

## SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

**Wednesday, March 11, 2020**

**7:00 p.m.**

**Trustees' Committee Room**

**133 Greenbank Road**

**Ottawa, Ontario**

Members:	Christine Boothby (Trustee), Rob Campbell (Trustee), Chris Ellis (Trustee), Sonia Nadon-Campbell (Community Representative), Jim Harris (VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children), Susan Cowin (Community Representative), Rob Kirwan (Community Representative), Mark Wylie (Down Syndrome Association), Cathy Miedema (Association for Bright Children), Nicole Ullmark (Easter Seals Ontario), Dr. Maggie Mamen (Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton), Katie Ralph (Autism Ontario, Ottawa Chapter)
Association Representatives (Non-Voting):	Susan Gardner (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation), Connie Allen (Professional Student Services Personnel), Nancy Dlouhy (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Operations Committee), Jean Trant (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, SSP), Catherine Houlden (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Teachers), Daniel Bersyniow-Naane (Student Senator)
Staff and Guests: Members:	Justine Bell (Trustee), Camille Williams-Taylor (Director of Education and Secretary of the Board), Mike Carson (Chief Financial Officer), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Christine Kessler (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Amy Hannah (System Principal Learning, Support Services), Rebecca Grandis (Senior Board Coordinator), Leigh Fenton

(Board/Committee Coordinator), Amanda Pelkola  
(Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Call to Order

Chair Nadon-Campbell called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. She acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Territory and thanked the Algonquin people for hosting the meeting on their land.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Sue Cowin,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Mr. Kirwan requested to amend the agenda to discuss Report 20-019, Process for the Advisory Committee Review, presented at the Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting on 3 March 2020. Chair Nadon-Campbell placed this item under Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report, item 5.4.

**Moved by Sue Cowin,**

**THAT the agenda be approved, as amended.**

**Carried**

3. Delegations

There were no delegations.

4. Presentations

4.1 2020-2021 Budget - SEAC's Priority Considerations

Superintendent Symmonds reported that on 8 January 2020, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Carson attended a SEAC meeting to provide the committee with details on the process of developing the budget for 2020-2021. There are different cycles involved in budget planning and currently the Financial Services Team has provided a draft budget for academic staffing. SEAC is being consulted to examine further opportunities for support and services in special education programming.

System Principal Hannah led the presentation entitled "SEAC's Priority Considerations for the 2020-2021 OCDSB Budget". The committee was asked to anticipate key spending priorities, pair with another meeting participant to discuss opinions and share the ideas with the committee in a round table discussion.

When the committee convened, the following perspectives were shared:

- The focus in the classroom should be on educational support rather than behavioural support. More training is required to guide students and provide effective and structured learnings. Spending priorities should assume increased resources for the educational support of students;
- Develop overarching goals to address behavioural issues;
- There is a requirement for more assistive technology support training for students, parents and staff;
- There is a need for additional Educational Assistants (EAs). The inability to attract teaching professionals requires a compensation review. Appropriate salary increases will make these roles more attractive;
- There is a goal to provide parent education, engagement and empowerment to clarify the purpose of the Individual Education Plan (IEP);
- There is a need for additional support to assist in the transitioning of students, especially those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The implementation of a job shadowing/coaching program was suggested;
- When children are transitioning from elementary school to secondary school, some teachers are having issues servicing the needs of these students. Ideally resources could be allocated to allow for training in new school environments. It was suggested that the Designated Occasional Teacher (DOT) initiative could assist in these transitions;
- Formalize the process for knowledge transfers during succession planning;
- Access to interventions is not standardized across the District. More resources should be allocated for a standardization process;
- Measures need to be taken to ensure that students who have extended needs are assimilated and engaged;
- Set aside resources to implement the recommendations from the Ontario Human Rights Commission's Right to Read report;
- Hire full-time "mobile" EAs to work in different classrooms, akin to the DOT system;
- There is a need for staff working with junior and senior kindergarten students to receive professional development to identify the early signs of extended educational needs in children;
- Equity to Access is required across the district. There is a specific need to increase staff and specialized programs in rural communities to ensure that all students have the essential resources they require to succeed;
- The capacity needs to be available to build reliable metrics and to perform preliminary assessments of extended educational needs in children. Children become disengaged when the testing lead time is extensive;
- There is a need to promote programs and provide more training to parents whose extended need children are moving onto post-secondary opportunities to advise them of options, such as Storefront; and
- Strike a Mental Health and Well-being Committee

Peter Symmonds thanked CFO Carson for attending and listening to the concerns of the members of SEAC.

5. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

5.1 12 February 2020

**Moved by Jim Harris,**

**THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee report dated 12 February 2020 be received.**

**Carried**

5.2 Review of Long Range Agenda

The long range agenda was provided for review.

As part of business arising from the minutes of 8 January 2020, Mr. Kirwan requested a further discussion period on the topic of transition with respect to a draft document entitled, "Provincial Transition Planning Framework - Transitional Planning for Young People with Developmental Disabilities" published in 2011 by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) and the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) to improve transition planning by better defining responsibilities. Chair Nadon-Campbell responded that placement of these subjects on a future SEAC agenda will be discussed at the upcoming agenda planning session and added that currently the item is listed under 'ongoing' on the long term agenda.

Under 'upcoming items', the committee requested the "Recommendations of the OCDSB Special Education Policy Ad Hoc Committee" be re-circulated for review.

Trustee Boothby inquired about the ability to track decommissioned body break rooms in schools and suggested that this item be added to an upcoming agenda in a meeting with all school principals. Superintendent Symmonds responded that he will approach the Planning Department to decide on ways to report on body break room usage.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that The Ontario Human Rights Commission's Right to Read Inquiry will remain on the long term agenda in anticipation of the formal report containing direction from the Ministry.

5.3 Motion/Action Tracking Report, Business Arising

The motion/action tracking report was provided for information.

5.4 Process for the Advisory Committee Review

Superintendent Symmonds reported that at the Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting on 3 March 2020, staff presented Report 20-019, Process for Advisory

Committee Review, outlining the process for a review and analysis of the District's advisory committees and their role in effective decision-making and community engagement. The following propositions were approved for recommendation to the Board of Trustees in the meeting of 31 March 2020:

- A review of Ottawa-Carleton District School Board advisory committees be undertaken;
- An ad hoc Advisory Committee Review Panel be established with a mandate to manage the advisory committee review process; and
- 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.

He explained the scope of the review will include gathering information on the current structures and processes within both the two statutory committees: The Special Education Advisory Committee and the Parent Involvement Committee. The following five special purpose advisory committees will also be a part of the review: Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Programs, Advisory Committee on the Arts, Alternative School Advisory Committee, Advisory Committee on Equity and Indigenous Education Advisory Council. The staff report did not specify that a final findings document be presented in October; however, there was an expectation that a progress report would be provided to COW in October 2020 and a final report at a later date. Superintendent Symmonds noted that prior to Report 20-019 being presented at COW, Manager Guthrie of Board Services contacted the Chairs of committees to advise them of the coming report and that it was likely that a panel would convene involving their membership for the proposed governance review.

Mr. Kirwan stated that SEAC members had not seen the report in advance of the presentation to COW, highlighting that SEAC is a committee regulated by government legislation. He expressed the view that though the review was necessary, SEAC should have been consulted. Superintendent Symmonds maintained that the goal of the review is to help support committees in their advisory roles to the board. When and if the ad hoc committee is established through Board approval on 31 March 2020, more information will be provided to SEAC and the other specified committees.

Report 20-019 will be provided to the members and that advisory committee review would be added to the SEAC agenda of 8 April 2020.

7. Action/Discussion/Information Items

Memo 20-003, Elementary Students with Individual Education Plans by Program

Your committee had before it Memo 20-003, Elementary Students with Individual Education Plans by Program, providing information regarding students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) stemming from Report 19-109, Status of the English with Core French Program.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that the data in the report included elementary students with an IEP who are part of the regular program. The report did not include the following students:

- those in a fully self-contained or partially integrated specialized program classes;
- those enrolled in a specialized program school (i.e. Clifford Bowey Public School or Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education); and
- students identified with Giftedness through an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC), regardless of placement.

In response to questions, the following points were raised:

- There is a high level of enrollment of students who have IEPs in the alternative schools across the District. It was suggested that further exploration is required for reasons the alternative way of learning is more appealing to parents whose children learn with an IEP;
- Ms. Allen shared the observation that in the French Immersion program the majority of IEPs are accommodated without the requirement of an Education Assistant (EA) in the classroom for safety reasons. The French Immersion programs do not require EAs, however the English programs prove to be more service intensive;
- Ms. Holden requested data on the number of secondary students with an IEP in academic classes be compiled and circulated. She suggested that this may be deduced from students attending adult high school who worked with an IEP and continue to show low levels of success. Superintendent Symmonds indicated that data could be collected from credit accumulation in the secondary grades;
- Dr. Mamen inquired whether statistics are collected for each student with an IEP who was placed by IPRC. She is interested in the comparisons between French immersion and the English program. Superintendent Symmonds noted this data would not be readily available but that this request would be reviewed. It was noted that approximately two thirds of children did not undergo an IPRC but have been provided with an IEP. In

- dual track schools, it is difficult to determine which students are enrolled in French or English programs due to how the information is captured;
- Superintendent Symmonds noted that it is a parent's right to request an IPRC;
  - Student Senator Bersyniow-Naane requested more information in regard to the manner in which the teacher becomes informed about a student's IEP and inquired who has the responsibility to ensure an IEP is being followed. Superintendent Symmonds explained that transition meetings occur in the spring of each year and the IEP information is communicated. Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) track each of the students to highlight their needs at the start of the school year. There is a thirty-day window in the fall for students enrolled in a special education program to have an IEP created and developed. In a secondary school setting, often an LST will visit the school and learn about these students in a formal way. The school is responsible to provide the supports outlined in the IEPs but students are encouraged to be their own advocates; and
  - Ms. Houlden noted that class lists identify students who have an IEP, and those students who have assistive technology needs.

## 7.2 Memo 20-026, Learning Support Services Operational Review Update

Your committee had before it Memo 20-026, Learning Support Services Operational Review which provided an update to trustees regarding the motion passed by the Board on 30 October 2018 where LSS was directed to undertake an operational review of the process for identification, needs assessment (including the use of tiered interventions as a support for all students, and as identification and placement evidence), and placement for all exceptionalities.

Superintendent Symmonds reported that the District has contracted external consultants, Optimus SBR, to undertake a series of eleven focus groups with stakeholders were scheduled for the week of 30 March 2020 but due to current labour sanctions, they cannot proceed at this time. Revised timelines have yet to be scheduled.

Ms. Miedema inquired about the number of parents the District plans to invite to complete the survey. Superintendent Symmonds replied that parents of students with an IEP will be notified of the formation of focus groups and participants will be randomly selected to gather in groups of 30 to 40 people.

Ms. Allen stated that many students have yet to receive LSS services and remain on the waiting list for assessments. She added, many special education resources are funneled to students who have had their needs identified through an IPRC or were informally identified as needing support. She asked that the groups surveyed incorporate a cross-section of parents whose children are waiting for services.

### 7.3 Memo 20-027, Specialized Program Class Planning 2020-2021

Your committee had before it Memo 20-027, Specialized Program Class Planning 2020-2021 to provide support to the proposed changes to specialized program classes as outlined in Report 20-024, Academic Staffing for 2020-2021.

Superintendent Symmonds clarified that the budgetary forecasts and the timeline for assessing student needs are not aligned. To help with class planning LSS makes requests to school staff for predictions on the number of referrals and where the students are being transferred from.

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

- The District currently operates 34 specialized program classes at the elementary level for Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD);
- There is a proposal for an additional 3 elementary ASD classes. These are noted as contingency staffing, as the need had not been confirmed;
- The District is experiencing issues accommodating the need for specialized program classes since many schools are fully occupied. This could become additionally problematic when students currently in elementary school transition to secondary school given that we have such a large number of specialized program classes at the elementary level. The schools that have capacity in the District are not necessarily in close proximity to all students. Options are being considered to remedy this issue;
- It was noted that the geographic model was created to ensure that special needs students feel a sense of belonging to their community;
- A secondary Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing (D/HH Program) program has been added and staffed by an elementary central position. The elementary FTE is being moved to be reflected as a secondary FTE;
- The DHH classes will be unaffected but there is an increase of 0.33 FTE to account for preparation time;
- Preparation time reflects an increase from 2.33 FTE to 2.66 FTE. The increase accounts for the salary differences in the secondary school;
- Alternative ways to support Learning Disability Specialized Intervention Program (LD SIP) are being explored;
- A Transition Coordinator role is under consideration;
- It was noted that Professional Student Services Personnel (PSSP) should be considered when adding new classes. Analyzing whether the full suite of assessments are necessary and whether a truncated list of sub-tests can be performed was recommended to address timeliness in assessment;
- Demands on support staff are having an effect on attrition;
- Ms. Miedema expressed disappointment on behalf of the Association for Bright Children of Ontario around the closing of two additional gifted classes and the fact that only one school remains serving grades 1 to 4. An investigation into the



reason behind drastically reducing gifted programs was requested. She maintained that there is a demand for gifted learning however parents are not fully aware of the program's availability.

#### 7.4 Memo 20-029, Update to Storefront Program

Your committee had before it Memo 20-029, Update to Storefront Program providing further data on the status of the program. The memo acknowledged the gap in transition supports for many students with developmental disabilities as they transition out of the public education system the year in which they turn 21 years of age. After students reach the age of 21, guidance on pathways can be complex and it is clear that students and families benefit from increased levels of support.

Superintendent Symmonds reported that he and Director Williams-Taylor visited the Storefront site to interact with the young adults in the program to gather more information on their experiences and learning.

Trustee Ellis commented that there is evidence that the program is helpful in finding employment placement in the workplace for young adults in the program. He requested that in a future update more information be shared concerning the success stories from Storefront. For example, he attended Storefront's 30th anniversary celebration and he met a first-year Storefront graduate who is still working at MacDonald's where he earned a job upon graduation.

Superintendent Symmonds referred to undertaking a deeper exploration of transition needs and this is part of the work LSS intends to accomplish with the support of a transition coordinator.

### 8. Department Update

#### 8.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Symmonds reported on the following items briefly:

- The Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) has returned to the bargaining table. Further, the Ontario Education Minister Stephen Lecce has made a number of concessions, including changing the government's position on higher class sizes and mandatory e-learning for students. Students can now opt out of e-learning courses. Staff are hopeful for a resolution.;
- The public hearing on OHRC's Right to Read was held in Ottawa on 10 March 2020. Superintendent Symmonds and the LSS team along with central OCDSB departments including Program and Learning, Research, Evaluation and Analytics Division (READ) and the LSS team met with the Right to Read Inquiry team to review the submission that LSS had prepared and submitted as requested. He reported on some of emerging themes in the public hearing: the need for evidence based intervention, the benefits of the Empower

- program and parent testimonials of success using these resources, early screening and identification for students with learning needs, pre-service training standards to be examined to ensure a properly equipped teaching workforce, delivering support to on-the-job teachers, and private assessments. Recommendations are due to be presented in the fall of 2020 for the District to consider. The report will be included in a SEAC agenda package as it is made available; and
- The OHRC continues to conduct a survey to support the Right to Read inquiry and it is open until 15 May 2020. This survey will help them to understand and report on the experiences of students with reading disabilities in Ontario public schools as part of assessing whether they have meaningful access to education as required by the Ontario *Human Rights Code* (*Code*).

Dr. Mamen requested that a copy of the LSS written submission be forwarded to her in order to share the perspective with the Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton. Superintendent Symmonds was unsure if the document was available in format that was suited to being shared however he would attempt to extract an accessible version as LDAO would require the information within days to meet their deadline for submission.

Dr. Mamen noted that Decoding Dyslexia Ontario was present at the public hearing and she said that although dyslexia is prevalent it is not a diagnosis but rather a descriptor of a type of reading disability.

## 8.2 Special Education Plan (Standards)

### a. Special Education Placements Provided by the OCDSB (Perusal)

System Principal Hannah reported that the special education placements by the District are updated annually based on the allocation of specialized program classes or sections. Different from elementary school where students attend one classroom in general, in secondary school, students are provided with eight sections of time within a year to attend a class.

System Principal Hannah highlighted that on folio 80 under 'Student Program Placement Options' describes the LSS service delivery model and this section of the standard will be updated to provide greater clarity to families to foster a better understanding on the areas of placement mandated by the Ministry.

System Principal Hannah advised that the LSS team is finalizing the revisions from consultations. The 2019-2020 Special Education Plan will be a part of the SEAC agenda package in June for a motion to recommend to the Board. By the end of July the plan will be submitted to the Ministry of Education.

9. Committee Reports

9.1 Advisory Committee on Equity

Ms. Cowin reported that the Advisory Committee on Equity meeting of 27 February 2020 was cancelled due to inclement weather.

9.2 Parent Involvement Committee

Ms. Mamen reviewed the agenda of the Parent Involvement Committee meeting of 19 February 2020, however there were no items that pertained to SEAC specifically.

9.3 Board

There was no report on the Board.

9.4 Committee of the Whole

Mr. Kirwan noted that the Committee of the Whole discussion pertaining to SEAC on the Advisory Committee Review was reviewed earlier in the meeting.

9.5 Extended Day Program

Mr. Harris read an email from the SEAC representative on the Extended Day Program, Mr. Warner, who reported that his conversations with staff at the City of Ottawa regarding improvements to Extended Day Programs in Ottawa were promising.

10. New Business

Mr. Harris recognized that many discussions at SEAC involve the Clifford Bowey Public School and the Crystal Bay Centre for Special Education. As a member of the committee, he has not been exposed to the challenges and requirements within these schools. He showed a strong interest in arranging an after-hours site visit or alternatively to host a SEAC meeting at either of the schools. He encouraged the members to connect with him should they be interested in the proposal. Ms. Trant noted that much of the context is lost when the classes are not in session. Superintendent Symmonds suggested a visual connection to the physical layout of these buildings and the gymnasium would be beneficial. Chair Nadon-Campbell submitted that perhaps the principal can be approached to deliver a presentation to SEAC in advance of a tour.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:21 p.m.

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Sonia Nadon-Campbell, Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee