



SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, October 7, 2020

7:00 p.m.

Zoom Meeting

Members: Christine Boothby (Trustee), Rob Campbell (Trustee), Chris Ellis (Trustee), Sonia Nadon-Campbell (Community Representative), Amy Wellings (Community Representative), Jim Harris (VOICE for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children), Mark Wylie (Down Syndrome Association), Nicole Ullmark (Easter Seals Ontario), Lisa Paterick (VIEWS for the Visually Impaired), Safina Dewshi (Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils), Maggie Mamen (Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton), Katie Ralph (Autism Ontario)

Association Representatives (Non-Voting): Jennifer Titley (Alternate, Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation), Connie Allen (Professional Student Services Personnel), Andrew Winchester (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Alternate), (Nancy Dlouhy (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Operations Committee)

Staff and Guests: Justine Bell (Trustee), Wendy Hough (Trustee), Jennifer Jennekens (Trustee), Lynn Scott (Trustee), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Mary Ann Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Carolyn Tanner (Human Rights and Equity Advisor), Dr. Petra Duschner (Manager of Mental Health and Critical Services), Christine Kessler (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Amy Hannah (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Kathryn Langevin (Supervisor of Social Work), Stacey Kay (Manager, Learning Support Services), Sandy Owens (Manager, Business and Learning Technologies), Nicole Guthrie (Manager of Board Services), Leigh Fenton (Board/Committee Coordinator)

1. Call to Order

Chair Nadon-Campbell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Territory and thanked the Algonquin people for hosting the meeting on their land.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Jim Harris,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Chair Nadon-Campbell requested that the letter from the Thames Valley District School Board, sent to all Chairs of Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs) in Ontario, be added as item 11.3 under New Business.

Moved by Jim Harris,

THAT the agenda be approved, as amended.

Carried

3. Delegations

There were no delegations.

4. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

4.1 7 October 2020

Moved by Katie Ralph,

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee Report dated 7 October 2020 be received.

Carried

5. Presentations

5.1 Report 20-090, Consultation Plan to Review of Police Involvement in OCDSB Schools (M. Farrish)

Your committee had before it Report 20-090, seeking approval of the consultation plan to review policy P.043.SCO Police Involvement in Schools. This will include an overall review of District practices, outcomes and impacts when involving police in schools.

Superintendent Farrish reported that on 27 October 2020 the Board of Trustees approved the proposed consultation plan. She provided an overview of the scope of the consultation process. She noted that members of SEAC could assist in the review by identifying which voices need to be heard and how best to engage with these individuals.

Trustee Ellis contributed that as part of the literature review intended for the consultation plan, it would be imperative to look for information around police involvement with students accessing special education services. There have been incidents with police and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) students or those who have behavioural exceptionalities, where handcuffs were used. He recommended that the outreach to special education parents or former students be proactive. He noted that should a community steering group be assembled, it would be beneficial to solicit the interest of a special education student to contribute to the group.

Superintendent Farrish advised that she and Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner are in the process of finalizing the steering group. SEAC will be invited to select a

representative to participate. Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner explained that the intention of this review is to engage in a collaborative and strong listening process while undertaking the consultation. She noted that a shared document requesting leads on various resources will be distributed to the Board's advisory committees. The aim of this review is to draw from the experiences of people most impacted by the involvement of police in schools. Research has shown that involvement with police has disproportionately impacted children with special education needs. She requested that the committee come forward with recommendations on how to work with this group of students, either through their parents, a trusted adult or a community facilitator.

Ms. Allen suggested that, through Superintendent Symmonds and Kathryn Langevin, the Supervisor of Social Work, District employed psychologists and social workers may be able to identify compatible students in a professional and confidential manner. She noted a formal body of the Health and Safety Committee, named the Violence Subcommittee, may be able to contribute to the consultation. Lastly, she stated that The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) District 25 has established the Status of Women & Human Rights Committee, whose members could further a consultation process of this nature.

In response to a query, Superintendent Farrish noted that there are mandatory occasions for involving the police in schools as outlined in the required elements for a local police/school board protocol. Police are alerted to an incident at school by the administration office through a 911 call. If a patrol officer or School Resource Officer (SRO) were to come to a school for a visit, they would be required to sign-in through the administration office as a visitor on school property.

Trustee Campbell advised that the protocol referred to describes a mix of mandatory and discretionary cases upon which police services are involved in schools. Legitimately, the review may only encompass the discretionary cases. Though a specific incident in schools may have been historically considered mandatory, consideration on ways to mitigate summoning an officer to the school is also possible.

Superintendent Symmonds stated that the timeline to complete a findings report is set for 13 April 2020.

6. Information Items

6.1 Memo 20-137, Location of Specialized Classes 2020-2021 (P. Symmonds)

Your committee had before it Memo 20-137 specifying the location of specialized program classes (SPCs) for the 2020-2021 school year. Manager Kay reported that SEAC receives information annually on the locations of all specialized program classes in the District. New additions to the information chart include indications of grade configurations and language of instruction. She reviewed the changes that have occurred with respect to specialized program classes including openings, closings and relocations. As reported in the 9 September 2020 SEAC meeting, an elementary gifted classroom opened in an Ottawa Carleton Virtual (OCV) school to accommodate remote learners from four English Gifted school sites. Recently a second gifted class has been added at Knoxville Elementary School to accommodate remote

gifted learners from this site and Vincent Massey Elementary School. She highlighted that the gifted classes are offered in both English and French Immersion. In secondary schools, gifted sites have accommodated their learners with both 'straight gifted' as well as combined 'gifted/university' sections. The chart will be updated with any further class additions or omissions which have occurred after the publication of the information in the SEAC agenda package. Superintendent Symmonds identified that the use of the geographic model has created accommodation pressures for locations of some SPCs, particularly at the secondary level. Learning Support Services (LSS) is focused on planning for the future as these students grow older, however, the ability to add classes continually in a geographically equitable model is a concern.

Ms. Miedema expressed her gratitude for the detail contained within the chart. In the update on the reopening of schools during the 9 September 2020 SEAC meeting, she understood that a secondary gifted class was to be created in a virtual setting. Superintendent Symmonds responded that due to the size of the secondary program and time constraints to generate new timetables, the decision to offer specialized programming for students was changed. Due to the large number of students, an elementary gifted class was created in the OCV. For all students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP), the plans continue to be implemented and accommodations continue to be provided, as per Ministerial Order M638/95. In response to a query from Ms. Miedema to launch remote gifted specialized programming in the coming quadmesters, Superintendent Symmonds noted the interrelationship between work assignments and students timetables from one semester to another. For this reason, shifting the current model is not being considered. Although she acknowledged the timetable challenges and difficulty beginning the year amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Miedema stated her disappointment that she and other parents with gifted students were expecting a designated classroom, as per the September SEAC update.

Trustee Boothby reflected that with the number of gifted students in the OCV there may have been a possibility of forming a class with students who are gifted but not a congregated class. She expressed her frustration that congregated gifted students are losing a school year together. She queried whether an Interest Academy is in place to ensure that these secondary students are engaged. Superintendent Symmonds noted that extra programs have not been initiated; however the secondary Learning Support Consultant (LSC) is working with teachers to generate support for each of the students. The teachers are coached on IEP development, as well as instructional decisions and accommodations that would support learning as it relates to students with giftedness. He confirmed that there was not an opportunity to create combined courses, nor offer congregated gifted courses in the secondary level; all courses are offered individually. In Appendix A to Memo 20-137, there is a footnote on folio 31 referencing split sections for 'gifted/university' courses however these classes are offered at the brick and mortar schools. Due to the reduction in enrollment, many schools have been re-organized to offer combined courses. Trustee Boothby submitted that should the OCV schools continue beyond the 2020-2021 school year, every effort should be made to ensure that congregations for gifted students are promoted remotely, as well as in brick and mortar schools.

In response to a query from Trustee Boothby, Superintendent Symmonds advised that secondary level SPC accommodation pressure is due largely to honouring the geographic model to offer classes in locations in the communities where students live. In certain areas of the city there is no space inside the schools to offer additional specialized program classes. LSS has concerns around many SPCs offered at a single school site.

6.2 Memo 20-139, Special Education Consultation Plan 2020-2021- SEAC Revision and Consultation Process (P. Symmonds)

Your committee had before it Memo 20-139, Special Education Plan 2020-2021 – SEAC Revision and Consultation Process. System Principal Hannah identified that in the annual review of the Special Education Plan, SEAC members are an integral component in the consultation and feedback process. She proposed a new review format for 2020-2021: in a standard where the content reflects status quo or is prescribed by the Ministry of Education, these sections of the plan may be independently reviewed and brought forward by the 3 March 2021 SEAC meeting to address any outstanding questions or comments. This provision will give the members time to consult with their respective groups. All other standards will undergo a collective review during the November, December, January and February SEAC meetings. LSS is seeking to continue to refine the full document for ease of accessibility to parents, guardians, caregivers and the school community.

8. Department Update

8.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Symmonds reported that the results of the Return to School Survey were released. The number of participants totalled approximately 22,000 people. For special education students, the key findings were: parents greatly value the return to school, generally, students and parents are comfortable with the safety practices and protocols that are in place, and students are engaged in their learning. LSS is working with the Research, Evaluation & Analytics Division (READ) to understand the data trends referring to the special education learners and to develop future support strategies. There are heightened concerns due to the amount of change and the impact on student and staff well-being. In general, educators expressed positivity to be re-engaged with students, but they have acknowledged the volume of work and the feelings of pressure in all areas. The last theme of the results centered on the need for stability at this time. More detail on the responses can be found on the District's website.

System Principal Hannah reported on key resources in place to support the provision of Special Education Programs and Services for students in the District. She presented the Remote Learning Launchpad to support the Specialized Program Class (SPC) Staff Portal, developed in partnership with the Business and Learning Technology (B<) and the Program and Learning (PAL) Department. This tool helps to support educators, itinerant staff and professional staff serving students simultaneously in the blended model. She noted that from a transition perspective, the blended model provides stability for students, families, caregivers and school teams during a time of uncertainty. SPC educator teams know their students best and can quickly provide guidance and support in the development of IEPs and the delivery of meaningful learning opportunities for both in-person and remote learners. The portal features a drop-down menu to guide educators to best practices in remote learning.

It contains a specific page for Learning Support Services Educators. The portal will be launched in the coming weeks.

To generate more input from those people who are working with the students on a daily basis, LSS is meeting with superintendents, system principals and learning support teachers (LST) to discuss the blended model of supporting students with special education needs.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that the portal is an example of how the District is adjusting to new styles of learning and the drive to ensure that premium resources are accessible.

Ms. Dlouhy congratulated the LSS team for advancing the powerful program. She queried the accessibility of the tool for teachers in the regular, in-person classrooms, as some students have more complex learning needs. For students studying while under quarantine, the teachers prefer they engage through a Google classroom. System Principal Hannah confirmed that the portal will be open to all educators to access key resources to help with programming. She added that the quality programming indicators underwent a review in May 2020 by the Learning Support Consultants (LSC). Formerly the indicators were captured using a hyperlinked resource on a platform that was not user friendly or accessible to all. As students entered into the Learn at Home program in March 2020, there was a need to re-invent the format of this resource. The goal is to present an update of the new resource and the process for its launch early in the New Year.

Dr. Duschner provided an update on the status of the Committee of the Whole motion of April 16, 2019, directing staff to identify the barriers to accessing mental health support for Indigenous students and male students of African descent. In collaboration with the University of Ottawa, literature reviews, both published reviews and organizational reports, have been conducted to examine the barriers to accessing services for Indigenous and Black youth. On 10 November 2020, two members from the Indigenous Education Team will lead a sharing circle to speak about uprooting systematic barriers. She noted that hearing the voices of the youth is essential for eliminating barriers. A focus group for male students of African descent is planned, in addition to a mixed gender focus group.

8.2 Special Education Plan (Standards)

a. Special Education Staff

In response to a query by Mr. Winchester, System Principal Hannah referred to the chart on folios 35 through 37 where the Special Education Staff are listed to provide specific details on board staff to the Ministry of Education and to the public. She explained that there is a requirement to use the template that is provided by the Ministry. In the chart under section 1.1 “Learning Support Teacher (LST)/Learning Resource Teacher (LRT)”, the Ministry is specifying teachers for resource-withdrawal programs. In the District both the LST and LRT fit this description. For greater clarity in this section, she stated that she would make a footnote with the explanation.

Ms. Allen contributed the following points:

- Communication Disorders Assistants (CDAs) are not regulated professionals and their scope of practice is limited. CDAs work in a supportive role with tasks supervised by a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) and therefore this group should be listed as Paraprofessional Resource Staff under section 5 of the chart;
- On folio 43 there is a written description of Speech-Language Pathology. The supervisors of Speech Language Pathology are reviewing the description and intend to expand upon the list of services and scope of practice, similar to the way that the professions of Social Work and Psychology are described in the standard;

- SLPs provide resources to the education system by participating on working committees to help with the placement of students and make recommendations. It was requested that this statement be added to the standard to reflect the SLP system impact; and
- SLPs are a part of the specialized team to deliver services to students accessing special needs support. It was suggested that on folio 42, fourth bullet under the section “Speech-Language Pathology”, read “SLPs are integral members of specialized central teams”.

b. Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) Process and Appeals

System Principal Hannah noted that there is a requirement annually to update the Ministry with a tally of any types of appeals, tribunals or mediations. This content will be updated with information received until the end of the 2020-2021 school year.

Dr. Mamen requested clarification on the extent to which parents are informed of the IPRC process. System Principal Hannah highlighted that when the school administration learns that a student might be identified, a conversation occurs at the school level to potentially identify the student. An IPRC can be initiated by the parent, guardian, caregiver or by the school principal. At this juncture the parent or guardian is given the two guides. Presently, school Learning Support Teachers (LSTs) and school administrators are receiving regular updates from LSS. The goal of these updates is to inform the system of required practices to support implementation and monitoring of these legislative requirements. Dr. Mamen expressed the view that many parents are not aware of an option to initiate an IPRC. She often refers parents to the Ministry’s website for a complete set of IPRC procedures. She recommended that the IPRC process be made more transparent for parents and guardians. Trustee Boothby concurred, noting that this same comment has been heard frequently over the years. She suggested the creation of a fact sheet for parents outlining the directives for initiating an IPRC. Newcomers to Canada may not be aware of their rights as parents or the rights of their children. She stated parents can be overwhelmed in a new country and potential challenges with the education of their children may or may not be addressed at the school level. With a significant decision such as an IRPC, information must be directed to parents from the outset of enrolment, considering websites are not accessible for all families. Ms. Dewshi emphasized that in Ottawa Carleton Assembly of School Councils (OCASC) meetings, parents have had discussions on the varying levels of difficulty while navigating the IPRC process.

Superintendent Symmonds responded that the comments regarding the IPRC process illuminate the importance of the ongoing work with LSS and school staff through the LST networks and meetings with school principals, administrators, classroom teachers and parents.

9. Matters for Action

9.1 Appointment of a Representative for the Committee of Whole Meeting

Ms. Sonia Nadon-Campbell nominated herself for the position of SEAC member representative on the Committee of the Whole.

Ms. Nadon-Campbell nominated Ms. Amy Wells for the position of alternate SEAC member representative on the Committee of the Whole.

Moved by Mark Wylie,

THAT nominations be closed.

Carried

Ms. Nadon-Campbell and Ms. Wells were declared the SEAC member and SEAC alternate to the Committee of the Whole, by acclamation.

10. Committee Reports

10.1 Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE)

Chair Nadon-Campbell reported that there were no items contained on the ACE meeting's agenda that were of specific concern to SEAC.

10.2 Parent Involvement Committee (PIC)

Dr. Mamen reported that there were no items contained on the PIC meeting's agenda that were of specific concern to SEAC.

10.3 Board

Mr. Wylie reported that there were no items contained on the Board meeting's agenda that were of specific concern to SEAC.

10.4 Committee of the Whole (COW)

There was no report from the Committee of the Whole.

10.5 Advisory Committee Extended Day and Child Care Programs (EDCCP)

The next meeting for EDCCP is scheduled to be held on 16 November 2020.

10.6 Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC)

Chair Nadon-Campbell reported that in the Council's discussion on the budget, it was highlighted that there is a need to promote the advancement of Indigenous EAs who may connect with students using culturally relevant knowledge. A member of the Indigenous Education Team shared that a bridge has formed between their department and LSS with a newly appointed, part-time Indigenous social worker, Courtney Valeyev.

11. New Business

11.1 The Forward Agenda

Mr. Harris reported that he and Chair Nadon-Campbell met with staff to discuss options for using a forward agenda for the business of SEAC. A forward agenda is a "living document" that ensures the association representatives will have time to raise the discussions with their respective organizations to collect feedback. SEAC has specific legislative responsibilities which are built into the annual agendas. In response to his query to the committee for input on SEAC priorities, Ms. Meidema proposed that SEAC be notified in advance of District consultation plans. Mr. Harris requested that any further input be shared via email with him or Board Coordinator Fenton. A draft forward agenda will be presented in the December meeting for further discussion.

11.2 December Committee Appointments

Chair Nadon-Campbell reminded the committee that in the December SEAC, the matter of committee appointments will be established for 1 December 2020 to 30 November 2021. Both she and Mr. Harris expressed an interest in continuing in their current roles as Chair and Vice Chair and welcomed others to step forward during the nomination process.

11.3 Letter from Thames Valley District School Board SEAC Re: Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and Quality of Auditory Information

Chair Nadon-Campbell shared a letter from the Thames Valley District school board SEAC describing the challenges of teaching and learning when the quality of auditory information is compromised with the full coverage of the mouth and nose. Their Special Education Advisory Committee passed the following motion on 14 September 2020: that the Chair of SEAC write a letter to the Board of Trustees and the Ministry of Education identifying the need for visually accessible PPE for all students and staff in classes that support any students who are deaf or hard of hearing. In the letter from the Thames Valley District SEAC Chair, support was requested for the purchase and use of microphone systems for teachers and students. It was recommended that in support of the teaching and learning opportunities of students with a formally identified deaf or hard of hearing exceptionality, face masks for all students and staff in these student's classes be visually accessible.

Superintendent Symmonds advised that the procurement of clear masks presented a challenge. These masks have been deemed non-medical grade personal protection equipment (PPE). LSS have not explored the use of the microphone specifically as it relates to students with deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) needs, but conversations have taken place on the number of barriers that are suitable and the appropriate distance to unmask and work with DHH students.

Ms. Dewshi reported that in one instance, to address these concerns, school council funds were used to purchase the microphones to aid the teachers. She noted that thirty-five devices were purchased by the school council treasury to supplement the microphones which were already purchased by teachers personally.

Ms. Allen contributed that the issue is not only with DHH students but with all children who have returned to the brick and mortar schools. Children have difficulty processing language for many reasons; they need to see facial cues to read emotion by the speaker. She has worked in language classes where frequency modulation (FM) technology is used for students who have two disabilities, both hearing impairment and language learning disability. She has seen the benefits of voice amplification under normal circumstances for students with language learning disabilities. The difficulties for those students, posed by the inability to watch the mouths of instructors, affect comprehension. She noted that as a SLP with good hearing and language processing, she experiences difficulties hearing her students when they are attempting to re-train their speech patterns. She indicated her support for a motion similar to that from the Thames Valley SEAC.

Trustee Campbell advised that considerations of equity are involved when some school councils are purchasing equipment and other school councils may not have the same resources to supply specialized devices for teachers. The Ministry's guidelines determine acceptable and unacceptable uses of school generated funds to be adopted by all school boards. Under the Ministry of Education Fundraising Guidelines for School Councils, funds raised for school purposes should not be used to support items funded through provincial grants, such as classroom learning materials, textbooks and repairs or for capital projects that

significantly increase operating costs. He stated that this issue falls into the concern of the equity strategy across the District.

Trustee Scott recommended that the SEAC Committee of the Whole (COW) Representative could bring this forward at the COW meeting of 10 November 2020.

12. Adjournment

Chair Nadon-Campbell stated that further specific feedback on any of the subjects discussed can be sent via email to both her and Superintendent Symmonds.

The meeting adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

Sonia Nadon-Campbell, Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee