

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: 21 May 2020

RE: **Weekly Memorandum to Trustees #8 (May 25-May 29)**

The majority of the content of this week's memorandum was shared with Trustees at the 26 May 2020 Board meeting. We have added additional information on the Red Cross and report cards.

UPDATE ON EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

Special Education Services and Programs – The District has a strong commitment to supporting students with special education needs. That commitment continues through the learn at home period and we are pleased to advise that:

- Working in partnership with SickKids and other stakeholders, we have been able to put a plan in place to restart the **Empower Reading Program**. Over the past two months, we have been reinforcing and consolidating learning with Empower strategies. We will now be in a position to provide the delivery of Empower lessons online. The expectation is that any student who started Empower during the 2019-2020 school year will be provided with an opportunity to complete the program either now, or in the fall.
- We have also been able to create a new parent web-based site with resources to **support students who are non-verbal or minimally-verbal**. Speech-Language Pathologists have created this compilation of robust resources to support parents during the pandemic and beyond. This complements the existing AAC website for all OCDSB staff.
- **Mental Health Supports** continue to be developed for students and staff. Since our last meeting we offered a series of staff workshops about supporting mental health and these were very well attended. Plans are underway to continue this work.

Pick Up of Student Belongings – We know that parents and students are very interested in accessing schools in order to pick up student belongings. Work is underway on the

development of a comprehensive plan for this which takes into consideration the safety of students, parents and staff. There will be some tailoring of the plans to meet the unique needs of elementary and secondary students. Parents can expect an announcement on this next week with pick up scheduled for later in the month.

Graduation Celebrations – We invited grade 12 students to share their thoughts about how we might celebrate their graduation and recognize physical distancing. We had a tremendous response and lots of great ideas. A summary of their feedback is attached. Using the student's ideas, as well as input from school staff, we are developing a district-wide strategy for celebration of students this spring while reserving the formal ceremonies in the fall. Key criteria in the planning are developing a strategy which ensures student safety, equity of access, and celebrates all students in the district. In the next week, we will be ready to release the details to school staff, students, and parents.

The Ottawa Citizen and Ottawa Sun are putting together a special graduation section and are inviting students to share their grad outfits, photos and speeches online, on their social media channels and in special Citizen print sections on June 18, 19 and 20. To be included in the print editions, the deadline for submission is June 12. We are promoting this information to all of our grade 12 students.

Leaving Ceremonies – At the elementary level, we will be holding “virtual” leaving ceremonies for students transitioning to new schools in September. This primarily involves grade 8 and grade 6 students, but we do have some additional transition points in this district. The goal is to have virtual celebrations which respect the school tradition and context, are equitable, maintain student privacy and are readily available to families to enjoy.

Planning for Re-opening of Schools and Buildings – The Ministry has announced that there will be province wide directives regarding the re-opening of schools in September. While we await provincial direction, we have initiated discussions about what re-opening could like; what safety mechanisms need to be in place; and how we manage access to buildings and services. In addition to the Ministry direction, we are working with Ottawa Public Health and with other school districts to ensure our planning is in alignment with other school districts.

DELF – The dates for the international administration of the Diplome des etudes de langue Francaise (DELF) are established by the CIEP, the governing body for the administration of the DELF. The only dates scheduled for Canada in the spring this year were early April/May and June. All three administrations were canceled. We are awaiting further information regarding potential future dates for Canadian administration.

Report Cards - The Ministry released the attached memo on 27 May 2020 to provide school boards with clarification and guidance to support the issuance of the Communication of Learning and report cards in June.

Red Cross - The Red Cross visits were an initiative of the City of Ottawa Human Needs Task Force. The city consulted with community partners such as the United Way, Salvation Army, and Red Cross, as well as Ottawa Public Health to create the force.

The Human Needs Task Force identified some immediate needs in the community, like food security, urgent transportation, and homelessness support. Through Ottawa Public Health, all four area school districts agreed to the need for wellness checks for those families with whom we had made no contact.

The task force is conducting wellness phone calls to isolated and vulnerable residents, and transportation to medical appointments and grocery stores for those with financial, transportation, health or mobility challenges. The actual visits are done by the Red Cross representatives who have experience in door to door contact in this type of situation.

A copy of the letter that was provided by the four school districts to the Task Force for distribution at the door is attached. In addition to this letter, they delivered information about online resources and supports and community agencies available to provide support. The wellness checks included information about why they were reaching out, a few questions to ensure everyone in the home was well and healthy, whether anyone had symptoms, whether there were students in the house, what school district they attended and whether they needed support to participate in online learning, and whether there were any other supports that would be helpful to the family.

cc Senior Staff
 Manager, Board Services
 Corporate Records