



**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
REPORT No. 20-019**

3 March 2020

Process for the Advisory Committee Review

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PURPOSE:

1. To obtain approval for the process for a review and analysis of Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) advisory committees and their role in effective decision-making and community engagement.

Building authentic engagement with and among our communities is one of the goals of the Culture of Caring in the Board's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. Some of the activities to build system capacity for engagement include initiating an advisory committee review and facilitating partnerships with community groups and agencies to enhance student learning and opportunities.

CONTEXT:

2. For several years, the Board has identified a need for a review of its advisory committees as part of its ongoing governance practice improvements. The review will create an opportunity for advisory committee members, trustees and staff to review current practices, research and identify best practices, and make recommendations for change. The review will commence in the spring of 2020 and report back to Board in October 2020.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

3. History of OCDSB Advisory Committees

Prior to amalgamation on 1 January 1998, the Ottawa Board of Education and the Carleton Board of Education had a number of advisory committees to provide advice to their individual Boards of Trustees. The newly amalgamated Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) began operations under the new Board's interim by-laws and standing rules for the period 1 January 1998 to 31 December 1998. The following special purpose committees and advisory committees were included in the interim by-laws:

- Special Education Advisory Committee;
- Anti-racism and Ethnocultural Equity Committee;
- Inter-Board Coordinating Committee for the Education of Pupils with Development Disabilities (agreement with Ottawa Catholic School Board);
- Supervised Alternate Programs for Excused Pupils Committee;
- Contractual Committees required under collective agreements; and
- Appeals and Expulsion Hearing Panels.

Current Statutory Committees Required by the Ontario *Education Act* and *Regulations*

- Parent Involvement Committee (*Regulation 612/00*);
- Special Education Advisory Committee (*Regulation 464/97*);
- Audit Committee (*Regulation 361/10*); and
- Supervised Alternative Learning Committee (*Regulation 374/10*).

Other Advisory Committees Established by Board Motion

- Advisory Committee for the Arts (Board, Policy P.065.GOV, August 1998);
- Alternative Schools Advisory Committee (Board; Policy P.065.GOV, August 1998);
- Advisory Committee on Equity (Board, Policy P.065.GOV, January 1998 and Policy P.008.GOV);
- Advisory Committee for Extended Day and Child Care Programs (Board, Policy P.111.GOV, January 2014); and
- Indigenous Education Advisory Council (Board, Policy P.140.GOV, 14 June 2018).

Some of the Board's advisory committees were established prior to the availability or general use of electronic and social media tools. As a result, a formal advisory committee structure was a direct way for the District to engage with and receive feedback from parents and the community.

The current environment is more complicated and has been affected by:

- An evolving organizational structure of the OCDSB, different legislative requirements, education policy priorities, an increased focus on diversity and equity, Indigenous education, and parental and community engagement;
- The establishment of administrative steering committees as directed in policy P.002.COM Board-Community Relations to consider matters of current interest in which there is a need for community involvement;
- Development of the Board's Strategic Plan for 2019-2023;
- Increased transparency/accountability measures;
- Increased opportunities to provide information and resources to assist the public in learning about advisory committees;
- Opportunities to gather public input on policy and program matters through public open houses, social media, task forces, community forums, zone meetings, working groups, focus groups, expert panels, online electronic surveys and questionnaires, District and school websites, or other mechanisms; and

- Higher expectations that the community has around public engagement.

4. Current OCDSB Advisory Committees Included in the Review

The OCDSB By-Laws and Standing Rules include advisory committees under the umbrella of special purpose committees established by the Board by resolution or policy to provide advice in a specific area. The following five special purpose advisory committees are included in the review:

- Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Programs;
- Advisory Committee on the Arts;
- Alternative Schools Advisory Committee;
- Advisory Committee on Equity; and
- Indigenous Education Advisory Council.

Statutory committees are established in accordance with the *Education Act, Regulations* or other legislation for the purpose specified. The following two statutory committees are included in the review:

- Parent Involvement Committee; and
- Special Education Advisory Committee.

NOTE: Although the Audit Committee and Supervised Alternative Learning Committee are statutory committees required by the *Ontario Education Act*, they are not included in this review as their mandates are operational in nature and do not include a primary focus for providing advice to the Board.

5. Scope of the Review of OCDSB Advisory Committees

In order to undertake a review, it will be necessary to gather information about our current structures and process. For each current OCDSB statutory and other advisory committee, the following information will be gathered and reviewed:

- Mandate/Terms of reference;
- Relevant legislation and OCDSB policies and procedures;
- Committee membership;
- Membership term limits;
- Quorum;
- Meeting and agenda protocols;
- Staff support provided to the committee;
- Recruitment, selection, appointment and resignation process for voting and non-voting committee members;
- Orientation, training and facilitation needs of advisory committees;
- Representation as non-voting members of Committee of the Whole and Committee of the Whole Budget as provided in policy P.110.GOV and procedure PR.644.GOV Consultation by the Board, Schools and School Councils with Constituent Groups and the Wider Community;

- Monthly and/or annual reporting requirements to the OCDSB Committee of the Whole and/or Board; and
- General observations.

6. Creating an Advisory Committee Review Panel

In the spirit of “building engagement”, staff is recommending the creation of an Advisory Committee Review Panel to undertake a review of the advisory committees. Having an Advisory Committee Review Panel manage the review will be a key mechanism for keeping all advisory committees informed of the process as it moves forward.

It is suggested that the Review Panel would include two trustees: one trustee to act as Chair of the Advisory Committee Review Panel and a second trustee to be a member of the Panel. Each of the Board’s advisory committees would be invited to appoint a representative to the Advisory Committee Review Panel.

The Advisory Committee Review Panel may wish to explore the possibility of engaging an external consultant experienced in reviewing governance structures to provide input, facilitation, and/or audit services as an advisor to, or member of the Review Panel.

Mandate and Terms of Reference

The mandate and terms of reference for the Advisory Committee Review Panel would include the following:

- Review the current status of OCDSB advisory committees;
- Consider mechanisms for broader communication and consultation with other advisory committee members, parents/guardians, school councils, and the wider community
- Identify what works well for each advisory committee;
- Determine where there are any opportunities for growth to facilitate the role of advisory committees in effective decision-making and community engagement; and
- Make recommendations to the Committee of the Whole with respect to the structure and function of OCDSB advisory committees.

It will be important for the Review Panel to consider and respect the differences between the Board’s advisory committees. For example, the Arts and Alternative Schools Advisory Committees have very few members this year and there may be a better way to engage these audiences. The Indigenous Education Advisory Council has a unique structure that is viewed as an exemplary model across the province. Care must be taken to ensure the review process does not introduce challenges to that model as Council continues to establish its goals and membership.

7. Key Findings and Recommendations

Following the consultation period, the Advisory Committee Review Panel will present a report to the Committee of the Whole in October 2020 on key findings and recommendations arising from the review of the Board’s advisory committees.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8. The cost of engaging an external expert to provide input or facilitate the work of the Panel, should the Advisory Committee Review Panel determine it to be appropriate, is estimated to be in the range of \$15,000.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

9. It will be essential that the review provide an opportunity for members of the Board's current advisory committees, trustees, students, and administrative staff who provide support to the advisory committees to provide their perspective on:
 - The role and function of the committee as an advisory body, public consultation mechanism, and communication tool;
 - Do advisory committees meet the requirements specified in the *Education Act, Regulations*, or Board policies;
 - The expectations that advisory committee members have with their role;
 - How well current practices meet those expectations;
 - Voting and non-voting members representing the diverse demographic composition of the District;
 - Changes required to the committee membership selection and appointment processes; and
 - Other possible options or changes needed to address current challenges.

The consultation may include attendance at advisory committee meetings, focus group sessions, public meetings, an electronic survey or questionnaire, and written submissions.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

10. Providing an up-to-date process that allows members of the OCDSB community to seek and/or provide meaningful consultation and engagement in a variety of ways is in alignment with the following goals of the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan :
 - Culture of Innovation - Promote collaborative environments which foster innovation and creativity;
 - Culture of Caring - Build authentic engagement with and among our communities; and
 - Culture of Social Responsibility - Improved decision-making and governance practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A. THAT a review of Ottawa-Carleton District School Board advisory committees be undertaken as outlined in Report 20-019;

- B. THAT a special purpose Advisory Committee Review Panel be established with a mandate to manage the advisory committee review process; and
- C. THAT two trustees be appointed to the Advisory Committee Review Panel: one trustee to act as the Chair of the Advisory Committee Review Panel and a second trustee as a member of the Advisory Committee Review Panel.

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