



MEMORANDUM

Memo No. 19-119

TO: Trustees
Student Trustees
Special Education Advisory Committee

FROM: Camille Williams-Taylor, Director of Education and Secretary of the Board
Peter Symmonds, Superintendent of Learning Support Services

DATE: 11 October 2019

RE: **Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) Launches *Right to Read* Public Inquiry**

On 3 October 2019, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) launched *Right to Read*, a public inquiry into human rights issues that affect students with reading disabilities in Ontario's public education system. The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board is one of eight Ontario school districts selected for the inquiry to provide a representative sample of boards across the province.

Other district school boards included in the inquiry are:

- Hamilton Wentworth District School Board;
- Keewatin-Patricia District School Board;
- Lakehead District School Board;
- London District Catholic School Board;
- Peel District School Board;
- Simcoe-Muskoka Catholic District School Board; and
- Thames Valley District School Board.

The OHRC is conducting a public inquiry to find out if students with reading disabilities (dyslexia and other learning disabilities that affect reading) have meaningful access to education as required by the *Ontario Human Rights Code* (Code). Specifically, the OHRC will assess school boards against five benchmarks the OHRC has indicated are part of an effective systemic approach to teaching all students to read:

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL);
- Mandatory early screening;
- Reading intervention programs;
- Effective accommodation; and
- Psycho-educational assessments (if required).

The inquiry will also recognize systemic and structural issues that may be contributing to human rights issues, including in the areas of teacher training, funding, oversight, monitoring and accountability, data collection, and curriculum design. The OHRC has retained Dr. Linda Siegel, University of British Columbia Faculty of Education, to assist with the inquiry.

The OHRC is carrying out this public interest inquiry pursuant to its powers under the Code. These powers include, but are not limited to:

- The power to request the production of documents, things or information;
- The power to question a person on matters that may be relevant to the inquiry; subject only to the person's right to counsel;
- The power to enter any premises where there may be relevant documents, things or information; and
- The ability to use expert assistance to carry out the inquiry.

The Code places a legal obligation on persons to comply with the OHRC's inquiry requests.

The OHRC will release a formal report on findings and recommendations in 2020.

Should you have any questions please contact Peter Symmonds at 613-596-8254.

Attach.

cc Senior Staff
 All Principals
 Corporate Records