



SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

**Wednesday, June 12, 2019, 7:00 pm
Trustees' Committee Room
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario**

- Members:** Christine Boothby (Trustee), Rob Campbell (Trustee), Mark Wylie (Down Syndrome Association), Andrea Nelson (Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton, Alternate), Donna Owen (Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils), Jim Harris (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children), Terry Warner (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children, Alternate), Susan Cowin (Community Representative), Sonia Nadon-Campbell (Community Representative), Susan Gardner (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation), Nancy Dlouhy (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Operations Committee), Jean Trant (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, SSP), Catherine Houlden (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Teachers), Lisa Paterick (VIEWS for the Visually Impaired)
- Staff and Guests:** Lynn Scott (Trustee), Donna Blackburn (Trustee), Erica Braunovan (Trustee), Brett Reynolds (Associate Director of Education), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Colin Anderson (System Principal Safe Schools), Stacey Kay (Manager of Learning Support Services), Dr. Petra Duschner (Manager of Mental Health and Critical Services), Amy Hannah (System Principal of Learning Support Services), Christine Kessler (System Principal of Learning Support 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.

Chair Kirwan noted that item 6.4, Section J, should be removed and that item 6.5, Special Education Plan 2019 and Special Education Report 2019, will follow item 6.1.

Moved by Christine Boothby,

That the agenda be approved, as amended.

Carried

3. Delegations

There were no delegations.

4. Member Update

There was no member update.

5. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

5.1 15 May 2019

Moved by Jim Harris,

That the SEAC report dated 15 May 2019 be received.

Ms. Houlden recommended the following change to her comment and query on page 2 of the agenda package. "Teachers at Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education and Clifford Bowey Public School are responsible not only for providing quality instruction, but also for the management of each student's complex care including, therapies, personal care, coordinating with nursing and physical therapists and occupational therapists, working with families, and managing transitions. The needs of the students at these locations are becoming more complex and, therefore, consideration must be given for classes for multiple exceptionalities, which, under the Education Act mandates a class size of six."

Trustee Boothby requested that the following sentence be added to the second paragraph under "Storefront" on page 10 of the agenda package:

"One important aspect of Storefront is a location outside the more traditional high school locations like OTSS, to promote more adult post-secondary environment, responsibilities and independence."

Moved by Jim Harris,

That the SEAC report dated 15 May 2019 be received, as amended.

Carried

5.2 Review of Long Range Agenda

The long range agenda was provided for information.

Reporting and ratios of students in the classroom at both Clifford Bowey Public School and Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education will be added to the long range agenda for discussion in the fall of 2019.

5.3 Motion/Action Tracking Report, Business Arising

The motion action tracking report was provided for information.

6. Action/Discussion/Information Items

6.1 Report 19-062, Student Suspension Report for 2017-2018 School Year

Associate Director Reynolds with the aid of a Powerpoint presentation guided the committee through Report 19-062, Student Suspension Report for 2017-2018 School Year.

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

- A suspension may be issued, resulting in the student's removal from the school. Principals may utilize in-school sanctions to permit the students safe return to school after the suspension period but there is no in-school suspension;
- Exclusions are not included in the report as there are currently no mechanisms to record the data. Suspensions are a form of discipline and exclusions are not disciplinary. Exclusions may be applied to students to whom discipline is inappropriate;
- Reporting protocol and coding, implemented in 2017 to attempt to capture exclusions, has unfortunately been inconsistent and applied incorrectly, which has impacted the reliability of the data. The District aims to have accurate data on student exclusions by the end of 2019-2020;
- Ms. Owen expressed concern over the lack of a definitive policy and procedure despite several requests from SEAC over the last number of years. Associate Director Reynolds responded that the procedure is currently in draft form and he anticipates it will be complete by the end of the 2019-2020 school year. He added that parents are informed of exclusions with a letter outlining the reasons for the exclusion and the remedies and advising them of the right to appeal;
- Trustee Campbell advised that he has served a notice of motion regarding student exclusions;
- Chair Kirwan advised that the Ontario Ombudsman's Office had provided strong guidance for school boards on exclusions and

expressed concern that the District has not acted on the recommendation;

- A person whose presence in the school would be detrimental to the physical or mental well-being of pupils may be excluded;
- Chair Kirwan remarked that a report on the frequency of exclusions and the application of District resources to support students is critical to the understanding of the issue and preventing and reducing the number of exclusions;
- The average length of an exclusion is typically four days. Some may extend to several weeks as appropriate;
- Associate Director Reynolds encouraged the members to direct parent concerns regarding exclusions to Superintendents;
- If a parent refuses to remove a child from the school, the only authority that a principal has to deny the child access to school is suspension or exclusion;
- Ms. Gardner commented that the safety of staff is also important. She noted that in order for the student to remain in the school a principal must evaluate whether or not the school has the additional resources necessary to keep the student, other students and staff safe;
- Ms. Dlouhy commented that the principal makes a decision on a case by case basis. She noted that the decision to contact the parent is usually made after all strategies have been exhausted. She concurred with Associate Director Reynolds on the challenge of establishing a procedure due to the variety of factors when dealing with exclusions; and
- Trustee Campbell noted the importance of accurate exclusion and suspension data to ensure staff can provide the necessary resources. The data will help inform strategy and practice.

6.2 Report 19-064, Special Education Plan 2019 and Special Education Report 2019

Your committee had before it Report 19-064, Special Education Plan 2019 and Special Education Report, seeking the approval of the plan. Chair Kirwan noted that over the course of the 2018-2019 school year, SEAC has reviewed and provided input into all of the standards that comprise the plan.

Moved by Mark Wylie,

- A. THAT the 2018-2019 Special Education Plan, attached as Appendix A to Report No. 19-064, be approved; and
- B. THAT the 2019 Special Education Report, attached as Appendix B to Report No.19-064, be approved.

During a discussion of the report, the following points were noted:

- Many of the recommendations made by SEAC have been incorporated but opportunities exist to build on the work. Staff will continue to work on simplifying the language for parents and increase opportunities for parents and community members to provide input;
- The Special Education Plan is intended to be an online document and the plan will be available on the District's website;
- Ms. Owen requested that the contact email for OCASC be revised to seac@ocasc.ca; and
- In response to a query from Ms. Owen regarding the reference to an invitation to the community inviting feedback, Staff noted that the Special Education Report page on the District website encourages comments, suggestions or feedback be sent to System Principal Hannah. SEAC reviews each of the sections of the Special Education Plan over the course of the year. SEAC meetings are open to the public and parents and community members are welcome to provide input through delegation.

Moved by Mark Wylie,

- A. **THAT the 2018-2019 Special Education Plan, attached as Appendix A to Report No. 19-064, be approved, as amended; and**
- B. **THAT the 2019 Special Education Report, attached as Appendix B to Report No.19-064, be approved.**

Carried

6.3 Memo 19-072, Draft Mental Health Strategy

Your committee had before it Memo 19-072, presenting the Draft Mental Health Strategy.

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

- The examples provided in the draft do not represent an exhaustive list of those specific populations the plan aims to support. The draft mental health plan aims to be inclusive;

- Trustee Campbell queried the training of staff on identifying for referral as opposed to diagnosis. Dr. Duschner noted that the plan provides for the training of staff in awareness to assist staff in recognizing signs and symptoms. Staff will be trained to observe major changes in behaviour and mood. Educators can then engage in conversations with the family based on the classroom observations. The observations can also be brought to the attention of the multi-disciplinary team who can further evaluate the need for further assessment and involved that psychology staff who are qualified to make a diagnosis should it be warranted;
- Superintendent Symmonds highlighted the reference to the document entitled "Supporting Minds" which provides accessible information for teachers to help raise awareness and competencies to recognize early signs. The Ontario College of Teachers has also issued a professional advisory on mental health;
- The District has received input from parents in the spring of last year and will be sharing the draft with community partners in the fall of 2019;
- The action plans referenced on page 45 will be available should the plan be approved. The action plan is the work plan of the department;
- Dr. Duschner noted that measuring the impact and success of the plan and the work in mental health is difficult. It is difficult to identify one specific strategy that is having an impact. The work must be evaluated in a broader context and through work with community partners and provincial counterparts to determine effective indicators and measures;
- Mr. Harris requested that SEAC continue to be apprised of work on the plan;
- Mr. Wylie expressed concern over the size and scope. He noted that the District must continue to focus on its role as educators and not diagnosticians. Dr Duschner noted that should the school boards be effective in the promotion of student achievement they must also address student well-being. Students cannot perform to their full potential unless they are feeling well. There is no expectation that educators become diagnosticians, but they can observe changes in students mood and behaviour;
- The provincial government focus is a general emphasis at the tier one, classroom level, mental health professional support in schools focussing on intervention at the tier 2 and 3 levels;

- Dr. Duschner noted that tracking data and the mechanism for recording issues within the system either through the Ontario School Record (OSR) is difficult. Some students have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), some have been identified with a specific exceptionality through the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) and some are not identified, making reporting challenging;
- Information regarding individual students may be communicated through conversations in the school among the teachers, with the family members and the multi-disciplinary team. A conversation with and consent form from parents is required in order to share information as there is still a stigma associated with mental health;
- The learning skills section of the student report card does allow for some reference to well being; and
- The mental health steering committee was established in June 2018 Further consultation on the plan with continue into the fall of 2019.

6.4 Integration and Support for Special Education Students

The committee worked in small, independent groups to formulate responses to three guiding questions with respect to the concept of inclusion. The responses (attached as Appendix A) will be used to continue the discussion at a SEAC meeting in the fall of 2019.

6.5 Report 19-063, Learning Disabilities Specialized Intervention Program (LD SIP) Program Monitoring Results

Your committee had before it Report 19-063, outlining the monitoring results for the Learning Disabilities Specialized Intervention Program (LD SIP).

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

- A non-standardized version of the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test, 3rd Edition (WIAT) was administered to all LD SIP students to help evaluate the academic outcomes of the students. The WIAT results indicated that students made academic gains and had made improvements against their performance on standardized tests of age-matched peers;
- Integration is challenging for LD SIP students, as evidenced by input from the parents and the students themselves;
- The integration is important to ensure that students are able to face challenges and build important resilience skills to foster independence;

- The WIAT post-test was the modified unstandardized version. The modification enabled the students to use assistive technology in the written expression portion which deviates from the standard test administration protocol;
- The LD SIP is a one year program with an option for a second year. Most students remain in the program for two years and the District has no immediate plans to change the program length. The goal is to prepare students for the pathway of their choosing at the secondary level;
- Referrals for 2019-2020 have increased the number of program classes;
- LSS will be providing professional development (PD) for teachers receiving students during the integration part of the day to help ease LD SIP students' transition to the regular classroom. This will help build system wide capacity to help support all LD students in the regular classroom;
- Ms. Nelson queried the decision to begin the LD SIP program in grade five when evidence supports early interventions. Manager Kay noted the the decision was suggested during the LD Review and the District has made investments in early interventions at the primary/junior level through the implementation of the Empower Reading program, the Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program as well as tier 3 support for students struggling with decoding. Many of those supports can be effectively delivered in the regular classroom. By grade five, based on the opinions of psychological staff, those who have not responded to intensive interventions in earlier grades may access the supports within the LD SIP;
- In response to a query from Ms. Nelson regarding LD SIP students missing out on elements within the regular classroom, System Principal Kessler advised that the LD SIP model has been changed to promoted balance within the student's to ensure they do not fall behind when they return to the regular classroom. Principals of schools with LD SIP carefully consider schedules and timetabling with LD SIP in mind to avoid student's from missing out. Students would never miss an entire subject area;
- LD SIP serves the most severe LD students. Most students with LD can be served in the regular classroom. LD SIP is designed for students that despite early interventions are still lacking academic skills and require a different service delivery model to address the challenges and to develop compensatory strategies;

- LD SIP enables the District to reach more students than the previous model with an empowered approach and relies on meta-cognition;
- The social-emotional component of the program is an important element of the LD SIP and has a significant impact on learners;
- Mr. Wylie commended the LSS team on the report and the programs ability to measure a benefit;
- Ms. Glance advised that having worked in the program she has witnessed the increase in confidence and self-esteem of the LD SIP students as they work on building integration skills;
- Ms. Owen requested that the comments from Dr. Maggie Memon be shared with all SEAC members;
- Ms. Houlden commented on the difficulty some students of small, congregated classes face when they transition to high school. She noted that the integration element of the LD SIP is essential to prepare students for secondary education and that the students transitioning from the LD SIP are ahead of their peers; and
- LSS will be monitoring the LD SIP students longitudinally as they leave the program and progress through the secondary level. LSS will use the WIAT, the results of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), credit attainment and other measures to assess student success.

7. Department Update

Superintendent Symmonds noted the following in his department update:

- The reduction of the itinerant behaviour teacher (IBT) will be offset with the addition of three social-emotional learning teachers;
- One board-certified behaviour analyst (BCBA) was approved by the Board in January 2019. Another two BCBAs were added as part of the 2019-2020 Budget;
- An applied behaviour analysis (ABA) coordinator will help provide support as the provinces shifts to an amended Ontario Autism Program;
- LSS plan to utilize the expertise of the BCBAs to determine the function of student behaviour and help reduce unwanted behaviour;
- LSS will trial the use of a communicative disorder assistant (CDA) to work in collaboration with speech language pathologists (SLP);
- 1.5 FTE psychologist and 0.5 FTE social worker will continue to support high needs areas;

- There has been no further direction from the Ministry regarding the changes to the Ontario Autism Program. A provincial panel has been struck to review the input from the Ministry consultation. LSS anticipates the enrollment of approximately 150 new ASD students between September and November 2019 as the extension funding terminates;
- The Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) has established a point of contact with the District to help staff; and
- The BCBAs will be working with both students and staff.

8. Committee Reports

8.1 Advisory Committee on Equity

Ms. Nadon-Campbell advised that the 23 May 2019 meeting of the Advisory Committee on Equity featured a discussion on the mental health strategy and a presentation of student voice.

8.3 Board

There was no report from the Board.

8.4 Committee of the Whole Budget

Ms. Owen noted that 2019-2020 Budget passed on 10 June 2019. She noted that the budget is status quo. Staff seek to maintain stability while determining how to address anticipated reductions in grants. The 2019-2020 Budget features investments in special education, health and safety, and student focused technology.

Ms. Owen noted that some of the positions funded by the Local Priorities Fund (LPF) have been maintained for 2019-2020 even though the funding has been eliminated.

The District has increased its spending in Special Education by 7% percent above what the Ministry funds and this will need to be addressed in subsequent budgets.

9. New Business

Trustee Boothby requested that the padlet exercise from the integration and support for special education students be shared with Trustee Lyra Evans, Ian Morris and Katie Ralph.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

Rob Kirwan, Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee