



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)
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Supporting Indigenous Learners at the OCDSB

Key Contact: Dorothy Baker, Superintendent of Instruction

PURPOSE:

1. To provide an update with respect to Indigenous Education within the OCDSB for the 2018-2019 school year.

CONTEXT:

2. The OCDSB's vision and work in supporting Indigenous Education is grounded in the Ministry's vision and the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The District's commitment to engaging with and supporting Indigenous students' achievement and well-being is focused on prioritizing their emotional, physical, social, and intellectual development by taking actions in these three key areas:
 - building relationships of trust within the Indigenous community to work together to improve student achievement and well-being;
 - establishing a process so that more students and their families feel comfortable in the self-identification process, providing the capacity to measure progress in closing the achievement gaps; and
 - providing learning opportunities for all students and staff to build knowledge, appreciation and a deeper understanding of Indigenous traditions, cultures, perspectives, and roles in Canadian history.

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board had 1400 self-identified Indigenous students in the 2018-2019 school year. Over the past three years the number of families who have chosen to self-identify as Indigenous within the OCDSB has remained constant. This number is consistent with that of the 2016 Canadian Census wherein the Indigenous population is reported at 2% in Ottawa.

In 2007 the Ministry released the Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Policy Framework. In 2014, the Ministry of Education released the implementation plan for that document, confirming the Ministry's three primary goals:

- Improve student well-being and achievement for Indigenous students;
- Close achievement gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students; and
- Increase public confidence.

Annually, the OCDSB develops a Board Action Plan (attached as Appendix A) and submits it to the Ministry. The following strategies are woven throughout the work of the OCDSB's Indigenous Educational Learning Team to support the Ministry's three primary goals:

- Using data to support student achievement;
- Supporting students;
- Supporting educators; and,
- Engagement and awareness building.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

3. Improving Well-Being and Achievement for Indigenous Students

The Indigenous Education Learning Team continues to work with students and educators towards a goal of supporting movement along a learning continuum that begins by building awareness, leads to engaged learning, and ultimately to embedding Indigenous pedagogy as part of practice.

In the 2018-2019 school year, the Indigenous Education Learning Team expanded to include an Indigenous Student Success Coordinator (ISSC) serving students and educators K-12. The addition of the ISSC increased the capacity of the team significantly. The Indigenous Student Success Coordinator, together with the Indigenous Student Success and Re-Engagement Coordinator (ISSRC) supported 33 schools (K-12), worked directly with 638 students, facilitated 112 student circles, held 111 parent/guardian meetings, and met with 457 school staff. Additionally, the ISSC and ISSRC provided intensive and ongoing support to students and staff at six OCDSB schools with the high representation of self-identified Indigenous students in our District. During the 2018-2019 school year, the ISSC and ISSRC made referrals to several community agencies and established a waiting list as they continue to attempt to meet the increasing demand for support. This reality reinforced the need to explore options to increase staffing in order to provide greater support for students and educators. Below is a table that shows the comparative data with respect to Indigenous Student Success.

Comparative Data - Indigenous Student Success Impact		
	2018-2019	2017-2018
One-on-one sessions	638	353
Student circles	112	60
Parent/Guardian Meetings	111	77
Met with School Staff	457	191

Self-identified and non-self-identified Indigenous students can be found at every school in the District. Efforts to support Indigenous students and to create a network of peers have resulted in the creation of a youth group, Original Voices, in the 2018-2019 school year. The Indigenous Student Success Coordinator and the Indigenous Student Success and Re-Engagement Coordinator work together with community partners that allow students to meet once a month. Students participate in sharing circles, receive support, build advocacy skills and provide input to the Indigenous Education Learning Team. Students have identified a desire to have opportunities to celebrate who they are; to share their stories; to know someone is listening to them; and to know that there will be action in response to their concerns.

Professional development continues to be a focus for teachers with respect to cultural competency and understanding. In the 2018-2019 school year, the Indigenous Education Learning Team worked together with the Student Success lead to increase teacher knowledge. Members of the Indigenous Education team facilitated learning to Student Teacher (SST) pod meetings three times during the year. The outcomes observed included an increased awareness and understanding of the importance of relationships and building trust with Indigenous students; teachers were far more willing to ask questions and take risks; and teachers were more open to creating safe spaces within their classrooms. The Indigenous Education Learning Team was also involved in increasing knowledge of Indigenous perspectives, history and contemporary issues among central coaches in Program and Learning K-12, educational assistants, and elementary principals. The result of these learning sessions was a variety of outreach from OCDSB staff to facilitate further conversations and professional development within schools.

Supporting the well-being of Indigenous students means allowing them to build their own understanding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit culture, provide them with self-advocacy skills, and leadership opportunities. In the 2018-2019 school year, 28 Indigenous students from various secondary schools in the District attended Leadership Camp; 150 OCDSB students attended the third annual Indigenous

Youth Symposium, along with 35 educators, 20 community partners offering information at kiosks. The day allowed Indigenous students to connect with other Indigenous students from across the city, learn more about various Indigenous culture, traditions, art, and language (13 workshops), and to come together in celebration. Indigenous students worked in collaboration with the Indigenous Education Learning Team to create and present various workshops within the District. The impact of these opportunities resulted in Indigenous students at various schools engaging in leadership roles within their schools to create education days for their peers.

4. Closing the Gap

The work facilitated by the Indigenous Education Learning Team in supporting Indigenous students' achievement and well-being is foundational to seeing changes in data; specifically in the narrowing of learning gaps. Provincial and District data continues to show a gap in achievement for students who self-identify as Indigenous. In 2018-2019, achievement gaps for students who self-identified as Indigenous narrowed in five of the ten Education, Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessments. Over a period of four years, general trends showed decreases in primary reading, writing and math and grade nine academic math. The largest gaps appear in junior mathematics and first year eligible Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). This data is detailed in Appendix B. When interpreting these trends, it is important to keep the cohort size in mind, noting that with smaller groups of students, fluctuations in performance tends to be more prominent.

In 2018-2019 phase II of the implementation of the English Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis and Inuit Voices (NBE3U/C/E) course as a compulsory course began. The OCDSB continued to partner with Indigenous elders, knowledge keepers and community partners to create rich, relevant learning opportunities. Thirteen secondary schools requested to be part of this planning to offer the NBE course as the compulsory grade 11 English course for the 2019-2020 school year. Participating schools benefited from the knowledge shared with the OCDSB by Indigenous partners both at the planning stages and at the implementation phase through continued Indigenous cultural competency learning, looking closer into the revised Indigenous Studies curriculum, developing a compilation of resources, and the introduction of a virtual learning environment. Teachers have expressed their gratitude for being able to explore and offer this course to students. One of the successes in developing the course was the ability to provide students with a new perspective that had either been limited or non-existent. In some schools teachers have shared how teaching the course has opened the eyes of teachers to a new world of literature from Indigenous authors. There is a recognition of the voices and perspectives which is important. Students have told teachers throughout the school about the books, the enjoyment, and have motivated those teachers to reach out and borrow copies to read.

In 2018-2019 our Indigenous Instructional Coach continued to work with students and educators at the junior and intermediate level to focus on mathematical

learning through beading. While building mathematical skills, this experience provided an opportunity to bring greater awareness to students and educators about Indigenous ways of knowing, while also building cultural competency through discussions on how to welcome and work with knowledge keepers in our school communities. The instructional coach facilitated connections between community partners and educators to develop and facilitate beading experiences. The community partners led the beading instruction while the instructional coach and teachers focused on, highlighted and reinforced mathematical concepts such as multiplicative thinking, algebraic reasoning, and patterning. This work made a difference for Indigenous students who expressed greater confidence in their mathematical ability. They felt pride by seeing elements of their culture as a central part of their learning and in taking on leadership roles, working directly with and supporting their peers' learning. All students expressed a greater awareness of the application of mathematical thinking in different and authentic settings.

5. Increasing Public Confidence: Engaging with Indigenous Students, Parents, and Community Partners

Prior to 2018-2019 and through the relationships developed by the members of the Indigenous Education Learning Team, Indigenous parents/guardians and community partners had shared a desire to increase Indigenous voices, content, and perspectives while further embedding an accurate portrayal of history in their children's learning experiences. Additionally, students reinforced that they would like to celebrate who they are, know that someone is listening to them, and see themselves reflected through better Indigenous content and more Indigenous perspectives. These voices informed several priorities for the work: the development of the Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC); embedding Indigenous perspectives in specific curricular areas; and further engaging with student voice to promote student leadership.

The Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC) began meeting in 2018-2019 to establish representation and to begin providing the District with ongoing advice and consultation in Indigenous Education. Initial priorities for this group included engaging with partners, students, families and educators to be part of this advisory group, and establishing relationships that support capacity building in listening and engaging in meaningful communication and shared learning.

In 2018-2019, the OCDSB was informed of the Ontario Ministry of Education's work with the Uqausilirijiit Circle (Inuit Elder's Language Circle). The creation of this circle will allow fluent Inuktitut speakers to be recommended to the Ontario College of Teachers for teaching certification. The mandate will provide opportunities for hiring Inuktitut language teachers in the OCDSB.

6. How do we know we are making a difference

The OCDSB has fostered many positive relationships with Indigenous students, their families and the Indigenous community in Ottawa. It is through these relationships that we have been able to achieve success. The addition of the Indigenous Student Success Coordinator to the Indigenous Education Learning

Team has allowed for significant impact on the number of Indigenous students we are able to offer support. In the 2018-2019 school year, 638 students received support as compared to 353 students in the 2017-2018 school year. In 2018-2019, 112 students circles were facilitated; an increase from 60 held in 2017-2018. Additionally, 457 meetings with school staff were held in 2018-2019; only 191 such meetings were held in the previous school year.

At the Indigenous Youth Symposium last year, students described how the day impacted them, the following comments were noted:

- “It is empowering,”
- “I know that 100 per cent of the people who are here today to hear me and are working towards making a difference,”
- “Here I feel accepted, not alone, and appreciated,”
- “We are building a community and community is important in Ottawa,”
- “I feel safe to be me”

Educators commented:

- “The day reminds me how important Indigenous youth voice is,”
- “The IYS allows for honouring young people, providing the space to celebrate who they are and their rich history,”
- “It’s a chance for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to come together to build relationships,”
- “I wanted to share with you that I listened to many meaningful personal stories, truths and history about Canada today - from being in the glass hallway in front of the map, and connecting with students through some of their creations.

I learned more about some parts of this country today than in my whole life before.”

Outreach from teachers and staff has continued to grow. Staff are asking how they can make changes in the way they teach. They have acknowledged the importance of including Indigenous knowledge, perspectives and history in the classroom.

- “Thank you so much for sending out resources and ideas like this, it makes a huge difference in how, as settler educators, we bring Indigenous knowledge to our students. As I continue to learn and grow, I feel so fortunate to have you by my side to bounce thoughts and ideas off of and to ensure I respectfully and accurately represent Indigenous realities in my classroom;”
- “As an administrator, I will hold my staff accountable, encourage and support them to incorporate aboriginal studies into their curriculum.”

7. Learning and Next Steps

Each experience and initiative resulted in enhanced awareness, capacity building, and movement into greater engagement of Indigenous pedagogy and Indigenous ways of knowing. Progress is being made, and those achievements support the refinement of our goals moving forward. Each experience serves to build understandings and guide next steps in further supporting professional learning for staff while valuing and empowering Indigenous Students. In order to continue

movement along the learning continuum - from awareness to engagement to embedded Indigenous pedagogy, the Indigenous Education Learning Team has continued to engage in and support learning during the 2018-2019 school year. This work supports the Ministry's three primary goals.

Initiatives to ensure that difference is being made in each of these areas have been built into the 2019-2020 Board Action Plan and include:

- Improved Well-being and Achievement for Indigenous Students
- Maintain Indigenous Youth group - accessible in many parts of the District;
- Be intentional in creating equitable opportunities to embed professional learning to build awareness and move into greater engagement in learning;
- Continue and expand Indigenous student leadership opportunities; and Closing Learning Gaps for Indigenous Students
- Further extend Indigenous Mathematics learning opportunities;
- Continue and deepen collaboration with Wabano and Inuuqatigiit-Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families to provide cultural support, and transitions; and
- Implement a Ministry funded Indigenous Grad Coach position; Build Public Confidence
- Continue the development of community partnerships with educators;
- Continue to build relationships between educators and Knowledge Keepers;
- Continue to listen to students, parents/guardians and families;
- Continue to phase the NBE3U/C/E course and offer support and resources necessary in all secondary sites within the District;
- Bring forward a four year strategic plan for Indigenous Education.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8. Funding for Indigenous education at the OCDSB and across Ontario stems from the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Supplement Grant, which has three allocations:
 - Native Language;
 - Native Studies;
 - and Per-Pupil Amount.

The OCDSB qualifies for both the Native Studies and Per-Pupil allocations, but does not currently offer Native Language programming and as such does not receive funds through allocation. Funding is used to offer Native Studies courses in secondary schools, provide resources for schools, support community partnerships (e.g., Urban Aboriginal High School, Inuuqatigiit-Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, etc.), provide for one system vice principal position and two instructional coach positions, and any other opportunities for students and staff development. For 2018-2019, the grant totals \$2,785,036. Since 2010, there have been many changes to the

funding formula for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education. The Ministry of Education has made it a priority for Indigenous students and their families to self-identify as First Nations, Métis or Inuit in order to allocate funds to support students. Appendix C provides pertinent financial reporting data for Indigenous Education at OCDSB in the 2018-2019 school year.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

9. Building trusting relationships and developing awareness of Indigenous learnings and ways of knowing serve as the catalyst to increasing the achievement and well-being of the Indigenous students in the OCDSB. This belief serves as the driving force of the Indigenous Education Learning Team. The Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC) and the Original Voices Youth Circle will allow the OCDSB to hear the voices of Indigenous students, families and community partners. These voices will continue to guide the development of strategies and initiatives designed to support improved well-being and achievement, and equitable outcomes for Indigenous students. Additionally in 2018-2019, the OCDSB has had the opportunity to consult with Indigenous parents and community partners as it embarked on the collection of identity-based data. As part of the commitment to the Indigenous community, the OCDSB held separate sessions to ensure Indigenous voices were heard in the process through both Indigenous student and parent focus groups, and provided information in Inuktitut.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

10. The work presented reports the measurement of progress being made in support of the OCDSB Indigenous population, and can be used to monitor advancement in our strategic objectives. Much of the progress detailed in this report was driven by the priorities set in the 2015-2019 strategic plan and the specific goal to reduce barriers to learning to improve equity of access and opportunity for all students. One of the strategies identified for achieving this goal was to review and ensure effective use of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit funding. The financial investments made in support of Indigenous student achievement and well-being can be found in Appendix C, which indicates that funds were largely spent as intended in the predetermined budget.

Looking ahead, the work in support of Indigenous Education addresses all three pillars of the 2019-2023 strategic plan: building a culture of innovation, a culture of caring, and a culture of social responsibility. A specific goal of the current strategic plan is to remove barriers to equity of access, opportunity and outcomes. This will be achieved by building system capacity in equity and inclusive practice to support education, engagement and reconciliation with historically marginalized groups.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

11. The following questions are provided to support the discussion of this item by the Committee:
- How can we leverage the work that has been done so that more educators are empowered and engaged in Indigenous education?
 - How can we best support the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with regard to Indigenous education in our schools?
 - How can we sustain meaningful relationships with community partners and Indigenous families so that we continue to build capacity for OCDSB staff, thus impacting all students?
 - How can we continue to support our movement as a District, along our learning continuum from awareness to engagement, to implementation?

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Board Action Plan/Initiatives and Programming
Appendix B Performance Measures
Appendix C Financial Information