



ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITY REPORT

January 23, 2020

6:00 pm

Continuing Education - Library - Room C210

440 Albert Street

Ottawa, Ontario

Voting Members: Elaine Hayles (Community Representative), Harvey Brown (Community Representative), Ruth Sword (Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools), Riaz Mostaghim (Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools), Susan Cowin (Special Education Advisory Committee, Alternate), Ryan Doucette (Young Leaders Advisory Council)

Non-Voting Members: Rob Campbell (Trustee), Chris Ellis (Trustee), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Curriculum Services), Jacqueline Lawrence (Equity and Diversity Coordinator), Joy Liu (Student Senator)

Staff and Guests: Shannon Smith (Superintendent of Instruction), Naya Markanastasakis (System Vice Principal ESL/ELD Programming K-12, Multicultural Liaison Officers in Schools), Nicole Guthrie (Manager of Board Services), Sue Rice (OCDSB), Ken Mak (OCDSB), Fatuma Samatar (OCDSB), David Sutton (OCDSB), Maria Teresa Garcia (Manager, Multicultural Liaison Officer Program, OCISO), Nimao Ali

1. Welcome

Chair Hayles called the meeting to order at 6:14 p.m. She acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Territory and thanked the Algonquin Nations for hosting the meeting on their land.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Sue Cowin,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

3. Community Voice (delegations)

No delegations - Maxine unable to call in - technical difficulty she will be asked to an upcoming meeting.

3.1 Maxine Adwella - National Collaboration for Youth Mental Health

Ms. Adwella was unable to attend the meeting to present to the committee.

4. Review of Advisory Committee on Equity Report

4.1 28 November 2019

Moved by Ryan Doucette,

THAT the 28 November 2019 Advisory Committee on Equity report be received.

Carried

In response to a query regarding the workshop on unconscious bias as referenced on folio 2, Superintendent Baker noted that it was a part of a workshop presented by the District's Equity team and an element of the District's Equity Learning Plan. The workshop was delivered to all central staff. The District welcomed the insight and assistance of the Canadian Centre of Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) equity, diversity and inclusion trainer, Renee Bazile-Jones in presenting the workshop to principals and vice-principals.

4.2 Review of Long Range Agenda

The long range agenda was provided for information.

Superintendent Baker noted that the Annual Student Achievement Report (ASAR) and the Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and Wellbeing (BIPSAW) are available. She advised that the members may wish to invite central staff to provide a presentation on the reports at an upcoming meeting.

Superintendent Baker noted that a consultation on the revisions to the safe schools' policies will be held on the following dates.

Safe Schools Policy Community Consultation

Merivale High School - cafeteria

March 2nd

7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Ottawa Technical Secondary School - cafeteria

March 4th

7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Earl of March Secondary School

March 23rd

7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Trustee Campbell remarked that many of the items on the long range agenda are identified as "to be confirmed". He queried the plan for reviewing the items and the creation of a more precise long-range agenda. Staff advised that ACE membership has been a top priority and that when the new members are in place a priority item will be to create a work plan and determine a long range agenda. It is anticipated that small working groups may be established to explore the work of the committee as it relates to the District's strategic plan.

In response to a query regarding the strategic plan and priorities, Superintendent Baker advised that each department has its own action plan with a tracking and monitoring system. She noted that her team is in the process of developing an equity action framework and anticipates this to guide the implementation of the strategic plan initiatives related to equity over the coming years.

4.3 Action Tracking Report

The action tracking report was provided for information.

Diversity Coordinator Lawrence noted that there has been no change to the action tracking report.

5. Action/Discussion/Information Items

5.1 ACE Membership

Diversity Coordinator Lawrence provided an update on membership. During the discussion, the following points were noted.

- A matrix of recommended candidates was provided;
- The matrix outlines members, alternates and waiting list members;
- Members may be utilized in working committees for each of the pillars of the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan as well as communication and membership sub-committee;
- Staff commented on the diverse group of applicants;
- Some of the candidates will be a part of a working group only, which will capture the experiences of their community;

- Several community organizations including Jaku Konbit, Algonquin College, Parents for Diversity and Youth Ottawa have indicated they will put forward representatives;
- An orientation session will be held on 27 February 2020;
- Ms. Ali noted that as a non-voting representative of ACE for several years, she experienced some confusion in completing the application and as a result, some spaces on her application were missed. Diversity Coordinator Lawrence advised that there will be a space for Ms. Nimeo and that the committee will continue to be an open space;
- Trustee Campbell queried the role of the alternates. Diversity Coordinator Lawrence noted that the members would be paired with alternates and that the voting member and the alternate would make arrangements among themselves to ensure participation in the event of absence;
- Section 4.17 of Policy P.00.GOV Advisory Committee on Equity notes that a member shall lose their seat if absent from three consecutive regular meetings of the Committee without notice;
- Those individuals outlined on pages 3 and 4 of the matrix are individuals who are considered members at large and will be on a waiting list. Those individuals will be invited to attend meetings, engage and participate in the meetings;
- The draft procedure was used to inform the work of the membership sub-committee in the selection process;
- 613819 was supportive of the membership campaign and helped share and distribute communications regarding the committee but have declined to put forth an individual to sit as a community representative;
- The 27 February 2020 orientation session will onboard the new members. Members will elect a Chair at the first meeting of ACE with the new members;
- All members, both primary and alternate as well as members at large, may attend and participate in the meetings but only the voting member or their alternate may vote;
- Members at large and non-voting can be appointed to be representatives on other advisory committees as required.

Moved by Ryan Doucette,

THAT the Advisory Committee on Equity accepts the recommendation of the membership committee.

Carried

6. Department Update

6.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Baker introduced new Superintendent Shannon Smith and noted that she will assume the portfolio that includes Continuing Education, Alternate schools, and Adult High School.

Superintendent Baker announced that Raigelee Alorut has accepted a position as the Strategic Planning Resource Advisor for the Ministry of Education in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. Chair Hayles thanked Ms. Alorut for her participation and on behalf of ACE wished her all the best in her next journey.

Superintendent Baker introduced Naya Markanastasakis, System Vice-principal for ESL/ELD Programming and the Family Reception Centre. She noted that the Family Reception Centre welcomes families new to Canada, to the OCDSB, and families returning to the OCDSB. Through the intake and assessment service, the staff of the FRC advocate for each student so that their diverse educational and academic needs can be met. The FRC also utilizes Multicultural Liaison Officer(s) (MLOs) who provide relevant settlement information. She added that the FRC provides a supportive beginning for students and their families so that they can commence their educational journey on a positive note and eventually achieve personal excellence in learning.

Superintendent Baker announced that the District will be hiring a Human Rights and Equity Advisor (HREA). Reporting to the Director of Education, the HREA will work alongside senior system leaders to proactively address human rights concerns and foster cultures of respect for human rights and equity. The HREA's key responsibilities include supporting the District's efforts to identify and address systemically-based human rights and equity issues and build capacity to ensure compliance with the Ontario Human Rights Code. She noted that the HREA will be in place by the end of February 2020.

Superintendent Baker advised that the District will be advertising for two Graduation Coaches for Black Students. The Graduation Coaches will support Black students and act as mentors and advisors, collaborating with school-based and other staff and the broader community to identify and address barriers to engagement, learning, and well-being. The District will also be seeking an Indigenous Graduation Coach who will be assigned to Gloucester High School.

Ms. Cowin queried whether or not any thought has been given to the creation of a Disability Graduation Coach, she noted the importance of

strong mentors and assistance for students with disabilities and how the model could make a difference with students with disabilities.

Ms. Ali expressed the view that sensitivity training should be a priority. She noted that recent experiences in her child's school have highlighted the concern and that the District must educate its educators to be sensitive to issues of diversity.

Superintendent Baker advised that the District recognizes there is still work that needs to be done and that the Equity team endeavors to provide necessary training to principals, front line staff and teachers. The District's Equity learning plan is ongoing. She added that all staff will be completing Equity Learning Modules that were prepared with the assistance of the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI).

Diversity Coordinator Lawrence advised that staff have engaged in module-based learning programs to learn the basics of equity language, and human rights and how to apply them to their environment. Staff aims to build capacity among staff to address sensitivity issues. She added that the training opportunity will be extended to both new ACE members and trustees.

Student Senator Liu expressed the view that as a student, she finds that the curriculum also requires alignment with an Equity framework. She noted that many of the required readings for English courses features books with white, male authors and predominantly white characters.

Superintendent Baker advised that while labour relations negotiations with both the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) and Ontario Secondary School Teachers (OSSTF) unions are ongoing, educators are still working hard. The District recognizes the challenges for families and hopes the matter will be resolved soon.

7. Standing Items

7.1 Identity-based Data Collection

The survey closed on 19 January 2020 with several schools exercising the option to extend the administration of the survey until 24 January 2020 to allow for further student participation.

The District received 11,750 responses from parents of students in Kindergarten to Grade 6. This represents a response rate of 35 percent.

The District received 22,000 responses from students in grades 7 to 12. This represents a 62 percent response rate.

Ms. Samatar requested that the deadline be extended as she felt that she could encourage more of the parents she engages with to participate.

Superintendent Baker advised that staff contacted schools that had a 50 percent or lower response rate and provided assistance in the completion of the survey. She added that the strike had an impact on the collection in some instances as the data collection was part of the union's struck work.

7.2 OCDSB Mental Health Strategy 2019-2022

Staff advised that staff are preparing a literature review on mental health and Indigenous students and identifying mental health gaps for students of African descent. There are plans to engage with student focus groups and to listen to their experiences with mental health.

8. Committee Reports

8.1 Committee of the Whole

Mr. Brown noted that the Committee of the Whole (COW) meets the first and third Tuesday of each month and that he attended the 7 January and 21 January meetings.

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

- The 7 January 2020 COW meeting featured a lengthy discussion on the English with Core French program. It was noted that structural changes to the program are required to provide equitable access to resources;
- Trustee Campbell noted that there are important differences in the outcomes of students in the English program for those living in poverty and with special education challenges that the committee may wish to monitor;
- Student Senator Liu expressed the view that among students there is a perception that French immersion students are smarter and the quality of the teachers is higher;
- The District's Mental Health Strategy was discussed at the 21 January 2020 meeting;
- Equity is generalized in the plan but it does not contain a specific reference to students of African descent. Diversity and the lived experiences of students is reflected but Mr. Brown expressed the view that the plan was weak in terms of key performance indicators and measurement tools;
- Ms. Ali noted that Muslim youth encounter stress related to their faith and queried how the District plans to address the issue. Superintendent Baker advised that the mental health strategy was prepared by Dr. Petra Duschner and the Learning Support Services

team and that it is written at a high level to respond to the Ministry. She encouraged the members to review the minutes of the COW meeting where the strategy was discussed and to bring their concerns and comments to the attention of Dr. Duschner. She added that she will also speak to Dr. Duschner to alert her to the issues of those with disabilities and students dealing with islamophobia;

- Program choice ultimately belongs to the parent;
- Members noted that it is important for parents of students in grades 8 and 9 to speak to their child's teachers about pathways and options at the secondary level;
- Some members expressed the view that it would appear that schools that have the most vocal parent councils seem to get the resources they seek. All schools should be provided with the resources required to ensure student success;
- Parents often feel unwelcome in the schools and many do not know how to communicate with the school administration;
- Student Senator Liu commented on the importance of public education on childhood development. She noted that families from low socioeconomic status may have difficulty advocating for their schools and their children;
- Ms. Garcia noted that the District's acknowledgment of mental health issues and its creation of a strategy to address the issues is an important step forward; and
- Trustee Campbell noted that the Board is ultimately accountable for student success through the decisions it makes on supports, program choices, and program locations.

8.2 SEAC

There was no update from the Special Education Advisory Committee.

9. New Business

Mr. Doucette invited members to participate in the many Black History Month events taking place in the city during the month of February including the official launch on 25 January 2020.

Student Senator Liu encouraged ACE members and guests to attend and speak at Student Senate meetings. She noted that the Student Senate is pleased to provide a student voice to a variety of education-related issues.

Diversity Coordinator Lawrence noted that Parents for Diversity will host a workshop on 15 February 2020 focussed on supporting the mental health of the

black child. She will provide members with more details as they become available.

Ms. Hussien encouraged members to be proactive in their support for those families impacted by the displacement and forced evictions within the Heron Gate Community. She noted that the children of these communities currently attend Arch Street Public School and Charles H. Hulse Public School.

Ms. Sword noted that Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools will have a new chair and are in the process of contracting a new coordinator. Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools intends to strengthen their caring presence and listening ear in schools and anticipates new representatives will be present at ACE. She expressed enthusiasm for the positive revitalization and transition happening within the organization.

Ms. Ali advised that she is currently involved with the chaplaincy at Carleton University. She noted the importance of spiritual care as a tool to aid in the support of students mental health and well-being.

Ms. Ali encouraged members to be supportive of the Muslim community as they approach the three year anniversary of the 29 January massacre. She noted that the Muslim community is still suffering and that local families may be affected by the tragedy.

Mr. Sutton encouraged ACE members to be mindful of their roles and responsibilities in developing an understanding and encouraging communication with partners to foster meaningful engagement.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:39 pm.

Elaine Hayles, Acting Chair, Advisory Committee on Equity