



MEMORANDUM

Memo No. 20-144

TO: Trustees
Student Trustees

FROM: Camille Williams-Taylor, Director of Education and Secretary of the Board
Michael Carson, Chief Financial Officer
Janice McCoy, Superintendent of Human Resources

DATE: 06 November 2020

RE: **Update on Enrolment and Academic Staffing**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update to the Committee of the Whole on student enrolment and staffing.

As in previous years, enrolment projections for the 2020-2021 school year were used for purposes of approving academic staffing levels for 2020-2021. More specifically, enrolment is a key determinant of the total number of elementary and secondary classroom teaching positions that are required to meet regulated class size requirements. Projected enrolment figures were also used in developing the approved budget, since enrolment is a key driver of funding under the Grants for Student Needs.

The enrolment projections used for staffing purposes was 49,646 elementary students and 24,988 secondary students. During the budget process, staff flagged the uncertainty related to enrolment due to the pandemic as a potential risk factor. In particular, staff highlighted uncertainty with respect to international students and kindergarten students in particular.

Enrolments are generally confirmed early in the school year, so that staffing levels, and more specifically, classroom staffing levels, can be reconciled based on actual enrolments, both at the District and school level. At the elementary level, actual enrolment figures as of the second week of school are normally relied on to inform fall staffing adjustments and classroom reorganizations as well as for Ministry class size reporting. At secondary, September 30 enrolment is used for purposes of reconciling staffing, with many adjustments deferred to the second semester.

This year, with the shift from in person to remote learning, a major reorganization was undertaken just prior to school resuming, in order to shift staff from in person to remote learning based on the number of students opting for that mode of learning. The

substantial reorganizations that were required to accommodate the shift were disruptive for staff and students as adjustments continued into the school year.

It has been more difficult than usual to confirm actual enrolments this year, for a number of reasons, including students on wait lists who were not initially attending either in person or remotely, late arrivals of students who were travelling and needed to quarantine on returning to Canada, and identifying students who were registered but where families had decided on other options such as home schooling, private school or, in the case of kindergarten students, deferring school attendance. The actual enrolment figures from late October indicate that enrolment is lower than projected at both elementary and secondary. This is not unique to the OCDSB, as many large urban boards, in particular, are reporting lower than projected enrolment, particularly in elementary schools. From a budget perspective, the potential impact could be as much as \$24 million in reduced revenue. More detailed information will be provided as part of the revised estimates, which will be presented to the Board in December. More detailed information on enrolment and staffing reconciliation and potential impacts is provided below.

Elementary Enrolment and Staffing

There are currently 2,213 elementary classes (excluding specialized program classes) in place across the district, which includes the 70 additional classes that were added based on additional funding or reallocated to in person schools to keep class sizes lower. As of October 30, 2020, actual enrolment figures show that total enrolment is approximately 1700 students below the figure that was used for budget purposes. The largest reduction between projected and actual enrolment is at kindergarten, where actual enrolment is almost 900 fewer than projected. It should be noted that enrolment figures increased by approximately 600 students between September 30 and October 30. At least some of this increase can be attributed to staff efforts to place students on waiting lists where space was available, and/or outreach from schools to students who were not attending.

The actual enrolment figure generates approximately 80 fewer classrooms than the projected enrolment. This number is offset by the number of additional positions that were added from the funding provided to reduce class size, so that the actual difference is approximately 40 classes. As indicated above, reconciliation of staffing and enrolment is normally achieved through reorganization, either to add classes where the enrolment is higher than projected, or to reduce or combine small classes where the enrolment is lower than projected. Reorganizations will result in at least some students changing classes, including moving from straight grades to combined grade classes, and teachers being reassigned either within the school or to another school. Staffing reductions at this time of year would be achieved by ending long term assignments and reassigning permanent teachers to these assignments instead.

Although not impossible, a reorganization to reduce by 40 classrooms would create a significant level of disruption to students and staff. Reorganizations are more challenging this year given the pressure to keep in-person class sizes as low as possible, within existing resources. There are some schools/programs where classes are very small (below 10 students) but combining classes is not feasible because it would result in combined grades classes of 4 or 5 grades (for example grade 1, 2, 3, and 4 students combined to make one class).

In an effort to identify potential reductions, staff are currently reviewing the school organizations to identify places where a reorganization could take place without a significant impact on class sizes and where disruption to the school can be minimized. Based on a preliminary review, staff has identified approximately 25 potential reductions. The timing of any reorganizations is also being considered to alleviate the impact of the changes for students and staff. For example, subject to cost considerations, it may be prudent to postpone reorganizations until January to coincide with students returning after the winter break and to align more closely with the end of Term 1. Staff will also continue to monitor enrolment closely to respond to changes that might impact or reduce the need for reorganizations.

Secondary Enrolment and Staffing

At secondary, actual enrolment as of the end of October is 183 students below projected enrolment, which is less than a 1% difference from the projected enrolment of approximately 24,000 students. From a staffing perspective, it means the system is staffed at approximately 13 FTE higher than enrolment would normally generate. This translates into approximately 84 sections or classes that would need to be reduced to reconcile enrolment and staffing. Adjustments to reconcile enrolment and staffing would be actioned in the next quadmester or, more likely, in the second semester at this point to avoid disruption of classes. Based on a school-by-school review of the impact of enrolment changes, it would be difficult for some schools to make adjustments without impacting program choice and their ability to offer all pathways, while other schools, where enrolment is higher than projected, need to add at least some classes in order to provide all students with courses. Staff will continue to work with schools to identify opportunities to reconcile enrolment and staffing. Efforts are also ongoing through the schools to engage students who have yet to attend school, including offering students the option to complete Independent Learning Courses (ILCs) developed through TVO with whom the Ministry of Education has established a partnership for this purpose. Students who take ILCs will continue to be connected to supported by their home schools through outreach from guidance and student success teachers.

Summary

In summary, at the elementary level, staff will be proceeding with reviewing opportunities to combine or reduce classes in schools without significantly impacting on class sizes of in person schools, where possible, with a view to reducing the current overstaffing of approximately 40 classroom positions. At secondary, staff will be proceeding with making some changes for the second semester to address enrolment shifts between schools, and with efforts to re-engage students where possible through various options. Based on the challenging nature of the year, senior staff is trying to maintain as much stability as possible, while also being mindful of the financial impacts of these decisions.

Further updates to enrolment and staffing will be provided as required. A more detailed analysis of the financial situation will be provided to the Board as part of the usual cycle of financial reporting.

cc. Senior Staff
 Manager, Board Services
 Corporate Records