

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, January 8, 2020, 7:00 pm
Trustees' Committee Room
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario

- Members:** Sonia Nadon-Campbell (Community Representative), Christine Boothby (Trustee), Rob Campbell (Trustee), Chris Ellis (Trustee), Susan Cowin (Community Representative), Rob Kirwan (Community Representative), Mark Wylie (Down Syndrome Association), Cathy Miedema (Association for Bright Children), Katie Ralph (Autism Ontario, Ottawa Chapter), Safina Dewshi (Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils, Alternate), Ian Morris (Ontario Associations for Families of Children with Communication Disorders), Jim Harris (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children), Terry Warner (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children, Alternate), Nicole Ullmark (Easter Seals Ontario), Dr. Maggie Mamen (Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton)
- Association Representatives (Non-Voting):** Jennifer Titley (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation), Connie Allen (Professional Student Services Personnel, Alternate), Nancy Dlouhy (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Operations Committee), Catherine Houlden (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Teachers), Kim Elmer (Ottawa-Carleton Secondary School Administrators' Network)
- Staff and Guests:**
- Members:** Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Mary-Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction for Safe Schools), Colin Anderson (System Principal of Safe Schools), Christine Kessler (System Principal Learning Support Services), Amy Hannah (System Principal Learning Support Services), Stacey Kay (Manager of Learning Support Services), Vicky Kryiaco (OSTA), Leigh Fenton (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Call to Order

Chair Nadon-Campbell called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Vice Chair Harris wished the committee a happy new year and explained that the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) policies were included at the beginning of the agenda package to provide the guiding documents to members at the outset of the term.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Mark Wylie,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

3. Delegations

Ms. Janet Bowen, Chair of the Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education School Council, sent a letter signed by all members of the Crystal Bay Centre school council, in support of the 13 November 2019 SEAC delegation on the implementation of Transition Counsellors/Coordinators.

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

- Currently the process in place for transitions at Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education involves staff working with families to register for service coordination and accommodations. Ms. Bowen stated that parents or guardians remain unclear on all services that are potentially available;
- Staff explained that transition support is also offered through guidance counsellors and learning support teachers who share the information about post-secondary services available;
- Pathway planning is available to students in all programs;
- Transition programs occur in August to support students with special needs in advance of entering into the successive learning institution;
- Mr. Kirwan expressed concern that the process must begin earlier for the severely developmentally disabled students and that many of these students will not enroll in post-secondary education, however, they require transition services beyond the classroom; and
- Ten students will graduate from Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. To Ms. Bowen's knowledge, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) has not visited the school to present information regarding social services or the length of the waitlist for programs.

Chair Nadon-Campbell thanked Ms. Bowen for her delegation and recounted that Transition Planning is on SEAC's long range agenda.

4. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

4.1 4 December 2019

Moved by Trustee Boothby,

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee Report dated 04 December 2019 be received.

Trustee Boothby noted that her name should be reflected in the Committee's attendance list and requested the following additional changes to the report:

- Daniel Bersyniow, Student Senator should be reflected in the Committee's attendance list under "Association Representatives (Non-Voting)";
- On folio 32, under the fourth bullet point, reference to the "reach ahead" program should be removed;
- On folio 32, under the fourth bullet point, "equity issue" should be revised to read "equity platform"; and
- On folio 32, under the fifth bullet point, the word "association" should be removed.

Moved by Trustee Boothby,

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee Report dated 04 December 2019 be received, as amended.

Carried

a. Business Arising

a. Nomination of a SEAC Representative Member and Alternate to Committee of the Whole

The Nomination of a SEAC Representative Member and Alternate to Committee of the Whole was deferred to section 8. Committee Reports.

4.2 Review of Long Range Agenda

The long range agenda was provided for information.

Trustee Ellis requested that Status of English with Core French Program be added to the long range agenda. Chair Nadon-Campbell noted that the agenda planning meeting for SEAC was scheduled for end of January and the placement of item will be discussed at that time.

Mr. Kirwan requested 'Implement Exit Outcomes' be changed to 'Transition Planning'.

4.3 Motion/Action Tracking Report

The Motion/Action Tracking Report was provided for information.

Access to Glebe Collegiate Institute was addressed by Chief Financial Officer Michael Carson. An interim plan is in place for the student. This information has been communicated with Trustee Lyra Evans.

Trustee Campbell reiterated his concern for including school-specific action items to be taken on by the SEAC committee. The District annually reviews Policy P. 121 GOV Accessibility.

5. Presentations

5.1 OSTA Presentation with Chief Administrative Officer and General Manager, Vicky Kyriaco

Ms. Vicky Kryiaco presented an Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) update. She reported that the service has grown from transporting 56,000 students in 2007 to 72,370 students in 2019. There are 700 vans servicing students. The organization has hired two Safety and Accessible Transportation Assistants. She reviewed revisions to the policy for students within a designated walk zone, the evaluation of the "ride alone" program and the concept of modified schedules where students may only require a one-way ride.

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

- The presentation was offered to SEAC because the Ottawa Catholic School Board SEAC has recently received the presentation;
- The "Request for Accessible Transportation" form is completed at the school with the learning support teacher and the parents. If a student is being considered for a modified transportation plan, this form is used in the skills review;
- Skills of student independency are developed through bus riding training, however there is a shortage of Orientation and Mobility Staff at the District to assist with training more students;
- The profile of a student who may be eligible for a transportation modification are those students who are having difficulty managing the programming of a full day at school;
- The OSTA vehicle drivers do not have a part in the skills development support of the students with their Individual Education Plan (IEP). The

drivers are made aware of any triggers the student may be sensitive towards or hand-signals which may comfort the student;

- An annual audit is performed, identifying students who are capable of taking the public transportation system;
- The increase in ride alone passengers is thought to be correlated to an increase in student anxiety and self-regulation issues; and
- A transition plan from van to public service is suggested for students leaving the District.

Superintendent Symmonds acknowledged that some of the students with special education needs have complex, highly individualized needs. The trends noticed in the transportation system are part of the challenge to support these students.

Mr. Kirwan stated that he intends to provide a notice of motion regarding a proposal on Transporting Special Education Students for the 12 February 2020 SEAC meeting.

5.2 Lockdown Procedure Information

Superintendent Symmonds introduced Superintendent of Instruction for Safe Schools, Mary-Jane Farrish, and System Principal of Safe Schools, Colin Anderson, to present information about the lockdown procedure at the District.

System Principal Anderson referred to folio 38 citing the mandatory requirement from the Ministry of Education that each school shall conduct a minimum of two lockdown drills during each school year.

Mr. Harris recalled that the committee had requested additional information on the lockdown procedures because many students experience anxiety. He queried whether there were rules of interpretation on the conducting drills.

Superintendent Symmonds relayed that the primary goal of the lockdown drills is student safety. It is important to work within the abilities of the students in the classroom to get into as safe as a position as possible.

In discussion, many noted that similar to a fire drill, empowering the students with the knowledge of managing themselves in the lockdown circumstances helps the students to become less anxious through the practice of procedure.

5.3 2020-2021 Budget

CFO Carson presented the committee with a summary of Special Education grant revenues and expenditures from the years 2017-18,

2018-19 and the approved budget for 2019-2020. All funding allotted by the Ministry of Education is determined by the number of students.

The Special Education total budget is approximately \$120 million annually, beyond the average expenditures per student. Many of the needs that Learning Support Services (LSS) address are not money-based but a skill shortage in the community. Since 2017-18 the LSS team has grown. The number of Education Assistants (EAs) have increased by 60.0 FTE. One half of the funds generated for these hires were funded by the province by the Local Priorities Fund (LPF). This fund was an arrangement made as a part of the last settlement of the collective bargaining agreement. With the expiration of the agreement in August 2019, this education grant is not in place for the 2019-2020 school year. Last year the District budgeted a deficit of \$7.8 million dollars for the 2019-2020 year. The province of Ontario allows for budgeted deficits of up to one percent of the annual budget. Therefore, positions created with LPF are not compromised. Until collective bargaining is completed and further communication is delivered on the next direction of the government, the District will be cautious. CFO Carson offered to come back to SEAC on 11 March, 2020.

Ms. Allen expressed the view that increasing staff salaries to a competitive market range will lead to the retention of a skilled labour force in the District. The dilemma with recruitment and the perceived lack of professionals to fill these jobs is inherently tied to the compensation the District offers. CFO Carson acknowledged that satisfactory compensation is an issue for every job category.

Trustee Ellis inquired over the appropriate time to bring forward staffing recommendations. CFO Carson replied that because of obligations under the Collective Agreement, the contract requires certain dates to identify the number of teachers who will be required for next year and the allocation of these teachers by school. Any job vacancies must be posted by a specific date. Academic staffing is finalized by the end of March. The challenge is this process includes both the mandatory, legislated staff for student/teacher ratios and non-mandatory teacher support.

Ms. Nadon-Campbell confirmed with CFO Carson that there will not be a change in the size of the Summer Learning Program. There is a limit to the program enrolment due to the limited number of facilities that can host the program. The change in the cost of the program is due to transportation fees.

In response to a query regarding the Behavioural Expertise Amount (BEA), System Principal Kessler responded that the BEA is related to students with Autism. Originally funds that were supplied to schools for Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) training and now the amount is part of

permanent funding to support multi-disciplinary staff positions that support the Autism Team, as well as ABA training.

In response to a query from Trustee Campbell regarding the allocation of special education funding, CFO Carson advised that more details will be provided during an additional budget presentation to SEAC on March 2020.

6. Action/Discussion/Information Items

6.1 Memo 20-001, Update to Needs Based Ontario Autism Program

Your committee had before it Memo 20-001 providing an update on changes to a new needs-based Ontario Autism Program (OAP).

Superintendent Symmonds reported that the key items from the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) announcement in December included core services, foundational family services, early intervention and school readiness services, and urgent and complex needs services. One recommendation from The Ontario Autism Program Advisory Panel Report (October 2019) was that the government should consider care coordinators to help the families who have identified challenges coordinating various services. LSS is unable to collect definitive data on autistic students who were subject to funding cuts and were subsequently enrolled in the public education system. The service providers in the field of Autism support are not part of a broad collective, therefore it is difficult to source information on enrollment. Care coordinators will be able to serve as the central point of contact and lead the process to forecast a child's support need.

It is anticipated that the implementation of the new OAP will begin in April 2020 followed by additional phases throughout 2020 and 2021. LSS will need to continue to monitor these changes in the coming years.

Superintendent Symmonds contacted the Ministry but has not received a response as of yet. There are no changes to the current practices within the District. He recognized that there are families and guardians who experience stress related to potential service reductions.

Trustee Boothby remarked that the concept of a fixed childhood budget is not adequate as each child has individual needs. Superintendent Symmonds responded that the invitation for interim one-time funding to be offered before the end of March will address any expenses of the student before the roll out of the program begins in April 2020. He was unaware of provisions within the 'service cap'.

7. Department Update

7.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Symmonds briefed the committee on the following subjects:

- Labour Relations unrest continues. He encouraged the committee to monitor the District website for daily updates;
- Potential barriers to e-Learning continues to be examined in LSS. Four skills are required for successful online learning: reading and writing, independent learning, motivation and computer literacy. Many students with special needs struggle with one or more of these. The requirement on credits has the potential to impact graduation rates. A student's IEP will be respected during e-Learning; however, the plan may not work online or may be difficult to implement.
- The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) Right to Read survey link will be shared with the committee electronically. On 10 March 2020 a public hearing is scheduled at the Nepean Sportsplex. Dr. Mamen asked for information on the statistics for success for special needs students learning online. System Principal Kessler explained that due to a lack of executive functioning, special education students will often face barriers to success. This is a concern for organizations involved in education and parents, respectively.

7.2 Special Education Plan (Standards)

a. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) (Discussion)

System Principal Hannah shared that she has been involved in comparative exercises with other boards when studying the District's Individual Education Plan (IEP) standard. She believes the language in this standard requires more work to ensure that the language is accessible to parents and guardians. To aid in that process, a section has been added to clearly outline the purpose of an IEP. More information will be added on the definition of 'accommodation', 'modification', or 'alternative program goal'. Defining 'annual program goals' and 'learning expectations' is important. The guides on how parents and guardians come to understand the IEP are under review. Clarity on the records management of IEPs should be captured in this standard.

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

- In an IEP form, all entered information is subject to change and can be edited;

- Classification standardization was implemented for the future goal of data analysis;
- On folio 8, consider that if the IEP is accommodation-only, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely (S.M.A.R.T) goals are not applicable;
- Add the reference: "Information on a 'diagnosis' can be found in the standard on Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)"; and
- Efforts are in place to write coherent IEPs with a goal of enacting a plan understood by the students to which they belong to.

b. Early Identification Procedures/Intervention Strategies (Discussion)

The standard on Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies was deferred to the 12 February 2020 meeting.

c. Specialized Health Support Services in School Setting (Independent Review)

Manager Kay reported that there have been a number of changes with community partners who have responsibilities for specialized health support in the school setting. As a result, the forms require updating. The Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) has a new referral form, reflecting the hospital's re-branding. The CHEO forms will be included in the revised version of the standard. She noted that the structure of the program, the criteria and services are all working well.

d. Board's Consultation Process (Independent Review)

System Principal Hannah requested that the members email her any questions or comments regarding the Board's Consultation Process standard.

8. Committee Reports

8.1 Advisory Committee on Equity

There was no report on the Advisory Committee on Equity.

8.2 Parent Involvement Committee

There was no report on the Parent Involvement Committee.

8.3 Board

There was no report on the Board.

8.4 Committee of the Whole

Mr. Kirwan queried the possibility of assigning more than one representative from SEAC to attend Committee of the Whole (COW) meetings on a rotational basis. Superintendent Symmonds will investigate the policy and consult with Board Services.

9. New Business

Trustee Campbell suggested that Memo 20-003, Elementary Students with Individual Education Plans by Program be brought to SEAC on 12 February 2020.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:31 p.m.

Sonia Nadon-Campbell, Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee