

ADVISORY COMMITEE ON EQUITY

May 23, 2019
6:00 pm
Trustees' Committee Room
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario

Members:	Elaine Hayles (Community Representative), Harvey Brown (Community Representative), Ruth Sword (Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools), Lisa Montroy (Family Services Ottawa), Raigelee Alorut (Tungasuvvingat Inuit), Susan Cowin (Special Education Advisory Committee, Alternate), Sonia Nadon-Campbell (Special Education Advisory Committee), Ryan Doucette (Young Leaders Advisory Council)
Non-Voting Members:	Rob Campbell (Trustee), Chris Ellis (Trustee), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Curriculum Services), Jacqueline Lawrence (Equity and Diversity Coordinator), Milo Salem (Student Senator)
Staff and Guests:	Donna Blackburn (Trustee), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Petra Duschner (Manager of Mental Health and Critical Services), David Sutton (OCDSB), Ken Mak (OCDSB), Bob Dawson (Community Representative), June Girvan (J'Nikira Dinqinesh Education Centre), Jean Goulet (Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools), Maxine Adwella (National Collaboration for Youth Mental Health), Nicole Guthrie (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Welcome

   Chair Hayles called the meeting to order at 6:28 p.m and acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Territory and thanked the Algonquin Nation for hosting the meeting on their land.

2. Approval of the Agenda

   Moved by Ruth Sword

   THAT the agenda be approved.

   Carried

3. Community Voice (delegations)

There were no delegations.

4. Student Voice

Indigenous Voice (Objibway)

- She noted that her high school has little programming or information to engage Indigenous students but the District's Indigenous Youth Symposium and some of the leadership initiatives it offers make her feel more welcomed. She noted that as a minority at her high school she feels that she stands out and that other students act differently around her;
- She expressed the view that it is essential for the District to provide resources and spaces for all cultures so that students feel comfortable. She noted that she often has to research on her own and it would be helpful if the school provided more information;
- She explained that another student had bullied her and the school administration did little to intervene, despite having brought the matter to their attention. She had to take time away from school to escape and begin to heal;
- She suggested that the ODCSB host presentations throughout the year to inform all students about Indigenous history to create an awareness and understanding;
- She requested that teachers be better educated in the presentation of Indigenous history and studies; and
- She advised that many students may not feel comfortable with providing accurate information to the identity based data collection initiative if it is not anonymous.

Transgender Voice, Female to Male, he/him pronouns

- He noted that before entering high school, he had no trans experience and little contact with the 2SLGBTTQ+ community. In high school he met numerous students at school and through the Rainbow Youth Forum and was able to begin to come to terms with his feelings to help shape and fully express himself;
- He highlighted the importance of having 2SLGBTTQ+ history and information included in the curriculum. He noted that many trans students are forced to get their information online and that there is a lot of misinformation. He noted that it would be safer and more comfortable for students to get that information at school. He encouraged staff to provide training to teachers on transsexual health as it is an area most trans students struggle with;

- He suggested that schools encourage the use of they/them pronouns and use more non-gender language. He noted that this small change would help foster feelings of inclusion;
- He indicated that gay and trans are not the same things and that even within the 2SLGBTTQ+ community, he often feels excluded. He suggested the District host a trans-specific event and expressed his interest in being an event organizer;
- He advised that the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) has an excellent gender clinic that has therapists and doctors supporting trans children and youth;
- He shared that the Rainbow Youth Forum provides 2SLGBTTQ+ students with a safe place to explore the issues students experience at school. He noted that his current school is a welcoming place and the staff have a great understanding of his identity and work to make him and his peers more comfortable;
- He recalled a difficult experience at her first high school. He expressed the view that the school was unwelcoming and unsafe, and the teachers and administrators did little to help him and his peers even after a violent incident. He and his peers had to move about the school in packs to feel safe. He had to transfer to another school where he was warmly welcomed and supported;
- He expressed concern about participating in the identity based data collection online. He noted that students are cautious about what they do online at school for fear others are looking over their shoulders. He suggested a voting box or private booth format where paper forms could be completed in private;
- He shared that he was once locked in a gender-neutral washroom and described the uncomfortable nature of using and accessing these washrooms. He noted that accommodations such as gender-neutral washrooms end up singling students out and often other students use the spaces to vape or make-out as they are single stall and the door can be locked. Trans students are often anxious about washroom use owing to the lack of availability and the safety issues of using their preferred washroom. He suggested the use of an "I'll go with you" system, whereby other students wear an identifier to indicate their willingness to help support trans peers; and
- Ron advised that trans is not strictly an adult topic. He suggested that educators and administrators need to be more informed of the broad terms and language of the 2SLGBTTQ+ community and that courses must including their history. He noted that is difficult to find trans history and would like to find himself represented in the lessons within the classroom.

Black and Muslim Voice

- He noted is while his high school is a multi-cultural school, he still feels he is a visible minority within his school as a black Muslim man;
- He expressed the importance of representation and diversity at the staff level. He indicated he would feel more empowered if he could see himself in his teachers, support staff and administrators. He highlighted his immense respect and admiration for his Principal. He noted that as a black woman in a place of authority, she can often empathize and has a real understanding of the types of issues he faces both at school and within the community;
- He advised that OCDSB schools need more conduits, programs and activities to support and engage Black students. He warned that when his peers do not have these outlets, they feel closed off and disengaged in school and community. He highlighted the continued support and persistence of a teacher who saw his potential and engaged him in a variety of school initiatives which helped him to take risks and brought him to the Black Youth Forum. Amar noted that he now works as a leader in his school to empower fellow and future students;
- He highlighted his recent involvement in his school's "Seeing in Colour" campaign to help raise awareness of the stigma of Black and Diasporic students in the 2SLGBTTQ+ community. He noted that small campaigns help create a spirit of equity and make everyone feel welcome;
- He stressed the importance of seeing himself in future career opportunities. He advised that Black students need to hear the stories of Black lawyers, scientists, doctors, and business leaders. The Black Youth forum provides this opportunity for Black students, and he would like to see more opportunities like these across the District;
- He spoke of the importance of inclusivity in education. He noted that the histories of many of his peers are mere side topics and if they were highlighted it could help broaden understanding; and
- Hespoke of the microaggressions he experiences as a Black student and that they help perpetuate the division and attitudes.

All three students agreed that OCDSB teachers and administrators should always be willing to ask, be curious, never assume and ask for pronouns and other information about their identities.

5. Review of Advisory Committee on Equity Report

5.1 25 April 2019

Moved by Ruth Sword,

THAT the ACE Report of 25 April 2019 be received.

Mr. Dawson requested that his name be added to the list of attendees.

Moved by Ruth Sword,

THAT the ACE Report of 25 April 2019 be received, as amended

Carried

In response to a query from Ms. Alorut, Superintendent Baker advised that information on Indigenous events and resources is shared with senior staff, administrators and trustees. She indicated that a monthly bulletin is shared with the Indigenous Education Advisory Council and could also be shared with ACE.

5.2 Review of Long Range Agenda

The long range agenda was provided for information.

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 19-053, Report on the 2019-2023 Draft Strategic Plan

Your committee had before it Report 19-053, seeking feedback on the draft 2019-2023 Strategic Plan.

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

- Mr. Dawson complimented the staff on the draft strategic plan and stated he was impressed with the project. He queried whether or not there will be more context provided. Executive Officer Giroux advised that the letter of transmittal that accompanies the draft strategic plan contains more detailed information, background, and context. When the draft strategic plan is presented to the Board in June, further information from the consultation will be included. She noted that the data and input from the Thoughtexchange process, available on the District website, is another source for background information;

- In response to a query from Mr. Weaver regarding the focus on mathematics, staff noted that the Annual Student Achievement Report (ASAR) documents overall student achievement through a comparison of EQAO measures as well as District compiled data to the provincial average. The District undertakes focused monitoring of specific groups of students that may experience barriers to learning. These groups are boys, English language learners (ELL), students with special education needs, students who self-identify as Indigenous, and students residing in lower-income neighbourhoods (SES). The examination of results for each of these groups of students relative to all students can expose

achievement gaps. The identity based data collection project the District has undertaken will allow for further layers to the ASAR. Staff noted that mathematics is identified specifically in the draft 2019-2023 Strategic Plan as a result of feedback from the community. During the feedback process, staff have heard that literacy should also be an area of focus;

- The District aims to mitigate the dis-proportionality in achievement by removing barriers to success for students. The first goal listed within the culture of innovation is "set high expectations for all student in all programs";
- Mr. Sutton recommended that key performance indicators for staff include a reference to staff diversity;
- Ms. Girvan queried how the draft 2019-2023 Strategic Plan honours the District's commitment to recognizing the United Nations Decade for people of African descent. Staff noted that within the culture of caring, the District intends to build capacity to support historically marginalized groups. Staff and trustees wished to be inclusive with the language. Staff expressed confidence in the draft 2019-2023 Strategic Plan and its ability to respond to the elements of the motion in support of the decade for people of African descent. The draft 2019-2023 Strategic Plan is intended to drive a culture of innovation, a culture of caring, and a culture of social responsibility with intentional impact on students, staff and the system;
- Ms. Girvan queried how ACE and the community hold the Board accountable to its commitment to the United Nations Decade for people of African descent. Staff will review the declaration further. The culture of social responsibility and modeling ethical leadership and equitable practice help ensure that the District is fostering good stewardship. The Board must follow up and monitor the strategic plan within the measurement framework;
- Ms. Adwella recommended the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan include a reference to race, culture and gender; and
- Mr. Doucette expressed concern that issues of privacy may impact the identity based data collection, as evidenced in the comments made by the students during their presentations within item 4. He noted that it would be necessary for the District to communicate the message that the intent is not to stigmatize communities but to acquire objective information to improve student outcomes.

6.2 Memo 19-072, Draft Mental Health Strategy

Your committee had before it Memo 19-072, Draft Mental Health Strategy Class locations, providing information regarding changes to specialized program

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

- Ms.Nadon-Campbell queried whether or not the strategy references students with special education needs. Staff noted that the District will explore best practices in supporting the mental health needs concurrent with student special education needs and that staff agree that these students often require a different level of mental health support;
- Ms. Adwella expressed concern about the timing of the discussion and noted that the draft mental health strategy requires further discussion by the committee. She expressed the view that the strategy was too general and requested that the strategy identify specific mental health strategies based on culture, race and gender. She commented that youth mental health must be reflective of the diverse population;
- Superintendent Symmonds requested that comments and feedback be forwarded to Diversity Coordinator Lawrence. The collective feedback will be shared with the Mental Health Team;
- Ms. Girvan noted that students spoke of environmentally induced mental ill-health. She expressed the view that much of the students energy and time is devoted to mental survival and the problem is systemic;
- Chair Hayles noted that the item would be added to the September 2019 agenda for further discussion.

6.3 Launch of the ACE Membership Campaign

Diversity Coordinator Lawrence advised that per the suggestion of the committee the ACE membership campaign will launch on 28 May and remain open until 28 August 2019 to ensure that all communities have an opportunity to engage with the campaign material and have time to submit applications. The members were engaged to collect a poster and the invitation letter and distribute within their communities. She noted that the District will also be utilizing a variety of media sources to promote the campaign.

6.4 Draft ACE Annual Report

Diversity Coordinator Lawrence advised that she will be sending out the draft ACE Annual Report to the members for comment. She encouraged the members to provide her with suggestions on the document.

7. Department Update

There was no department update.

8. Committee Reports

8.1 Committee of the Whole

There was no report from the Committee of the Whole.

9. New Business

Ms. Nadon-Campbell advised that the Odawa Native Friendship Centre will host its annual Pow Wow on 25 and 26 May 2019 at 200 Moodie Drive and invited members to attend.

Ms. Girvan June advised that plans are underway to have Ottawa declared a Child Friendly City. She noted that the City of Ottawa will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Children's Day on 20 November 2019.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

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Elaine Hayles, Chair, Advisory Committee on Equity