

## SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

**Wednesday, February 12, 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), Ian Morris (Ontario Associations for Families of Children with Communication Disorders), Jim Harris (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children), Nicole Ullmark (Easter Seals Ontario), Dr. Maggie Mamen (Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton), Lisa Paterick (VIEWS for the visually impaired), Ian Morris (Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders),

**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), Jean Trant (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, SSP), 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), Dr. Petra Duschner (Manager of Mental Health and Critical Services), Christine Kessler (System Principal Learning Support Services), Amy Hannah (System Principal Learning Support Services), Stacey Kay (Manager of Learning Support Services), Joan Oracheski (Manager of Research Evaluation & Analytics Division (READ)), Nicole Guthrie (Manager of Board Services), Jeffrey Humphries (Learning Support Consultant for Assistive Technology), Daniel Bersyniow-Naane (Student Senator), Leigh Fenton (Board/Committee Coordinator), Shelly Wei Ma (Lisgar School Council)

1. Call to Order

Chair Nadon-Campbell called the meeting to order at 7:01 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 Rob Kirwan,**

**THAT the agenda be approved.**

**Carried**

3. Delegations

Ms. Sadler, parent of a student with level three autism, has had little success with the integration of her son into the regular classroom. The school environment is overwhelming for her son. He has difficulty communicating his needs and has been subject to both exclusions and suspensions. The assistance of a 0.5 FTE education assistant was offered to support him.

Trustee Ellis requested clarification on the reason the student does not meet the current criteria for an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) system class placement. Ms. Sadler responded that her son has been assessed to be of average ability and has not been previously eligible for placement.

In response to a committee member's question on potential solutions, Ms. Sadler responded that a lower ratio class size with highly trained staff would benefit her son.

Trustee Boothby inquired about the District's plan to facilitate his return to school and a safety plan. Ms. Sadler mentioned that as of 12 February 2020, she received a letter for an ASD referral which may potentially address her main concern regarding the large class size.

4. Presentations

4.1 Report 19-123, The Annual Student Achievement Report (ASAR) 2018-2019 (M.Giroux ext. 8310)

Superintendent Symmonds introduced Joan Oracheski, Manager of Research Evaluation & Analytics Division (READ) to present the results of the 2018-2019 Annual Student Achievement Report (ASAR) and supplementary analyses of assessment results for students by exceptionality.

Manager Oracheski began the presentation by emphasizing the reduction in the density of the ASAR document through the use of infographics. The ASAR serves as a progress monitoring tool for the Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and Well-Being (BIPSAW). The report includes cross-sections of achievement from multiple sources to provide insight into the positive impact on student learning and to identify opportunities where intentional focus is required to better meet student needs.

One third of the student population participated in Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessments annually. Data is reported on all students and those belonging to specific groups such as English Language Learners; students with special education needs (excluding gifted); students residing in low income neighbourhoods and those who self-identify as Indigenous. In comparison to all students, achievement results for specific groups of students continue to be lower, especially among students with special education needs. Approximately two thirds of the students with special education needs have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) only. The most common exceptionality among the remaining students with special education needs are students with learning disabilities, autism and giftedness.

In 2018-2019, results on the provincial assessments showed that students with an IEP only and those with a learning disability performed similarly to all students with special education needs. In the case of the OSSLT and grade 9 math (academic and applied) performance of these students were similar to that of all students. Some special education students were exempted from testing in grades 3 and 6 (e.g., those with a mild intellectual disability (MID) and developmental disability (DD)). Grade 6 achievement rates continue to be higher in comparison to grade 3.

For math results, there are opportunities for growth; this is consistent with the province. Student attitudes towards math and outcomes are closely linked. Analysis of report card data and credit accumulation rates suggest improvement as students' progress towards grade 11.

In response to questions the following points were noted:

- If a student is absent or exempted from EQAO testing, their results are included in the overall results. Exceptions include grade 9 math where there are no exemptions and OSSLT for first time eligible and previously eligible students, where results are reported for fully participating students;
- A four year historical trend is provided in the 2018-2019 ASAR analysis;

- The cohort graduation rate is determined by the Ministry and considers the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) only, which requires thirty credits, forty hours of community service and the literacy requirement. It does not include the Ontario Secondary School Certificate (OSSC) or the certificate of accomplishment;
- Learning Support Services (LSS) is newly receiving the information and are eager to examine the disaggregated data on students with special education needs. Determining whether EQAO is the appropriate measure for students with DD and MID will be considered now that the specificity of information is accessible. This work is cross-departmental;
- For students with more than one exceptionality, the main exceptionality is used to classify the data accrued; and
- Ms. Houlden highlighted a third pathway to graduation with an OSSD–workplace and locally developed classes. The ASAR reports that the students in the locally developed classes are experiencing a gap in achievement patterns. She is interested in having more information about the numbers of students in locally developed classes with IEPs.

#### 4.2 Electronic Agenda Packages Presentation

Superintendent Symmonds introduced Nicole Guthrie, Manager of Board Services, to provide an overview of the shift to paperless committee meeting agenda packages, published using a software application called eScribe. Manager Guthrie reported that in order to align with the Culture of Social Responsibility objective of the 2019-2023 strategic plan and to foster progressive stewardship of the environment, the District will eliminate printed agendas by June 2020. A technology cart may be made available at meetings to provide computers to access the material and participants are encouraged to bring their personal devices to meetings. All agenda packages can be found online on the OCDSB website under the 'upcoming events' calendar. Manager Guthrie demonstrated selected views of various participation types and provided a comprehensive on-screen tutorial.

Laserfiche is an online archive system, where all documents issued by the District can be accessed. Manager Guthrie offered to return to another meeting to review Laserfiche and its capabilities.

In response to a query about the ability to take notes inside the application, Manager Guthrie stated that note taking is possible using the eScribe app and Board Services staff is looking at ways to unlock more capabilities for users through licensing.

The committee and its participants were encouraged to connect with Board Services staff to help with engagement of the eScribe product.

5. Department Update

5.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Symmonds reported on the following items briefly:

- Justine Bell, the new trustee for zone 10 Somerset/Kitchissippi, will be formerly sworn on 18 February 2020;
- Three policy consultation meetings for parents and guardians on the safe schools policy and school code of conduct are scheduled as follows: Monday, 2 March 2020 at Merivale High School, Wednesday, 4 March 2020 at Ottawa Technical Secondary School, and Monday, 23 March 2020 at Earl of March Secondary School; all meetings proceed from 6 to 8 p.m.;
- The Right to Read public inquiry is scheduled to be held on 10 March 2020 from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Nepean Sportsplex;
- Labour sanctions are on-going and on 21 February 2020 there will be a full withdrawal of service in the Ontario public school system. Mr. Wylie inquired whether the Ministry of Education could potentially "claw-back" a portion of their funding due to the teacher absences. Superintendent Symmonds responded that portions of the funding will be returned to the Province. There are certain expenditures that the District incurs and there are reasonable expenditures that the Ministry will allow as part of the strike contingency funding, however the remainder is returned to the government.
- The consulting firm, Optimus SBR, has been contracted to conduct the LSS operational review. As part of this work, a series of focus groups are planned for several stakeholders. Access to an online poll will be provided to voting members to determine the best time to conduct the focus group for SEAC.

a. Storefront Update

System Principal Kessler reported that the Storefront program is a transition class functioning as a part of the Ottawa Technical Secondary School (OTSS). This program serves the needs of students who have developmental disabilities and focuses on a range of academic, social skills and supported workplace experiences. There will be 14 projected student referrals coming forward for the fall. She cited a number of factors that might have contributed to the shift in enrolment this year such as bringing

Storefront under the umbrella of LSS. She is working closely with the principal of OTSS, Jennifer Perry.

Trustee Ellis expressed a high regard for the program that has been operational for nearly thirty years. He noted that the curriculum meets the strategic direction of the culture of innovation. He mentioned that Elizabeth Wyn Wood Secondary Alternate Program could be considered as a second location if another space is required for the program. System Principal Kessler explained that based on the feedback of former students and families, part of the uniqueness was the program's location outside a school environment.

System Principal Kessler advised that LSS circulates information to all principals, vice principals, guidance counselors and learning support teachers about the program and who may be eligible for the program. Staff continues to perform an annual review of eligibility based on criteria sheets. The aim is to be able to provide a range of experiential learning opportunities for students who have developmental disabilities.

Mr. Kirwan suggested that funds be set aside to ensure the program continues should the space require a formal lease. Superintendent Symmonds recommended that the subject be raised when Finance staff attend SEAC to discuss priorities for the 2020-2021 Budget on 11 March 2020 meeting.

b. Communications Disorder Assistant Service Delivery Model Update

Manager Kay reported that the Communications Disorder Assistant (CDA) Service Delivery Model, implemented in November 2019, uses a hybrid service deliver model of a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) and a CDA at both Clifford Bowey Public School and Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education. The two CDAs are assigned to these schools on a full time basis and the SLP visits each school twice a week. The process began with a comprehensive review of Ontario Student Records (OSR), examined the readiness of each student for communication intervention strategy and discussed co-planning goals. In January 2020, an information session was held for both parents and guardians and a follow-up session is set for June 2020. Supervisor Maya Rattray and Program Evaluation Officer Steven McKibbin developed evaluation plan components, including student specific goals, student progress data tracking and collecting educator feedback from surveys or focus groups. Initial feedback from administrators, teachers, EAs and the SLPs involved have been positive thus far.

Trustee Campbell made an inquiry about the intent to measure the impact of components with quantitative evaluation techniques. Manager Kay responded that the evaluation plan includes both quantitative and qualitative measures. Evaluation of student goals will be measured against “no progress”, partially achieved” and “fully achieved”

Mr. Morris commented that he was impressed to learn that the project began with a notable tri-phase start. Evaluation from the growth perspective of the individual students is a commendable place to begin assessments. He is encouraged by the purposeful collaboration with the teaching staff upon introducing the CDA model. He appreciated that this program is an extension of a service rather than a replacement of a service. The goals that have been set in place with this program are more precise than in years previous and are being adhered to.

Ms. Allen questioned whether it was the service delivery model that led to students demonstrating progress on their goals or was it due to the increase in staffing that has addressed communication challenges. Manager Kay responded that the model uses specialists in the field of communication aligned with their professional training and scope of practice (e.g., SLP assessment and develop an intervention plan, CDAs implement a training plan under the supervision of a SLP and develop supporting materials).

c. Updated Procedure PR.686.SCO Use of Service Animals For Students

Superintendent Symmonds reported that on 28 January 2020 the board approved a change to the procedure PR.686.SCO Use of Service Animals where the language on service dogs specifically was removed to consider the use of service animals deemed critical in the support of either well-being or student learning under the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC). Determinations on whether to approve requests for a service animal would be made on a case-by-case basis, and considering the individual needs of the student.

Student Senator Bersyniow-Nanne raised a concern over the competing rights of students where the presence of an animal may conflict with the needs of the student. Manager Kay responded that under the OHRC if the presence of an animal impacts the well-being of another student, staff or community member, the school principal, the Superintendent of Instruction (SOI) and LSS staff collaborates with all parties to mitigate potential conflicts.

Chair Nadon-Campbell queried the extent of the assessment of the training of the animal to ensure its safety and the safety of others

present. Manager Kay explained that the role of the principal will include:

- A review of the animal training documentation;
- An assessment of the accommodation request, evaluation of alternative accommodations and review of ongoing need for the accommodation; and
- A review of health, safety and other concerns that may impact students, staff and the school community.

The SOI will continue to make the final determination as to whether to support or deny the request for the service animal; however, this determination will be supported by a central team that would include: the principal, representatives from LSS, and other professionals as required. The process would be centrally coordinated, in conjunction with the collection of data as required by the Ministry.

Dr. Mamen inquired about the preparation of the other children who will be sharing the classroom with the service animal. Manager Kay stated that the steps taken to welcome the service animal into the service community, include information sessions for parents, a transportation plan and student acclimatization.

## 5.2 Special Education Plan (Standards)

### a. Equipment (Discussion)

System Principal Hannah introduced Jeff Humphries, Learning Support Consultant for Assistive Technology, to deliver a presentation on the Special Equipment Amount (SEA). Last year an update was made to the SEA Guidelines that changed the requirement: the Per Pupil Amount computer component no longer necessitated an authorizing signature from a regulated health professional to enable students to access the curriculum. The change to the standard ignited a provincial scan conducted by LSS staff. The process will include multi-disciplinary teams bringing forward student applications using a paperless process. This approach will help to eliminate barriers for receiving necessary equipment. Using Laserfiche to store information, the application process can begin after 15 minutes, as opposed to the previous system where students could be waiting for their equipment for a considerable amount of time.

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



- Data on who are provided with SEA equipment and continue to use it is difficult to track;
- With the District's technology plan there is less of a stigma around the use of portable computers;
- On folio 24, Ms. Miedema noted that wording in the process diagram requires an update to be in alignment with the new SEA Guidelines referring to students requiring a note from a professional;
- Customized software loaded onto a device must be used specifically by that student;
- On folio 24, Trustee Boothby suggested an addition to "Funding Information and Allocation Specialized Equipment" which states that the equipment will be made available to SEA status students beginning the new school year in the fall 2020.
- Approvals are required on a case-by-case basis to permit lending of equipment over the summer months; and
- It was recommended that the reference procedures explaining use of equipment outside of the school be attached to the standard.

b. Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies (Discussion)

System Principal Hannah recognized that some changes are necessary to add to the Early Identification Procedures and Intervention Strategies standard such as guidelines for English Language Learners (ELL) and English Literacy Development (ELD). She mentioned plans for adding descriptions for the transition phases throughout the school year.

At times, students arrive from other countries where english is not their first language, and also have a special education profile. Service to these students and their ability to access the english language is provided to further assess their special education needs. Where a child's first language is not English or French, a reasonable delay in the language-based aspects of assessment should be considered.

Dr. Mamen raised the importance of the evidence-based process in early identification. Tier 1 intervention strategies were not listed as a course available to the primary grade teachers in the Staff Development Standard. The Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton places critical value on this addition. Standardizing

a process for early intervention for students with comprehension difficulties is also relevant to the Right to Read Inquiry. She questioned on which groups of children are data normalized, what is done to help children once they are identified and whether a triage system initiated to work immediately with the students whose needs are most severe. Superintendent Symmonds acknowledged that professional development is an area of on-going challenge to the District. Professional learning often takes the form of a “coaching” model versus pulling large groups of educators together for a day. This model provides for incremental improvements at a deeper level, albeit at a slower pace, as consultants and itinerant teachers are working directly with an individual educator or a small, school-based team. LSS is concerned with the learning progression of every student with special needs. The EMPOWER Reading program is a series of evidence-based reading intervention programs students can be included in at the grade two level.

Mr. Kirwan suggested that engagement could occur through the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA), LSS and the Ontario College of Teachers to issue a provincial resolution to standardize intervention strategies across the Province. Trustee Boothby responded that the resolution would need to be passed in April in order to be on the AGM agenda for June. Forty-two English school boards would be involved in the decision. The first step is to generate approval from the District, however a directive of this magnitude requires months of organization and preparation.

c. Special Education Placements Provided by the OCDSB (Perusal)

Special Education Placements Provided by the OCDSB was deferred until the 11 March 2020 meeting.

7. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

7.1 8 January 2020

**Moved by Rob Kirwan,**

**THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee Report dated 8 January 2020 be received.**

**Carried**

Mr. Kirwan noted that there were matters arising from the minutes which he would recognize in the meeting of 11 March 2020.

7.2 Review of Long Range Agenda

The Long Range Agenda was provided for information.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that due to the labour action, the Pilot for the OCDSB Guide to Supporting Gifted Learners in the Regular Classroom and OCDSB Interest Academy has been placed on hold.

7.3 Motion/Action Tracking Report, Business Arising

The Motion/Action Tracking Report was provided for information.

a. Appointment of Committee of the Whole SEAC Representative

Mr. Kirwan nominated himself for the position of SEAC member representative to the Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Kirwan nominated Mr. Wylie for the position of alternate representative to the Committee of the Whole.

**Moved by Trustee Boothby,**

**That nominations be closed.**

**Carried**

Mr. Kirwan and Mr. Wylie were declared the SEAC member and SEAC alternate to the Committee of the Whole respectively, by acclamation.

Mr. Wylie requested that the audio visual equipment in the Boardroom be upgraded to improve the viewing quality for on-line participants.

8. Action/Discussion/Information Items

8.1 Elementary Students with Individual Education Plans by Program

This item was deferred to the meeting of 11 March 2020.

9. Committee Reports

9.1 Advisory Committee on Equity

There was no report on the Advisory Committee on Equity.

9.2 Parent Involvement Committee

There was no report on the Parent Involvement Committee.

9.3 Board

Mr. Kirwan reported that on 28 January 2020 the board approved a change to Policy P.121.GOV Accessibility and the establishment of an Integrity Commissioner Selection Committee.

9.4 Committee of the Whole

Mr. Wylie reported that there were no items directly pertaining to SEAC at the meeting of 4 February 2020.

9.5 Extended Day Program

There was no report on the Extended Day Program.

10. New Business

Trustee Boothby noted that she along with Superintendent Symmonds and System Principal Kessler are working on a motion to bring forward to OPSBA on e-learning and a recommended exemption from the e-learning environment by students with high needs.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:22 p.m.

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Sonia Nadon-Campbell, Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee