



REPORT NO.08

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

TO: The Committee of the Whole (Public)

Date: 2 October 2018

September 12, 2018

7:00 pm

Trustees' Committee Room

133 Greenbank Road

Ottawa, Ontario

ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES: Dragos Popa, Association for Bright Children of Ontario; Mark Wylie, Down Syndrome Association; Katie Ralph, Autism Ontario; Dana Somayaji, Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils (OCASC); Michael Bates, Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton (LDAOC); Terry Warner, VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children; and Ian Morris, Ontario Associations for Families of Children with Communication Disorders (OAFCCD).

TRUSTEE MEMBERS: Christine Boothby.

OTHER TRUSTEES: Donna Blackburn and Chris Ellis.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES: Rob Kirwan, Tina Morden and Sonia Campbell-Nadon.

NON-VOTING REPRESENTATIVES: Catherine Houlden, Ontario Secondary Teachers' Federation (Teachers); Jean Trant, Ontario Secondary Teachers' Federation (SSP); and Jennifer Titley, Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation.

STAFF: Peter Symmonds, Superintendent of Learning Support Services; Janice McCoy, Superintendent of Human Resource, Amy Hannah, System Principal of Learning Support Services; and Nicole Guthrie Board/Committee Coordinator.

1. Call to Order

Chair Kirwan called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Trustee Blackburn advised she would be recording the meeting.

2. Approval of the Agenda

In response to a query from Mr. Popa, Superintendent Symmonds indicated that he will be providing an update on the Gifted Advisory Group as part of the department update. Mr. Popa indicated that he would also provide an update on the Gifted Advisory Group.

Moved by Terry Warner,

THAT the agenda be approved.

- Carried -

3. Delegations

There were no delegations.

4. Member Information

Mr. Warner noted that the voice summer camp held at W.E. Gowlings Public School. was a success. Voice was able to secure additional funding for the camp through generous benefactors. He encouraged the other associations to prioritize fundraising to enable learning opportunities for students. Mr. Warner added that scholarships applications for deaf and hard of hearing students moving on to post-secondary education are open.

Mr. Morris noted that Ontario Associations Families of Children with Communication Disorders received notice that there would be a delay in the implementation of the province's Special Needs Strategy (SNS). The trial SNS was scheduled to launch in September. Superintendent Symmonds responded that Manager Kay had an information session on the SNS with staff on 11 September 2018. He indicated that he would followup with Manager Kay on the status of the program launch.

Chair Kirwan advised that John Downing will be resigning as the primary member of Autism Ontario, Ottawa Chapter and that Katie Ralph will be taking on the primary role with Samantha Banning assuming the role of alternate. He noted that Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton (LDAO-C) is also changing its membership. Michael Bates will become the alternate and Linda Barbetta will be returning as the primary member for LDAO-C.

Mr. Warner announced that Jim Harris will be assuming the role of the primary member for Voice and that he would remain the alternate member.

Chair Kirwan advised that the appointments must be authorised by the Board and that a report outlining the changes will be presented to the Board on 25 September 2018.

4.1 Appointment of Association Representatives and Alternates

Chair Kirwan advised the members that the term of local associations and community representatives will expire on 30 November 2018. The term of SEAC membership is associated with the term of office of the Board and the municipal elections. The new Board will be formally acknowledged at the 3 December 2018 inaugural meeting.

Chair Kirwan indicated that the president of the association must provide Board Services with the name of their primary and alternate member no

later than 23 November 2018. A report outlining the request for appointments of all associations will be included in the 3 December 2018 Board Agenda. He added that correspondence regarding the process has been sent to all SEAC members and that Manager Mallan will approach all of the eligible associations with the request and the timelines for submission.

Chair Kirwan advised that the process for community representatives is different and that a call for applications will be distributed through the District's communication channels. Current community representatives must re-submit an application if they wish to be considered for the 2018-2022 term. The trustees currently appointed to SEAC form the membership sub-committee and will make the determination for appointment with the assistance of Superintendent Symmonds and Manager Mallan. He encouraged the current community representatives to follow the process as advertised.

In response to a query from Mr. Wylie regarding incumbents, Superintendent Symmonds responded that the membership sub-committee reviews the applications, determines the interview questions, selects candidates for interview and makes the final selection.

5. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

5.1 Report 7, 06 June 2018

Moved by Michael Bates,

THAT Special Education Advisory Committee Report 7, dated 06 June 2018, be received.

The Committee requested that the 5th bullet of section 8 on page 11 be revised to include the word "website" at the end of the sentence.

Moved by Michael Bates,

THAT Special Education Advisory Committee Report 7, dated 06 June 2018, be received as amended.

- Carried -

5.2 Review of Long Range Agenda

Chair Kirwan encouraged members to provide additional topics for discussion.

Superintendent Symmonds queried the intent of item 5 and indicated he could, with a broader understanding of the topic, provide details and a

possible speaker. Chair Kirwan indicated that the item would be further discussed at the next SEAC agenda prep meeting in late September.

Mr. Popa queried the decision to discuss the Pilot Project for Gifted in November. Chair Kirwan indicated that the report on the subject was not available for the September meeting and the timelines required its move to November.

Mr. Warner indicated that speaking points for item 6 will be provided to Chair Kirwan.

5.3 Motion/Action Tracking Report, Business Arising

Chair Kirwan advised that the action tracking captures motions/actions from previous meetings and he encouraged members to follow up on items that are outstanding or have not been addressed.

In response to a query from Trustee Boothby regarding item 2, Superintendent Symmonds advised that the item is a placeholder to encourage communication on the ongoing inter-department collaboration with Curriculum Services. The two departments, including Business and Learning Technology (B<) are becoming more aligned in the work and have regular meetings to better understand and support each other. He added that the item was placed on the tracker as a result of the Learning Disabilities (LD) and math collaboration and the work that was being undertaken. Chair Kirwan indicated that the item could be removed but he hoped Superintendent Symmonds would continue to bring forward interdepartmental updates during the department update.

Mr. Bates indicated that item 5 is complete and can be removed.

Ms. Houlden indicated that she had no update on item 7. The Annual Student Achievement Report (ASAR) has not yet been released. She noted that the issue continues to be system wide and indicated the item should remain on the action tracking report.

Chair Kirwan indicated that item 8 is complete and can be removed.

Mr. Popa advised that he has no update on item 9. Ms. Houlden queried whether or not the action item should be expanded to include other exceptionalities and highlighted behaviour as an area where more data would be of interest for staff. She indicated that SEAC should be interested in the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) data of all specialized students. Mr. Wylie noted that the EQAO data for Gifted students is tracked differently and that the Association for Bright Children of Ontario (ABC) wish to access the information.

Superintendent Symmonds advised that he will approach the Research, Evaluation & Analytics Division (READ) team with the request. He

indicated that he was unsure of the scope of the work involved in the data extraction. Typically a request of this scope and scale is a result of a major project and he indicated it may not be possible. Superintendent Symmonds will provide an update at the 10 October 2018 SEAC meeting.

Trustee Boothby commented that the item was placed on the tracker as a result of the Gifted report which indicated the District had the EQAO data of Gifted students. She added that she would like to have a better understanding of the EQAO data for all exceptionalities. She queried whether or not students are asked to self-identify their exceptionality, race, and ethnicity. Superintendent Symmonds indicated that much of the identification information is input directly from the student information system. The students are not asked to self-identify.

Superintendent Symmonds advised that the data collected as a part of the Gifted report was collected as part of the Gifted review and represented 18 months worth of work.

Vice-Chair Somayaji requested the actions attributed to Superintendent Grigoriev be attributed to Superintendent Symmonds.

6. Action/Discussion/Information Items

6.1 Memo 18-107, Accessibility Report (J.McCoy, ext. 8207)

Your committee had before it Memo 18-107, Accessibility Report. The District is required under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) to prepare an accessibility report on the progress of measures taken to implement its multi-year accessibility plan.

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

- The District maintains an Accessibility Working Group (AWG) with representation from all stakeholder groups including parents of students with special needs and staff that work with students with special needs;
- The memorandum contains the highlights of the annual accessibility report which is shared with the Board and the public;
- The report provides an overview and update on progress in undertaking the projects within the different departments across the District in meeting and exceeding the obligations under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the accompanying regulations;
- The AODA is focused on ensuring accessibility in 5 key areas:
 - information and communication
 - customer service
 - employment

- physical public spaces
- transportation
- The report focuses specifically on the results and work that occurred within the 2017-2018 school year;
- The report includes a summary of implementation activities which outlines the legislative requirements and a summary of corresponding actions to ensure the District is in compliance;
- The requirement of the AODA are ongoing and the District works diligently to ensure that students, parents, staff and visitors find an accessible environment;
- The report also identifies areas of focus for the 2018-2019 school year;
- The AWG will be investigating the recently released policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities. The policy was developed by the Ontario Human Rights Commission and identifies several recommendations for governments, school districts and universities and colleges; and
- Ms. Houlden shared that in her experience, requests for items related to accessibility are acted upon immediately. She praised the District's ongoing prioritization of accessibility and the immediate response to requests.

7. Department Update

Superintendent Symmonds introduced himself to the members and provided a brief biography of his teaching and administrative accomplishments. He noted that he assumed the leadership of the Learning Support Services (LSS) department in late August 2018.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that, since the transition to the Conservative provincial government, there have been several announcements. The province has indicated its intent to shift focus to the fundamentals of mathematics which will involve further cross departmental work with Curriculum Services (CS). The District has been shifting to concept of number and number relations and all school learning plans have a focus on mathematics. LSS and CS were involved in the session with school principals to discuss their learning plans.

Superintendent Symmonds advised that a memo from the province outlined some changes to funding for the 2018-2019 school year. He noted that there would be an increase to the Special Education Per Pupil Amount (SEPPA). Funds that were allocated by the former government have been expanded to include Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and mental health. Funding will also be provided to improve the graduation rate of indigenous students. The Special Incidence Portion (SIP) will not increase as originally proposed, however that particular funding stream has always been conditional on an application and a demonstrated need.

The ASD pilots, "The Art of Conversation" and "The Art of Play", have been extended and will run again in the fall of 2018 and the spring of 2019 at 6 new schools.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy Statement on Students with Special Education Needs is currently being reviewed by LSS staff and it contains several ideas and notions related to the work of LSS. Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a high yield strategy identified in the province's Learning For All document, is a recurring theme.

Superintendent Symmonds advised that in June 2018 there was a presentation of materials in relation to the interest academy and supports for the gifted learner in the regular classroom. Two documents created by LSS staff in consultation with the Gifted Advisory Group were presented. He noted that there was a written response to the presentation from some members of the Gifted Advisory Group and indicated that a response is forthcoming.

Mr. Popa acknowledged that a discussion on the pilot project did occur but that several members of the Gifted Advisory Group expressed their concern over the process and the outcomes in a letter addressed to the Director of Education, Superintendent Grigoriev, Superintendent Symmonds and Chair Kirwan. In the letter Mr. Popa, Ms. Somayaji, Ms. Miedema and Trustee Boothby outlined their frustration with the lack of scope and detail within the proposal that was brought forward in June. They note that the proposal will do little to support Gifted students in the regular classroom.

Mr. Popa shared that ABC is looking for guidance on how to proceed and that the issues of stakeholder involvement and transparency impact all SEAC members, and for that, reason he requested that the letter be formally discussed by the committee.

Chair Kirwan advised the members that the letter will be added as a discussion item for the 10 October 2018 SEAC and that the long range agenda would be updated accordingly.

7.1 Special Education Plan

Chair Kirwan requested that SEAC review the entire Special Education Plan by March 2019. The review is critical to staff and their preparation of the document which must be sent to the province. Principal Hannah advised elements of the Special Education Plan will be incorporated into each agenda for review. She noted that she is working closely with Communications to further improve the overall look and feel of the plan.

a. Provincial and Demonstration Schools in Ontario

Principal Hannah advised that purpose of this section is to provide the public with information about the provincial and demonstration schools that are operated for students who are deaf, blind, or deaf-

blind, or who have severe learning disabilities, which may include attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). She noted that the District is required to share statistics of those students who attend the schools. During the 2017-2018 school year the District had 5 students in attendance at provincial and demonstration schools, in the final report for the 2018-2019 school year the number will decrease to 4 due to a graduation.

Principal Hannah advised that errors and omissions within the names, titles and school website information will be corrected. She noted that the province has amended their document to categorize blind and deaf blind as blind, low vision and deaf-blind. The District will amend the plan to be in alignment with the province.

In response to a query from Vice-Chair Somayaji, Principal Hannah advised that the chart on folio 49 can be reorganized for clarity to better distinguish students attending a provincial school and those attending a demonstration school.

In response to a query from Mr. Bates, Principal Hannah advised that the text that includes the wording "severe learning disabilities" is the exact wording used by the Ministry. Principal Hannah noted that the province encourages and prioritizes learning at the student's home school and that only in severe instances would a student be moved to a provincial or demonstration school. The transfer would only be required when the needs cannot be met in the regular school within the home District.

b. Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities

Principal Hannah advised that the categories and definitions of exceptionalities are set out by the Ministry. She noted that the section is now formatted differently and the spelling errors will be remedied.

Superintendent Symmonds queried whether or not Voice intends to lobby the province for a change to the definition of deaf and hard as a communication disorder. Mr. Warner responded that in recent correspondence with the Ministry, it was unlikely a change would be made for the 2018-2019 Special Education Plan. Mr. Warner expressed the view that the new Conservative government may be more receptive to category changes.

c. Roles and Responsibilities

Principal Hannah advised that the roles and responsibilities section of the Special Education Plan is prescribed by the Ministry and therefore cannot be modified or edited at the District level. She noted that Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) were added as

partners in the plan in 2018. Superintendent Symmonds will be added as the Superintendent of Learning Support Services and any spelling or grammatical errors will be amended.

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

- Errors and omissions noted by members can be brought to the attention of Principal Hannah by email;
- In response to a query from Vice-Chair Somayaji regarding the responsibility to create and maintain a guide of SEAC members and contact information, Principal Hannah indicated that the list of members is included in the plan. Chair Kirwan requested all members ensure their contact information is correct; and
- In response to a query from Mr. Popa, Chair Kirwan responded that parents may periodically approach individual SEAC members for support. He noted that it is the responsibility of the member to refer parents to the SEAC meetings and bring forward issues for discussion as warranted.

8. Committee Reports

Superintendent Symmonds queried whether or not a SEAC representative to the Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Programs was required. Mr. Warner agreed to continue to serve as the representative.

8.1 Advisory Committee on Equity

a. Appointment of representative

Chair Kirwan indicated that Trustee Olsen Harper had served as the SEAC representative to the Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE). He suggested the appointment remain on the agenda.

8.2 Parent Involvement Committee

a. Appointment of representative

Sonia Campbell Nadon volunteered to represent SEAC at the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) meetings.

8.3 Board

a. Appointment of representative

Chair Kirwan volunteered to represent SEAC at Board meetings. Vice-Chair Somayaji will be the alternate.

8.4 Committee of the Whole

a. Appointment of representative

Vice-Chair Somayaji volunteered to represent SEAC at Committee of the Whole (COW) meetings. Mark Wylie will be the alternate.

8.5 Committee of the Whole, Budget

a. Appointment of representative

Chair Kirwan advised that the role of the representative will be to assess the budget for investments in Special Education and make suggestions and recommendations to staff and trustees. Chair Kirwan indicated that he intends to form a budget sub-committee. The small working group will meet with Chief Financial Officer Carson and Superintendent Symmonds to discuss the 2019-2020 budget.

Chair Kirwan suggested the item remain on the October agenda.

9. New Business

Superintendent Symmonds advised that the process to replace the Director of Education is underway. The job post has closed and an ad-hoc committee of trustees is interviewing applicants. He added that he expects there will be an announcement this fall.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Rob Kirwan, Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee