



## ADVOCACY STRATEGY COMMITTEE

April 17, 2019, 3:30 pm  
Trustees' Committee Room  
133 Greenbank Road  
Ottawa, Ontario

Trustee Members Present: Lynn Scott , Christine Boothby, Wendy Hough, Erica Braunovan, Keith Penny

Other Trustees Present: Donna Blackburn

Staff Present Camille Williams-Taylor, Director of Education; Michele Giroux, Executive Officer, Corporate Services; Katrine Mallan, Manager of Board Services; Sue Baker, Senior Board Coordinator

1. Call to Order

Trustee Braunovan called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

2. Approval of the Agenda

**Moved by Trustee Penny,**

**THAT the agenda be approved.**

**Carried**

Trustee Scott noted that she wished to discuss developing a strategy for the advocacy committee for dealing with requests from stakeholder groups to join their advocacy activities.

3. Matters for Discussion/Action:

3.1 Next Phase of Consultations on Hiring Practices and Class Sizes

a. School Board Hiring Practices Consultation Guide

Your committee had before it a consultation guide from the Ministry with respect to school board hiring practices. The guide is intended to support stakeholders in understanding the government's proposed changes to hiring practices for teachers.

M. Giroux advised that staff submitted an earlier response to a request from the Ministry for input on hiring practices. The Ministry has now extended the consultation period and trustees are invited to provide feedback to four targeted questions. The deadline for response is 31 May 2019.

b. Board member feedback re Hiring Practices Consultation Questions

Trustee Scott suggested that the members consider whether there are any concerns with the proposed changes and if there are disadvantages to having a single hiring pool. Director Williams-Taylor noted that there is some ambiguity with respect to criteria and flexibility and, when implemented, the hiring practices may differ somewhat from what is currently outlined.

The Committee provided the following input on the four questions in the Ministry's consultation guide:

1. What are the implications of the proposals on hiring practices of teachers in Ontario in relation to the five key goals (student achievement, protect front line staff, fiscal responsibility, evidence-based decision making, and diverse teacher staff)?

- less administrative time required to maintain lists and conduct teacher interviews;
- the best fit for the a school community can be hired rather than hiring by seniority only;
- flexibility in the hiring process could help to improve situations where multiple replacements are brought in to cover teacher absences;
- the focus must be on improving student achievement; and
- more opportunity to diversify staff.

2. Regarding this proposal, what issues will need to be considered for implementation?

- monitoring implementation may add to the workload of the superintendent of instruction;
- implementation complexities must not create new barriers and more paperwork;
- Regulations and PPMs may lead to the government requiring that school boards develop local policies and procedures;

- local policies and procedures could include an equitable hiring framework that includes hiring and onboarding processes; and
- remove hiring requirements from collective agreements.

3. Are there alternative approaches that you would like to put forward that would achieve the government's five key goals?

- no response.

4. Are there any other comments you would like to provide, keeping in mind the five key goals?

- no response.

In response to suggestions from Executive Officer Giroux with respect to a written submission, meeting with Ministry officials, financial implications, and teacher lay-offs in the face of changing hiring practices, the Committee provided the following comments:

- a written submission should clearly state the Board's perspective and include phrases such as mutual respect, respect for teachers' rights, and improving student achievement; and
- meetings with local members of the provincial parliament are good opportunities to provide input as well as distributing a written submission.

Executive Officer Giroux advised that staff will prepare a draft submission and circulate it to trustees prior to the deadline for submissions.

c. Class Size Consultation Guide

Your committee had before it a consultation guide from the Ministry with respect to class sizes. The guide is intended to support stakeholders in understanding the government's plan for elementary and secondary class sizes.

d. Board member feedback re Class Size Consultation Questions

During discussion of the consultation guide, the following points were noted:

- There will not be a District-wide consultation on this topic;

- Board members may consult with their constituents if they wish;
- OCASC was made aware of the consultation through the school council newsletter; and
- The Student Senate is also aware of the consultation. Some school senators have been organizing town halls and may provide student input.

Grades 4-8 maximum board-wide average class size of 24.5 with no exceptions:

- Is that number based on the enrolment count on a certain date?
- Does it take into account areas with enrolment growth after the enrolment count date?
- The enrolment cap should be flexible in consideration of students with high needs, newcomers, English language learners, refugees, etc. The cap formula should consider local demographics;
- The proposed changes for grades 4-8 alleviate some limitations by moving from a hard cap to an average class size;
- The ability of school boards to do accommodation reviews would provide some flexibility;
- Will students in special education classes be counted in the overall class size average? If yes, what is the impact on other classes?;
- OCDSB special education classes are currently excluded when calculating class size averages of 22 students;
- Is funding based on average class sizes, including system classes?
- The OCDSB has a significant number of system classes of only six students. Boards with high numbers of system classes are penalized if these classes are included in the average class size calculations; and
- It may be worthwhile to study whether student weighting is worthwhile when calculating class size averages.

Grades 9-12 maximum board-wide average class size of 28 students

- It is not yet known whether the increase in class size will affect specialty classes such as Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM);
- There will not be much of an impact in the first year because collective agreements are still in place which include a staffing formula for an average of 22 students per class;
- The impact will not be felt until new collective agreements are negotiated and when the e-learning component is fully implemented;
- Currently, students may enrol in e-learning classes in other districts. It is not yet known if this will be permitted in the future;
- System classes should not be included in calculating average class sizes;
- Alternate high schools have small classes and some students may attend part-time and/or be taking a co-op class. Will this model be allowed to continue?
- Are there class size restrictions for shop or chemistry classes where dangerous chemicals or machinery are used? Flexibility is required for safety reasons;
- Will there be exemptions for e-learning classes? What about students in rural areas with no internet availability?;
- Will there be purchase of service agreements for school boards wishing to make use of e-learning courses?; and
- Students in grades 11 and 12 may have part-time jobs that require flexibility on exemptions.

### 3.2 Service Animals in Schools: Public Consultation

Executive Officer Giroux advised that the province has recently established a consultation on service animals in schools. The District has a policy and procedure on service dogs and there are a couple of areas that require attention. The deadline for the submission of input is 4 May 2019 and the Associate Director is compiling a summary. She noted that the concussion protocol is also out for consultation with a deadline of 18 April 2019.

Trustee Scott expressed the opinion that the committee needs to develop a strategy for determining if and when it wishes to respond to a Ministry consultation or if it should be left to staff to provide a response, if desired. This topic will be discussed further under New Business.

On the advisability of responding to the service animal consultation, the following points were noted:

- The District must ensure it is in compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA);
- Trustee Boothby noted that the District currently has an ongoing issue with a service animal;
- Trustee Boothby advised of her preference to provide a response to all consultations affecting special education services and supports;
- The draft PPM on school board policies for service animals appears to be a consultation plan; and
- The District's procedure contemplates a handler who is not a staff member. This may require revision for younger children who require a service animal.

#### 4. New Business -- Information and Inquiries

##### 4.1 Role of the Advocacy Committee

Trustee Scott advised that the Committee of the Whole, at its meeting on 16 April 2019, recommended that the mandate of the Advocacy Strategy Committee be:

1. to develop an annual advocacy strategy for board approval;
2. to develop advocacy positions for board approval; and
3. to advise and support the Chair of the Board on specific advocacy issues and key messaging as needed and in a timely way.

Trustee Scott suggested that the Committee develop a strategy for how the Board will approach issues, identify areas for advocacy, and seek Board approval on whether it wishes to take a position.

Executive Officer Giroux noted that when the Ad Hoc Committee to Develop an Advocacy Strategy was established in 2016, the advocacy strategy included the following goals: to protect and maintain stability in funding; to promote high quality public education for all students; to promote the importance and value of locally-elected school boards; and to ensure the interests of the OCDSB and public education in Ottawa are well represented in provincial and municipal issues.

Trustee Scott noted that each year the Advocacy committee prepared a document addressing five actions the Board asked the province to undertake. She added that these activities do not speak to how the committee wishes to approach or respond to issues with the Ministry and/or local members of parliament.

Trustee Penny expressed the view that the advocacy strategy should reflect the interests of Board and bring clarity to positions taken.

Trustee Blackburn queried whether any of this work could be undertaken over the summer.

#### 4.2 Requests from Stakeholders for Advocacy Action

Trustee Scott advised that she received a message from a federation president urging the Board to pass a motion to denounce funding cuts and work with its partners to enhance education. Using this example, she noted the requirement for a strategy to help the committee determine whether it wishes to comply with a request to align with a union or maintain its independence. Trustee Penny noted that this letter was shared at the recent OPSBA eastern regional meeting and cautioned against solidarity with unions at this time. Trustee Blackburn noted that the Board is considered to be "management" during contract negotiations and it must consider the needs of students as well as the needs of staff. Trustee Boothby suggested that the Board focus on staff and student achievement, well-being and mental health. Trustee Braunovan noted that she wants to be supportive of federations, but as a trustee and member of the Board, she was unsure if it would be appropriate to align with federations. She added that it should be the prerogative of individual trustees to do as they wish.

Executive Officer Giroux noted that when thinking of the elements of advocacy, it is important to consider relationships and build on mutual needs and benefits. She suggested that the Board acknowledge the letter and indicate that the federation has raised important issues during a period of uncertainty. The Board will continue to advocate for student achievement and well-being and will respond to the Ministry, as appropriate.

#### 5. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

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Erica Braunovan, Chair, Advocacy Strategy Committee