

WEEKLY MEMORANDUM

TO: Trustees
Student Trustees

FROM: Camille Williams-Taylor, Director of Education and Secretary of the Board
Michèle Giroux, Executive Officer, Corporate Services

DATE: 16 April 2020

RE: **Weekly Memorandum to Trustees #2 (April 14-17)**

Update on Emergency Operations

- **Launch of OCDSB Learn at Home** - Last week, the District moved to Phase 2 of Learn at Home and a follow-up Thoughtexchange launched on 9 April 2020. The Thoughtexchange encourages students, parents, and the community to share their experiences with learning at home, the challenges they have encountered and their ideas for improvements. As of 14 April, there were over 2,700 participants including 400 grade 7/8 students, 1800 grade 9/12 students, 400 elementary parents, 128 secondary parents, and 18 community members. The Thoughtexchange closes at midnight on 16 April and staff will communicate the results with the community and intend to use the results to inform and improve the Learn at Home experience.
- **Facilities and Security** - Controlled access was provided last week for staff at the Administration Building who required materials to support their work. Controlled access to schools by teachers to retrieve essential technology or learning materials began last week. Regular checks of all District buildings continue to be carried out. Since the closure began, the District has experienced one break-in and some vandalism, but less than usual for this time of year. Buildings were accessed during the checks and as a result, the District was able to donate 600 N95 masks to the City's donation centre. Construction at Elmdale Public School has halted in compliance with the provincial declaration of Emergency. At present, construction has been restricted to critical provincial infrastructure and residential units where building permits have been issued. Staff continues to be in regular contact with Ottawa Public Health (OPH) and the City's emergency command centre. Rents have been waived for April, to allow tenants to develop continuity plans. This applies to the RIDEAU HUB, third-party child care centres and other tenants renting in spaces like 440 Albert Street. This decision will be reviewed monthly as provincial updates are provided.
- **Finance** - Ministry staff has indicated that they are targeting early May for the release of Grants for Student Needs (GSNs). While no details were shared, it was indicated that this should be a "no surprises" announcement.

Staff continue to work on the development of the 2020-2021 budget. More details regarding the impact of events since March on the current year's financial forecast, as well as potential impacts on the 2020-2021 budget will be shared prior to the 28 April 2020 Board meeting.

- **Distribution of Technology:** As of this week, 7,000 Chromebooks have been distributed to students and their families to assist with online learning. Students and families have been provided with instructions to set up their Chromebook and connect to the wireless router.

For families that do not have wireless access, 1,400 mobile hot spots on the Rogers network will be delivered this week and next. This will assist families in being able to access Wi-Fi and engage in online learning. In some situations, we will be providing both a device and a hotspot to families, while in other situations, the family may only require a hot spot or a Chromebook. An additional 300 Bell mobile hot spots are expected to arrive in the next two weeks. These hot spots will be provided to families where Bell has better coverage.

- **Support for Families in Need** - Principals and Social Workers are collaborating to submit applications to the Education Foundation of Ottawa (EFO) to obtain funding to support their students through the Bridges Over Barriers and Students In Crisis funds. The community may make donations to both funds through the EFO website. In addition to the \$25,000 EFO contributed to the Ottawa Network for Education (ONFE) School Breakfast Replacement Kit program, EFO has also committed \$20,000 (from their Students In Crisis fund) to support the requests received from social workers. Hard copy or virtual gift cards are provided to parents/guardians and/or students living on their own to purchase food, household essentials, educational materials to support learning, clothing, and personal hygiene items. Request amounts range anywhere between \$50 and \$250.

A total of 1,568 ONFE School Breakfast Replacement Kits (28,224 meals) were delivered last week to communities by partnering with groups and agencies that are already equipped to reach thousands of vulnerable families. Each kit includes food items amounting to 18 meals or breakfast for three weeks. All children and youth living in one of the City's many emergency family-shelters were included in the delivery. By the end of April, 3792 breakfast replacement kits will be distributed which equates to 68,000 meals. These are distributed through 38 sites including 15 shelters and community housing.

In all cases where schools know of a need that cannot be met, they are working with families to engage in crisis support services through the City of Ottawa's support phone line at 211.

Principals are also working with Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families in their submission of a group application on behalf of Inuit students and families for the Child First Initiative for food supports.

- **Staffing** -Human Resources and Labour Relations staff are working with the unions and principals on the academic staffing timelines based on current circumstances and the demands on school administrators.

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A central agreement with the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) has been reached but has yet to be ratified. A tentative date has been set for a virtual local bargaining meeting with Ottawa-Carleton Elementary

Teachers' Federation (OCETF). If it is successful, staff will explore scheduling dates for future meetings with other bargaining groups.

- **Annual District Recognition Events** - The annual retirement reception held in June will be canceled for this year. The 2019/2020 retirees will be sent a letter, acknowledging and thanking them for their service and letting them know they will be invited to the June 2021 celebration, where a double cohort of retirees will be honoured.

Both the employee and student recognition awards ceremonies will be canceled. The award winners will receive a letter acknowledging their contributions.

Photographs of the award winners will be taken when the closure is lifted, and staff will consider alternate ways to celebrate their successes and recognize their accomplishments.

A total of 15 nominations were received for the Community Recognition Awards. The Agenda Planning Committee will discuss the selection process and alternative methods for recognition at the 22 April 2020 meeting.

- **Extended Day Program (EDP) and Infant-Toddler Program (ITP)** - ITP refunds for the closure dates in March were sent to parents on 8 April 2020. Families have not been charged for the month of April. EDP refunds should be sent by 17 April 2020. Calculating refunds for EDP closure and strike days has taken longer as the financial aspect of the new Digibot e-registration platform is not yet live.
- **Operations-** The Ministry has informed school boards that the timelines for the approval of the school year calendar for 2020-2021 will be adjusted this year in light of current realities; an amendment to Regulation 304 to allow for the timeline adjustment is being sought. Two collaboration tables are being established to engage school administrators and federation/union representatives along with senior staff in the development of operational and continuity of learning plans during the closure period.

cc Senior Staff
 Manager, Board Services
 Corporate Records