

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, December 4, 2019, 7:00 pm
Holiday Inn Express & Suites Ottawa West - Trinity Room
2055 Robertson Rd
Ottawa, Ontario

Members: Rob Kirwan (Community Representative), Rob Campbell (Trustee), Chris Ellis (Trustee), Cathy Miedema (Association for Bright Children), Katheryn Ralph (Autism Ontario, Ottawa Chapter), Mark Wylie (Down Syndrome Association), 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), Lisa Paterick (VIEWS for the Visually Impaired), Nicole Ullmark (Easter Seals Ontario), Michael Bates (Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton, Alternate), Ian Morris (Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders)

Association
Representatives
(Non-Voting): Jennifer Titley (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation),

Staff and Guests: Lynn Scott (Trustee), Daniel Bersyniow (Student Senator), 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), Michelle Berry (Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils), H       Buisson-Fenet (Senior Researcher at the Ecole Normale Sup      re of Lyon), Leigh Fenton (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Call to Order

Superintendent Symmonds called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. He welcomed newly appointed SEAC members Mr. Michael Bates and Trustee Chris Ellis.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Mark Wylie,
THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

4. Committee Appointments

Superintendent Symmonds explained the process for appointing members to the various positions.

4.1 Chair

Mr. Rob Kirwan nominated Ms. Sonia Nadon-Campbell for the position of Chair.

**Moved by Trustee Boothby,
THAT the nominations be closed.**

Carried

Ms. Nadon-Campbell was declared Chair of SEAC by acclamation.

At the request of Ms. Nadon-Campbell, Superintendent Symmonds remained in the Chair.

4.2 Vice-Chair

Mr. Kirwan nominated Mr. Jim Harris for the position of Vice-Chair.

**Moved by Trustee Boothby
THAT nominations be closed.**

Carried

Mr. Harris was declared Vice-Chair of SEAC by acclamation.

4.3 Board

Trustee Ellis nominated Mr. Rob Kirwan for the position of SEAC representative to the Board.

**Moved by Trustee Boothby
THAT nominations be closed.**

Carried

Mr. Kirwan was declared the SEAC Representative to the Board by acclamation.

4.4 Committee of the Whole

The SEAC representative for the Committee of the Whole was not determined

Mr. Kirwan asked that this item be added to the 8 January 2020 agenda.

4.5 Committee of the Whole, Budget

Mr. Kirwan nominated Ms. Cathy Miedema for the position of SEAC representative to the Committee of the Whole, Budget.

Moved by Trustee Boothby,

THAT nominated be closed.

Carried

Ms. Miedema was declared the SEAC representative to the Committee of the Whole, Budget, by acclamation.

4.6 Parent Involvement Committee

Mr. Michael Bates nominated Dr. Maggie Mamen for the position of SEAC representative to the Parent Involvement Committee.

Moved by Trustee Boothby,

THAT the nominations be closed.

Carried

Dr. Maggie Mamen was declared the SEAC representative to the Parent Involvement Committee, by acclamation.

4.7 Advisory Committee on Equity

Ms. Susan Cowin nominated herself for the position of SEAC member representative to the Advisory Committee on Equity.

Ms. Sonia Nadon-Campbell nominated herself for the position of SEAC alternate representative to the Advisory Committee on Equity.

Moved by Rob Kirwan,

THAT nominations be closed.

Carried

Ms. Cowin and Ms. Nadon-Campbell were declared the SEAC member and SEAC alternate to the Advisory Committee on Equity respectively, by acclamation.

4.8 Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Programs

Terry Warner nominated himself for the position of SEAC representative to the Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Programs.

Moved by Rob Kirwan,

THAT nominations be closed.

Carried

Terry Warner was declared the SEAC representative to the Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Programs, by acclamation.

5. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

5.1 13 November 2019

Moved by Rob Kirwan,

THAT the 13 November 2019 report be received.

Ms. Miedema requested that the comment regarding the categories and definitions of exceptionalities on folio 7, section c, be revised to read "the Ottawa Catholic School Board has a system in place to provide an additional way to identify students."

Mr. Morris noted on folio 7 the reference to EQOA should read EQAO, the acronym for the Education Quality and Accountability Office.

Moved by Rob Kirwan,

THAT the 13 November 2019 report be received, as amended.

Carried

With respect to the delegation's concerns about transition planning, Trustee Ellis asked when a report on transition planning would be presented to SEAC. Superintendent Symmonds advised that transition planning is underway in Learning Support Services (LSS) this year, and oral updates will be provided to SEAC.

5.2 Long Range Agenda

The long range agenda was provided for information.

Trustee Campbell requested that item 10 be revised to read "Review of the Special Education Policy Ad hoc Committees Recommendations from the Central Committee".

5.3 Motion/Action Tracking Report 2019-2020

The Motion/Action Tracking Report was provided for information.

Trustee Campbell expressed the view that including a school-specific action item such as item 4, Access to Glebe Collegiate Institute (GCI), sets a precedent for the District's advisory committees to involve themselves with the operational matters of schools. He recommended that this item be removed. Mr. Morris agreed. Mr. Harris noted that systemic issues should be permissible on the action tracking report.

Moved by Mr. Kirwan,

THAT the removal of item 4, Access to Glebe Collegiate Institute, be discussed with Trustee Lyra Evans.

Carried, friendly

It was noted that item 7 on folio 12 should read "Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM)" rather than "legislation".

Ms. Nadon-Campbell requested that sensitivity training be added to item 7, Use of Service Animals in Schools. She added that some new Canadians may consider dogs to be impure and may not be acceptable in schools. Superintendent Symmonds recommended speaking to the principal in those schools where there are reports of service animals being mistreated.

6. Action/Discussion/Information Items

6.1 Post Elementary/Secondary Transition Planning

Mr. Kirwan raised the proposal for a transitional counsellor, formally brought to the committee by a delegation in the meeting of 13 November 2019 by Kevin Thompson, co-chair of the Ottawa Technical Secondary School (OTSS) school council. He highlighted that in 2011, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) and the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) published a draft, "Provincial Transition Planning Framework - Transitional Planning for Young People with Developmental Disabilities". The delegation underscored the necessity for a mandated approach to transition planning. Reasoning that planning for transition is not the sole responsibility of the District, he urged SEAC to contact the appropriate institutions, as listed above. He stated that he will bring forward a funding request in relation to this proposal for SEAC's consideration at the presentation of the 2020-2021 budget process in January.

System Principal Kessler acknowledged the document was initially to be implemented in 2012, updated in 2013 and adopted in 2015. The concerns that have been brought forward speak to concerns of implementation. As it presently stands, there is support for transition planning provided to the secondary schools and to Clifford Bowey Public School and Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education through the District's Learning Support Consultants (LSC). These consultants are the agents for support in transition planning. She noted that she has recently attended a school council meeting for Ottawa Technical Secondary School (OTSS) and a presentation on Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) Eastern Region and Service Coordination at OTSS. As part of the LSC work plan this year, the 2013 tri-Ministry memorandum entitled, 'The Integrated Transition Planning for Young People For Young People with Developmental Disabilities' (Framework) document will be reviewed. The

plan is to revisit and improve the approach of how the District has been bridging the coordination from schools to access points for adult developmental services.

Mr. Bates suggested a systemic approach as a plausible solution with transition being embroidered into the curriculum for the congregated small classrooms. He commented that Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton (LDAOC) has similar concerns about addressing strategies to use in the post-secondary realm. Superintendent Symmonds responded that transition plans are a requirement built into the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). System Principal Kessler referred to PPM 156 "Supporting Transitions for Students with Special Education Needs" which sets the requirement for transition plans for school boards. This is an area that is addressed in training when educating the new learning support teachers.

System Principal Kessler explained that the District fosters relationships with the universities and colleges in Ottawa to make opportunities available for students to visit. Additionally there is a very robust dual credit program with Algonquin College and consultants promote different pathways and opportunities through work experience and co-op placement to allow the transition to be tailored to the individualized strengths and interests of the students. The Summer Transition Programs have been extremely helpful in the preparation of the transition. The District offers tours of these locations to function as the "guide on the side" so that students can develop their self-advocacy skills.

Trustee Campbell imparted that Mr. Thompson has made substantial changes to requests regarding transition planning and this will be circulated when the item comes back for discussion at the SEAC meeting of 8 January 2020.

Mr. Kirwan noted that some students will chose not to enter into post-secondary education. He suggested the District discuss cohesive transition planning with MCSS and DSO.

In response to a query from Trustee Boothby, System Principal Kessler established that three LSCs are in place for the secondary schools, along with LSCs assigned to particular program areas. Regular meetings with LSCs determine where needs exist in certain schools and how to provide the relevant transitional information in a timely manner. A Learning Support Teacher (LST) works in concert with the guidance counsellor to support students in their transition into post-secondary education. Superintendent Symmonds added that LST resources are not dedicated to transitions however the school is allocated a certain number of LSTs after consideration of the programs, size, and number of IEPs in the schools, etc.

Trustee Ellis has stated that he has learned in meetings with OTSS that there is a lack of community services available. He advised that a central list of services be made available to the LSTs. System Principal Kessler explained that the services and programs change on an ongoing basis. The Service Coordination group manages these lists. It is important that educators in the District help families navigate the complex array services early in the secondary school process to ensure adequate time and consideration is afforded to explore the options available. The Framework document attests to the important work of school teams and the teachers who work directly with the child, because it is through a person-centred approach that transitions will be most successful.

System Principal Kessler concluded by placing emphasis on the need to assist families to understand the transition system and become connected with the system. The District has a legal obligation to serve students with special needs but there is no legal obligation for MCSS to care for the most vulnerable students once departed from the public education system.

Mr. Kirwan requested that staff connect with the Ministry of Education (EDU) to learn the name of a contact or team leading the Framework initiative.

7. Department Update

7.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Symmonds provided a labour relations update and disclosed that there are updates available to the public on the District website and app. He briefly shared that they are awaiting further updates from the province on e-learning courses. In a recent government announcement, they have reduced the number of required online courses to two courses, for students graduating in 2023-2024, however there will be some exemptions. Should a consultation be held, SEAC will be a part of the discussions. Additional information will be brought forward as it arises.

a. Memo 19-123, Cost of the Summer Learning Program (P. Symmonds, ext. 8254)

Your committee had before it Memo 19-123, providing information on the cost of the summer learning program.

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

- The longstanding program has been in place for 30 years, involving the local four boards of education. Currently the program is only for students in the OCDSB;

- The program is available to any child who is enrolled in the Autistic Disorder (AD) or Developmental Disabilities Program (DD) specialized classes;
- The program can accommodate 276 students. All spaces have been filled on a consistent basis and there is an ongoing demand;
- Once the admissions criteria is updated for the summer learning program, it will be shared with SEAC;
- Trustee Boothby noted that there was a Board motion in the spring of 2015 to ensure the survival of this program, until there is another program in the Ottawa area that fulfills the identical mandate. She requested that, in future, the memo include more information, for example, the program reduces the potential for "the summer slide" where students experience a regression in academic proficiency due to the 9 weeks outside of the classroom, Reach Ahead credit acquisition possibilities, the "pay-what-you-can" equity platform, program focus on student IEPs, and a deeper explanation of the financials;
- The voluntary fee association is \$70.00 from families, used for the purposes of community outings and social interaction;
- The bulk of the cost of the program is allocated through the Summer School Grant included in the Grant for Student Needs (GSN) from the Ministry of Education. The remaining costs are absorbed within the District's general revenues.

b. Board Strategic Plan

Your committee had before it the District's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan.

Superintendent Symmonds highlighted the key objectives of the plan as the direction is driving the work of Learning Support Services to achieve the desired outcomes, measured against the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). In the development of the plan, trustees and staff had placed a great deal of importance on students with special education needs. He drew attention to the language in the plan that promoted championing high learning expectations for all students in all programs. Students with special education needs deserve high quality programs with high expectations. There are many aspects to the plan that are of particular relevance to the teaching teams and families of students with special education needs, such as promoting a culture of social responsibility, gaining the advantage of improved social and

emotional skills. He encouraged the committee to evaluate the benefit of discussion on a future agenda about the specific goals of the strategic plan.

7.2 Special Education Plan (Standards)

a. The Board's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) (Discussion)

System Principal Hannah noted that the standard relating to the Board Special Education Advisory Committee is typically presented on the agenda at this time considering the business of elections for SEAC positions occur in the meetings of December. It is an opportunity to decide what are the roles and responsibilities.

During discussion and in response to queries, the following points were raised:

- Under the section Roles and Responsibilities, include the following details: the committee encourages the public to bring special education issues to the attention of SEAC by requesting to delegate at monthly meetings, by hosting a District webpage dedicated to Special Education, displaying a strong presence at the Parent Conference, and announcing all SEAC meetings publicly;
- Include the email of the trustees, in addition to a phone number;
- Broaden the description of the roles and responsibilities of SEAC, beyond the ministry-given mandate on the delivery of programs and services to exceptional pupils, to include other students with special education needs and mental health issues; and
- SEAC is an advisory body to inform the decisions of the trustees. The composition of SEAC provides for three trustee voting members whose votes may potentially dilute the votes of community representatives. It was suggested that, where appropriate, trustee members should abstain from voting.

b. Educational and Other Assessments (Discussion)

System Principal Hannah explained that since the review in 2018, the current version of the standard on Educational and Other Assessments, places more emphasis on the difference between identification and diagnosis. More language was included on the process for assessments done outside the District.

During discussion and in response to queries, the following points were raised:

- Under the heading School-Level Assessments, first bullet, expand on the detail by adding the words "and conversation" after the "observation";
- Under the heading Confidentiality and Rights to Privacy, include a bullet that explains parental consent is required to include in the Ontario Student Record. Manager Kay advised that regulated professions are required to have informed consent, and parents can revoke consent during the assessment process and deny consent to share information with certain others; and
- Insert language regarding the universal early identification of students at risk for learning difficulties.

c. Coordination of Services with Other Ministries or Agencies (Perusal)

System Principal Hannah mentioned that LSS is limited in its ability to make changes to the standard on Coordination of Services with other Ministries or Agencies, as this information was for the District to share rather than to create. When updates to the programs and services are received, the standard will be revised.

During discussion and in response to queries, the following points were raised:

- Current assessments generally refers to the two-year mark, depending on the student's age. The need to re-assess is determined on a case-by-case basis;
- An IEP from another school district is used as a data source, and the District's multi-disciplinary team will review the former plan. Each school district structures their special education plans differently;
- On folio 32, change "transition to middle schools" to "transition to secondary schools";
- On folio 33, change "semestered secondary schools" to "high schools";
- On folio 28, add descriptions for extended day programs and communication between third party care providers and the teaching staff in the regular classroom;
- On folio 32, change "sending school" to "home school"; and
- On folio 33, note the grade range where home instruction is applicable, that the instruction is delivered by a teacher and

stipulate that, for home instruction eligibility, the nature of the health concerns are extreme.

d. Roles and Responsibilities (Independent Review)

System Principal Hannah advised that Roles and Responsibilities are mandated by the Ministry of Education and this particular standard is verbatim to Ministry standards.

8. Committee Reports

8.1 Advisory Committee on Equity

There was no report from the Advisory Committee on Equity.

8.2 Parent Involvement Committee

Mr. Morris attended the Parent Involvement Committee of 20 November 2019. He reported on the items contained on the meeting's agenda and there were no matters of specific concern to SEAC.

8.3 Board

There was no report from the Board.

8.4 Committee of the Whole

There was no report from Committee of the Whole.

9. New Business

Mr. Warner advised that he attended the Advisory Committee for Extended Day and Child Care Programs on 27 November 2019 where he learned that a robust provincial oversight is in place for Extended Day Programs (EDP) and Child Care programs. A City of Ottawa office manages subsidies for child care programs for all four school boards. He intends to visit the city office to gather supplementary resources (location maps and presentations) to share with the Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Programs.

Mr. Bates advised that he would share the Right to Read survey link with the SEAC membership.

Trustee Ellis noted that the Annual Student Achievement Report (ASAR) will be released soon and this report does disaggregate the students with special education needs. He suggested that the ASAR be added to a future agenda for committee discussion in advance of the report being discussed at the Committee of the Whole (COW). In addition, he mentioned that on the 7 January 2020 COW meeting, a report on the Status of English with Core French Program will be discussed. This topic may be of interest to members of SEAC as there is a large enrolment of students with special education needs in that particular program.

Ms. Titly spoke about the importance of keeping the discussion of public education alive in community discussions together. She reported that the Ottawa Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation Community Forum on 21 November 2019 was successful as this concern is being moved forward politically.

Mr. Warner announced that VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing will host their annual potluck and skate activity in Manotick on 7 December 2019.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:26 p.m.

Peter Symmonds, Acting Chair,
Special Education Advisory Committee