indigenous ways of knowing. Progress is being made, and those achievements support the refinement of our goals moving forward. Each experience serves to build our understandings and guide our next steps in further supporting professional learning for staff while valuing and empowering Indigenous students.

In order to continue movement along the learning continuum - from awareness, to engagement, to embedded Indigenous pedagogy, the Indigenous Education Learning Team has continued to engage in and support learning during the 2018-2019 school year that supports the Ministry's three primary goals.

Initiatives to ensure that difference is being made in each of these areas has been built into the 2018-2019 Board Action Plan and includes:

- Improved Well-being and Achievement in Indigenous Students
  - Establish a monthly Indigenous Youth group;
  - Create an additional Indigenous student support position;
  - Continue to embed professional learning to build awareness and move into greater engagement in learning;
  - Continue and expand Indigenous student leadership opportunities; and
  - Support the implementation of the NBE course.
- Closing Learning Gaps for Indigenous Students
  - Further extend InStem learning opportunities;
  - Support the partnership with Wabano and Inuuqatigiit-Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families (formerly known as the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre) to provide cultural support; and
  - Continue engaging in the Collaborative Inquiry on transitions at the primary level.
- Build Public Confidence
  - Formalize the IEAC;
  - Continue the development of community partnerships with educators;
  - Build relationships between educators and Knowledge Keepers; and
  - Formalize the Land Acknowledgement across the District.

## **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

7. Funding for Indigenous education at the OCDSB and across Ontario stems from the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Supplement Grant, which has three allocations: (i) Native Language; (ii) Native Studies; and (iii) Per-Pupil Amount. The OCDSB qualifies for both the Native Studies and Per-Pupil allocations, but does not currently offer Native Language programming and as such does not receive funds through allocation. Funding is used to offer Native Studies courses in secondary schools, provide resources for schools, support community partnerships (e.g., Urban Aboriginal High School, Inuuqatigiit-Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, etc.), provide for one system vice principal position and one instructional coach position, and any other opportunities for students and staff development. For 2017-2018, the grant totals \$1,405,909.

Since 2010, there have been many changes to the funding formula for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education. The Ministry of Education has made it a priority for Indigenous students and their families to self-identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit in order to allocate funds to support students. Appendix C provides

pertinent financial reporting data for Indigenous Education at OCDSB in the 2017-2018 school year.

## **COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:**

8. Building trusting relationships and developing awareness of Indigenous learnings and ways of knowing serve as the catalyst to increasing the achievement and well-being of the Indigenous students in the OCDSB. This belief serves as the driving force of the Indigenous Education Learning Team. The OCDSB now has an advisory body in the IEAC to hear the voices of Indigenous students, families and community partners. The IEAC along with the voices from Indigenous students, families and community partners will continue to guide the development of strategies and initiatives designed to support and work towards achieving improved well-being and achievement, and equitable outcomes for Indigenous students.

## **STRATEGIC LINKS:**

9. The work presented reports the measurement of progress being made in support of the OCDSB Indigenous population, and can be used to monitor advancement on the equity objective in the 2015-2019 Strategic Plan. This objective is to reduce barriers to learning to improve equity of access and opportunity for all students. There is evidence that, as a group, students who identify as Indigenous face barriers to learning and are at risk of lower levels of achievement than their peers.

## **GUIDING QUESTIONS:**

The following questions are provided to support the discussion of this item by the Committee:

- How can we leverage the work that has been done so that more educators are empowered and engaged in Indigenous education?
- How can we best support the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with regard to education in our schools?
- How can we sustain meaningful relationships with community partners and Indigenous families so that we continue to build capacity for OCDSB staff, thus impacting all students?
- How can we continue to support our movement as a District, along our learning continuum from awareness, to engagement, to implementation?

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## **APPENDICES**

[Appendix A Board Action Plan/Initiatives and Programming](#)

[Appendix B Performance Measures](#)

[Appendix C Financial Information](#)