

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, November 13, 2019, 7:00 pm
Trustees' Committee Room
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario

Members: Rob Kirwan (Community Representative), Rob Campbell (Trustee), Lyra Evans (Trustee), Cathy Miedema (Association for Bright Children), Katie Ralph (Autism Ontario, Ottawa Chapter), 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), Lisa Paterick (VIEWS for the Visually Impaired), Nicole Ullmark (Easter Seals Ontario)

Association Representatives (Non-Voting): Susan Gardner (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation), Nancy McLaren Kennedy (Professional Student Services Personnel), Nancy Dlouhy (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Operations Committee), Catherine Houlden (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Teachers)

Staff and Guests: Lynn Scott (Trustee), Ganaabout Gagne (Student Trustee),
Members: Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Stacey Kay (Manager of Learning Support Services), Amy Hannah (System Principal Learning Support Services), Christine Kessler (System Principal Learning Support Services), Dr. Petra Duschner (Manager of Mental Health and Critical Services), Dr. Maggie Mamen (Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton), Leigh Fenton (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Call to Order

Chair Kirwan called the meeting to order at 7:14 p.m.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Sonia Nadon-Campbell

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

3. Delegations

3.1 Kevin Thompson, re: Proposal for Transition Counsellor/Coordinator

Mr. Thompson, co-chair of the Ottawa Technical Secondary School (OTSS) school council, expressed concern that the OCDSB has no formal mechanism to implement effective transition plans for students with exceptional needs.

He proposed that in order to effectively implement the legal requirements for transition planning under *Ontario Regulation 181/98* and 2013 Memorandum, that the Board (a) amend Policy P.096.SES to make post-graduation transition planning a part of the *Guiding Principles and Key Learning Supports* and consider whether a specific Board Procedure on Transition Planning should be developed and (b) expressly set aside dedicated resources to assist parents, students, principals and teachers in developing detailed transition plans ("transition counselor"). He suggested two options: Identify dedicated support staff at each school where the numbers of students warrant; or designate a central Board resource person(s) to consult and provide advice to principals, teachers and parents.

Ms. Houlden shared her support for the proposal. She noted that "Connecting with Agencies" documents were created to help parents with transitions. She offered to share it with SEAC.

Mr. Harris queried the ability to measure the delivery of the desired result. Mr. Thompson responded that within the framework, developed by the Ministry of Education in 2013, a review and update of an integrated transition plan is recommended after a period of initial implementation.

Superintendent Symmonds confirmed that there are a variety of supports for students to access; however, dedicated transition employees are not a part of the District's current staffing complement. Ms. Kessler stated that she did attend an OTSS school council meeting in the spring and shared the concerns with the LSS Team. Subsequently, transition planning is an element of the LSS workplan for 2019-2020.

Trustee Campbell requested clarification on the services and supports noted within proposal. Mr. Thompson replied that his goal was to raise awareness about the issue. Hiring a councilor is an option. Another would be a coordinator who could meet with and discuss best practices, facilitate introductions to employers, and encourage community participation events.

Chair Kirwan communicated his disappointment in Developmental Services Ontario, the mandated governmental body leading transition

support for special education students. He suggested that Transition Planning be added to the long range agenda.

4. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

4.1 09 October 2019

Moved by Jim Harris

THAT the report from the 9 October 2019 SEAC meeting be received.

Carried

4.2 Review of Long Range Agenda

The long range agenda was provided for information.

Ms. Miedema requested that the topics "The OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Learners in the Regular Classroom" and "The OCDSB Interest Academy" be added to the long range agenda as ongoing items.

Trustee Lyra Evans requested that "Memo 19-123, Cost of the Summer Learning Program" be added to the 4 December 2019 SEAC meeting agenda.

4.3 Motion/Action Tracking Report, Business Arising

The Motion/Action Tracking Report was provided for information.

5. Action/Discussion/Information Items

5.1 Report 19-114, In Year Support for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders and Developmental Disabilities

Your committee had before it Report 19-114, providing information on in-year support for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and Developmental Disabilities (DD).

There has been an unexpected increase in the number of students with complex needs, both DD and ASD. After the spring planning process fourteen new specialized program classes were opened to address the projected student needs and to minimize waitlists. LSS is investigating whether this year's number of unexpected students is an anomaly or a trend to be anticipated annually.

To be able to provide the necessary support for these students, the following in-year supports are recommended: 25.0 FTE Educational Assistants (EAs) and 1.0 FTE Itinerant ASD/DD teacher. The increase in staffing ensures student safety, provides coaching support for classroom teams to facilitate developmentally appropriate educational programming and promotes the development of school readiness skills.

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

- All the specialized classes for these two exceptionalities are full. Vacancies arise when students leave the program or transfer. Twenty-one ASD students are on the waitlist for placement. Fourteen vacancies are projected for the end of 2019-2020. At Clifford Bowey Public School and Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education there are six students on the waitlist;
- Ms. Dlouhy commended LSS on their immediate response to the needs of these students. She remarked that online registration may be a factor, as parents and their children are not visiting the school in-person, in advance. Many complex needs were identified in this initial visit through conversations. Human relationships are fundamental to supporting special education students;
- The proposal to the Board seeks to utilize the funding reserve and will not negatively impact other programs;
- LSS is working with Human Resources to develop a strategy to help to address the EA shortage in the District;
- Some new Canadian students have complex communication needs, which has placed a strain on some elementary schools; and
- These students will attend their designated schools.

5.2 Memo 19-119, Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) Launches Right to Read Public Inquiry

Your committee had before it Memo 19-119, providing information on the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) launching a *Right to Read* public inquiry to address concerns that Ontario's public education system may be failing to meet the needs of students with reading disabilities. The OHRC is conducting a public inquiry to determine if these students have meaningful access to education, as required by the Ontario *Human Rights Code* (*Code*). Specifically, the OHRC will assess school boards against five OHRC benchmarks for 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).

Dr. Mamen expressed the view that this is an important project and it will require consistent monitoring to ensure the inquiry meets its objectives. The item will be added to the SEAC long range agenda for future updates and discussion.

Chair Kirwan suggested confirming with OHRC whether this inquiry will extend to Special Education Advisory Committees.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that the inquiry is broad reaching and its scope is beyond that of LSS. LSS will collaborate with other departments to assist with the production of documents, data and information to add to the inquiry. The OHRC plans to have recommendations from this inquiry by 2020.

5.3 Memo 19-131, Release of the Ontario Autism Advisory Panel Report

Your committee had before it Memo 19-131, providing information regarding the development of a new needs-based Ontario Autism Program (OAP) by April 2020.

Superintendent Symmonds highlighted that the Ontario Autism Program Advisory Panel Report can be accessed online and contains several recommendations. The Panel explicitly notes that recommendations should be funded by the Ministry of Education. The Panel recommended the formation of an education advisory committee on Autism before the end of 2019. He noted that at present, there is no change to the District's practices regarding programs and services to support students with autism. LSS continues to monitor Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) and the Ministry of Education (EDU) announcements and will provide updates as details become available.

6. Department Update

6.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Symmonds provided the committee with a brief departmental update:

- The pilot use of the "OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Learners in the Regular Classroom" and the "OCDSB Interest Academy" has begun. New schools have been identified as changes in enrollment have impacted plans. Program Evaluator Steven McKibbin will utilize surveys to collect and analyse the feedback of staff, parents and students. LSS will release a report on the pilot in spring 2020;
- LSS was well represented at the PIC Parent Conference on 9 November 2019. The LSS team conducted various workshops on understanding and accessing special education, developing self-regulation in children and parent/child connection; and

- Executive Director, Susan Hopkins, of The MEHRIT Centre has been engaged to join LSS at the December department meeting to offer suggestions in support of building capacity in schools to promote children's self-regulation.

6.2 Special Education Plan (Standards)

a. Special Education Staff (Discussion)

System Principal Hannah provided the specific details on OCDSB staff to the committee, however she noted the numbers will be updated as the chart reflects data from 2018-2019.

Mr. Harris suggested listing general tasks to be completed by all itinerants then separately detailing those specific tasks according to each exceptionality.

Ms. Houlden requested that an updated version of Quality Program Indicators be included.

Trustee Campbell inquired about tangible comparisons for LSS staff role standardization across all Ontario school boards. Superintendent Symmonds noted that in the past he has discovered that job categorization and responsibilities differs from district to district.

Ms. Miedema highlighted the distinction between the descriptions of multi-disciplinary teams and other lone personnel. System Principal Kessler explained that all staff work together however there are individual titles for some roles. There are many support descriptions and staff are working on simplifying the language for parents.

Ms. Gardner underscored the position that teachers are not therapists. Superintendent Symmonds referred to the Policy/Program Memorandum No. 140 (PPM) where teachers will incorporate methods of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) but, for example, they will not conduct Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) therapy.

b. Staff Development (Perusal)

The plans to update the staff development section include alignment with the strategic plan and considerations in the upcoming budget approval process. System Principal Hannah drew attention to the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), a Ministry of Education initiative where new teachers are paired with a teacher mentor as they build knowledge, skills and self-confidence. They also participate in an extensive and differentiated professional development program designed to address the specific needs of

these new professionals in the areas of classroom management, assessment and evaluation, teaching students with special education needs, and literacy and numeracy.

Dr. Mamen indicated that last year there was a request from both the Association of Bright Children (ABC) and Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton (LDAO) for professional development for classroom teachers for tier one interventions. She queried whether any of these developmental activities address this request. Superintendent Symmonds responded that the support for teachers is done predominantly through a coaching model with the Program and Learning Team, formerly known as Curriculum Services. Advancements in the Learning Disability Specialized Intervention Program (LDSIP) include working with teachers in the half day programming of this specialized training.

Ms. Miedema noted that of the fifty-six Special Education Workshops, not all courses pertain to Special Education. She suggested that some courses be omitted in favour of directing funds towards teacher education to supporting students with special education needs.

c. Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities (Independent Review)

The standard of Categories and Definitions of Exceptionalities were provided for independent review. System Principal Hannah explained that the information contained within this standard is determined by the Ministry of Education.

In response to a query from Trustee Campbell, Superintendent Symmonds responded that we do not currently have a way to identify “non-exceptional” IEPs against one of the identified exceptionalities. Ms. Miedema noted that the Ottawa Catholic School Board has a system in place to help include specific details on the IEP. Administration uses these details to provide greater supports for the students without referring the student to the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC). The EQOA data is reported on by exceptionality.

7. Committee Reports

7.1 Advisory Committee on Equity

There was no report from the Advisory Committee on Equity.

7.2 Parent Involvement Committee

Chair Kirwan reported that he and Ms. Campbell staffed the SEAC table at the 2019 Parent Conference and School Council Training Day.

7.3 Board

There was no report from the Board.

7.4 Committee of the Whole

There was no report from the Committee of the Whole.

8. New Business

Chair Kirwan noted that the 4 December 2019 will include elections for committee appointments. He urged committee members to be prepared to nominate others or self-nominate.

Ms. Ullmark announced that the provincial Parent Association Advisory Committee on Special Education Advisory Committees (PAAC on SEAC) is seeking assistance with a survey of SEAC members. The survey is available on their website until January 2020.

Ms. Gardner announced that the Ottawa Community Forum on Education is hosting an expert panel to discuss education issues on Thursday, November 21, 2019 at Broadview Avenue Public School Library.

Ms. Miedema announced that ABC is presenting two workshops on supporting gifted children on Wednesday, November 27, 2019 and Wednesday, December 11 at the Revel Academy.

Superintendent Symmonds made a presentation of gratitude to Chair Kirwan on behalf of SEAC in appreciation of his leadership over the past eleven years.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:18 p.m.

Rob Kirwan, Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee