

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, May 15, 2019, 7:00 pm
Trustees' Committee Room
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario

Members:	Rob Kirwan (Community Representative), Christine Boothby (Trustee), Rob Campbell (Trustee), Cathy Miedema (Association for Bright Children), Katie Ralph (Autism Ontario, Ottawa Chapter), Mark Wylie (Down Syndrome Association), Ian Morris (Ontario Associations for Families of Children with Communication Disorders), Jim Harris (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children), Lisa Paterick (VIEWS for the Visually Impaired), Donna Owen (Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils), Safina Dewshi (Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils, 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:	Lynn Scott (Trustee), Donna Blackburn (Trustee), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Curriculum Services), 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), Jennifer Offord (System Principal, Curriculum 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 Christine Boothby,

   THAT the agenda be approved.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that item 5.5, the Role of the Early Childhood Educator, would be moved to the 12 June 2019 meeting.

Moved by Christine Boothby,

THAT the agenda be approved, as amended.

Carried

3. Delegations

Janet Bowen, Chair of the Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education School Council, expressed concern over the class sizes and staff to student ratios at the school. She expressed the view that the teacher to student ratio should be altered to 1:6 to match that of the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) program to support the breadth of need these students require.

System Principal Kessler noted there are generally 2.5 FTE Educational Assistants (EAs) assigned per class, however in instances where students have higher medical needs, are deaf or hard of hearing or blind/low vision the allocation of EAs is higher.

Ms. Bowen noted that there are generally three to four adults per eight students.

In response to a query from Mr. Morris, Ms. Bowen expressed the view that the addition of more adults can overwhelm the students and recommended six students per class with similar staffing ratios.

Superintendent Symmonds advised that the support models for specialized program classes differ. The Education Act sets the limit for the Developmental Disability (DD) class size at ten. He added that Learning Support Services (LSS) had noticed a change in the complex profile of DD students at the Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education. LSS staff carefully monitor and review the support staff requirements and allocations for the site.

In response to a query from Trustee Campbell, Superintendent Symmonds advised that the support staff are a critical component of the DD program as is the collaboration with other professionals that help inform the programming. System Principal Kessler added that it can be difficult to implement instructional practice. The teacher is responsible for the instruction of the students but owing to the varying needs of the students; much of the instruction is individualized.

In response to a query from Ms. Houlden, System Principal Kessler responded that each class is a different configuration of students with special needs and noted that efforts are underway to address issues with transitioning support and liaising with families. In 2018-2019 there was an increase in Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) assigned to both Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education and Clifford Bowey Public School. Additional Vice-Principal time has also been approved. LSS cares about all students, no matter the learning profile and is continually investigating ways to improve service delivery.

Chair Kirwan requested that student staff ratios for Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education and Clifford Bowey PS be added to the long-range agenda.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that he had received an email from the chairs of the School Councils of Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education and Clifford Bowey PS expressing their concerns about class sizes ratios. The message was shared with all senior staff and trustees.

Trustee Campbell queried whether or not the matter should be raised as part of the 2019-2020 Budget process. Chair Kirwan noted that Ms. Bowen could make a delegation to the Committee of the Whole Budget Committee on 3 June 2019.

4. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

4.1 10 April 2019

Moved by Christine Boothby,

THAT the report from the 10 April 2019 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee be received.

Trustee Boothby requested that the word "while" be removed from the second bullet on page 5.

Ms. McLaren Kennedy requested a correction to the spelling of her last name on page 7.

Moved by Christine Boothby,

THAT the report from the 10 April 2019 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee be received, as amended.

Carried

4.2 Review of Long Range Agenda

The long range agenda was provided for information.

Chair Kirwan noted that completed items will be removed.

Trustee Boothby requested the addition of "Learning Resource Teachers (LRTs) and LSTs days lost and exclusions" to item fourteen.

Ms. Owen requested the addition of the changes and impact of e-learning to special education students at the secondary level as a possible discussion item in December 2019.

4.3 Motion/Action Tracking Report, Business Arising

The Motion/Action tracking report was provided for information.

Superintendent Symmonds advised that the Research, Evaluation, Analytics Division (READ) undertook a fulsome evaluation of data,

including EQAO data during the Gifted Review. He added that the READ team will take the request under advisement. Ms. Miedema indicated she would follow up with Superintendent Symmonds on the matter.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that he discussed the matter of the inclusion of locally developed statistics in the Annual Student Achievement Report (ASAR) and the Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and Well-being (BIPSAW), the READ team have questions of clarification. Ms. Houlden advised that she would speak with Superintendent Symmonds independently.

Manager Kay noted that she may have further information on the use of Communication Disorder Assistants at the 12 June 2019 meeting.

Ms. Miedema noted that the map of the specialized program classes does not indicate the location of the classes per grade and noted it is difficult to spot geographic holes that may occur within exceptionalities. Superintendent Symmonds advised that a follow-up memorandum will be provided at the October 2019 meeting.

5. Action/Discussion/Information Items

5.1 Report 19-053, Report on the 2019-2023 Draft Strategic Plan

Your committee had before it Report 19-053, seeking feedback on the draft 2019-2023 Strategic Plan.

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

- Mr. Warner stated that it would be helpful for parents if the strategic plan had a broad goal to work toward. Staff noted that the draft strategic plan links to the mission statement and the exit outcomes. The strategic plan helps further actions toward reaching the exit outcomes when students graduate;
- Ms. Gardner noted the absence of improved staff safety under the culture of caring and that its addition may help reduce the number of violent incident reports;
- Ms. McLaren Kennedy noted that a mechanism to track bullying incidents would help inform the key performance indicators under a culture of caring. She also noted a lack of reference to support for mental health which was an element discussed at the focus group sessions;
- The key performance indicators are not intended to be comprehensive;
- Ms. Owen expressed the view that the relationship between the goals and the key performance indicators under the culture of innovation are inconsistent;

- Ms. McLaren-Kennedy clarified that the use of the term well-being perpetuates the stigma of mental health by not specifically noting mental health. She expressed the view that the strategic plan should contain a reference to mental health and well-being;
- Mr. Morris expressed the view that it is the job of SEAC to ensure that the special education lens does not get lost and that special education students see themselves reflected in the classroom; and
- Superintendent Symmonds advised that the strategic plan is one element of a four-year plan which will be further broken down into department action plans. Mr. Morris expressed the view that the sub-goals related to special education will be of interest to SEAC.

5.2 Memo 19-066, 2019-2020 Specialized Program Class Locations

Your committee had before it Memo 19-066, 2019-2020 Specialized Program Class locations, providing information regarding changes to specialized program classes based on information available from the specialized program class referral process.

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

- Mr. Warner expressed the view that the map could be more precise;
- In response to a query from Ms. Owen, Manager Kay noted that the Learning Disabilities Specialized Intervention Program (LD SIP) at A. Lorne Cassidy Elementary School was closed in 2017-2018. The programs at both D. Roy Kennedy Public School and Broadview Public School are full and staff continues to see significant referrals justifying two new classes. LD SIP requires a kindergarten to grade eight configuration with options for both English and French Immersion and only certain schools can accommodate the classes;
- LD SIP is officially an English program, but LSS do provide for opportunities to accommodate the program in schools with French immersion programs where possible;
- French immersion has never been exclusionary criteria for the LD SIP program. The integration portion of the student's day will be French immersion. Literacy and math are taught in low ratio environments and students return to the regular classroom, either English or French immersion for other subjects;
- Superintendent Baker noted that there are different time allocations for different subject areas and mathematics and literacy are significantly larger; and
- Ms. Gardner queried whether or not the Behaviour Intervention Program (BIP) classes are fully contained or are students integrated for a portion of the day. Staff noted that there are a variety of models depending on the student. Integration opportunities are explored,

but often the needs are profound and the student requires a full day of learning to develop compensatory strategies and self-regulation skills in order to progress to the regular classroom. The BIP classes are staffed as a full-time program.

5.3 Memo 19-063, OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom Pilot and OCDSB Interest Academy Pilot

Your committee had before it Memo 19-063,OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students in the Regular Classroom Pilot and OCDSB Interest Academy Pilot,

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

- The OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students is directed at gifted learners. The OCDSB Interest Academy Pilot is intended to support all learners, including those with Giftedness;
- The OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students is intended to be a useful and fulsome resource to remove barriers to effective programming for students with Giftedness;
- The OCDSB Interest Academy Pilot is an inquiry-based learning experience where teachers and students co-create learning goals and success criteria contributing to a shared learning opportunity;
- Initial orientation and training will be conducted with staff to prepare for the launch of the program in the fall of 2019;
- Data collection tools are still in development to ensure staff can monitor the effectiveness;
- The District is trialing the use of the Renzulli scales to assist educators in developing learner profiles. The learner profiles will serve as an aid to improve the learning experience for students;
- Staff intend to report on the pilot by the end of the 2019-2020 school year;
- Trustee Boothby queried the whether or not the OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students would be available in every classroom across the District. She expressed the view that the gifted students in the regular classroom cannot wait years in order to receive supports. Superintendent Symmonds advised that the intent of the pilot is to ensure the OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students and the OCDSB Interest Academy Pilot function as intended. LSS aim to ensure the resources are as effective as possible;
- Three schools have confirmed they will participate in the pilot;
- The intent of the student self-reflection assessment is to disaggregate the data for gifted students to measure the impact on gifted learners;

- The District is cautious about making decisions on a single point of data and will use a variety of data sources to analyze the effectiveness of the resources;
- In response to a query from Trustee Campbell, Superintendent Symmonds indicated he would speak to the Program Evaluator about the survey being provided to all participants;
- In response to a query from Trustee Campbell regarding the effect of the intervention and whether or not there is a control group, Superintendent Symmonds noted that the research is exploratory in nature and LSS is still working on the program evaluation;
- LSS will ensure there is balanced representation between the use of the OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students and the OCDSB Interest Academy Pilot;
- Staff indicated that the self-assessment may not be a part of the data as staff were unsure of the reliability and accuracy of the self-assessment of the teacher resource;
- Ms. Miedema expressed the importance of student data and voice in the analysis of the program's effectiveness. Superintendent Symmonds committed to working with the program evaluator to investigate the use of student input;
- LSS approached the principals of the three schools that were selected to participate in the pilot based on the knowledge that there were gifted students within the school;
- Ms. Owen expressed the view that if the goal of the pilot is to examine effectiveness in the support of students with giftedness then the focus of the evaluation and data collection should be on students with Giftedness;
- Ms. Miedema suggested that a parent and guardian survey also be administered with the OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students;
- Staff noted that the OCDSB Interest Academy Pilot is intended to operate in 6-week cycles and the OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Students will support teachers throughout the school year. A preliminary report on effectiveness should be available by the end of March 2020.

5.4 Memo 19-062, Empower Reading Update

Your committee had before it Memo 19-062, providing an update regarding the status of the Empower Reading program.

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

- Teachers are asked to record pre-Empower and post-Empower assessment data in a tracking form developed by LSS;

however, gaps in collective data gathering exist due to the voluntary nature of the request. At this point it is not mandated;

- For those students who do not respond to Empower or are not able to be placed in Empower, there are other resources available to those students through Multi-Disciplinary teams, and Psycho-Educational assessments for the diagnosis of other needs. Empower is a tier three intervention at the school level and the Multi-Disciplinary team would look at different strategies to support those learners;
- Empower is currently being piloted at the secondary level at Gloucester High School and Sir Guy Carleton Secondary School and students may achieve credit for their participation at the discretion of the school principal;
- There can be up to eight students per Empower class or grouping, on average the District is reaching 800 students with the Grade 2 to 5 decoding and spelling;
- Mr. Morris commented that having seen Empower in action it is a powerful, tier three intervention. He expressed the view that while the budget for the program may be large, it is a critical investment for student success;
- Empower is noted the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP);
- Mr. Morris expressed the view that offering Empower at the secondary level is important as many high school students cannot read. He hoped the program would be offered in more high schools across the District to ensure students can access the program in their community school;
- Ms. Dlouhy shared the success Richmond Public School has had with Empower reading. In grade one, students have additional LRT support and small group reading and at the end of the year the Multi-Disciplinary team will establish a list of candidates for Grade 2 Decoding and Spelling. She noted that Richmond PS wants all students reading by the end of grade two. In the 2018-2019 school year Richmond PS offered three classes of decoding and spelling and one class of comprehension and vocabulary. Empower enables her school to capture the students before they fall behind. The fidelity of the program is an issue as the other teachers want to know how to support the student when they are outside Empower and her suggestion for overcoming the issue is team communication;
- Ms. Dlouhy expressed the view that Empower is the single most significant intervention in a student's life for those meeting the eligibility criteria and the expense is a bargain. She noted that the evidence of its impact is profound and often changes attitudes and behaviour;
- Superintendent Symmonds advised that reading is the single biggest indicator of student success;
- In response to a query from Ms. Owen, Superintendent Symmonds advised that students in schools without Empower will receive

assistance and support through the Multi-Disciplinary team and the program continues to expand;

- Empower reading is available to students in French immersion;
- Trustee Boothby queried the statement "not all trained teachers are delivering Empower this school year". System-Principal Kessler noted that the trained teacher is still within the school but the school may not have a cohort;
- The Empower program is highly regimented and students move through 110 lessons. Students must begin at the beginning and that may require a delay in participation until the next school year. Students are placed in Empower as quickly as possible. In the interim, the Multi-Disciplinary team is working to provide supports to the students. Students may re-enter Empower at a strategic point to reinforce the learning;
- The District still uses Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) as a reading intervention;
- The content for Empower is presented visually and a large part of the program is rooted in meta-cognition. For students accessing assistive technology, the program may need to be presented differently to make it accessible;
- Ms. Paterick noted that if the material is in a printed format it can be translated to Braille;
- Ms. Gardner queried the logistics of the program and the timetabling. System-Principal Kessler advised that the majority of Empower teachers are LRTs and LSTs and the school must be intentional in scheduling the time and space for the program;
- Ms. Houlden noted that, at the secondary level, there are no LRTs. With planned increases to class sizes, she queried how Empower can continue. System Principal Kessler noted Empower is currently being piloted at Sir Guy Carleton SS and Gloucester HS and is in the early stages of introduction. She advised that she will be meeting with the secondary school teams to review the results and discuss next steps;
- Chair Kirwan requested the addition of a Secondary Empower Update to the long range agenda; and
- Ms. Miedema expressed the view that early intervention is key and queried whether or not the data from the program could be used to understand missed opportunities. Staff noted that SickKids has data and that staff will communicate with them about its use.

6. Department Update

Superintendent Symmonds advised that LSS and the Mental Health Team are hosting information nights for parents on the topic of Self-Regulation in Childhood and Adolescence. He noted that the next session would be held on 28 May 2019 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Summerside Elementary School.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that Dr. Jonathan A. Weiss provided a presentation on Addressing Mental Health in Autism at the Autism Parent Information Night held on 23 April 2019. He noted that the event, hosted by the ASD team, was well attended and that the team provided workshops to parents on a variety of topics.

Storefront

System Principal Kessler noted that the Storefront program is a transition program for those in the General Learning Program (GLP) and an important pathway to employment in the community and other learning opportunities. Storefront is available to twelve students. She noted that of the six students graduating at the end of 2019, four have been able to find various degrees of paid employment. The majority of the students are referred from Sir Guy Carleton Secondary School and Ottawa Technical Secondary School. The students had many successes during the 2018-2019 school year with a highlight being a positive collaboration with the Algonquin College Kitchen Steward program.

System Principal Kessler advised that the Storefront program will remain at its current location in a commercial building near the St. Laurent Shopping Centre and has an ongoing commitment with the landlord. Trustee Boothby expressed concern over the lack of a sustained commitment. System Principal Kessler noted that she will confirm location details and arrangement and will report back to SEAC.

Chair Kirwan expressed concern about the instability of the present location and suggested the Merivale Road corridor as an alternative that could be investigated. Superintendent Symmonds advised that other GLP initiatives are offered in the Woodroffe High School area and, at present, LSS is not contemplating expanding Storefront.

Superintendent Symmonds advised that the Ministry has recently announced its Priorities and Partnership Fund which may grant the District additional funding to explore successful practices in transitioning students with developmental disabilities to work, community or post-secondary education.

System Principal Hannah advised that Storefront is an extension of GLP and focuses on the exit outcomes of its students with an emphasis on independence. The GLP criteria, along with input from teachers and family members regarding readiness and independence, are factors in student placement. Storefront students must be able to travel independently to and from the program utilizing OC Transpo and have some necessary social skills.

There is currently only one site for the program. Staff noted that Storefront is one opportunity, and there are other options within Secondary General Learning Programs that students can explore. The transition funding would allow the District to explore other possibilities to fill gaps, but it is premature to speculate.

Six students will graduate from Storefront this year. The program is offered to students between the ages of 19 and 21. Students may attend Storefront for one or two years but must leave the program the year in which they turn 21.

Integration and Support for Special Education Students

Principal Symmonds requested the item be added to the 12 June 2019 SEAC agenda.

External Consultation Qualifications

Superintendent Symmonds advised that the Ministry has implemented new procurement rules and the District must now first investigate whether or not vendors of record can undertake the work. The vendors of record provided by the Ministry are often large scale organizations, and it is difficult to assess whether or not they have experience in the work of school boards. He noted that LSS has conducted a preliminary review of the recommended vendors and have identified six that may suit the project.

Chair Kirwan noted that Superintendent Symmonds has agreed to a meeting with a select number of members to discuss the qualifications of potential consultants. Mark Wylie, Cathy Miedema, Sonia Nadon-Campbell, and Jim Harris volunteered to meet with Superintendent Symmonds.

7. Committee Reports

7.1 Advisory Committee on Equity

Ms. Nadon-Campbell noted that the 25 April 2019 meeting of the Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE) featured discussions on ACE membership, equity resources and follow-up on the mental health motion initiated by ACE at its 28 March 2019 meeting. She noted that the mental health strategy would be provided for discussion at the 23 May 2019 meeting.

7.2 Parent Involvement Committee

Mr. Morris advised that the 17 April 2019 Parent Involvement Committee meeting featured discussions on field trips, identity based data collection, the parent survey, and the Ministry consultation on class sizes and hiring practices. He added that the PIC also confirmed new community representatives, Ottawa Network for Education and Parents for Diversity.

7.3 Board

There was no report from Board.

7.4 Committee of the Whole

There was no report from the Committee of the Whole.

7.5 Committee of the Whole, Budget

Ms. Owen noted that, at the 16 April 2019 meeting of the Committee of the Whole Budget, Chief Financial Officer Carson presented the updated financial forecast as of February 2019 and an update on the 2019-2020 budget process.

Ms. Owen noted that the presentation of the staff recommended budget will be on 29 May 2019. The first meeting for public delegations will be 3 June 2019.

8. New Business

Ms. Nadon Campbell requested further details on the number of EAs at Clifford Bowey Public School and Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education to aid in the discussion of the class size ratios.

Mr. Warner noted that VOICE hosted a talent showcasing the deaf and hard of hearing students at Vincent Massey Public School on 11 April 2019.

Ms. Houlden shared that Sir Guy Carleton Secondary School will host a Spring Market on 16 May 2019.

9. Adjournment

The meeting at adjourned at 10:23

_____

Rob Kirwan, Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee