ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2018-19

Presented to the Committee of the Whole of the
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
June 4, 2019

Introduction

It is said that "transformation occurs in conversations". Conversations, rooted in diverse voices and experiences make up the heart and backbone of the OCDSB's Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE). And, it is through courageous, challenging and necessary conversations that ACE members share and listen for relevant and creative possibilites "to advise the Board of Trustees on the review, development, implementation and monitoring of all policies that support student achievement and well-being" In the 2018-19 school year, ACE continued to liase with community stakeholders, parents, students and community partners to strengthen their recommendations for the District to foster equitable, safe and inclusive learning and working environments.

As part of its evolution, different voices enter and leave ACE's conversation space yearly. We acknowledge and thank Trustee Erica Braunovan as trustee representative, Stacey-Ann Morris, Nadine Clarke, Leslie Giddings for their contributions to the conversation over the years. And, we welcome Trustee Rob Campbell and Chris Ellis as the Board representatives, Trustee Lynn Scott, Raigelee Alorut (Tungasuvvingat Inuit), Sonia Nadon-Campell and Sue Crowin from SEAC, Clara Morgan, Sue Rice (Equity Instructional Coach) who have all brought different perspectives and experiences to enrich ACE's conversations.

2018-19 Priorities and Accomplishments

In the 2018-19 school year, along with its continued focus on engagement, research and valuing diverse types of knowledge, ACE also focused on strengthening the communication channels with communities and trustees to ensure they have access to the reports that capture the rich conversations generated during ACE meetings. In addition, ACE participated in the professional development for Advisory Committee Chairs to ensure the conversation space is navigated with ease. A brief summary of these priorities are provided below.

Engagement

In 2018-19, ACE's engagement conversations focused on the following key areas:

- Ensuring diverse voices are connected and included to identify systemic barriers and opportunities, tools and resources are available to address them;
- Strengthening a two-way communications between communities and ACE and ACE and the Board;

- Developing a Communications and Marketing Membership Outreach Campaign; and,
- Applying a diversity, equity and inclusion lens on District priorities.

Ensuring diverse voices are connected and included

With its revised mandate and having a seat at the Committee of the Whole (COW) table, ACE expanded opportunities for communities to engage in two ways. It created a community voice standing item at the beginning of each meeting's agenda. This demonstrated ACE's commitment to put the voice of parents, students and communities first. The intention is to hear their stories and, whenever possible, their proposed solutions to inform how ACE can support identifying and addressing systemic barriers that currently impact equity of access and opportunities within the OCDSB. These stories are also a qualitative data source to inform ACE's recommendations to the Board.

ACE also added a conference line for members to be able to attend meetings virtually if they are unable to do so in person so that quorum is achieved. We have also found that this has expanded avenues for parents, students and community partners to participate in these important conversations.

Strengthening a two-way communications with communities and the Board

ACE strengthened two way communication channels with its key stakeholders this year by realigning the distribution of ACE's minutes with Board Services to ensure trustees and community members have access to ACE minutes on the website. ACE also implemented a Motion/Action Tracking Report and Long Range Planning process to enhance transparency regarding the status of key priorities, including feedback from the Board and District staff regarding ACE recommendations.

Developing a Communications and Marketing Membership Outreach Campaign

ACE's revised mandate strengthens the voice of parents with students currently enrolled in OCDSB schools and community representatives from organizations and agencies representing and/or serving OCDSB parents and students. To this end, while preparing to develop its membership outreach campaign, ACE reviewed its membership composition to ensure that distinct subgroups within the Indigenous, racialized, 2SGLBTTQ+ and Persons with Disabilities communities were listed to ensure they would also receive the invitation to appoint members. As well, members believed it was important to include the contributions and difference that ACE is making within the District in the promotional materials. This will enable interested individuals or organizations to see how their time will be invested and to envision how they can add or expand the conversation.

A Membership Committee was struck and tasked to pull the campaign together with the support of the Communications department. To this end, the team was able to identify the membership outreach theme of: *Together: We Can Make a Difference* and drafted invitation letters, a poster and web banner that will be on our site for the duration of the campaign from the end of May to the end of August, 2019. In addition, the

Communications department will engage in a social media campaign via Facebook and twitter.

Applying a diversity, equity and inclusion lens on District priorities

During the 2018-19 school year, ACE was invited to provide a diversity, equity and inclusion lens on the following District priorities: the Strategic Plan, Budget, Identity Based Collection and the Mental Health Strategy. The summary of the conversation around the Identity Based Data Collection will be provided under ACE's research update given its direct alignment with ACE's research commitments.

Strategic Plan

ACE acknowledged the Strategic Plan information gathering process for visibly integrating diversity and equity elements such as translation, bias aware questions, and the willingness of staff to work with community members to input the data for those who may not have access to technology or who may require accessible accommodation beyond the ThoughtExchanges compatibility with assistive devices.

ACE's contribution to the Strategic Plan conversation focused on the following: ensuring communication strategies link parents participation to their child's success and well-being; engaging the most vulnerable populations to voice their lived experiences; inviting community groups, especially those that have not traditionally engaged with the OCDSB, to host forums as Indigenous and equity seeking communities are increasingly voicing the mantra "nothing about us without us"; creating a welcoming atmosphere through the ritual of breaking bread together to provide a safe environment; tapping into the expertise of community partners with access to parents and students and their understanding of key issues that impact certain communities; supporting students and parents with limited access to technology by exploring the possibility of schools being a community hub to facilitate access and investigating the possibility of a mechanism for voluntary self-identification (as many boxes as relevant to reflect intersectionality of identities) within the Thoughtexchange platform so that the District can know which communities are engaged and what ideas they bring forward.

2019-2020 Budget Overview

During a presentation on the 2019-2020 Budget Overview, members appreciated the learning around growth opportunities such as the increase in enrollment while understanding that forthcoming challenges due to recent decisions by the province. Members also appreciated the inclusion of equity-related initiatives such as funding for RAISE schools, MLOs, Indigenous support staff and breakfast programs.

The conversation that followed centered on a more direct alignment of the budget with the strategic plan's equity goals to better align the allotted investments as a measurement to foster student achievement and well-being. To further illustrate this point, some members noted that Black students are not getting the financial support they need and should be granted. When these supports were spoken to specifically around matters relating to mental health, both Black and Indigenous representatives voiced similar concerns and as a result, the following motion was recommended to the Board:

THAT the Board explore funding to support mental health through an equity lens especially for students who self-identify as First Nations, Inuit and Metis and for male students of Black African descent.

ACE was pleased to hear that the motion was heavily discussed at COW and amended as follows:

Moved by Trustee Braunovan, Seconded by Trustee Campell

THAT the following motion be referred to staff to provide additional information, including consultation with the Advisory Committee on Equity, prior to presentation at the Board meeting in September 2019.

Moved by Trustee Ellis, seconded by Trustee Braunovan,

1. **THAT the Board direct staff to explore and report on funding to support mental health through an equity lens, especially for students who self-identify as First Nations, Métis, Inuit and for male students of African descent.**

2. **THAT the Board direct staff to evaluate, through an equity lens, barriers to access mental health services within the OCDSB, especially for students who self-identify as First Nations, Métis, Inuit and for male students of African descent.**

Mental Health Strategy

As a result of the motion mentioned above, staff requested ACE's input in the draft Mental Health Strategy that is being developed to be implemented in the 2019-2020 school year. ACE invited a stronger reference to the impact of the experiences that students with a single or intersecting racial, cultural and gender identities may have on their mental health. ACE will provide additional input in the coming weeks and looks forward to the strategy coming back to the table in the fall for more detailed conversation and on-going updates.

Research

ACE's research focus is about getting to know the diverse mix of students and parents that are being served within the District. This year, the District's forthcoming Identity Based Data Collection and ACE's Community Forum with Students sharing their lived experiences provided rich conversations to inform ACE's work moving forward.

Identity Based Data Collection

ACE was pleased to hear and see concrete plans outlining the District's focus groups with community partners, students and parents to inform the data gathering process and questions in order to meet the District's timeline to complete its 2nd Identity Based-Data Collection process in November 2019. The direction is very much in alignment with ACE's call over the years for disaggregation of data to possible disproportionalities such indicators as suspensions and early school leavers with the intention to identify

underlying trends, patterns or insights to inform program direction and measures around student success and well-being.

ACE wanted to ensure that as OCDSB moves through the process it was understood that self-identity is not necessarily about self, but more about how other people perceive you and ascribed identities cannot be gleaned from personal information, however, the social categories within the standards may help the District differentiate questions about race and ethnic origins. As a result, capacity building and training are critical to ending systemic racism. This underscores the need to communicate clearly the purpose and use of the data being collected to build trust, especially with the Indigenous and Black communities that have had historical experiences of information being collected and seeing very little shift in practices to serve them effectively.

ACE also had questions around the application of the Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP™) principles pertaining to Indigenous groups and its relation to data collection, whether or not the data collection would extend to staff, include a focus on Southeast Asian communities, and how intersectionality of students will be captured. Other considerations from ACE included; recognizing that the Ottawa-Carleton District is particularly distinct as it is a rural, suburban and urban board; inviting the students from the Black Student Forum, Rainbow Youth Forum and Indigenous Youth Symposium to participate in the focus groups; listening how ACE can be involved in the collection of the qualitative data and community conversations and stressed the importance of a bottom-up approach and expressing an interest in the results of the focus groups.

Community Forum with Students

For the second year, ACE invited students to share their lived experiences. The students represented the three major student voice forums in the District: the Indigenous Student Symposium, the Rainbow Youth Forum and the Black Students Forum. A summary of their stories are provided below.

<u>Indigenous Voice</u>

- Little programming or information to engage Indigenous students in my school, but in the District's Indigenous Youth Symposium and leadership camp felt more welcomed;
- As a minority in my school, I stand out and other students act differently around me;
- Believe it is essential for the District to provide resources and spaces for all cultures so that students feel comfortable as most often have to research on my own and it would be helpful if the school provided more information. For example, when bullied, the school administration did little to intervene, and I had to take time away from school to escape and begin to heal.
- Recommends that the OCDSB:
    - host presentations throughout the year to inform all students about Indigenous history to create awareness and understanding.

    - enhance education for teachers to be able to better present Indigenous history and studies.
- Many students may not feel comfortable with providing accurate information during the identity based data collection initiative if it is not anonymous.

Trans Voice

- Rainbow Youth Forum provides 2SLGBTTQ+ students with a safe place to explore the issues students experience in schools; helped me to come to terms with feelings to shape and fully express self.
- Important for 2SLGBTTQ+ history and information to be included in the curriculum (it is our civil rights history) because many Trans students are forced to get their information online and there is a lot of misinformation. It would also be good to see self in the curriculum.
- Educators and administrators need to be more informed of the broad terms and language of the 2SLGBTTQ+; using non-gender language is a small change to help foster feelings of inclusion. As well need to understand transsexual health as this is the area Trans students struggle with the most.
- Current school is a welcoming place and the staff has a great understanding of my identity compared to last school where I felt unsafe and unwelcomed because teachers and administrators did little to help after a violent incident.
- Expressed concern about participating in the identity based data collection online for fear others are looking over your shoulders. The suggestion of a voting box or private booth format where paper forms could be completed in private;
- Trans students are often anxious about washrooms because of safety issues in using preferred washroom and gender neutral washrooms single out Trans students. Propose "I'll go with you" system, where other students wear an identifier to indicate their willingness to support Trans peers.

Black & Muslim Voice

- Although attends a multi-cultural school, still feels like a visible minority as a Black, Muslim man;
- Expressed the importance of diverse representation of staff to empower Black students to see themselves in teachers, support staff and administrators. I am lucky, in my school there is a Black principal. I see them in a place of authority, with empathy and has a real understanding of the types of issues Black students face both at school and within the community;
- Stressed the importance of seeing self and other Black students seeing themselves in future career opportunities, therefore they want to hear the stories of Black lawyers, scientists, doctors, and business leaders. The Black Youth forum provided this opportunity for Black students; more opportunities like this are needed across the District;
- Shared that the OCDSB needs ore conduits, programs and activities to support and engage Black students. He warned that when his peers do not have these outlets, they feel closed off and disengaged in school and community. One of his teachers saw his potential and persistently encouraged their engagement in a variety of school initiatives. This encouraged them to take risks and brought

them to the Black Youth Forum. Because of this, I work as a leader in my school to empower fellow and future students;
- Highlighted importance of intersectionality; currently working on a project to reduce stigma of Black and Diasporic students in the 2SLGBTTQ+ community; small campaigns like this help to create a spirit of equity and make everyone feel welcomed;
- Importance of inclusivity in education because histories of many peers are mere side topics and if they were highlighted it could help broaden understanding; and,
- Micro-aggressions experienced as a Black student helped to perpetuate division and attitudes.

They all agreed that the best for teachers and administrators to find out about their identities is to ask them what is your background, the use of pronouns or where they can tap into Indigenous resources instead of making assumptions about students.

Valuing Diverse Types of Knowledge

Capacity building speaks to the journey from intention to the impact of OCDSB policies, procedures and programs to foster an equitable and inclusive learning and working environment. In essence, it speaks to applying learning and showing instead of telling how practices are being transformed where it matters most: in the OCDSB classrooms; schools, departments and anywhere decisions are being made that impact student success and wellbeing. Understanding and valuing diverse types of knowledge is essential for this culture shift to happen and in particular for students, parents and staff to feel a sense of safety, welcome and belonging.

The capacity building necessary to demonstrate value of diversity types on knowledge were evident in our conversations in the following ways:
- The practice of Land Acknowledgement
- Curriculum development and implementation
- Professional Learning
- Equity Resources
- Building a representative workforce

<u>Practice of Land Acknowledgement</u>

This year, ACE began opening its meetings with the Land Acknowledgement. As guests on this land, this acknowledgement honours the different ways of knowing and being that Indigenous peoples have stewarded over the centuries. We fully endorse this practice in our schools as a start to understanding the truth of First Nation, Metis and Inuit experiences and listen for how we can support and work with our Indigenous members who call for their culture and teachings to be taught to strengthen Indigenous students while expanding the learning of non-Indigenous students and staff. .

<u>Curriculum Development and Implementation</u>

There were conversations about the role that communities can play in the development and delivery of curriculum. It was shared that although the curriculum is developed at the provincial level, teachers and administrators have leveraged community knowledge

to enhance and supplement the curriculum in a culturally sensitive manner. ACE was also listening for how to leverage community knowledge in a more expansive way across the District.

Professional Learning

In terms of staff professional development, ACE was happy to hear that culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy training was conducted with Central coaches, Learning Support Services and MLOs. As well, as a founding member of A Date with Diversity Learning Event, ACE was pleased to see staff, students and community members engaged in learning with, from and about each other to deepen their understanding of what it takes to journey from a focus on diversity to a focus on equity. ACE was pleased to hear about the plans for district wide learning around equity and unconscious bias.

Equity Resources

ACE continued its quest to know the type of equity resources that are available and accessible to students, staff, parents and the community to ensure that students see themselves in the curriculum and increase global awareness of their classmates. ACE appreciated the presentation by Curriculum Services on the resources that are currently shared with schools and welcomes the invitation to continue to listen for and share resources that may help Curriculum Service expand its resources.

Building Capacity through a Representative Workforce

In addition, various conversations throughout the year emphasized the importance of the District's hiring and retention practices to build a workforce population that is representative of the students it serves. ACE supports this notion more and more given the increasing number of student and parent voices seeking more representation to ensure a better understanding of the nuances and impact the lived experiences and to provide role models to aspire Indigenous and equity seeking group students to pursue post-secondary education, including seeing education as a viable career path. ACE is very interested in seeing if the recent provincial government's announcement regarding changes to Regulation 274 will support this process while being mindful that some federations see this change may see an exodus of occasional teachers thus escalating OT shortages and impacting this diverse pipeline for future positions.

Key Next Steps

As the District becomes more intentional about its journey from diversity to equity, ACE's 2018-19 conversations to once again put in the space the following recommendations:

- Establish a central equity office of equity within the District, including a superintendent whose portfolio is exclusively equity;
- Prepare a district-wide Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy and Action Plan with measurable indicators;
- Outline concrete initiatives that will honour the Board's commitment to honour the UN Decade for people of African Descent;

- Develop a diversity, equity and inclusion lens to support the work of schools and departments, including when consultations are being conducted to ensure multiple ways that responses can be gathered (i.e. online, face to face, focus groups) and the opportunity for respondents to voluntarily self-id to ensure data is being collected on the communities that are engaged and those that are not; and,
- Enhance equity page to include resources for staff, students and the community; events, videos, pictures, celebration of successes and which is user friendly

ACE will continue to do its part to contribute by:

- Strengthen its membership base to ensure diverse voices are at the table and ensure alignment with the evolving language of each group's identity;
- Continue its community outreach forums to hear the stories to gain a better understanding of the experiences of students, staff and communities, including meetings within community at various locations to enable different voices to be heard;
- Continue use of technology to allow different voices to join the conversation;
- Leverage the knowledge and skills of non-voting members and guests through working and ad hoc groups; and,
- Continue to apply a diversity and inclusion lens on OCDSB policies, programs and practices.

Conclusion

A special thank you to ACE's members and community guests for their on-going commitment to contribute to the OCDSB's efforts to foster a welcoming, caring and inclusive learning and working environment. Thank you to our community members Elaine Hayles, Clara Morgan, Chukwuemeka Ndukwe, Harvey Brown, and Nadine Clarke, whose commitment has been greatly appreciated. A special thank you to our community agency representatives: Jane Fjeld, Youth Services Bureau, Lisa Montroy from Family Services Ottawa and Ruth Sword and Jean Goulet from the Spiritual Care Group in Secondary Schools, and Raigelee Alorut (Tungasuvvingat Inuit).

We are thankful to our trustee representatives Rob Campbell and Chris Ellis. As well, we wish to recognize Trustees Donna Blackburn and Lynn Scott who regularly attended the meetings to provide support to the equity work that is unfolding in the OCDSB. We also acknowledge the regular presence of the following community representatives: Professor Timothy Stanley, Bob Dawson and June Girvan.

And, we would like to acknowledge the ongoing support and leadership of Dorothy Baker, Superintendent of Curriculum; Jacqueline Lawrence, Diversity & Equity Coordinator; and Nicole Guthrie, Committee Coordinator.

Appendix A: ACE COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND DISTRIBUTION LIST (2018-2019)

	NAME	MEMBER AFFILIATION
	Chukwuemeka Ndukwe	Community Rep
	Elaine Hayles	Community Rep; Acting Chair
	Harvey Brown	Community Rep
	Nadine Clarke	Community Rep
	Claire Morgan	Community Rep
	Stacey-Ann Morris	Young Leaders Advisory Council
	Jane Fjeld	Youth Services Bureau
	Saadia Nuh	Ottawa Community Services Organization OCISO
	Raigelee Alorut	Tungasuvvingat Inuit
	Lisa Montroy	Family Services Ottawa
	Ruth Sword	Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools
		Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools
	Donna Blackburn	Trustee
	Rob Campbell	Trustee Representative to ACE (incoming)
	Chris Ellis	Trustee Representative to ACE (incoming)
	Erica Braunovan	Trustee Representative to ACE (outgoing)
	Sonia Nadon-Campell	SEAC
	Sue Crowin	SEAC
	Bob Dawson	Community
	June Girvan	Community
	Hindia Mohamoud	OLIP
	Denise Deby	OLIP
	Professor Timothy Stanley	University of Ottawa
	Eldon Holder	Community Member at large
	Professor Awad Ibrahim	Community Member at large
	Nimao Ali	EISC of Ontario
	David Sutton	OCDSB
	Ken Mak	OCDSB
	Jimmy Pai	OCDSB
	Nicole Guthrie	OCDSB
	David Wildman	OCEOTA
	Dorothy Baker	Superintendent of Instruction
	Janice McCoy	Superintendent of Human Resources
	Sherwyn Solomon	Principal, York St. Public
	Jacqueline Lawrence	Diversity & Equity Coordinator
	Nancy Henry	Aboriginal Education Instructional Coach
	Sue Rice	Equity and Instructional Coach
	Johanna Jackson Kelly	Curriculum Services