

## SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, October 9, 2019, 7:00 pm  
Trustees' Committee Room  
133 Greenbank Road  
Ottawa, Ontario

Members: Rob Kirwan (Community Representative), Christine Boothby (Trustee), Rob Campbell (Trustee), Lyra Evans (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), Safina Dewshi (Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils, Alternate), Jim Harris (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children), Susan Cowin (Community Representative), Sonia Nadon-Campbell (Community Representative), Nicole Ullmark (Easter Seals Ontario), Lisa Paterick (VIEWS for the Visually Impaired)

Association Representatives (Non Voting): Jennifer Titley (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), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Stacey Kay (Manager of Learning Support Services), Dr. Petra Duschner (Manager of Mental Health and Critical Services), Leigh Fenton (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Call to Order

Chair Kirwan called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.

2. Approval of the Agenda

**Moved by Jim Harris**

**THAT the agenda be approved.**

**Carried**

4. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

#### 4.1 Report 11 September 2019

Moved by Ian Morris,

THAT the report from the 11 September 2019 SEAC meeting be received.

Mr. Morris noted there were instances of missing salutations in the bulleted list in section 6.1 a.

Ms. McLaren Kennedy requested her comment regarding The OCDSB Model for Special Education be revised to read, "Ms. McLaren Kennedy contended that it is important to keep people a part of the community and be aware that inclusion rather than specialized classroom placements should be the goal. Focusing on separating children creates an "otherness" that is not inclusive. She urged the committee to consider whether, to the best of the abilities of District staff, there has been effective management of the existing policy and a move to increase the effectiveness of the system that is in place today. Realizing the potential of the current operating policy is preferable to deviating in another direction and beginning anew."

**Moved by Ian Morris,**

**THAT the report from the 11 September 2019 SEAC meeting be received, as amended.**

**Carried**

#### 4.2 Review of Long Range Agenda

The long range agenda was provided for information.

Trustee Lyra Evans requested resolute timelines for items designated with the term To-Be-Decided (TBD). Superintendent Symmonds responded that there are times where the District is unsure of the timelines, as updates from the government inform many of the items on the long range agenda.

Trustee Boothby requested the addition of Decommissioned Body Break Rooms. It is her understanding that there are schools in Zone 2 where body break rooms are being decommissioned to accommodate an increase in student population. She suggested the discussion focus on the number of decommissioned body break rooms and the identification of methods to replace the programming. Superintendent Symmonds noted that Learning Support Services actively supports principals when they wish to create resource rooms.

Superintendent Symmonds advised that 'Lockdown Procedure Review' be revised to note a 'discussion' on the agenda. Lockdown Procedures in schools are mandated by provincial regulation. Trustee Lyra Evans

requested that the matter be reviewed by SEAC to illuminate the perpetuation of a fear-based culture and the impact of these drills on students. Chair Kirwan requested that Superintendent Symmonds contact the appropriate superintendent governing the Safe Schools Curriculum to acquire the relevant information for the discussion.

Mr. Morris requested that 'Communication Disorder Assistant Update' remain on the long range agenda for a further update in February.

#### 4.3 Motion/Action Tracking Report, Business Arising

The Motion/Action Tracking Report was provided for information.

Ms. Miedema provided an update on item 2, EQAO Data on Gifted Students. She advised she has met with Superintendent Symmonds to discuss a change in the way the data is presented for all special education students, where the information will be aggregated by exceptionality.

### 5. Action/Discussion/Information Items

#### 5.1 Report 19-091, Specialized Program Class Referral Information 2019-2020

Your committee had before it Report 19-091, providing information on the 2019-2020 specialized program class referral and placement process.

The number of ASD specialized program classes has increased significantly in order to minimize wait lists. Waitlists are fluid as families opt for various support options for their child (e.g., full time school, Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI))

Trustee Lyra Evans queried whether or not the waitlist is re-examined during the staff reallocation in September. Superintendent Symmonds stated that after the main staffing period has been finalized, typically no further classes are added. Manager Kay explained that opening a specialized program class is a complex undertaking with considerations including suitable facilities and geographic distribution across the district. Teachers apply to work in specialized class programs during the spring staffing process and the school community is prepared in advance to welcome special education students effectively to ensure smooth transitions. Superintendent Symmonds added that students on waitlists are provided with support in regular classrooms.

In response to a query from Mr. Morris regarding the age group of students who are being assessed by a speech-language pathologist, Manager Kay acknowledged that early intervention is desirable for best outcomes. She explained that speech-language pathology supports and services are prioritized for students in Kindergarten until grade three. Formalized assessment might be an end point after a number of other

interventions. Speech language therapists are working collaboratively with teachers and early childhood educators (ECEs) to implement whole-class programming to focus on literacy and phonological awareness. Program evaluation has demonstrated the effectiveness of these services. Trustee Boothby expressed concern that the waitlist for psychology assessments is eight to ten months. She asked for clarity on the process should the student wait beyond the end of a school year. Dr. Duschner responded that the eight to ten month waitlist statistic is misleading, as it reflects only formal assessments. At schools, meetings are held with the multi-disciplinary team to discuss student need and a priority list for referrals is developed. A student who absolutely needs a formal assessment would not be waiting more than a few weeks. Other students may be supported in other ways including informal assessments, which include consultation with staff, observation, review of Ontario Student Record (OSR), Individual Education Plans (IEP), or consultation with parents. Progress and ongoing needs would be monitored and if necessary, a formal assessment, including standardized measures would be conducted. Dr. Duschner stated that every school has a multi-disciplinary team comprised of a psychologist, social worker and a speech-language pathologist. The number of times a multi-disciplinary team can meet is dependent on many factors, including whether the school is an elementary or secondary school.

Ms. Meidema queried how the District allocates multi-disciplinary support staff to each school. Manager Kay explained a matrix is used for these determinations such as number of students in schools, and number of specialized program classes and socio-economic status of the community. In a typical elementary school, there is a half-day allocation per week; however, if a school serves 800 students and has four specialized program classes, the allocation may be changed to one full day per week, based on the needs of that school. Professionals have flexibility in their caseload and can adjust their schedules accordingly.

Manager Kay informed the committee that waitlist data was manually collected by professional support services staff in collaboration with the school-based special education team in May/June 2019. Due to the way in which the data was collected, there may be issues with respect to reliability and validity. Chair Kirwan requested clarification from Superintendent Symmonds on the wording in the Board motion of 30 October 2018, moving a "series of updates" on the number of applications and the number of children receiving assessment and placements in all congregated programs. Superintendent Symmonds confirmed the ability of staff to collect information annually into a consolidated report for the committee.

## 5.2 Report 19-097, Revision to Policy P.096.SES

Your committee had before it Report 19-097, considering a revision to section 3.3 (a) of Policy P. 096.SES Special Education Programs and Services.

Moved by Ian Morris,

THAT SEAC recommend to the Board that section 3.3(a) of Policy P.096.SES Special Education Programs and Services be amended to insert the word 'timely' before the word 'assessments'.

*An amendment moved by Trustee Campbell,*

*THAT section 3.3 (a) of Policy P.096.SES Special Education Programs and Services be revised to read: "a range of appropriate and timely assessments and accompanying timely tiered interventions and professional strategies."*

*Carried, friendly*

**Moved by Ian Morris**

**THAT SEAC recommend to the Board that section 3.3(a) of Policy P.096.SES of Special Education Programs and Services be revised to read: "a range of appropriate and timely assessments and accompanying timely tiered interventions and professional strategies." (Attached as Appendix A)**

**Carried**

**5.3 Memo 19-103, Support for Mental Health Through an Equity Lens (P. Symmonds ext. 8254)**

Your committee had before it Memo 19-103, pertaining to support for mental health through an equity lens.

Superintendent Symmonds reported that consultations on the Draft Mental Health Strategy were completed with the Advisory Committee on Equity and the Indigenous Education Advisory Council. An annual action plan will be created for Mental Health Strategy which will include work to address the motion approved by the Committee of the Whole on 19 April 2019.

Ms. Houlden inquired whether the plan had been examined through an equity lens that specifically considers students with cognitive or developmental disabilities, as these are exclusionary diagnoses for many resources offered in the broader community. Dr. Duschner responded that one of the strategies under the objective of the Culture of Social Responsibility within the Mental Health Strategy is "to explore and expand best practices in supporting the mental health needs concurrent with student special education needs". Mr. Morris queried the available Ministry of Education funding in support of this initiative. Superintendent

Symmonds replied that the Priorities and Partnership Funding (PPF) supports additional mental health workers for secondary schools in the District.

5.4 Memo 19-105, Location of Specialized Program Classes 2019-2020

Your committee had before it Memo 19-105, providing the current locations of all specialized classes in the District.

Ms. Meidema requested the next iteration of the schedule, include the language and grade levels for the gifted classrooms.

5.5 Memo 19-108, Staffing Allocations to Clifford Bowey PS and Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education (P.Symmonds ext. 8254)

Your committee had before it Memo 19-108, providing information regarding staffing allocations to Clifford Bowey Public School and Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education.

Superintendent Symmonds communicated that as originally conceived, these schools were provided academic staffing with a 1:10 ratio as required by the Education Act. Over time, the ratio for academic staffing was adjusted to 1:8 in recognition of the changing profiles of students who had higher needs. There is no regulation requiring Learning Support Teacher (LST), Learning Resource Teacher (LRT) or Education Assistant (EA) staffing allocation. He explained that adding more people into a room crowded with multiple pieces of large equipment, used by students, could hinder existing support.

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

- The LST allocation has increased in the two schools, as they offer leading support to students;
- Certain classroom allocations are adhered to, along with student-specific allocations. Staffing allocations are based on projected enrollment; and
- Presently O.Reg. 298 – Operation of Schools – generally sets the maximum class size for self-contained classes by exceptionality.

Chair Kirwan summarized that the student councils of Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education and Clifford Bowey PS were notified that this memo was on the agenda at SEAC. The District will communicate with the parent advisory groups. Discussion on the delivery of service to the students will begin with the parents of these students. He noted there is not a short-term resolution to such a complex problem.

## 5.6 Communications Disorder Assistants Update

Manager Kay reported that in the 2018-2019 school year, Maya Rattray, Supervisor of Speech Language Pathology, developed a proposal to use Communication Disorder Assistants (CDAs). Through the approved Board budget, 2.0 FTE were hired in Learning Support Services. CDAs have college-level qualifications and work under the direct supervision of a speech language pathologist. The District is embarking upon its first year of the service delivery model. The CDAs are working at Clifford Bowey Public School and Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education to bolster the supports and services for those students. Supervisor Rattray is working with Program Evaluator McKibbin to develop a monitoring plan to survey the effectiveness of the CDA role.

Mr. Morris congratulated the District on recruiting the participation of CDAs in the service delivery model. He stated that the Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders are interested in ongoing updates.

## 6. Department Update

### 6.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Symmonds provided the committee with a brief departmental update:

- There are no updates from the Ministry on the change in the Ontario Autism Program. When LSS was consulted, it was communicated that schools require advance time to plan accordingly to meet the needs of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and alignment with the beginning of the school year was strongly suggested; and
- The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has launched a public inquiry into human rights issues that affect students with reading disabilities in Ontario's public education system. A memo is to be circulated to trustees, Special Education Advisory Committee, senior staff and all principals on the subject. The OHRC will release a formal report on findings and recommendations in 2020.

Chair Kirwan requested an update on the use of service animals in schools. Superintendent Symmonds responded that the department will ensure that the schools are aligned with the amendment to the legislation and clearly outline the process families should follow when requesting the accommodation of service animals in schools.

### 6.2 Special Education Plan (Standards)

- a. The Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) Process and Appeals (Discussion)

Superintendent Symmonds reviewed necessary changes in the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) Process and Appeals Standard. The language will be updated to reflect the change in platform from Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to IEP Online (IOL). A section will be added to explain the procedure of initiating an IPRC. The Parent Guide will be studied to ensure alignment with the Ministry's requirements of an IPRC.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that discussions occurred with Ms. Houlden on the challenges behind the parental ability to waive an IPRC. Ms. Houlden explained that the new language on the OCDSB IPRC invitation reads: "the decision to dispense with the annual review could mean no review would take place and the existing IPRC identification, program and placement would remain in place." Parents are then given the following option: "I exercise my option to have the annual review waived." If selected, it would indicate the parent is choosing to have the annual review waived, but the current language does not supersede a review held in their absence. If the IPRC, which parents believe was dispensed, was held and changes made, this could be very upsetting for families. Not attending and choosing to dispense/waive the annual review with the IPRC are different. She expressed the view that if the school does not plan to dispense with the annual review and plans to make changes to program, placement and/or identification, should be clearly stated to the parents.

Trustee Campbell requested a definition on the roles of expertise for the central referral committees and the IPRC. Superintendent Symmonds confirmed that new language will be added to clarify the difference between the two groups.

Trustee Lyra Evans suggested the addition of language in the standard to explain the appeals process, despite the explanation of appeals found within The Parent Guide. Committee members agreed that The Parent Guide is not accessible to parents due to the density of the language contained within. Superintendent Symmonds stated that it is important that The Parent Guide is in alignment with Ministry standards.

Ms. Dewshi suggested on folio 47 the second bullet be revised to read: "to decide whether or not the student should be identified as exceptional" as written in the Special Education in Ontario Policy and Resource Guide.

b. Provincial and Demonstration Schools in Ontario (Perusal)

Manager Kay communicated that System Principal Hannah and her team added the following bullet point on folio 57, under 'Programs



at this school' which reads: "offer courses in the expanded core curriculum, which includes compensatory strategies, Braille and literacy.

c. Accessibility of School Buildings (Independent Review)

Superintendent Symmonds mentioned that this standard will be updated to reflect the expenditures on accessibility for 2019/2020.

Trustee Lyra Evans requested that Access to Glebe Collegiate Institute be added to the Motion/Action Tracking document with Michael Carson listed as the Action Agent.

7. Committee Reports

7.1 Advisory Committee on Equity

Ms. Nadon-Campbell reported that in the meeting of 24 October 2019, she suggested that for Special Education students who require a scribe, that a letter of confidentiality is prepared for the scribe for signature in order to assure the student the disclosed information is classified.

7.2 Parent Involvement Committee

Mr. Morris made the following announcements:

- A speaker series is scheduled for 10 October 2019 by Karyn Kibsey on 'Protecting Your Child: Reducing the Risk of Sexual Abuse';
- The Annual Parent Conference will take place on 9 November 2019 and will feature an interactive process for idea exchanges amongst participants to support the afternoon programming on School Councils; and
- The Parent Involvement Committee has retained an external facilitator to assist in the development of an annual committee workplan.

7.3 Board

Chair Kirwan noted that he will be present at the Board meeting of 22 October 2019.

7.4 Committee of the Whole

Mr. Wylie reported that Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) announced a Request for Proposal for small vans for student transport.

8. New Business

Ms. Titley announced on 10 October 2019, parent 'walk-ins' have been registered in 15 schools in Ottawa to demonstrate support for public education across the city. She highlighted that the Ottawa-Carleton Elementary School

Teachers will be hosting a community forum on 21 November 2019 to bring together different parent groups and communities to discuss public education in Ontario.

9. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:19 p.m.

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Rob Kirwan, Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee