

EXCERPT FROM:
Subject to Confirmation and Correction

BOARD, 22 June 2020

11.1 COVID-19 Update (verbal)

Director Williams-Taylor advised that staff are in the process of preparing for the return to school. The Ministry released its *Approach to reopening schools for the 2020-2021 School Year* on Friday 19 June 2020. Most districts have already been engaged in and have begun preliminary planning for a variety of possible scenarios to permit a safe return to school for students and staff. The Ministry guidelines notes three options for return: a conventional return with some guidelines to prevent spread; an adaptive model with many caveats and a fully virtual mode in the event it is deemed unsafe to return.

Director Williams-Taylor noted that the adaptive approach to the return to school - would see the creation of cohorts of no more than 15 students. The cohorts are required to ensure contact tracing if required. Staff, in collaboration with Ottawa Public Health (OPH) and co-terminous boards, are reviewing the cohort model. It is anticipated that there may be differentiation from one district to another depending on guidance from their own public health units.

Director Williams-Taylor emphasized the importance of coordination with the co-terminous boards particularly the Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB) as the two boards share transportation. Although the District does not have the same collaboration with the French Catholic or French Public, all local boards will have to adhere to the guidance provided by both the Ministry and the direction of OPH.

Director Williams-Taylor provided the following points in her COVID-19 update:

- The planning for transportation will have to follow the chosen academic mode. The Ottawa Student Transportation Authority (OSTA) have already begun to plan for a variety of models. The Associate Director has led much of this work and continues to meet with OPH, OSTA and OCSB staff;
- OCSB are suggesting a cohort model, with not every student at school every day. The OCSB recognize that the opportunity for more students to be in attendance at certain schools will vary based on the community needs and the school enrolment;
- The District will consider its most vulnerable students first;
- The directors of education, in their regular meetings with the Deputy Minister, anticipate further discussion to address emerging questions;

- The collaborative tables working to plan for the return to school and continuity of learning include union representatives the mental health lead, the equity lead, as well as the Managers of Business & Learning Technology (B<) and Learning Support Services (LSS). The collaborative tables have received input from all of the partners from the inception of the planning process;
- Staff will meet to discuss the launch of a Thoughtexchange for students, parents and staff seeking input on possible models and reflections upon their experience to date. Staff anticipate the Thoughtexchange will be released the first week of July 2020.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- Trustee Ellis stressed the importance of providing support and routine to higher needs students. He noted that many families have struggled to support their children without the resources they previously had at the school level;
- Trustee Penny thanked the Director for the update and noted that staff well being should be considered. He noted that unprecedented situations often place undue stress on leadership and queried the Director's plans to mitigate this stress. Director Williams-Taylor advised that the Director's Executive Council have discussed this topic and the need for balance. She noted that the OCDSB staff have risen to the occasion. She added that the summer is not yielding many opportunities for time off with the cancellation of many camps and other summer programming. Staff recognizes the mental health and well-being aspects of this problem. Staff cannot guarantee that schools or the administration building will reopen or be ready for 1 September. Staff continues to work to ensure employees remain calm and reassured. The District will uphold the summer closure period the last week of July and the first week of August. Staff will be encouraged to have a break during this time;
- In response to a query from Trustee Bell, Director Williams-Taylor noted that information regarding what communications the community can expect over the summer will be important as the usual communication with teachers will not be a part of the regular cycle. The District does not have all of the information right now and is working on both its planning for the reopening of schools and the extended day programs but do not have clarity yet. Staff is unsure how the childcare model and school models can combine. Staff understands that it is helpful for parents to remain up to date on the District's plans and will create a communication structure to ensure messages are conveyed. Director Williams-Taylor added that a final return to school model will likely not be provided until August 2020 as it will be dictated by the numbers of new cases and data.