

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITY REPORT

October 29, 2020

6:00 pm

Zoom Meeting

Voting Members:	Ayan Yusuf Karshe, Nasrin Mirbagheri-Javanfar, Nicki Dunlop, Seema Lamba, Bronwyn Funicello, Nicki Dunlop, Carrie-Lynn Barkley, Deepika Grover, Elizabeth Sweeney, Chandonette Johnson-Arowolo (Jaku Konbit), Ryan Doucette (Young Leaders Advisory Council), Kahmaria Pingue (Parents 4 Diversity)
Non-Voting Members:	Rob Campbell (Trustee), Chris Ellis (Trustee), Lynn Scott (Trustee, ex officio), Bob Dawson, June Girvan, Yazhou Zhang, Ruth Sword, Susan Cowin (Special Education Advisory Committee), Inini McHugh (Indigenous Education Advisory Committee), David Wildman Ottawa Carleton Elementary Occasional Teachers Association (OCEOTA)
Staff and Guests:	Justine Bell (Trustee), Joy Liu (Student Trustee), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Instruction), Mary-Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Carolyn Tanner (Human Rights and Equity Advisor), Shannon Smith (Superintendent of Instruction), Melissa Collins (System Principal, Equity), Jacqueline Lawrence (Equity and Diversity Coordinator), Ken Mak (Vice Principal), Jeannine Bradley (Office Administrator) David Sutton (Educator), Donna Blackburn (Guest), Leigh Fenton (Board Coordinator)

1. Welcome

1.1 Land Acknowledgement

Acting Chair Deepika Grover called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. She acknowledged that the meeting was taking place on unceded Algonquin Territory and thanked the Algonquin people for hosting the meeting on their land. She called for a moment of silence to honour the memory of Abdirahman Abdi who died under the custody of the Ottawa Police Services. She asked that in the quiet, the committee consider the strong proactive community voices and leadership that continue to persevere in the pursuit of justice and fairness.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Nicki Dunlop,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

3. Presentations

3.1 Report 20-090, Consultation Plan for Police Involvement in Schools

Superintendent Baker provided a high-level overview on the consultation plan for police involvement in schools. She noted that the consultation plan process was partially informed through discussions held at the Advisory Committee on Equity's (ACE) special purpose meeting of 28 September 2020. She indicated that the consultation plan will remain a standing item on all forward agendas for ACE. Staff are in the process of determining the process for the selection of the steering group. Ms. Lamba suggested that predominantly racialized staff be included in the steering group. Chair Grover requested more information on the membership of the steering group, as it becomes available. In addition, she suggested that the standing item could be an opportunity to review progress, deliver insights as they emerge and review documents as they are produced.

The Committee raised the protocols for engaging police services in schools, the areas of discretion and mandatory instances when police are summoned to the school, the compulsory training for the School Resource Officers (SRO), the concept of community offering alternative safety services, and the division in the understanding of justice in the city, in light of the not guilty ruling in the death of Adbirahman Abdi. Superintendent Baker concluded that the consultation review aims to examine these subjects, and will include the review of the role of the SRO. In response to an inquiry, she noted that she will bring forward to Superintendent Farrish, the suggestion of inviting former students to participate in the consultation process. To better understand these topics, Ms. Hayles suggested the following future guest presenters at ACE: a police officer and a human rights lawyer, who are independent of District employees or partnerships.

4. Reports

4.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Baker reported that at the Committee of the Whole meeting on 13 October 2020, the Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights (IEHR) Division was launched. In addition, The Indigenous, Human Rights and Equity Roadmap 2020-2023 (the Roadmap) was presented. She noted that the District is presently moving forward on the commitments of the Roadmap. On 27 October 2020, the Board approved the creation of two full time equivalent (FTE) Indigenous Graduation Coaches positions, selected from an Indigenous candidate pool with expertise in the cultures of Inuit and Métis people, the expansion of the Equity

Team through an additional Equity Coach with a focus on Black, racialized, minoritized groups, and an allocation of up to \$50,000 annually to support translation services to communicate and support the implementation of the Roadmap. Trustee Bell reflected that the motion for additional Indigenous Graduation Coaches was accepted by the Board, due, in part, to a delegation given by a member of the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee (IEAC). She shared that during the meeting, Chair Scott proclaimed that delegation rules do not align with Indigenous ways of sharing knowledge and that Mr. McHugh would be allotted the time he needed to present his concerns to the Board of Trustees.

Superintendent Baker acknowledged the allegations against former staff at Nepean High School. She noted that an investigation is underway; staff is unable to share further details with the public.

Superintendent Smith reported that a support team was assembled to accommodate the needs of students at Nepean HS, including staff from IEHR and Learning Support Services (LSS). Connecting with the students and providing some urgent professional training for staff is the prime focus presently. Google Meets are scheduled for students to be working with a social worker, and itinerant educational assistant and the school psychologist. Small group opportunities will be available for students to connect directly with District administration. She and Principal Johnson sat with student leaders from the Diverse Student Union. In this meeting they were provided with information about the daily experiences of students who were racialized at Nepean HS and issues that impacted these students as a result of the school environment. Listening to the student voice is at the centre of the student support planning and outcomes were established from the meeting. Every three weeks, she and Principal Johnson will seek additional feedback from the Diverse Student Union.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- The lessons learned from the experiences of students at Nepean HS will influence the work that is underway for the Roadmap to take across the District and further the strategies designed for a series of learning opportunities involving school leaders;
- A way to file reports of inappropriate or racist teacher conduct will be made possible through an independent arm of the District, led by Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner. The Safe Schools policies and procedures will include the development of a complaint form that students may submit anonymously, identifying the kind of behaviour under scrutiny;
- A committee member contended that students may not be comfortable coming forward to speak about traumatic circumstances involving educators; therefore creating a position for an ombudsperson within the schools could lead to increased advocacy in matters of bullying and human rights violations;

- LSS partners have assigned a multi-disciplinary team to support affected Nepean HS students. These counsellors reflect the diversity of the students;
- A committee member stated that though encouraged at every opportunity, students should not be expected to advocate for themselves because they are children under the care of the District while on school property;
- A committee member expressed concern that the District approach to mending the damage experienced by Nepean HS students is largely a “top-down” strategy with complex power dynamics. Historically, many racialized students have struggled with the power dynamics in society;
- Superintendent Smith advised that these circumstances have highlighted many areas that require attention, for example, how to unlearn the ways in which white supremacy lives in actions and words, closely surveying the materials chosen to teach the curriculum and examining the dynamics that are set up in the classrooms;
- Support in the form of a three tiered structure was deployed for the students of Nepean HS after the District became aware of the allegations. Superintendent Smith noted that there was a personalized approach to supporting each of the students. Further information was requested about the tiered approach, and it was suggested that the information be communicated to the parents of the affected students;
- Parents of students affected by the words and actions of the past and present Nepean HS staff should be assured that the District is doing more than their legal obligation to investigate the allegations. Superintendent Smith noted that a communication plan to the community is forthcoming; and
- Superintendent Baker explained that during a tragic event a Tragic Event Response Team (TERT) is deployed to offer support through professional services and at times, spiritual workers arrive on location to support the school community, friends and siblings. The District continues care as long as the recipients believe that they require the support.

4.2 ACE Report 24 September 2020

Moved by Chandonette Johnson-Arowolo,

THAT the Advisory Committee on Equity Report of 24 September 2020 be received.

Carried

4.3 ACE Discussion Notes 28 September 2020

The ACE discussion notes of 28 September 2020 were received.

5. Information

5.1 Election Selection Process

Diversity Coordinator Lawrence presented a document which outlined the responsibilities and described the guidelines for the scheduled election at the 26 November 2020 ACE meeting. She asked that voting members send an expression of interest for the positions of Chair, Vice Chair and Committee of the Whole (COW) representative to her or Board Coordinator Fenton by 12 November 2020. The official start date of the presiding officer positions begins on 1 December 2020. In response to a query, she reviewed the history of the creation of ACE, which was also presented in the ACE orientation meeting of 27 August 2020.

The COW representative was described by Diversity Coordinator Lawrence, as a representative from ACE who attends a monthly meeting with the Board of Trustees. The concerns of ACE can be brought into the discussion periods. This representative would contribute to the conversation with an equity lens on matters brought forward and, in turn, report to ACE about matters that require feedback from the ACE committee. Trustee Ellis contributed that, in years previous, he wrote the recommendation to provide a seat for ACE at the COW table. He noted that this representative is of prime importance and will bring forward equity issues to the trustees or to present a perspective of diversity while the trustees are debating a particular matter. Trustee Scott maintained that the Board of Trustees is involved in steering the change within the institutional structures to better reflect diversity. The formality of the Board of Trustee meeting setting should not be a deterrent as the trustees rely on hearing all experiences in order to make their decisions. The key consideration is that the representative brings forth the views of ACE rather than individual views. The representative will speak at COW defining the consensus position of ACE and ask questions of clarification to be better equipped to report back to ACE. Trustee Campbell highlighted that ACE may formulate a motion and bring it to the table for the Board of Trustees to consider.

Ms. Hayles suggested that a motion be recommended to the Board of Trustees to appoint an Algonquin member as a Board Trustee. Staff noted that trustees are not appointed but rather they are elected. Trustee Ellis noted that *Ontario Regulation 462/97 First Nations Representation on Boards* outlines the requirements for First Nations appointments to the Board The District does not qualify for this provision.

Mr. McHugh, who attends ACE as a representative for the IEAC, queried the likelihood of granting every person attending ACE a legitimate vote. Diversity Coordinator Lawrence responded that the question has been raised in previous years. ACE is a unique body with a variety of diverse voices and individuals that share different ways of knowing. She established that advisory committees of the Board operate through structured policy. The committee exists through the discretion of the Board. She suggested that after the 2020-2021 school year, a recommendation from ACE may come forth to revise Policy P.008.GOV to better serve the diverse voices and identities that attend and participate at ACE. In

response to an inquiry about including a person from the Algonquin nation on the list of voting members, she noted that the membership sub-committee conducted an extensive outreach to solicit applicants and to arrive at the current ACE membership. She maintained that each voice who attends is respected and welcome; the richness of the conversation relies on contributions from the group. Ms. Lamba iterated that the P.008.GOV allows for the creation of various sub-committees should an area of business require greater focus by a selection of committee members.

Ms. Javanfar noted that the member application process occurred in 2019 and then in 2020 applicants began to receive notifications pertaining to upcoming ACE meetings. She understood that the length of the membership is two years however she did not understand the distinction of the different member categories on ACE. She noted that she was not a parent of a child currently enrolled in the District; however she is a voting member in the independent category. She requested more information about how the ACE conversations are connected to tangible change within the school system. Diversity Coordinator Lawrence explained that many staff are assigned to ACE, including the Equity Instructional Coach, Sue Rice and they have a direct connection with all schools and may share outcomes from ACE discussions at the school-level. The meeting reports are published as part of the COW agenda packages and all trustees are accountable for reading the advisory committee reports, in turn informing trustees of the community voice and the matters requiring further attention at the Board-level. Superintendent Baker emphasized that ACE is the advisory committee on equity to the Board.

Ms. Sweeney requested clarity on the appointments to the eleven voting positions as P.008.GOV is written with the provision that only voting members may hold the positions of Chair, Vice Chair and COW representative. Diversity Coordinator Lawrence responded that non-voting members are able to self-nominate to sit on the sub-committees of ACE. This provides an opportunity for all to share time and talent to the committee if they seek a larger role. She acknowledged the two vacancies in the community representative voting member category. It was noted that in the non-voting 'Members at Large' category, participants who also represent community agencies, may be approached to fill these vacancies. Alternatively, a listing of organizations and associations within P.008.GOV may be considered.

Ms. Miller examined section 4.6.(a) under "Membership Criteria" where the language reads: "Every effort shall be made to ensure that the four (4) individual members are parents/guardians with children enrolled in the OCDSB who represent the diverse demographic composition of the District". She inquired how many of the four voting members were parents with children enrolled in the District. It was determined that 25% of the independent voting members were parents. Ms. Javanfar stated that those members who are the parents with students in the District should have the voting privileges. It was established that

75% of independent members in the 'alternative' voting column were parents with children in the OCDSB. The Committee agreed that a balance between parents with children currently enrolled in the District schools and those without, was a preferred membership structure.

Ms. Sweeney queried the mechanism in place to expand the voting membership within P.008.GOV. Superintendent Baker replied that the District will be conducting a review of all policies relating to the Board's advisory committees in 2020-2021. Though the committee policy can be amended and presented to the Board, she was concerned about the timeline, as the ACE elections occur on 26 November 2020. She assured the committee that ACE arrives at their decisions by consensus. Trustee Scott communicated that ACE will be asked for input in the fulsome review planned for the advisory committees.

5.2 Indigenous, Human Rights and Equity Roadmap 2020-2023

The final version of the Indigenous, Human Rights and Equity Roadmap 2020-2023 was included for information.

Ms. Hayles requested consistency in the way Black people are referred to throughout the document. Superintendent Baker clarified that, in consultation with Diversity Coordinator Lawrence, Black people are distinguished as Caribbean Black in the Roadmap.

6. New Business or Event Announcements

There was no new business raised.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned the meeting at 8:45 pm.

Deepika Grover, Acting Chair, Advisory Committee on Equity