

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITY ORIENTATION REPORT

August 27, 2020

6:00 pm

Zoom Meeting

- Voting Members:** Elaine Hayles, Nicki Dunlop, Carrie-Lynn Barkley, Deepika Grover, Bronwyn Funiciello, Semma Lamba, Nasrin Mirbagheri-Javanfar, Elizabeth Sweeney, Chandonette Johnson-Arowolo (Jaku Konbit), Kamaria Pingue (Parents 4 Diversity), Maria Teresa Garcia (Ottawa Community Immigrant Services (OCISCO))
- Non-Voting Members:** Bob Dawson, Edil Adan Ahmed, Said Mohamed, Yazhuo Zhang, Chris Ellis (Trustee), Rob Campbell (Trustee), Lynn Scott (Trustee, ex officio), Ruth Sword (Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools), Susan Cowin (Special Education Advisory Committee), Inini McHugh (Indigenous Education Advisory Council), David Wildman (OCEOTA)
- Staff and Guests:** Christine Boothby (Trustee), Justine Bell (Trustee), Joy Liu (Student Trustee), Charles Chen (Student Trustee), Camille Williams-Taylor (Director of Education), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Instruction), Carolyn Tanner (Human Rights and Equity Advisor), Jacqueline Lawrence (Equity and Diversity Coordinator), Sue Rice (Instructional Coach), Andrea Rahim (Policy Analyst), Leigh Fenton (Board Coordinator)

1. Welcome

Acting Chair Hayles called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

1.1 Land Acknowledgement

Chair Hayles acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Territory and thanked the Algonquin Nations for hosting the meeting on their land.

1.2 Introductions

Coordinator Lawrence welcomed the new members and invited each person to introduce themselves.

2. Valuing Community Voices

Director Williams-Taylor thanked the committee for their introductions which provided a context of who they are as individuals. She noted the reflection of the diversity of lived experiences and lived perspectives among the new committee members.

She shared her thoughts pertaining to the role that ACE committee plays when various members of the committee contribute their points of view. In certain forums she has heard people talk about the importance of representing voice. She challenged this notion and instead suggested that this advisory committee might “reflect” voice. When the word ‘represent’ is used to imply that the speaking is done on behalf of others; however in equity work, anti-oppression and anti racism work, the intention is not to speak on behalf of one identity. The purpose of meeting at ACE is to reflect experiences and perspectives of reality. In addition to this, she encouraged the committee to build conversations based on an asset-based approach, rather than a deficit-based approach, shifting the focus from what is wrong with communities to what is right with communities. She recognized that there is much work to be done in education, not only in the District but in society, on issues of importance.

Director Williams-Taylor stated that every student possesses genius and it is the responsibility of the community to nurture strengths. The work of equity is to remove the barrier to the genius. The education system she envisions is strength driven and opportunity focused, noticing the present possibilities to build upon. Additionally, the use of language matters when you refer to the words “complicated” or “complex”. Work in equity, diversity and inclusion is complicated. The complication lies in the negotiation between shifting priorities. This kind of work is not a conversation about the hierarchy of oppression. Communities, schools, students or families’ priorities may conflict with each other and that is the complication. Amongst these complications, the negotiation to remove barriers takes place.

She reinforced the need to continue to grow through learning and reserve judgement on the conglomeration of systems. She asked ACE to consider the conversations that must take place to remove antiquated structures, project change and facilitate methods of learning. What is wrong is often the exact barrier to arriving at an understanding of what is right. ACE plays a role in moving the District towards enhanced human rights and inclusion while avoiding framing the conversation into the warranty of wrongfulness. She learned in the introduction part of the meeting that many individuals have been a part of the equity journey for a long time.

Director Williams-Taylor expressed frustration that the headlines from 1972, 1989 and 1994 were announcing the same news about racism heard just last week and yesterday. As an organization, the District will have achieved notable

outcomes if sustainable structural changes occur. One of the advantages of living in this time is that society has recognized the importance of measurable changes. The aim is to create new practice within the organization. As the lead teacher in this organization, as she described herself, she will feel that we have achieved the key core principles of the organization when all children are embracing their genius. When the students feel their genius is celebrated, this is when the District will have achieved its objectives. She thanked ACE in advance for what the committee is going to be able to do to help make a measurable difference.

3. ACE's Role and Relationship with Trustees

Trustee Scott advised that trustees are a group of twelve ordinary people who were chosen by people voting in municipal elections. Trustees function under the *Education Act* and school boards are a creation of the provincial government, bound by its legislation and regulations. The District had chosen to compose an Advisory Committee on Equity many years ago because equity, diversity and inclusion are conditions that complete the fabric of the school community. As individual trustees, each person can influence the Board decision making process, but none of them can make a Board's decision alone. It is the advisory committees that provide trustees with a mindful voice to approaching a particular issue. The fact that legislation governs the Board process does require some degree of formality in the relationship of the advisory committees and the Board itself. When ACE brings a recommendation to the Board, it might be approved or it may be amended and occasionally the idea will be considered at a later date. Trustees have an obligation to give careful consideration to recommendations in order to arrive at a policy or a decision aiming to provide the highest support to student achievement and well-being.

It is important to the Board to have an understanding of the source of the advice received and this is the reason to have a defined ACE policy, P 008 GOV Advisory Committee on Equity, and consistency in the membership around the table. To have the most effective conversations, it is important to know each other. When ACE makes a decision during a meeting, the committee will be speaking in one voice. Trustees will be looking to ACE for advice on key budget decisions, key policy decisions and how best to pursue strategy. Consultation sessions will occur regularly, as substantiated in the recent consultation for the Indigenous, Human Rights and Equity Roadmap.

In response to questions for Director Williams-Taylor and Trustee Scott, the following points were raised:

- In the fall season, an Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Division will be re- launched. Though special focus on these areas is in place, the work requires more visibility for students and the community;
- A Community Development Officer will be added to the team in the new Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Division. This person will be engaged in community outreach;

- The Advisory Committee on Equity is established and empowered by a governance policy. A policy is a statement of intent or governing principles that serves to guide the overarching operations of the Board. All policies are adopted by the Board in open public sessions;
- A statutory committee is a committee passed by provincial law. ACE is a special purpose committee. The committee has security as part of the structure of the organization;
- The amalgamation of the Ottawa and Carleton school boards occurred on 1 January 1998, and that year one of the first policies that were approved was a policy establishing the Community Council on Ethno-Culture Equity. This committee's policy was the first rendition of the ACE policy; and
- Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 entitled "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools", outlines that the *Education Act* gives the Minister of Education the authority to require all school boards to develop and implement an equity and inclusive education policy.

4. Overview of OCDSB's Strategic Plan

Strategic Business Analyst Rahim reviewed the purpose of the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan:

- To set out the values of the organization and its stakeholders;
- To set a course of action to meet the vision and mission of the organization;
- To provide a framework to guide and direct all work of the OCDSB for 2019-2023; and
- To inform the budget and other planning processes.

The pillars of the plan are: Culture of Innovation, Culture of Caring and Culture of Social Responsibility.

She noted that the development of the strategic plan was done through pre consultation with advisory committees, a community wide idea exchange, focus group meetings to develop strategies and revisiting the stakeholder groups for feedback on the plan.

She highlighted uniqueness of the plan which focuses on culture change. It is the main planning document which sets out high priority areas of focus and guides all other departmental strategies. The way the strategic plan tracks the District's commitment to identify and remove barriers, which impact student learning and well-being, is to monitor annual reports, key performance indicators and other data collection initiatives.

During the meeting, the committee was invited to participate in a ThoughtExchange exercise, considering the questions:

- How can ACE and diverse school communities engage with the strategic plan?
- What are the ways outside of the meeting space that could facilitate collaborating together?

Strategic Business Analyst Rahim noted that the ThoughtExchange survey will be open until the end of the evening to collect more thoughts from the committee. The anonymous thoughts that received the highest star-ratings were:

- Provide ACE with regular updates on the progress of the strategic plan pillars;
- Consulting with the committee as early as possible on proposed initiatives;
- Develop practical ways to understand the strategic plan, thereby making the document more accessible; and
- Verify the sensibility of language translation for information sent to parents.

Strategic Business Analyst Rahim advised that she will send a report of the final results of the ThoughtExchange to be appended to the meeting report. Coordinator Lawrence specified that the questions in the chat forum will be included in the meeting report as an appendix.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- The measurement of the success of the strategic plan occurs at the administration level rather than the school level. School Climate Surveys will launch for the 2020-2021 school year to measure student and staff experience;
- In the spring, the District-wide consultations on the Learn at Home Program during the COVID-19 pandemic shifted the priority away from a strategic plan measurement report;
- A new initiative for strategic plan reporting is to build an interactive strategic plan web page that reflects progress;
- The District is looking for different ways to measure student engagement in learning rather than solely by credit accumulation;
- The District is seeking both quantitative data in numbers and qualitative data regarding the phenomenon which can be observed but not measured. Qualitative data can come in the form of shared, diverse experiences;

- Coordinator Lawrence recommended that should an immediate and urgent school-related need arise, contact a staff person who supports ACE or one of the trustees to share the information;
- The Research Evaluation and Analytics Department (READ) is researching how to best measure the success of the students learning from home and examining comparative data from other school boards;
- A representative from READ can be invited to speak with the committee on the Identity Based Data Collection data analysis;
- Reports concerning suspension and expulsion rates can be shared with ACE;
- A team of seventeen multicultural liaison officers (MLOs) assist with the communication to families where English is not their primary language;
- The committee shared a desire to access open data collected by the District; and
- Some committee participants indicated that they would like to have input on the scope and nature of a review on Police Involvement in Schools should a review occur at the District.

Chair Elaine Hayles advised the committee that they have control over the agenda for ACE. It is within the member's prerogative to add items to the meeting agenda or to request that an item be brought back in a future meeting.

5. OCDSB's Equity Journey and the Role of ACE

Coordinator Lawrence led a discussion on the purpose behind the ACE conversations. As the diversity in the student population increases, the opportunities for engagement must be identified. This work involves understanding the full diversity of student needs as well as understanding how to set the space for the genius within students to occur. ACE is a sharing space where the nuances in the conversation provide context to unfamiliar experiences. With these stories of lived experience, matters impacting student and staff are brought to the attention of trustees, senior staff and community partners. She explained that these meetings are about listening, making connections and seeing patterns.

She recalled that at the beginning of the meeting, each person shared how they self-identify and provided details of their lives. She noted that the diversity of voices was remarkable in ACE. When all perspectives are combined, there is an opportunity to shift the practice in ways that were not previously anticipated.

She noted that there is room on every agenda for the public to delegate. This means that members of the community may come to ACE to speak about an issue that deserves further thought. ACE members are ambassadors for the

community and invite others to come to the meetings to give a delegation on a topical viewpoint and to offer suggestions to the committee.

She concluded by distinguishing the different membership structure in the ACE.

An incredible calibre of people responded to the membership campaign last year to expand ACE's diversity of voices. Although there is a voting allowance held by seven community members and four individual members in the ACE policy, staff recognizes that life events, at times, prevent people from fulfilling their voluntary commitments. The ACE membership was built with contingency planning to ensure that there are enough people at any one meeting to ensure the conversations can continue with the challenge of achieving quorum. The strength of the ACE body is in the conversation; transformation occurs in the conversation. As individuals present themselves at the meetings, they may see themselves stepping into the accountabilities of one of the executive positions such as Chair, Vice Chair or as a representative ACE member at the Committee of the Whole meetings with the trustees. More information will be shared on elections in the next meeting.

5.1 Policy P.008 GOV Advisory Committee on Equity

The Policy P.008 GOV Advisory Committee on Equity was distributed as a part of the meeting package for informational purposes.

5.2 ACE Membership 2020-2021

The ACE Membership 2020-2021 chart was distributed as a part of the meeting package for informational purposes.

5.3 2018-2019 ACE Annual Report

The 2018-2019 ACE Annual Report was distributed as a part of the meeting package for informational purposes.

6. ACE's Role and Relationship with the Senior Team

Superintendent Baker stated that her role at ACE is to support the committee, alongside of Board Services Coordinator Fenton. She is a conduit of information from the District, or the province, to the committee and works in the Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Division. She echoed that the role ACE members play has a significant impact on shifting organizational structures. Equity is at the core of the work of the committee. The Strategic Plan and the Roadmap were created with equity at the centre of each document. She noted her enthusiasm about the new ACE membership and believes that many people on the committee have the foundational knowledge to continue moving the equity journey forward at the District.

7. Information

7.1 2020-2021 ACE Meeting Schedule

The 2020-2021 ACE Meeting schedule was distributed as a part of the meeting package for informational purposes.

6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned the meeting at 8:36 pm.

Elaine Hayles, Acting Chair, Advisory Committee on Equity