

## **ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2017-18**

**Presented to the Committee of the Whole of the  
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board**

**June 5, 2018**

### **Introduction**

The September 2017 launch of the Education Equity Action Plan reinforced the central role that equity plays in Ontario's public education system. The plan "creates a path to identify and eliminate discriminatory practices, systemic barriers and bias from schools and classrooms. And, as such, allow the ministry to better support the achievement and well-being of all students". This path is in alignment with the Advisory Committee on Equity's (ACE) mandate to advise the Board of Trustees on the review, development, implementation and monitoring of all policies that support student achievement and well-being through a diversity, equity and inclusive education lens, including its engagement with communities.

In 2017-2018, were several changes that occurred in our membership. Firstly, Trustee Anita Olsen Harper completed her term as Trustee representative with ACE, and we welcomed Trustee Erica Braunovan in her new assigned role. Secondly, we welcomed back Trustee Olsen Harper to the table in her new role as the SEAC representative. Thirdly, the committee welcomed Stacey-Ann Morris from Young Leaders Advisory Council, Leslie Giddings from the Spiritual Care Group I Schools and Lisa Montroy from family Services Ottawa. And, lastly, after being at the helm and guiding ACE to strengthen community engagement to ensure diverse voices at the table as well as to provide strategic directions through a diversity, equity and inclusive education lens, Harvey Brown stepped down as Chair of the committee. Under his leadership, ACE expanded its membership base, originated the Excellence in Equity Awards, became a founding partner of A Date with Diversity and was relentless in the call for disaggregation of identity based data to inform policies, programs and practices to support student success and well-being. We were excited with Joanne John's commitment to serve as the interim Chair to support ACE to complete its policy revisions. Both Dr. Olsen Harper and Mr. Brown were acknowledged and thanked for their invaluable contributions.

### **2017-18 Priorities & Achievements**

In 2017-18, the major focus for ACE was the revision of its policy and understanding the Equity Action Plan's alignment with the district's Equity objectives and ACE's strategic focus areas. The committee was also able to provide feedback on OCDSB's Budget Process and Policy [P.140.GOV](#) Indigenous Education Advisory Council. In addition, its 2017-18 engagement focus was on student voice. As a result, student representatives

from the Rainbow Youth Forum, the Indigenous Youth Symposium and the Black Youth Conference were invited to share their lived experiences in the OCDSB, and, the opportunities provided to voice these experiences and the impact on their academic success and well-being.

### ***Policy P. 008.GOV – Advisory Committee on Equity***

During most meetings from September to March, the committee focused on revising P.008.GOV. ACE initiated this review to expand its membership base to embrace and reflect a broader representation of diverse voices within the OCDSB community, and, to strengthen its infrastructure to support this expansion and its overall effectiveness in fulfilling its mandate.

The policy was discussed at Committee of the Whole on April 3<sup>rd</sup> and passed on April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

### ***Ontario's Equity Action Plan***

The Equity Action Plan “stems from the fundamental principle that every student should have the opportunity to succeed personally and academically, regardless of background, identity or personal circumstances.” ACE’s work is in alignment with the specific actions that are recommended to foster organizational change to ensure “...that system leaders, educators, staff and students remain committed to creating and sustaining environments that support an equitable and inclusive education system. This is a necessary condition to ensure all Ontario students feel included, respected and able to succeed”. As a result, throughout the year, various aspects of the Equity Action Plan were explored in relation to the OCDSB’s Equity Strategic goal and ACE’s three areas of focus: research, engagement and value of diverse knowledge. A summary of these conversations are provided below.

#### ***1. Research***

This year, ACE continued to confidently voice their support for data collection and the critical role that it plays in identifying barriers. Similarly, the Equity Action Plan asserts that “collecting and analyzing demographic data will provide a clearer understanding of who Ontario’s students and staff are which will enable our school and system leaders to more precisely address the barriers to student success. Data to be provided on a voluntary basis will include not only race and ethnicity, but also religion, sexual orientation and gender identity. The action plan will ensure that data collection is aligned across the education sector and provide support for school board analysis. The data will be used to inform local decision making.”

ACE welcomes the mandatory and provincial focus of data collection, and the OCDSB’s role in helping to design a framework for the collection of this data. ACE is also in full support of expanding data collection beyond the following identities: gender, First Nation Metis and Inuit (FNMI), English Language Learners and students with exceptionalities.

The committee also continued to distinguish that data is not only about numbers, data also includes the stories of our students, staff, parents and community representatives. To this end, members consistently requested a status update on how its 2017 motion, that was shared with senior staff and Trustees, regarding the collection of the lived experiences of students and staff around discrimination within OCDSB schools.

## **2. Engagement**

During its meetings, ACE continues to connect the relationship between research and school and classroom practices. Members raised questions about diversifying the curriculum to elevate the learning experience of all its students by reflecting the contributions of the full diversity of Canadians and global citizens. For example, members have quoted reports that indicate that racialized students, Indigenous students and student with disabilities are over-represented in the data on suspensions and expulsions. In addition, members have also asked questions about which students are streamed into applied programs and its impact on career pathways.

It is for these reasons that ACE welcomes the Equity Action Plan's focus on school and classroom practices, and in particular its commitment to strengthen inclusive and culturally responsive and relevant teaching, curriculum, assessment and resources; supporting student pathway choices; addressing suspension, expulsion and exclusion rates; and, increasing parent engagement in equity and inclusive education.

In addition to exploring these issues in this year's Date with Diversity, and championing its fourth year of Excellence in Equity Awards for staff, students and community members, one meeting this year focused on learning about the Black Youth Suspension and Expulsion Project that is being managed by the Somali Centre for Family Services (SCFS). The project aims to reduce the number and length of suspensions and expulsions of Black students.

During this conversation, the presenter noted that the program also aims to discover underlying issues, learn more about discrimination and strengthen relationships with students, teachers, and parents. To date, many of the families utilizing the program are new immigrants and there is often a lack of understanding of the system and language barriers which can exacerbate matters. As well, some of these cases go beyond difficulty in communication and result in the suspension of Black students. ACE members shared that the total number of suspensions and expulsions along with accompanying demographics and reasons would be of interest. And, the presenter shared that any statistics collected during the program would be shared with school boards.

ACE also continued to listen for ways to expand their engagement with parents, students and community members. This year, committee members mobilized delegations from the Black community to present their issues and concerns before the Committee of the Whole. The delegations called upon the OCDSB to:

- recognize the United Nations International Decade of People of African Descent;
- collect and disaggregate data and, highlighted the importance of ensuring that members from the Black community are involved in the establishment of data collection processes when the District is prepared to proceed with the proposed initiative;
- publically address concerns around the building of a new and larger jail in the Ottawa area given members of the Black community's concern about the disproportionate number of Black boys who leave school and end up in jail (often referred to as the school to prison pipeline); and,
- establish an "equity office" and expand its current staff to include an "equity and human rights officer".

ACE is pleased that the recognition of the United Nations International Decade of People of African Descent was passed by the Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018. ACE looks forward to seeing how it can support the OCDSB to bring to life this declaration.

During the meeting following the delegation, Trustees and other community members congratulated committee members and the Black community representatives on their delegations. It was noted that the presentations and order of presentations were effective and assisted in providing the trustees with a broader understanding of the issues.

And, for the third year, ACE conducted an engagement focus session. This year the engagement focus was on student voice. To this end, representatives from the Rainbow Youth Forum, the Indigenous Youth Symposium and the Black Youth Conference pilot were invited to share their lived experiences within OCDSB schools and the impact participating in these spaces have had on their academic success and well-being. The students shared their lived experiences in terms of what they want their school to know about them, systemic challenges and what these student voice spaces have provided them. A summary of their thoughts are provided below:

**What do you want your school to know about you:**

- each Indigenous person is different; each culture (First Nation, Metis and Inuit) is different - not all the same culture;
- narrative around trans is always about harm; want to also tell the stories about trans who are brilliant and powerful;
- no matter the differences or similarities, we are all the same; we are flesh and bones and that connects us all; people should know these identities are only part of who I am/who we are;
- smart, educated Black kids are not a needle in the haystack - give us an opportunity
- we talk about inclusion and diversity, but don't talk about racist and other derogatory language in Canada

**Systemic Challenges:**

- placed in ESL class even though I speak English perfectly (racism)
- shift the burden from students to the school board to build relationship with communities in order to build the capacity to address these lived experiences
- make the curriculum more inclusive
- the problem with bullying, it does not look at the root cause, such as racism, transphobia, sexism; homophobia etc.; the problem is discrimination

**Benefits gained from student focused spaces:**

- incredible to have a space to meet and connect with other students who are like them, who have similar experiences like them; just want to be with people who get it;
- identify gaps and barriers, however gaps still exist in the system and support is needed to keep them going and growing
- build capacity for youth to advocate within their schools
- learned a lot about self, about my culture in workshops,
- nice to know our voices are heard;
- good to work with Black teachers to know Black teachers are not a myth - they do exist
- after hard work and positive reaction, makes me feel hopeful for next year;
- nice to see successful Black adults (community support); brought hope

**3. *Value Diversity of Knowledge***

ACE's focus on valuing diversity of knowledge speaks to the capacity of OCDSB staff members to understand and value different ways of knowing, and to be able to address world issues when they appear in their learning or working environment. This knowledge capacity is in alignment with the Education Action Plan's establishment of an "equity knowledge network ... for applied education research to facilitate knowledge mobilization processes to improve education and leadership conditions and supports needed to advance equity."

As well, through the leadership, governance and human resource practices, the plan supports ACE's call for a more representative workforce "to ensure that the diversity of the teachers, staff and school system leaders in Ontario schools reflects the diversity of their students through its recruitment, hiring and promotion of educators and school and system leaders". It also includes, professional development focused on equity, inclusion and human rights. These areas in alignment with ACE's conversations around increasing the representation rates of the OCDSBs workforce to reflect the students in the schools, and how do students see themselves reflected in the curriculum.

## Key Next Steps

In 2018-19 as the OCDSB continues growing equity, ACE recommends the district embarks on the following:

- establish a central equity office of equity within the district, including a superintendent whose portfolio is exclusively equity;
- prepare a district-wide Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy and Action Plan with measurable indicators for its Equity Pillar;
- identify measures to track physical and psychological safety in classrooms before and after the delivery of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy training;
- examine hiring practices to look at the representation rates in relation to its student and parent populations; and, the equitable distribution of funds for specific positions that may arise as this year funds became available for guidance counsellors;
- explore the school to prison pipeline;
- develop a diversity, equity and inclusion lens to support the work of schools and departments;
- develop a communications strategy around equity which includes:
  - providing monthly updates to ACE around the OCDSB's commitment to collect and disaggregate identify based data to identify and eliminate systemic barriers and to ensure the supports are in place for students who could potentially disengage, experience suspensions and expulsions and subsequently leave school early;
  - capture and share stories of lived experiences of staff, students and parents across the district;
  - internal communications to staff regarding its equity plan, including opportunities for them to share the work they are doing in their schools or departments and promotion of opportunities such as the Excellence in Equity Awards
  - external communications with diverse communities and community partners about OCDSB's equity work to enhance engagement moving forward

ACE will continue to do its part to contribute by:

- strengthening its membership base to ensure diverse voices are at the table based on our newly revised policy;
- continue its community outreach forums to hear the stories to gain a better understanding of the experiences of students, staff and communities
- leveraging the knowledge and skills of non-voting members and guests through working and ad hoc groups;
- Continue to apply a diversity and inclusion lens on OCDSB policies, programs and practices.

## **Conclusion**

A special thank you to ACE's members and community guests for their on-going commitment to contribute to the OCDSB's efforts to foster a welcoming, caring and inclusive learning and working environment. Thank you to our community members Elaine Hayles, Chukwuemeka Ndukwe, Nadine Clarke, who in addition to family, work and other priorities, continue to volunteer to attend monthly meetings. A special thank you to our community agency representatives: Jane Fjeld, Youth Services Bureau, Saadia Nuh from the Ottawa Carleton Immigration Services Organization, Lisa Montroy from Family Services Ottawa and Leslie Giddings from the Spiritual Care Group in Secondary Schools.

We are thankful to our Trustee representative Erica Braunovan. As well, we wish to recognize Trustee Dr. Anita Olsen Harper who represents SEAC, Trustees Donna Blackburn and Chris Ellis who regularly attend the meetings to provide support to the equity work that is unfolding in the OCDSB. We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the consistent presence of the following regular guests: Professor Timothy Stanley, Bob Dawson and Stacey-Ann Morris.

And, we would like to acknowledge the ongoing support and leadership of Dorothy Baker, Superintendent of Curriculum; Jacqueline Lawrence, Diversity & Equity Coordinator; and Nicole Guthrie, Committee Coordinator.

## Appendix A: ACE COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND DISTRIBUTION LIST (2017-2018)

	NAME	MEMBER AFFILIATION
1	Chukwuemeka Ndukwe	Community Rep
2	Elaine Hayles	Community Rep
3	Harvey Brown	Community Rep
4	Nadine Clarke	Community Rep
5	Joanne John	Chair, ACE
6	Jane Fjeld	Youth Services Bureau
7	Saadia Nuh	Ottawa Community Services Organization OCISO
8	Elaine Kicknosway	First Nation Community
9	Lisa Montroy	Family Services Ottawa
10	Leslie Giddings	Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools
11	Erica Braunovan	Trustee Representative to ACE
12	Donna Blackburn	Trustee
13	Chris Ellis	Trustee
14	Anita Olsen-Harper	Trustee/SEAC
15	Dorothy Baker	Superintendent of Instruction
16	Janice McCoy	Superintendent of Human Resources
17	Sherwyn Solomon	Principal, York
18	Jacqueline Lawrence	Diversity & Equity Coordinator
19	David Sutton	OCDSB
20	Nancy Henry	Aboriginal Education Instructional Coach
21	Ken Mak	OCDSB
22	Jillian Ade	OCDSB
23	Jimmy Pai	OCDSB
24	Kim Zink	OCDSB
25	Nicole Guthrie	OCDSB
26	David Wildman	OCEOTA
27	Bob Dawson	Community
28	Hindia Mohamoud	OLIP
29	Denise Deby	OLIP
30	Danaita Mehreteab	Young Leaders Advisory Council
31	Ayesha Thorne	Young Leaders Advisory Council
32	Faiza F Hass	Young Leaders Advisory Council
33	Stacey-Ann Morris	Young Leaders Advisory Council
34	Professor Timothy Stanley	University of Ottawa
35	Eldon Holder	Community Member at large
36	Professor Awad Ibrahim	Community Member at large
37	Nimao Ali	EISC of Ontario