

## SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

**Wednesday, January 6, 2021, 7:00 pm**  
**Zoom Meeting**

- Members:** Christine Boothby (Trustee), Rob Campbell (Trustee), Chris Ellis (Trustee), Susan Cowin (Community Representative), Sonia Nadon-Campbell (Community Representative), Mark Wylie (Down Syndrome Association), Cathy Miedema (Association for Bright Children), Katie Ralph (Autism Ontario, Ottawa Chapter), Safina Dewshi (Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils, Alternate), Ian Morris (Ontario Associations for Families of Children with Communication Disorders), Jim Harris (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children), Terry Warner (VOICE for deaf and hard of hearing children, Alternate), Amy Wellings (Community Representative), Marianne Long (Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton, Alternate)
- Association Representatives (Non Voting):** Jennifer Titley (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teachers' Federation), Connie Allen (Professional Student Services Personnel, Alternate), Nancy Dlouhy (Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Operations Committee), Jean Trant (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, SSP), Catherine Houlden (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Teachers), Andrew Winchester (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Alternate)
- Staff and Guests:** Justine Bell (Trustee), Lynn Scott (Trustee), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Kevin Gardner (Manager of Financial Services), Dr. Petra Duschner (Manager of Mental Health and Critical Services), Christine Kessler (System Principal, Learning Support Services), Stacey Kay (Manager, Learning Support Services), Charles D'Aoust (Coordinator of Budget Services), Leigh Fenton (Board/Committee Coordinator)

### 1. Call to Order

Chair Nadon-Campbell called the meeting to order at 7:02 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 Katie Ralph,**

**THAT the agenda be approved.**

**Carried**

3. Delegations

There were no delegations.

4. Review of Special Education Advisory Committee Report

4.1 9 December 2020 SEAC Report

Moved by Christine Boothby,

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee Report dated 9 December 2020 report be received.

Trustee Boothby requested the following changes:

- Folio 11, sixth bullet, the word "hire" be used to replace the word "employ";
- Folio 12, last paragraph, the word "availability" be used to replace the word "liability"; and
- Folio 13, first paragraph, the words "and the high number of staff had impacted the viability of EDP programs" be removed.

Ms. Houlden requested the following changes:

- Folio 7, second bullet, the words "Vocational Programs" be used to replace the words "Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Programs (OYAP)"; and
- Folio 11, seventh bullet, the paragraph further specifies that "At this time, schools have been allocated 40% of their budgets. Funds provided at the end of June to support the establishment of a new system class are no longer accessible and any purchases made with those funds have been charged to the 2020-2021 budget."

Ms. Dewshi noted there was an instance of an incorrect salutation on folio 7, last bullet.

**Moved by Christine Boothby,**

**THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee Report dated 9 December 2020 report be received, as amended.**

**Carried**

4.2 Review of Forward Agenda

Chair Nadon-Campbell presented the forward agenda as a draft document to guide the work of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) for 2020-2021.

Trustee Ellis suggested the Review of Police Involvement in Schools be added to the chart as an upcoming item in the spring of 2021.

## 5. Presentation

### 5.1 2021-2022 Budget Process Review (M. Carson x 8881)

Manager Gardner presented the information shown on the comparative summary of special education revenues and expenses. He indicated that the breakdowns of special education allocations and enveloping provisions are consistent with the information reported in the Ministry of Education's Education Finance Information System (EFIS).

Manager Gardner noted that the financial summaries provide comparative information from prior years and illustrate the approved budget for 2020-2021. The anticipated total revenues of \$117.9 million support the special education programming for the 2020-2021 school year. These revenues are generated from special education grant allocations, the proportionate share of the pupil foundation and teacher qualifications and experience allocations, and other specific grants such as those to support the summer learning program, the mental health leadership position and special grants to support various initiatives which are provided through the Priorities and Partnerships Fund (PPF). In addition, the proportionate allocation of employee life and health trust (ELHT) funding has been assigned to the special education program. ELHT funding is the money the government provides to support employee benefit costs.

There is a projected shortfall of funding totalling approximately \$13.5 million. The shortfall is based on the revenues received minus the necessary costs to provide the services required for students accessing special education support. Some of the increased costs are related to ratifying the collective agreements which were retroactive to 1 September 2019, hiring approximately 50 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Educational Assistants (EAs), and hiring additional psychologists, social workers and speech and language pathologists. The anticipated expenses in support of special education for 2020-2021 is \$131.4 million.

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

- PPF grants fall outside the regular Grants for Student Needs (GSN). There has been a decrease in funding in this category of revenue. Some funds that were previously provided as a PPF grant were moved into the GSN allocation and account for some of the change in funding.

PPF grants are subject to renewal annually and additional funding may also be announced during the year. Further information on PPF grants will be presented as part of the 2020-2021 Revised Estimates;

- In response to a question, it was noted that on folio 19, the 'Operating' line item under 'Expenditures' refers to spending for temporary or casual staff, and for supplies and services. Staff costs for budgeted positions are separated from operating costs;
- Mr. Harris inquired how the COVID-19 provisional funding to support special education studies will be adjusted in the budget planning for future years if some of these services are deemed necessary for continued support. As some students move back into remote learning for the beginning of the 2020-2021 second term, how can the capacity to support the remote learning environment be maintained at a high level. Superintendent Symmonds noted that Learning Support Services (LSS) undertakes planning involving a determination on the continuity of learning for service delivery. As the potential of protracted remote learning continues into the school year, LSS will be required to identify the constraints and options for programming. At this time any new requirements for remote learning through a Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) have not been released by the Ministry. If this occurs, an assessment will be made on central resources that may be leveraged to support student learning through the Ottawa-Carleton Virtual (OVC) school. He noted that there is a COVID-19 contingency fund, and additional federal funds are anticipated by the District;
- It was noted that the 'Casual Professional Student Services Personnel (PSSP) for Budget Pressures' line refers to amounts for casual support needs that may be identified throughout the year;
- In response to a comment, it was noted that the historical spending for the 'Child and Youth Worker and SIP Consultant' will be reviewed by Financial Services as part of the upcoming budget process; and
- Ms. Houlden outlined that all system class students continue to be supported by their home schools. The school programs are operating with 40% of the released budget, leaving the teachers with less funding to support a new hybrid model of learning. Expenses from last year are being deducted from current year budgets, for example her \$7,000 allocation to open a new General Learning Program (GLP) class in June was attributed to the 2020-2021 budgetary allocations. Manager Gardner indicated that he would assess the status of the GLP allocation. He also noted that initially 40% of the operating budgets were released District-wide due to the uncertainty of COVID-19. At this time 100% of the school budgets have been distributed. He also noted that past practice is to carry over a school's budget surplus

from the previous year for use by the school in the current year. Financial Services plan to examine this further due to the unusual nature of the 2019-2020 school year to determine an approach to the provision of surpluses.

Superintendent Symmonds thanked Manager Gardner for his overview and noted that the first Committee of the Whole, Budget meeting will occur on 2 February 2021.

6. Matters for Information

6.1 Memo 21-001, Learning Support for Students with Special Education Needs

Your committee had before them Memo 21-001, Learning Support for Students with Special Education Needs, providing an overview of the content and the planned release process for the OCDSB Learning Support for Students with Special Education Needs online resource.

Superintendent Symmonds reported that the online resource, which is scheduled to launch in September 2021, represents a major revision to the previous paper document that focused exclusively on specialized program classes. Modern ways of thinking have shifted, as it relates to special education, where instructional pathways that are deemed necessary for some are beneficial for many, ensuring inclusion for all. Educators will be able to use the resource to guide professional learning as they build capacity in meeting the needs for all students. The resource is a tool to assist all educators to provide personalized and precise support. Indicators of quality programming will focus on the following topics: Class Profiles; the Tiered Approach to Intervention; Individual Education Plans; Transition Plans; Assessment and Evaluation; Assistive Technology; Specialized Program Classes; and quality program indicators by exceptionality. In the online format, access to the most current versions of documents and links are available and new information from the Ministry of Education can be maintained on the Google site.

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

- A draft version of the resource is planned for a focus group exercise in advance of the launch to determine the usability of the tool. The goal is to create a resource that educators will refer to regularly;
- Educators are encouraged to ask their school psychologist to read and interpret psychological assessments, rather than interpreting them without the theoretical understanding of the components of a safe assessment;

- The Google site will be accessible through the staff portal on the District website. In the soft launch the link will be included in the weekly electronic LSS update;
- It was suggested that the launch be noted in the Planning and Learning Department (PAL) weekly updates, as a large number of teachers leverage these communications;
- To ensure that the tool contains the most current information, an ongoing review of site content will be placed on the annual LSS workplan; and
- System Principal Kessler noted that to keep current with sharing best practices, Learning Support Consultants (LSCs) join the Learning Support Teacher (LST) and school-based Special Education Teacher networks which are voluntary groups who hold their meetings virtually at this time.

## 7. Matters for Action

### 7.1 Appointments - Board Representative

The SEAC representative for the Board was not determined.

Ms. Nadon-Campbell requested the item be added to the 3 February 2021 agenda.

### 7.2 Appointments - Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Programs

Mr. Terry Warner nominated himself for the position of SEAC member representative to the Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Programs.

**Moved by Trustee Ellis,**

**THAT nominations be closed.**

**Carried**

Mr. Warner was declared the SEAC member to the Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Programs, by acclamation.

## 8. Department Update

### 8.1 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Symmonds reported that on 21 December 2020 the Minister of Education issued a letter to Ontario's parents calling for the temporary return to remote learning for elementary students until 11 January 2021 and for secondary students until 25 January 2021. Embedded in the letter, was the requirement that Districts include

provisions for in-person teaching for students with special education needs whose needs cannot be accommodated through virtual learning. LSS have made arrangements for students who attend specialized program classes or specialized sites to return to in-person classes on 7 January 2021. Central resources are being leveraged to provide support to students in the regular program, who also require access to special education programs and services. LSS staff are consulting and supporting educators at the school level to ensure the needs of students are being met during the remote learning period. The District's mental health professionals have been working to connect with students who require support to ensure the re-establishment of connections, following the winter holiday. As student transportation services were not to resume during the temporary closure, LSS collaborated with (OSTA) to arrange for transportation for students in the specialized program classes. Ottawa Public Health (OPH) created a school support team to ensure that the necessary protocols are being followed.

Mr. Morris inquired about the District's state of preparedness to withstand the possibility of a protracted absence from the in-person learning environment. Superintendent Symmonds stated that teachers are maintaining learning management systems and are prepared to teach in the remote learning model. He acknowledged that remote learning is not the preferred mode of learning for some students with special education needs, in part due to the nature of the exceptionality and the level of home support they can receive. He anticipated a wide range of readiness and highlighted that LSS is aware of and sensitive to the significant challenges faced by some families in the remote learning setting.

## 8.2 Special Education Plan (Standards)

### a. Individual Education Plans

System Principal Kessler reviewed the purpose of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) standard, outlining the procedure for the development of a plan, transition plans, dispute resolution process, storage of IEPs, and the online template form used in the IEP placements. Adjustments are made to the template in accordance with Ministry guidelines. Manager Kay is the lead contact for managing the IEP software product.

Trustee Campbell noted on folio 31, under the heading "Purpose of an IEP", the description begins with the words "The IEP will:" to form a list of purposes. In the first bullet on folio 32, the word "may" is used. He suggested that consistency be used in the description of the IEP purpose between the uses of the words "will" and "may". Secondly, he indicated that further clarity was required for the second and third bullets in the list which address the decisions

made about the development of the IEP within the first 30 days of the school year for students in a special education program and the lack of an indicated timeline for those students who are not in specialized program classes but could benefit from a IEP. He requested more information on where the IEP services are guaranteed and whether the services referred to in the third bullet are only for students who have been through an Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process.

Trustee Boothby noted on folio 31, the fourth paragraph states "the implementation of the IEP is the responsibility of the classroom teachers, parents, and students who are 16 years of age or older". She debated whether the implementation of the IEP is the parent's responsibility. On folio 33, under the subheading "Implementing the IEP", third bullet, parents are not listed as accountable for a role in putting the IEP into practice. She requested more clarity on the active role that parents may have in this process.

Trustee Boothby noted, on folio 35, the standard refers to the "Storage of IEPs", where the working copy of the IEP should replace the previously filed copy in the Ontario Student Record (OSR) at the end of each year. She expressed concern that replacing records may lose some relevant information learned from the students previous years in the school system. System Principal Kessler reported that the description about storage of the IEP was language used directly from Ministry Guidelines. The language ensures that the most recent version of the IEP is to be filed in the OSR. She noted that it is common practice for schools to maintain the term one IEP. The updated and revised version of the IEP is kept in the OSR through consultation with the parents.

Superintendent Symmonds provided assurance that previous IEPs are stored historically on 'IEP Online' for staff review. Trustee Boothby requested the inclusion of details about the retention of former IEPs for historical reference. Ms. Houlden shared that the practice stands where past IEPs are used as a reference when writing the IEP for the current school year.

Ms. Ralph noted that the opportunity to have an IEP was described differently in the Ministry's guidelines, stipulating wording discrepancies between folios 31 and 32 on "requiring" or "receiving" an IEP. She requested clarification in the policy documentation pertaining to consultation on special programs or services. System Principal Kessler agreed to review the standard for alignment in the language and she further explained that once LSS begins to provide services and support to a student, this student falls under LSS programming. The message that this standard aims to convey



to families is that at times the District provides support and services on a short term basis, depending on the needs of the student, for example, recovery from concussion. Short term support may or may not involve the development of an IEP based on assessments and working with the preference of families and students 16 years of age and above.

b. The Board's Model for Special Education

System Principal Kessler noted that the purpose of the standard describing “The Board's Model for Special Education” is to provide the Ministry and the public with information on the Board's philosophy and service-delivery model and the continuum of supports and services for the provision of special education programs. She noted that the content of the standard is a reflection of Ministry direction, along with the District's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan outlining the philosophy to champion high learning expectations for all students in all programs.

Superintendent Symmonds noted that Care and/or Treatment, Custody and Correctional (CTCC) programs have been re-named to Educational and Community Partnership (ECP) programs.

c. Staff Development

Manager Kay presented the purpose of the standard on 'Staff Development' was to provide details of the Board's professional development plans for special education staff to the Ministry and to the public.

A chart contained within the standard referenced expenditures in the 2019-2020 school year for staff professional development. Part of the Ministry requirement necessitates the disclosure of the LSS Staff Development Plan with details on the prioritization and alignment of staff development activities, for example, alignment with the strategic plan and exit outcomes. She highlighted that due to labour disruptions and school closures attributed to the COVID-19, many of the planned professional development sessions were unable to take place during the 2019-2020 school year. LSS embraced the opportunity to shift to virtual professional development (PD) which fostered a large number of participants on a virtual platform where staff were invited to select tailored courses. She noted the significant amount of special education PD that occurs through the principal and vice principal internship programs and the new teacher induction program. To promote cross-community education, partnerships and cost sharing agreements exist with care and treatment programs along with the Ministry of Community, Children and Social Services.

In response to a query from Mr. Warner, Manager Kay confirmed that through college affiliations, professional support services staff do have credit requirements to acquire annually and a certain number of PD hours are required. These credits may also be attained through self-directed reading or participating in clinical rounds. She noted that the virtual conference format has enabled staff to attend without the expense of travel costs.

Ms. Allen contributed that there are many opportunities available to staff without cost. She highlighted that many of the opportunities are offered by LSS staff members, including speech language pathologists, psychologists and social workers; however there are fewer opportunities offered for those professionals. She expressed the view that the funding offered is typically limited and there is often a perception amongst staff that it is difficult to access PD funding. Ms. Houlden mentioned that due to the shortage of supply teachers, booking time outside of the classroom is difficult. The PD that she attended in the past was funded by the union in the amount of \$400 every two years.

Ms. Miedema queried whether the PD was held on PD days, regular school days or beyond the hours of school. Manager Kay replied that during the school closure period for the Learn at Home Program in March 2020 until June 2020, some employee groups were able to have a lot of flexibility with their workday. Educator groups and allied health groups provided newly developed PD at this time. The focus last year was to pivot to remote learning and therefore providing staff development opportunities was crucial for students with special needs who were learning within a new framework. In the early Teacher Induction Program, LSS attempts to offer times that are easily accommodated by the teachers in the late afternoon. Superintendent Symmonds acknowledged the challenge with an adequate number of replacement teachers however sessions are recorded to review later at a staff member's convenience.

System Principal Kessler reported that through Geneva's platform, Sonderly, LSS was successful in offering additional Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) courses to teachers, EAs and administrators. In response to a query from Ms. Miedema about Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT) training, System Principal Kessler explained that it is an achievement test that measures how an individual is performing in areas related to academic school work. The WIAT provides an assessment in areas such as reading, math, written expression, and oral language. The assessment is often administered in consultation with school

psychologists. It is a test that LSTs, who have special education qualifications, are eligible to train on and deliver to students. 'Structured teaching' is an approach to present learning activities and learning environments linked to the work to support ASD students.

9. Committee Reports

9.1 Board

There was no report from the Board.

9.2 Committee of the Whole

There was no report from the Committee of the Whole.

9.3 Parent Involvement Committee

There was no report from the Parent Involvement Committee.

9.4 Indigenous Education Advisory Council

There was no report from the Indigenous Education Advisory Council.

9.5 Advisory Committee on Equity

There was no report from the Advisory Committee on Equity.

9.6 Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Program

Mr. Terry Warner reported that the extended day programs and full-day kindergarten have been operating despite the low enrollment this year due to Covid-19. He noted during the meeting on Advisory Committee on Extended day and Child Care Programs, people were engaged in the discussion on accommodating the needs of children and that special education students can be accommodated in full-day kindergarten.

10. New Business

Chair Nadon-Campbell announced that Nicole Ullmark from Easter Seals has resigned from SEAC. She thanked Ms. Ullmark for her long-standing work on the committee.

Chair Nadon-Campbell raised the 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. In December she sent an email to all SEAC members requesting further guidance on the need for collective action from SEAC to the District.

During discussion the following points were raised:

- LSS staff is creating "tip sheets", through collaboration with staff speech pathologists, to mitigate issues of communication between staff and students

while using personal protective equipment (PPE). These will be distributed for the 3 February 2012 SEAC meeting;

- Trustee Campbell stated school principals are present at the school councils meetings. The principal would determine whether a request to access school-generated funds was to finance a needs-based model of accommodation or if the expenditure was to enrich the experience of students or enhance parent engagement. If the expenditure is deemed necessary for instruction, the principal may use funds from the school budget, appeal centrally to LSS or the school superintendent. Any other process would prove to be inequitable due to the imbalances between the treasuries from school to school;
- Ms. Dewshi noted that the definitions on necessities for student learning are not finite. Often inequities exist when a school council gives precedence to funding one item over another;
- Ms. Dlouhy commented that staff were able to apply to the Health and Wellness Program for an accommodation for voice amplification devices where warranted;
- Superintendent Symmonds explained that a wide variety of devices are available on the market. Research into these devices is required before a District recommendation can be put forth. These devices may appear helpful but some concerns have been raised that voice amplification may have a negative impact on learning in the classroom; and
- Superintendent Symmonds noted that a communication strategy is planned for school administration to clarify procurement rules in the absence of a professional evaluation.

Mr. Harris concluded the discussion noting that there was no overarching support from SEAC members to intervene with a recommendation to the Board. He noted LSS staff is working to make improvements for communication between educators and students.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:44 p.m.

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Sonia Nadon-Campbell, Chair,  
Special Education Advisory  
Committee