

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITY SPECIAL PURPOSE DISCUSSION

September 28, 2020

6:00 pm

Zoom Meeting

Voting Members: Nicki Dunlop, Carrie-Lynn Barkley, Seema Lamba, Ayan Yusuf Karshe, Elizabeth Sweeney, Chandonette Johnson-Arowolo (Jaku Konbit), Kahmaria Pingue (Parents 4 Diversity), Maria Teresa Garcia (Ottawa Community Immigrant Services (OCISCO), Ryan Doucette (Young Leaders Advisory Council)

Non-Voting Members: Chris Ellis (Trustee), Lynn Scott (Trustee, ex officio), Rob Campbell (Trustee), Edil Adan Ahmed, Said Mohamed,

Staff and Guests: Justine Bell (Trustee), Donna Blackburn (Trustee) Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Instruction), Carolyn Tanner (Human Rights and Equity Advisor), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Jacqueline Lawrence (Equity and Diversity Coordinator), Nicole Guthrie (Manager of Board Services), Darren Gatley (Board Coordinator), David Sutton (Occasional Teacher), Jeanine McClure

1. Welcome

Acting Chair Yusuf Karshe opened the special purpose discussion at 6:00 p.m. She noted the discussion was arranged at the request of the members at the 24 September 2020 ACE meeting and is intended to seek input on the consultation plan on the police involvement in schools policy and practice review.

2. Police Involvement in Schools – Policy and Practice Review

Staff presented the preliminary concept for the consultation plan. During the discussion of the plan the following points were noted:

- The review will focus on police engagement in elementary and secondary with particular emphasis on schools with priority School Resource Officers (SROs). The District will approach the review from a trauma sensitive and a “do no harm” perspective;
- The Steering Group will feature student voice (past and present, LGBTQ2++, Indigenous, Black, Muslim, and other minoritized communities). It will be critical to create a safe space for students so that they may discuss their experiences and students will be permitted to bring a trusted adult to the Steering Group;

- Established organizations in the City that help to serve youth should be invited to participate in the review;
- Members expressed concern with the use of a survey as it may privilege feedback from the majority, and it is the minority voices that need to be heard;
- Surveys could pose questions regarding ethnicity in order to know which voices to focus on;
- Questions seeking specific encounters with police may be traumatic to reflect upon and should be avoided;
- Equity seeking students should be the center of the Steering Group;
- While it is important to ensure that there is a human-rights focus on the issue, it is important to recognize the important role of police as well;
- Members would like to see the review reflect the recent work of other school boards, such as the Toronto District School Board, and shifting to a call to service model;
- The language of the policy must align with the Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap;
- The steering group must be free of politics to ensure the group can work without biases;
- Members noted the importance of using direct language in the discussion surrounding issues of racial discrimination;
- It will be important to collect input from racialized staff and their experiences with SRO's in schools;
- Members queried the size of the budget and whether or not it would enable the involvement of fee based expert consultants and justice groups;
- The review will feature groups meetings, one on one meetings, a targeted survey and a student-centred steering group;
- A report will be published at the end of the review to ensure the community can access the consultation and its results;
- The members noted the importance of using direct language to talk about racism and violence and noted that the lens of the consultation should be focused on anti-black racism;
- The members stressed the importance of an external review and the presentation of alternative solutions;
- The members agreed with prioritizing the voices of students, but cautioned that students should not have to review policy statements;

- The members questioned the role of the Regional Safe Schools Committee of Ottawa and whether or not they would be involved in the consultation;
- The District must be intentional in the selection of facilitators for the group discussion and where possible they should be racialized staff to ensure a safe space. Facilitators with an authoritative lens may discourage participation;
- Ottawa Police Services (OPS) will be made aware of the project and project milestones. The District will keep OPS apprised of the findings. The review focuses on the District's policy which has a connection to OPS, but the review will be independent of OPS;
- ACE members have many diverse and knowledgeable contacts with whom the District may wish to engage;
- The members questioned the role of ACE on the steering committee and whether or not they would have membership. At this point staff could not comment on the composition of the committee. Staff and members acknowledged the important role ACE can play in the review;
- Members expressed the view that unfortunately, the education system has some of the same systemic racism issues as the police and sometimes unknowingly contribute to the problem. The District should ensure outreach to current Ottawa area anti-black racism consultants, experts and community groups and that these individuals/organizations should assist in the selection of the members of the steering committee and/or be sought out to monitor the project and provide accountability;
- Members felt reluctant to put too much pressure on the students. They noted that many students feel uncomfortable speaking with those in a position of authority and discussions could have the potential to re-traumatize students;
- There are valuable community resources available within the ACE membership and consultation with ACE must continue. ACE should be provided with an opportunity to review and provide input on the document as it evolves. Police Involvement in Schools will be added as a standing item on the ACE agenda for the 2020-2021 school year;
- The District must provide alternative ways and accommodations to promote and encourage people with disabilities and those who may have challenges with access to or barriers to technology.

3. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:36 pm.