

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITY REPORT

September 24, 2020

6:00 pm

Zoom Meeting

Voting Members:	Ayan Yusuf Karshe, Nasrin Mirbagheri-Javanfar, Nicki Dunlop, Seema Lamba, Bronwyn Funicello, Carrie-Lynn Barkley, Deepika Grover, Elizabeth Sweeney, Chandonette Johnson-Arowolo (Jaku Konbit), Maria Teresa Garcia (Ottawa Community Immigrant Services (OCISCO), Ryan Doucette (Young Leaders Advisory Council)
Non-Voting Members:	Rob Campbell (Trustee), Chris Ellis (Trustee), Lynn Scott (Trustee, ex officio), Bob Dawson, Edil Adan Ahmed, June Girvan, Yazhou Zhang, Ruth Sword, Sonia Nadon-Campbell (Special Education Advisory Committee), Susan Cowin (Special Education Advisory Committee, Alternate), Inini McHugh (Indigenous Education Advisory Committee)
Staff and Guests:	Justine Bell (Trustee), Joy Liu (Student Trustee), Charles Chen (Student Trustee), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Instruction), Mary-Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Carolyn Tanner (Human Rights and Equity Advisor), Jacqueline Lawrence (Equity and Diversity Coordinator), Leigh Fenton (Board Coordinator)

### 1. Welcome

In the absence of Acting Chair Hayles, Ayan Yusuf Karshe called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. She acknowledged that the meeting was taking place on traditional spiritual and unceded territory of the Algonquin nation, home to the first peoples of Canada. She expressed her honour and gratefulness to share this land with the knowledge keepers. She called for a moment of silence to honour Breonna Taylor in life and in her unjust death.

### 2. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Seema Lamba,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Ms. Sweeney requested the 'Review of School Resource Officers' be added under item 5.2.

**Moved by Seema Lamba,**

**THAT the agenda be approved, as amended.**

**Carried**

3. Delegations

There were no delegations.

4. Update on the Return to School

Using a Powerpoint presentation, Superintendent Baker presented the District's Return to School Update, noting the following items: models of learning, daily self-assessment, class-size averages, staffing, workload implications, special education support, communications strategies, school councils, reporting outbreak management, and student transportation.

Superintendent Baker acknowledged the tremendous efforts of all employee groups who worked tirelessly to ensure that buildings were safe and schools were ready to open in September. She highlighted that there continues to be challenges with change requests from in-person enrollment into the Ottawa Carleton Virtual (OVC) schools. There are approximately 2000 students who have applied to move to the OVC. She noted that 700 teachers were deployed to OVC. Due to the changing Ministry of Education mandates, the reorganization of schools was completed in three weeks, a process which normally is organized over several months. As the needs of staff and students are considered, further adjustments to workload and instruction are expected.

Students in specialized program classes (SPC) will be included in a hybrid model of learning which will combine in-person and remote learners. The English Literacy Development (ELD) secondary student classes have been congregated in the in-person schools, where the students are in cohorts for intensive language support. The secondary remote learners are being supported by an ELD instructional coach and they may also be able to choose some sheltered content courses to further support their learning. At the elementary level there were additional staffing provisions allowing for classrooms to be congregated. The 11 elementary ELD students, learning through OVC, are attached to peers in their in-person classrooms through the hybrid model.

Superintendent Baker invited Trustees Campbell and Ellis to provide the committee with an update on school councils, as this has been an ongoing conversation at the Committee of the Whole (COW) meetings. Trustee Campbell noted that the Board of Trustees passed a recommendation on 22 September 2020 that OCV parents be allowed to be non-voting members or, where insufficient in-school parent candidates have put themselves forward for

established school council positions, continue to be allowed to be voting or executive members of the school council at their children's home schools. School councils for the new OVC schools will be established; They will continue to play an important role in enhancing the communication between the OCV and the parent community. School council elections are to be conducted in October in accordance with procedure PR 509 SCO, School Council Elections, Constitutions and By-Laws. Trustee Ellis stated that the compromise was recommended by the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) in order to facilitate the opportunity for OVC parents to be connected to their home school.

Superintendent Baker reviewed the information on safety prioritization for the re-opening of schools. All educators have been trained through the 'Employee Health and Safety' program. She has witnessed the conscientiousness of staff and students wearing their personal protective equipment (PPE). Regular emails are sent to families within the District reminding them to perform a daily self-assessment to determine if their child should attend school that day. The Ministry of Education has outlined an elevated level of reporting requirements for students or staff who have tested positive for COVID-19. These individuals are added to a daily 'Do Not Attend' (DNA) list and their names are forwarded to superintendents of instruction,, the Associate Director of Education and the Ministry of Education. The home page of the District website features a COVID-19 Dashboard, detailing the total number of cases for both students and staff, along with closed cohorts, classes and schools. During the presentation and in response to questions, the following points were noted:

- Being one of the first languages in Canada, Inuktitut should be included as a language of translation when circulating materials on instructions for self-assessment. Superintendent Baker noted that she has been in contact with Ottawa Public Health (OPH) to address this gap;
- The prioritization of smaller class sizes in some schools was a decision made in conjunction with OPH because in specific areas of the city the transmission rates of COVID-19 are increasing. These class sizes are, on average, kept below 20 students;
- The District is following the OPH guidelines using the screening tools for the students attending school or child care;
- Communication is expected from the District outlining when students can apply to change to remote or in-person learning;
- Every teacher in the "brick and mortar schools" also has a virtual learning portal in place for those students who have been sent home for a period of quarantine;
- Newcomer families require extra resources to explain the curriculum by grade and subject to support their children at home. Many of these people moved to Canada specifically to improve the education of their children

however, in the current pandemic, are facing disruption in their child's education attainment;

- It was suggested a central repository be implemented, by grade level, for the best videos and on-line lessons that were developed for The Learn at Home Program last spring;
- The Human Resources department continue to recruit occasional teachers to ensure that ample coverage;
- Public Health Nurses are in place at school sites provide support to students and staff.

## 5. Discussion Items

### 5.1 Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap

Superintendent Baker thanked the committee for their input and contributions to the Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap (Roadmap). The final version will be presented to the COW on 13 October 2020.

Diversity Coordinator Lawrence reported that by referring to the feedback from the last meeting, enriching changes were made to the Roadmap, such as placing the support for the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent at the beginning of the document. Specific milestones set the expectation for implementation over the next three years. Progress will be monitored through cyclical quantitative and qualitative measurement structures aligned with the reporting structure of the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan. Specifically, the District is creating a 'scorecard' that will establish accountability measures and reports on progress towards goals identified in the Roadmap, disaggregated by grade, Indigeneity, race, language, disability, sex, gender, and socio-economic status.

Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner invited the committee to share any further thoughts to better serve the students who have been historically underserved. Student Trustee Liu announced that the Student Senate has suggested the development of a mechanism, apart from a school administration based mechanism, to report racist incidents and identity-based bullying occurring on school property. Advisor Tanner responded that a human rights policy, currently in development, will include a complaint procedure. The District has processes to manage human rights issues, like discrimination or racism, however, these are contained within other procedures rather than in a free-standing document. The current goal is to develop an overarching human rights policy that will touch on standards of behavior, particularly around groups that are protected within the Human Rights Code on race-related or gender-related grounds. Included in the policy will be accommodations for people based on those grounds and how to address complaints in relation to those grounds. The development of the policy will be collaborative and consultative.

Mr. McHugh noted the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) put forth calls to action for Canadians to repair the relationship with Indigenous peoples. He strongly suggested that the TRC be highlighted more prominently in the Roadmap. Superintendent Baker agreed to feature the TRC at the beginning of the document.

Trustee Campbell endorsed the Roadmap as a step forward for the District and noted his approval of the Securing Accountability section. He commented on the need to have all identities equally richly reflected throughout the document. He noted that at times the language changed from the way people were referred to, wavering between the word “Black and “African, Black and African-Caribbean” (ABC) descent. He requested more clarity on who was consulted for the making of the Roadmap. He pointed out that the key indicators measure pathways and graduation rates but not equally and therefore the scope of measurement and reporting could be further quantified.

Ms. Lamba recommended that parts of the Roadmap be embedded in the Trustee Code of Conduct policy to ensure that trustees are aware of and support current expectations. This policy will address issues of misconduct and detail the associated repercussions. It is important that, in advance of becoming a trustee, the selected candidates have a demonstrated track record of recognizing equity and are committed to anti-racism, decolonization, feminism, disability justice, queer liberation and gender self-determination. She hopes to see senior management and principals consistently use the lens of an elevated standard of social relations. A requirement for hiring people in decision-making positions must include the search for individuals who are well-versed on the subject of nurturing a diverse community.

Diversity Coordinator Lawrence noted her accord with reference to strengthening policies surrounding trustee accountability. She indicated that going forward there will be intentionality around diversity training for staff, not just for promotions within the District, but established as part of a foundational job requirement. Superintendent Baker stated that trustees serve a governance role for the organization. She is confident that the trustees will use the Roadmap to help ensure that the guidelines set within the document are upheld. The trustees are elected by the public to serve their geographic zones throughout Ottawa; they are not employees hired by the District. She added that the current Board of Trustees are committed to enhancing their knowledge in matters of equity and adopting the pillars of progress outlined in the 2019-2023 Strategic Plan.

Ms. Barkley contributed that defining an alphabetical glossary of terms in the introduction of the document is useful for readers.

## 5.2 Discussion on the School Resources Officer (SRO)

Ms. Sweeney introduced the discussion with an inquiry as to whether or not this committee can suggest changes to the wording of the motion that was put

forward and approved at COW 15 September 2020. Secondly, she asked how ACE can participate in the review process of police involvement in schools.

Trustee Campbell responded that unless the trustees at the COW table move another motion to change the wording of the motion, the language cannot be changed. Before the end of October 2020, a plan for the overall review of police involvement in OCSDB schools, including milestone achievements is to be recommended to the Board. In the current motion, there are no instructions for how the consultation with stakeholders should be undertaken or how the reviews are to be organized. He noted that discussions in this evening's meeting present an opportunity to present further input on the matter.

Student Trustee Liu referred to the Safe Schools Protocol as a municipal policy and it identified instances where the notification of police service is mandatory for certain types of incidents in schools. These situations would include: possession of a weapon, including, but not limited to, firearms, use of weapon to cause bodily harm physical, assault, threats of serious injury, including threatening on social media, text messages or email, sexual assault, possession of illegal drugs, trafficking in drugs or weapons, robbery, extortion, hate and/or bias-motivated incidents, gang-related incidents, criminal harassment, possession of an explosive substance, bomb threat and all deaths directly impacting the school community. She noted that any debate would be required to occur around the school policy itself rather than the municipal policy.

Superintendent Farrish, who is responsible for Safe Schools across the District, thanked the committee for the invitation to attend the discussion. She reasoned that her presence at the meeting could allow her to collect the input needed to be able to design the consultation plan. She acknowledged that Advisor Tanner was also working on the initiative to ensure the focus remains on human rights. The direction they plan to take is to hear from the voices that do not necessarily get heard. She offered to respond to further questions, after the meeting, by email.

Trustee Bell highlighted that the District does fund SROs in schools. The allocation of these education funds constituted grounds for the original debate at the Committee of the Whole-Budget meetings over the summer. She noted her confidence in the people overseeing the review and stated that they will afford greater weight to those voices that are traditionally marginalized. She encouraged a 'Do No Harm' approach to the review; requiring consideration over the initial plight of the affected persons and taking steps to avoid any attempt to have witnesses relive their trauma by a testimony.

Trustee Ellis sought more information on the matrix of people to be invited to form an advisory panel or ad hoc committee for the purposes of this review. He recommended that a member of ACE be asked to sit on a panel of this nature. Superintendent Farrish responded that objectives from the community will be

reflected in the style of the review. The District is in the very early stages of contemplating the consultation process. Advisor Tanner volunteered that the purpose of the discussion was to hear from ACE about how to approach a consultation to provide a safe space where people can share perspectives. ACE can provide ideas to elevate and reflect the voices of people who have been most impacted by police involvement in schools.

Ms. Grover suggested the use of a citizen's jury, where a group is formed from citizens to deliberate on an issue of local importance. She has observed that this is a successful way to have conversations about complex, multi-stakeholder issues where there are competing perspectives. The process occurs with the selection of a cohort of 20 people who will then work together in an intensive way by reading the testimonial evidence, policy tools and guidance documents. They hear from both non-traditional and traditional experts, and speak to many other people that they feel will hold specific knowledge and expertise on the topic. They will deliberate and arrive at a thorough recommendation. She offered to share more information with the committee on this deliberative method of public participation.

Chair Yusuf Karshe recommended a special purpose meeting be held to further discuss the consultation plan for police involvement in schools. The committee agreed to come together for another meeting in the following week.

Mr. Dawson suggested that Superintendent Farrish and Advisor Tanner facilitate the second meeting by providing a proposed framework of the consultation plan in advance to ensure thoughtful discussion on the issue.

6. Review of Advisory Committee on Equity Report

6.1 Meeting Report 23 July 2020

**Moved by Carrie-Lynn Barkley,**

**THAT the Advisory Committee on Equity Report of 23 July 2020 be received.**

**Carried**

7. Committee Reports

7.1 Committee of the Whole

Deferred

8. Information

8.1 Election Selection Process

Diversity Coordinator Lawrence will send the committee correspondence outlining the election selection process.

### 8.2 2020-2021 ACE Meeting Schedule

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

9. New Business

There was no new business raised.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned the meeting at 8:21 pm.

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Ayan Yusuf Karshe, Acting Chair, Advisory Committee on Equity