



BOARD (PUBLIC) Report 20-065

21 July 2020

Return to School Planning Update

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PURPOSE:

1. To provide an opportunity to review and approve planning documentation for the return to school in September 2020 prepared in accordance with Ministry directives and Board guiding principles.

CONTEXT:

2. On June 19, 2020, the Ministry of Education released guidelines regarding how schools could reopen in September. The guidelines require school districts to plan for three scenarios
 - Regular school day routine with enhanced public health protocols;
 - modified school day routine based on smaller class sizes, cohorting and alternative day or week delivery; and
 - at-home learning with ongoing enhanced remote delivery.

Since the introduction of the guidelines there have been shifts in direction from the Ministry, from public health authorities with increasing indications which encourage a full-time return to school in September. On July 9, 2020 the Board of Trustees met and heard from dozens of parent delegations expressing a strong preference for the return to school in September. The Board passed a motion which reaffirmed this preference, confirmed guiding principles, established reporting standards and which directed staff to continue planning based on this direction. Since that meeting, the Ministry has released a checklist for local planning, attached as Appendix A, and confirmed that it will meet with school districts in July to review local planning and by August 4th will confirm the direction for school openings in September. The OCDSB Planning for September 2020 document, attached as Appendix B, is presented to the Board and will also form the basis of the presentation to the Ministry of Education.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

Board Motion

On July 9, the Board passed the following motion:

- A. THAT the Board prefers all students return to full-time instruction, including Extended Day Program, five days a week, with enhanced cleaning and hygiene in September 2020.
- B. THAT the Board direct staff to orient all work around children's human right to education as per article 26 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Canada's commitment to achieve Sustainable Development Goal #4 Quality Education;
- C. THAT the Board direct staff to develop high-level plans for the implementation of scenarios for the delivery of public education during the 2020-21 school year, commencing in September 2020, for approval by the Board in accordance with guidance from the Ministry of Education and the guiding principles outlined in Report 20-061, as amended;
- D. THAT the 2020-2021 Staff Recommended Budget identify the provisions and estimates associated with the implementation of the scenarios that will guide the return to school in September;
- E. THAT regular financial reports be provided to the Board on the costs and any recoveries arising as a direct result of the pandemic throughout the 2020-21 school year, such as the implementation of the return to school plans and any other costs and recoveries associated with operational adjustments that might need to be made during the year in response to COVID-19;
- F. THAT the Board include a standing item on each Committee of the Whole agenda for the 2020-2021 school year in order to receive regular updates on the implementation of the board's pandemic response plans, to evaluate the effectiveness of these plans, and to determine on an ongoing basis whether adjustments need to be made by the board; THAT staff be directed to work creatively, including the investigation of how other jurisdictions in and outside Canada have safely provided return to classroom schooling, on an equal priority basis, and in close concert, with Ottawa Public Health (OPH), to seek to develop a broadly costed, workable, full-time September return plan for both school and EDP, that is explicitly endorsed by OPH as satisfactorily addressing all local Ottawa full-time return risks as at endorsement time, for presentation to the Ministry in expected August conferencing;
- G. THAT staff be directed to carefully review such discretionary OCDSB operating and capital spending, including possible pausing of current multi-year investment or deficit management plans, as may be needed for sufficient reprioritization of funds to support such emergency spending as may be required in order to obtain local Public Health endorsement of a plan for the full-time return to school by September and/or as consistently thereafter as possible; and
- H. The Chair of the Board write to the Minister of Education and to the Premier of Ontario to express the Board's concern that the current Back to School Recovery plan, and the "hybrid" or "adapted" model, in particular, leave working parents with young children, single-parent households, and low-income families in the

precarious position of having to choose between educating their children and their own employment and that any Back to School Recovery plan needs to accommodate getting as many students as possible back into physical schools and spaces, while respecting public health advice, the letter to be copied to OPSBA, its member boards and Ottawa MPPs, and include the following:

- i. The OCDSB believes that a full and measured emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery/reopening requires an ambitious and creative plan that supports communities, families, and children, and prioritizes investment in public education;
- ii. Ask the Ministry to provide emergency and continuing funding to school districts to cover all extra COVID-19-related costs including, but not limited to, PPE, additional staffing, transportation, IT, supports for mental health and well-being, cleaning supplies, and essential school retrofitting and maintenance.

3. Public Health Directives

Dr. Vera Etches joined the Board meeting to hear public delegations and respond to questions about public health. Since the meeting, Ottawa Public Health has advised that the return to school is a key part of learning to live with COVID-19. Keeping the virus level low in the community supports a safer return.

- Start school in September 2020 with students present in a school setting five days a week, with feasible measures to reduce COVID-19 transmission;
- Work with the Chief Medical Officer of Health to prioritize infection prevention and control measures that enable in-person school five days a week;
- Ensure a standard level of rapid response, in partnership with health authorities, to address any concerns arising about transmission in a school setting;
- Consider cohorting or stratifying school activities by age group;
- Enable ongoing engagement of parents and caregivers on the school week schedule, measures to limit COVID19 transmission, and the impact of the approaches on their lives and families' wellbeing; and
- Provide an option for home schooling for children and youth who decide not to participate in in-person school

Staff continues to undertake planning in collaboration with Ottawa Public Health and this feedback has been incorporated into our approach.

4. Ongoing Collaboration

Similarly, active collaboration continues through the collaborative tables that were established through the Program and Learning K-12 department. Regular meetings which engage union partners, principals, vice-principals, Learning Support Services, staff leads with responsibility for mental health, equity, school effectiveness, extended day programs and information technology continue to ensure many voices inform our thinking.

We continue to examine models and research shared by other jurisdictions in the province, nationally and internationally to develop a foundation for collaborative planning.

5. Planning Documents For Many Audiences

In the report on July 9, staff provided a detailed overview of the Ministry guidelines and the local conditions and factors to be considered in planning. Recognizing that locally, the decision for school districts is not which of the three models to implement in September, but rather how to operationalize each of the three models, consideration had to be given to the structure of planning documents to meet the needs of the Board, the Ministry, parents and education practitioners. This is particularly critical given the rapid pace of information and change which influences our planning, the sheer volume of information, and the need to tailor information to different audiences. To that end, staff has focused on the development of the **OCDSB Planning for September 2020 document**, attached as Appendix B. This document is aligned with the recently released Ministry checklist and provides a comprehensive, but high-level overview of system operations under each of the three planning scenarios. It is the document presented to meet the Board's request and is the document that will be used for the presentation. (There is no formal submission) to the Ministry which is to be scheduled the week of July 27th*. Building this document into the public agenda package ensures it is accessible to parents, staff and students.

As we move forward with more certainty about the Ministry direction for September, much of this information will form the basis for more detailed school operations guidelines/information which will be used in staff and parent communications, web text and other communications materials.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

6. In early July, the OCDSB invited students (grades 7-12), staff, and parents to complete an online survey reflecting on their experience with Learn At Home, followed by an online conversation about what is important to them as we plan for September. We also invited staff to share their experience working from home. There was a tremendous response to the survey:

	Participants	Thoughts	Ratings
Parent/Guardians	20,063	35,320	787,012
Students	4,211	3,570	81,213
Educators	1,147	3,462	82,174
Staff	2,698	7,382	171,870
Total	28,119	49,734	1,122,269

There are several ways to view the results. Within Thoughtexchange, users can look at the Discover Pages and see the results from the survey questions, as well as what we heard from the open-ended discussion. A few things to note about navigating the results:

- The 'Hot topics' tab shows the most relevant thoughts that cover some of the major topics that emerged.
- The 'All thoughts' tab ranks all thoughts by average rating.
- The 'Your activity' tab provides a summary of your activity and how you relate to other participants.

[Discover Page for Parent/Guardian survey](#)

[Discover Page for Student survey](#)

[Discover Page for Educator survey](#)

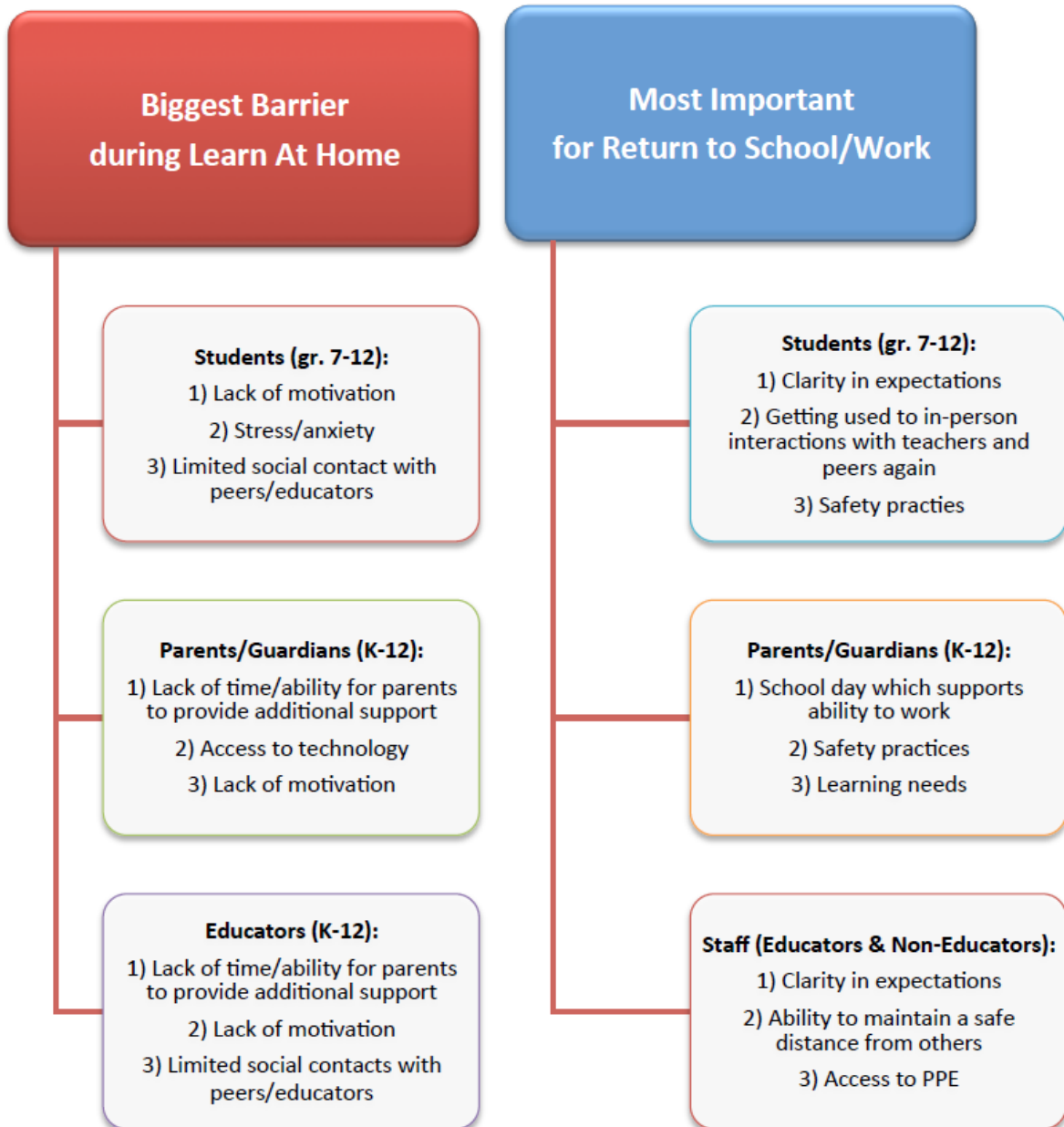
[Discover Page for Staff survey](#)

6. Detailed Analysis

A more detailed analysis has been undertaken by staff. Readers can read [the full report](#) here or take a look at it by the following sections:

- Process and Participation Rates
- Survey Responses from Parents/Guardians
- Open-Ended Feedback from Elementary Parents/Guardians
- Open-Ended Feedback from Secondary Parents/Guardians
- Survey Responses from Students (grades 7-12)
- Open-Ended Feedback from Students
- Survey Responses from Educators
- Open-Ended Feedback from Educators
- Survey Responses from Staff
- Open-Ended Feedback from Staff
- Integration of the Results and Next Steps

A snapshot of some of the data is included below:



7. NEXT STEPS

Following the Board meeting, staff will meet with Ministry staff as required to review plans for each scenario. Following the Ministry meetings with all districts, the Ministry is expected to confirm the model to be in place for September. The expected date is August 4

Parents are entitled to opt for remote learning. To ensure proper planning for staffing and supervision requirements, the OCDSB will ask all parents and guardians to confirm whether or not their child(ren) will attend school or learn remotely in September. While some districts have proceeded with this survey for planning

purposes, staff is recommending that this take place once the Ministry has confirmed direction and parents have more information on which to make their decision. This is expected to be launched immediately following the Ministry announcement.

Communication will continue over the summer and once the school year begins. The following timelines are in place.

Week of July 13, 2020

- Share feedback from the survey exchange;
- Provide an update on planning for September;
- Share information about the process for registration/confirmation of attendance, if required;
- Confirmation about the first day of school if possible;
- Clarification on when to expect more information; and
- Register anytime.

Week of August 4

- Update parents and staff on Ministry announcement;
- Send online confirmation of attendance; and
- Register anytime.

Week of August 10

- Update on planning for September, possible confirmation of model;
- Information about preparing for school and what families need to do to be ready;
- Covid-19 status update and implications for safety; and
- Register anytime.

Week of August 24

- Welcome back messaging;
- Confirm/reaffirm model for September;
- Specific details about student program/school, etc.;
- How to access buildings and/or online learning;
- What to expect in the first week; and
- Transportation services.

Week of September 1

- Final planning details;
- Welcome message from the school principal; and
- Teacher contact information.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8. Information about resource implications is included in the 2020-2021 Staff-Recommended budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Board approve the high-level plans for the delivery of public education during the 2020-2021 school year as outlined in **OCDSB Planning for September 2020**, attached as Appendix B to Report 20-065, developed in accordance with guidance from the Ministry of Education and the guiding principles established by the Board on July 9, 2020.

Brett Reynolds
Associate Director

Camille Williams-Taylor
Director of Education and
Secretary of the Board

Attachments:

Appendix A: School Board Self-Assessment Checklist

Appendix B: OCDSB Planning for September 2020

