# ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITY REPORT

**November 26, 2020**

**6:00 pm**

**Zoom Meeting**

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| Voting Members: | Ayan Yusuf Karshe, Nasrin Mirbagheri-Javanfar, Seema Lamba, Bronwyn Funiciello, Nicki Dunlop, Carrie-Lynn Barkley, Deepika Grover, Elizabeth Sweeney, Chandonette Johnson-Arowolo (Jaku Konbit), Maria Teresa Garcia (Ottawa Community Immigrant Services), Ryan Doucette (Young Leaders Advisory Council), Kahmaria Pingue (Parents 4 Diversity), Larissa Silver (Youth Services Bureau) |
| Non-Voting Members: | Rob Campbell (Trustee), Chris Ellis (Trustee), Lynn Scott (Trustee, ex officio), June Girvan, Yazhou Zhang, Ruth Sword, Megan Willis, Said Mohammed, Sonia Nadon-Campbell (Special Education Advisory Committee, Alternate), Inini McHugh (Indigenous Education Advisory Committee), David Wildman (Ottawa Carleton Elementary Occasional Teachers Association) |
| Staff and Guests: | Justine Bell (Trustee), Donna Blackburn (Trustee), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Instruction), Mary-Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Carolyn Tanner (Human Rights and Equity Advisor), Melissa Collins (System Principal, Equity), Colin Anderson (System Principal), Joan Oracheski (Manager, Research, Evaluation and Analytics Division), Nicole Guthrie (Manager, Board Services), Jacqueline Lawrence (Equity and Diversity Coordinator), Sue Rice (Equity Instructional Coach), Sharon Martinson (OCDSB Educator), Maxine Awedalla (Delegate), Kyrstin Dumont (Co-Chair National BIPOC LGBTQ2 Youth Mental Health Convention), Leigh Fenton (Board Coordinator) |

1. <u>Welcome</u>

Acting Chair Deepika Grover called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m. She acknowledged that the meeting was taking place on unceded Algonquin Territory. She expressed gratitude to the Algonquin people for the privilege to live and work on their land.

2. Approval of the Agenda

**Moved by Nasrin Mirbagheri-Javanfar,**

**THAT the agenda be approved.**

**Carried**

3. Community Voice (Delegations)

3.1 R. Maxine Adwella, Mental Health and Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) Students

Ms. Adwella, the Executive Director of National Collaboration for Youth Mental Health (NCYMH), introduced Ms. Kyrstin Dumont, the co-chair of the "National BIPOC LGBTQ2 Youth Mental Health Convention", who will launch the virtual convention on 3 March 2021. Ms. Adwella encouraged OCDSB students and staff to attend the conference. Ms. Adwella's delegation highlighted content for potential five-year workshops and training programs against racism and systematic discrimination, available to communities, corporations and educators through NCYMH.

4. Presentations

4.1 The Development of a Human Rights Policy (C. Tanner)

Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner reviewed a presentation on the development of a foundational human rights policy for the District. She noted that there are existing policies and procedures that address some aspects of human rights, such as anti-discrimination and harassment and some types of accommodation, however there are opportunities to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights by developing a policy that will have primacy over other policies that that will include recognition of fundamental human rights principles, define a human rights complaints mechanism, and define a process for accommodation requests. Her aim is to work in a collaborative way with students, parents and caregivers, employees, and community stakeholders to develop a transparent and accountable human rights policy and complaint procedure that serves the District's stakeholders.

During the presentation and in response to questions, the following points were noted and recommendations made:

- Consultation may include virtual focus group meetings, written submissions, a public forum and an anonymous ThoughtExchange survey to create safe spaces to engage in conversation;
- Incorporate the human rights policy into the curriculum and define the language associated with the policy, for example, the words "equity", "poverty" and "discrimination" are terms which merit definition;

- Consult with educator networks and community stakeholders in an open forum style, encouraging representatives from each organization to join the discussion. A group meeting format may provide additional feedback rather than meetings with individual groups;
- Ensure that metal health organizations are a part of the consultation groups;
- Visit community centres to listen to input from new Canadians;
- Consider developing a conceptual scope question to measure whether the intended policy would eliminate possible exclusion, lack of opportunity or imbalances in the right to education;
- Engage directly with students with complex disabilities. Seek feedback from students and families who are not members of organizations or affiliates and who may not otherwise be heard;
- Refer to the Ontario Human Rights Commission's recommendations on balancing competing rights for the express purpose of drafting policies and procedures; and
- Consult with the Aboriginal Coalition of Ottawa which represents all Indigenous organizations in the city. Each agency within the coalition could be approached for feedback.

4.2 Report 20-085, Annual Report on Student Suspensions (2019-2020) (M. Giroux)

Your committee had before it Report 20-085, presenting the annual report on student suspensions in 2019-2020.

Manager Oracheski reported that suspension data is reviewed annually. The Safe Schools strategy is built on promoting positive student behavior by building relationships, establishing a code of conduct, and ensuring bullying prevention initiatives are in place. The Safe Schools framework govern reporting requirements. The Anti-Racism Act and accompanying data standards governs the collection, analysis and reporting of identity based data, including the requirement to calculate disproportionality and, or, disparity indices.

Manager Oracheski noted that suspension information has been consistent over the past several years. For 2019-2020, the overall student suspension rate was 2.2%, measured from September 2019 to March 2020, at which time the province mandated the closure of schools due to COVID-19. Approximately 10% of suspensions were mandatory in nature and approximately two thirds of suspensions were single-day suspension. She highlighted that in all cases the disproporationality and disparity rates are higher for Indigenous students and students with special needs. Ongoing efforts are being made to create safe

spaces that promote student engagement, safety and a greater sense of belonging.

During the presentation and in response to questions, the following points were noted:

- Some school teams are trained to understand restorative justice approaches. Superintendent Farrish noted that in discretionary suspensions, progressive discipline is utilized to care, correct and support the student. Embarking upon a restorative justice practice requires knowledge of Indigenous circles of support and accountability;
- There is a need to be sensitive towards the complexity of self-identification for a racialized person. The way a student identifies is not necessarily the same way they are viewed by staff;
- It was suggested that a record of the number of sharing and healing circles that transpired with Indigenous students, prior to suspension, be included in future reports;
- A concern was expressed regarding the parallel increase in intermediate school suspensions alongside the typical increase in mental health challenges for students in grades seven and eight. As some of the suspensions may be based on mental health challenges, these students may benefit from mental health interventions rather than being suspended;
- Nearly 90% of suspensions issued to students in 2019-2020 were of a discretionary nature. System Principal Anderson noted that there are six broad categories of conduct outlined in subsection 306(1) of the Education Act where a principal shall consider suspension: a threat to inflict bodily harm to another person, possessing alcohol, cannabis or illegal drugs, being under the influence of alcohol or cannabis, swearing at a teacher or a person of authority, committing an act of vandalism that causes extensive damage to school property, and bullying, including cyber-bullying. He highlighted that the main reason for discretionary suspension was to uphold the safety of students and staff;
- The 10% of mandatory suspensions issued to students in 2019-2020, were related to possession or use of a weapon, committing assault requiring treatment by a medical practitioner, trafficking weapons, sexual assault, committing robbery, or supplying a minor with alcohol or cannabis, an unacceptable bullying risk to the safety of another person or any activity listed in subsection 306 (1) that was motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on race, national or ethnic original, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, general identity, or gender expression;

- Principals are required to use their discretion to consider the context of the behaviour, the circumstances of the individual student, potential biases, and whether the student will learn from the consequence;
- Concerns were expressed that students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other neurodevelopmental disorders, who regularly demonstrate severe tantrums and aggressive behaviours when irritable, are being suspended for these behaviours;
- Manager Oracheski explained that the Research, Evaluation and Analytics Division (READ) conducted the analysis of the data, and have benefitted from ongoing discussions with other research personnel from across the provinces undertaking the same type of analysis. A Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was assembled from the community, composed of people who have experienced anti-Black racism, anti-Indigeneity, anti-Semitism, Homophobia, Islamophobia, Transphobia, Poverty/Classism, and Ableism/Disabilities. TAG met on 6 November 2020 to provide guidance and feedback to support the analysis and reporting of demographic data collected under the Anti-Racism Act (2017), and in accordance with the Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of System Racism (2018), as they relate to identified outcomes (e.g., suspensions, achievement, and streaming);
- The suspension data has not been disaggregated by school site; and
- Additional reports will be generated from the data, such as credit accumulation, achievement streaming and sense of belonging.

Committee members agreed that suspension data be kept on the agenda as a standing item.

5. Matters for Action

5.1 ACE Committee Appointments

Superintendent Baker and Equity and Diversity Coordinator Lawrence explained the process for appointing members to the various positions.

a. Chair

Ms. Ayan Karshe nominated herself for the position of Chair.

The committee supported that notion that an ACE member may wish to stand as Co-chair. This collaborative seat could replace the requirement for an election of a Vice Chair.

Ms. Deepika Grover nominated herself for the position of Co-chair.

Ms. Karshe and Ms. Grover were declared the Co-chairs of ACE by consensus.

5.2 Community Involvement on Board Standing Committees

a. Committee of the Whole

Delegate Ms. Awedalla nominated herself for the position of Committee of the Whole representative for ACE. It was noted that committee representatives must be current members of ACE. A District-wide membership drive was initiated in the fall of 2019 and the orientation of new members was held on 27 August 2020. Ms. Awedella requested that she be contacted following the meeting with information on ACE membership.

Ms. Nicki Dunlop nominated herself for the position of Committee of the Whole representative, by proxy, with the caveat that she would withdraw her nomination should a person of colour wish to hold the position independently.

Ms. Seema Lamba nominated herself for the position of Committee of the Whole representative.

With Ms. Lamba's consent, the committee was in support of electing Ms. Lamba for the position of Committee of the Whole representative and Ms. Dunlop as the alternate representative.

b. Committee of the Whole – Budget

Ms. Bronwyn Funiciello nominated herself for the position of Committee of the Whole, Budget representative.

Ms. Funiciello was declared Committee of the Whole, Budget representative by acclamation.

5.3 Ad Hoc Committee Appointments

a. The Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Childcare Programs

Ms. Nasrin Mirbagheri-Javanfar nominated herself for the position of The Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Childcare Programs representative.

Ms. Mirbagheri-Javanfar was declared The Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Childcare Programs representative by acclamation.

Equity and Diversity Coordinator Lawrence encouraged the members to consider striking a membership subcommittee. The item will appear on the 28 January 2021 meeting agenda for further discussion.

6. Reports

6.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Baker announced that the *Valuing Staff Voices: Equity and Engagement Survey* will be undertaken in March 2021, led by a third party facilitator. The survey will be divided into two sections providing two different sets of data on identity within the organization, in addition to employee engagement

questions. Needs assessment sessions with staff occurred in October 2020, providing employees with the opportunity to have conversations about the topic of identity and engagement. Due to the level of interest in the sessions, an additional session has been scheduled for 1 December 2020. As part of the pre-survey work, a draft survey instrument was used in consultation with union executives and the leaders of employee affinity groups such as the Indigenous employee resource group, employees with learning disabilities, Black Educators Network, Rainbow Educators Network, Muslim Educators Network (MENO), and representatives from the Ontario Principals Council (OPC). Findings from the pre-survey discussions and the results from the upcoming survey will be used to develop a comprehensive action plan with focused responses on a system, department and school level.

Trustee Bell requested clarification on whether ACE can make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees to add an Indigenous voting member to ACE prior to the District's proposed advisory committee review. Trustee Ellis suggested that item be added to a future agenda for discussion. Ms. Hayles suggested that the topic be broadened to discuss the appointment of an Indigenous trustee to the Board of Trustees.

6.2 ACE Report, 29 October 2020

This item was deferred to the 28 January 2021 ACE meeting.

7. Standing Items

7.1 Update on District Review on Police Involvement in Schools

Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner provided a brief update on the District Review of Police Involvement in Schools:

- A call for proposals by facilitators was sent by invitation, with a closing date of 30 November 2020;
- Facilitators will be selected to support the process by mid-December 2020;
- Ayan Karshe, Kahmaria Pingue and Elizabeth Sweeney volunteered to sit as the ACE representative on the steering group for the Police Involvement in Schools;
- Two representatives from the Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC) and one from the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) are a part of the steering group;
- The inaugural meeting of the steering group will occur on 16 December 2020. Steering group exercises are to include a literature review and determining questions for the review participants; and

- Consultation and engagement with review participants is planned for January 2021.

Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner noted that many of the points raised in the ACE meeting of 29 October 2020, such as compulsory training for school resource officers, community safety services, and the engagement of police in schools, will be addressed in the literature review. She confirmed that the ACE representatives on the steering group will provide the update to this standing item on the ACE agenda going forward.

On the subject of inviting a police officer to present to ACE, as was suggested in the ACE meeting of 29 October 2020, Ms. Sweeney commented that this invitation was the suggestion of one member and would require further discussion to achieve consensus from the committee.

8. Information

There was no new information presented.

9. New Business or Event Announcements

Superintendent Baker recognized Elaine Hayles for her contribution as the Interim Chair of ACE for many years. Her dedication to ACE has been exemplary and her advocacy within the community, commendable. Her voice has been a true sense of change not only for the committee's work but for the work of the District.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned the meeting at 8:38 pm.

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Deepika Grover, Acting Chair, Advisory Committee on Equity