

Advisory Committee for Extended Day and Child Care Programs Report

Wednesday, November 27, 2019, 7:00 pm
Trustees' Committee Room
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario

A meeting of the Advisory Committee for Extended Day and Child Care Programs was held this evening commencing at 7:05 p.m. in the Trustee's Committee Room, 133 Greenbank Road, Ottawa, with Superintendent Grigoriev in the Chair and the following also in attendance:

MEMBERS: Lucas Malinowski (Parent Member)
Courtney Clark (Parent Member)
Laura Kelly (Parent Member)
Terry Warner (Special Education Advisory Committee, electronic communication)

TRUSTEE: Rob Campbell

STAFF AND GUESTS: Olga Grigoriev, Superintendent of Instruction
Julie Cyr, Manager of Early Learning
Tammy Piche, Early Childcare Educator, OSSTF representative
Mryriam Pepin, Children's Village representative
Nicole Guthrie, Board/Committee Coordinator

1. Call to Order

Superintendent Grigoriev called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Quorum could not be achieved. It was considered important to proceed with an information session.

2. Approval of the Agenda

3. Delegations

There were no delegations.

4. Review of Committee Report

4.1 30 October 2019

The report of the 30 October 2019 meeting was provided.

4.2 Action Arising from the Report

a. Welcome to New Members

New parent representatives Laura Kelly, Lucas Malinowski and Courtney Clark introduced themselves to those present.

b. Engagement Strategies

Superintendent Grigoriev noted that engagement of parents has, in the past, been an issue for the committee and that the outreach conducted at the end of the 2018-2019 school year resulted in a shortlist of parents who expressed interest in participating on the committee. She encouraged conversation on the matter of engagement and the goals and objectives and what brought those parents to the table.

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

- Parents with children in an extended day program (EDP) will have a relationship with the District for a number of years and their input can help shape the program. There is value to a strong parent voice and a healthy committee;
- Ms. Kelly noted her background in child and youth mental health. She stressed the importance of the EDP in the social and emotional development of children;
- Ms. Kelly suggested that the members review the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health paper "Supporting Ontario's youngest minds: Investing in the mental health of children under 6";
- Ms. Clark noted the importance of quality, safe, affordable care for children. Children often spend upwards of 10 hours a day in childcare; therefore, quality is critically important. She noted the many City of Ottawa programs and their philosophy on reaching vulnerable communities. She expressed the view that the quality of instruction is incredible and that , and every child in District run programs deserve similar opportunities;
- Ms. Pepin has provided her experiences from an operational perspective and would like the policy to clarify the role of the third-party providers on the committee;
- There are a variety of means to reach and engage parents including surveys and newsletters. Members noted that people tend to be more engaged and more outspoken when they are dissatisfied;

- Each meeting of the committee typically provides District staff with valuable suggestions and input on program delivery;
- Mr. Malinowski expressed the view that the committee can be an effective conduit between a parent of a child in the EDP and the Board. He added that mandate, as well as the role and function of the committee need to be carefully considered;
- Ms. Pepin noted that the committee rarely sees items requiring action. The items are mostly for discussion. Myriam no action items, where quorum necessary for voting;
- A consensus model has worked for the committee and the Board should refer matters to the committee to solicit their valued input on matters related to child care;
- The fee structure is an annual agenda item. It may or may not be contentious depending and may require the support of the committee;
- Trustee Campbell was pleased to welcome the new members and remarked on the committee's lack of capacity and consistency in the past. He hoped the committee could become more functional and noted that the Board has planned to conduct an review of all of its advisory committees in 2020;
- The policy requires the committee to create an annual report, last year the annual report was prepared by Manager Heap;
- The policy clearly identifies the voting members of the committee as parents and representatives of other parent-based community or District advisory committees. The non-voting members help support the parent members;
- Ms. Kelly expressed concern on the lack of diversity and hoped the parent voice could be made more reflective of the community of child care program users;
- In the absence of a diversity of members surveys could be used effectively to reach a broader audience;
- Ms. Piche is familiar with and understands the range of care required in the District's EDP and is happy to support and inform the committee of the challenges from a staff perspective;
- Manager Cyr remarked that it is important to listen to the parent input and values the conversations of the committee. She noted that it might also be valuable to have meetings of District and third party provide staff to discuss operational issues;
- Trustee Campbell noted that school councils are mandated to provide an opportunity for parents to provide feedback, but the mandate does not extend to EDP and childcare and therefore there is no mechanism for parental feedback to be conveyed to the principal, the Superintendent of Instruction and ultimately the Board;

- The Children's Village has a seat as a community member on their school's parent council and they often assist their schools with fundraising and other initiatives;
- The Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils (OCASC), the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) and the Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE) will be contacted regarding their interest in providing a representative to the committee;
- A survey is conducted biannually and committee members have had input on the questions. The participation rate of the survey is high and parents' overall satisfaction with the program is high; and
- The survey questions and survey results will be shared with the committee. The members agreed the survey could be used to help inform the committee's future work.

6. Department Update

6.1 Update from Olga Grigoriev, Superintendent of Instruction

Superintendent Grigoriev provided the following update:

- An internal audit of the Extended Day and Childcare Program and Department was conducted in May 2018. The audit identified a number of areas for focus, including but not limited to:
 - Operating System
 - Staffing ratios
 - Attendance management
 - Professional development
 - Early Child Educator vacancies
 - Delegation of authority
 - Financial reporting
 - Supervision and safety
 - Hiring
 - Documentation and succession planning
- Manager Cyr is currently using the audit results as a blueprint to guide the work of the department;
- A successful Town Hall style training session was held during the annual training exercise in August 2019;
- Early Childhood Educator shortages and replacement staff are significant issues for the District; and
- It is anticipated that the Board will further investigate the question of the Infant-Toddler Program (ITP) in 2020.

6.2 Update from Julie Cyr, Manager of Early Learning

Manager Cyr provided the following update:

- The Digibot platform the District has invested in for Extended Day and Childcare registration is live and families can now register children online, update children's information and access their income tax receipt through the portal;
- Department staff can now more reliably report on available spaces and are freed from laborious hand filing which has created further efficiencies;
- The District recognizes that not all families will have access to smart phones or computers and families will be supported through the transition;
- Additional support and training will be provided to staff;
- The District is required to maintain legislated childcare to caregiver ratios;
- Staff are reviewing the support for children with special education needs and those with emergency plans and plan to enhance support staff and resources as required;
- The department is currently evaluating the Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) leave request process. Staff anticipate the implementation of a new program to support staff leave to ensure care is not impacted;
- The waitlist for childcare at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year was significant with close to 350 families on the list. There were over 41 schools with a significant waitlist owing to a shortage of ECEs;
- The District held several career fairs and interviewed and hired as many ECEs as possible. As a result only 6 schools now have a waitlist with 55 children currently without care;
- Many of the schools impacted are located in the eastern part of the City, in the Orleans and Gloucester area. Staff has had difficulty finding qualified staff in the area. The District has a career fair planned for January 2020 in an effort to engage qualified ECEs in the area; and
- Staff plan to reach out to the schools individually and use all available means to advertise and promote the vacancies.

7. New Business

Trustee Campbell advised that he has concerns in the following areas:

- Special education supports
- Consistency of programming
- The deficit in the Infant Toddler Program (ITP)
- Extra charges to EDP parents to cover ITP
- Unused purpose-built spaces
- Barriers to low socio-economic status families to access the programs

Superintendent Grigoriev indicated that she would provide the members with the Advisory Committee for Extended Day and Child Care Programs annual reports

from previous years. It was noted that the 2017-2018 annual report as presented at Committee of the Whole in June 2018 was not was not reflective of the discussions by the committee and conveyed the personal experiences of one parent.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:14 p.m.