

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITY REPORT

January 28, 2021
6:00 pm
Zoom Meeting

- Voting Members: Ayan Karshe, Seema Lamba, Elizabeth Sweeney, Carrie-Lynn Barkley, Ryan Doucette (Young Leaders Advisory Council), Maria Teresa Garcia (Ottawa Community Immigrant Services), Kahmaria Pingue (Parents for Diversity), Kathryn Owens (Youth Services Bureau)
- Non-Voting Members: Elaine Hayles, Bob Dawson, Meghan Wills, June Girvan, Yazhuo Zhang, Inini McHugh (Indigenous Education Advisory Council), Ruth Sword, Rob Campbell (Trustee), Justine Bell (Trustee), Susan Cowin (Special Education Advisory Committee)
- Staff and Guests: Donna Blackburn (Trustee), Lynn Scott (Trustee), Joy Liu (Student Trustee), Charles Chen (Student Trustee), Ishti Hossain (Student Senator), Carolyn Tanner (Human Rights and Equity Advisor), Janice McCoy (Superintendent of Human Resources), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Instruction), Melissa Collins (System Principal, Equity), Pamela LeMaistre (Manager, Human Resources), Sue Rice (Equity Instructional Coach), Sharon Martinson (OCDSB Educator), Riaz Mostaghim (Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools), Leigh Fenton (Board Coordinator)

1. Welcome

1.1 Land Acknowledgement

Chair Karshe called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. She acknowledged that the committee is presently meeting on the unceded, unsurrendered Territory of the Anishinaabeg Algonquin Nation whose presence in Canada reaches back to time immemorial. She extended deep gratitude and sought to support and affirm their rights as the land's stewards and keepers.

1.2 Approval of the Agenda

**Moved by Elizabeth Sweeney,
THAT the agenda be approved.**

Carried

2. Community Discussion - Open Space

2.1 Opening from Co-Chairs: Topics, Speakers, Community Experts

Chair Karshe expressed hope that the membership of the Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE) can recreate the space as, not only one used in disseminating information and data, but to allow for transparency and healing. To facilitate an anti-oppressive space, both she and Co-chair Grover will ensure that all who seek to speak are honoured and valued and that collective efforts become productive and useful, for the children and themselves. Speaking analytically about issues that have a direct impact on the lives of racialized and marginalized peoples can be triggering, and she encouraged all to take care, with their words and with their hearts. While ACE seeks to change schools for the better, members also create space for those who experienced the consequences of white supremacy and systemic racism.

Chair Karshe stated that she and Co-chair Grover will strive to create a space of true collaboration. They intend to continue to adapt and change the structure as often as needed to ensure a truly decolonized space. As chairs of ACE, they value any input, expertise, and experience, and will welcome participation at every meeting.

2.2 The ME Project (Student Trustees Joy Liu and Charles Chen)

Student Trustees Liu and Chen reported on the Menstrual Equity (ME) Project which led to a motion before the Board, subsequently passed on 26 January 2021. The motion consisted of five clauses, requiring coin-free menstrual hygiene product dispensers and disposal units in all washrooms accessible to students (including in at least one stall within male washrooms), guidance departments, and physical education departments in all schools with students in grades 4 to 12 prior to September 2022. These products will consider environmental impact and appropriate distribution channels. The District committed to provide age and grade appropriate education to at least grade 4 to 12 students on the proper usage and disposal of menstrual hygiene products, as well as the rationale for their placement. Consideration for the needs of all student demographics in the implementation and maintenance of this initiative is paramount, for example, private and unsupervised access, usage of gender neutral language and packaging.

Student Trustee Liu noted that the consultation process from November 2020 to January 2021 was centered on student opinion. An anonymous feedback form was distributed through the student senators to their schools, gender and sexuality alliances or LGBTQ2S+ groups. She highlighted that the student senators were consulted regarding the

education component of the menstrual product provisions. Conversations with Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Carson occurred to gain insight into the financial allocations required to fund the initiative. The student trustees wrote a public letter to the Board of Trustees on behalf of students who supported the motion, of which over 1400 students signed and disclosed their own experiences, opinions and feedback.

Student Trustee Chen reported that in the 2019-2020 school year, at Featherstone Drive Public School, a pilot program was launched in female washrooms for cisgender students. This was initiated by grade 7 and 8 students after watching a screening of the documentary, "Pandora's Box: Lifting the Lid on Menstruation". The film studied the far-reaching implications of the lack of access to menstrual hygiene products and the societal stigma of menstrual cycles. The students who led the pilot were consulted for feedback on the motion.

In discussions with CFO Carson, the student trustees learned that the District intends to begin the program, using a few different schools as early adopters. Lessons learned from the preliminary roll-out of the program will inform the implementation at all schools by September 2022.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- Equity Instructional Coach Rice noted that she informed the Rainbow Educators and the LGBTQ2S+ community partners about the measures of the ME Project. All members of these stakeholder groups were in support of the motion and commented that the language contained within was thoughtfully considered;
- Proper usage of tampons or pads is not currently part of the Ministry of Education's mandated instruction of the curriculum, however education about the menstrual cycle is a part of the curriculum in junior grade levels associated with puberty and adolescent development;
- Student Trustee Liu mentioned that she would advocate for a consultation framework for the implementation process to ensure that cultural sensitivity is in place for the menstrual health education piece and the types of culturally appropriate sanitary protection products;
- Specific consultation with the Afro Caribbean Black community was suggested due to the cultural sensitivity towards menstruation;
- Superintendent Baker noted that when the ME Project motion was before the Board for debate, Director Williams Taylor did note the importance of considering cultural sensitivity with the understanding that implementation would include this lens; and

- Ms. Hayles suggested that an invitation be extended to a speaker to hear about instruction on health and sexuality at the District in order to examine the topic from an equity perspective.

2.3 Discussion on the Government Issued Province-Wide Shutdown and the Effects on the School Community

Chair Karshe reported that the Community Discussion category of the agenda is an open forum created to encourage discourse from all members, non-voting members and guests from the community. She prompted participants to discuss the impact of the extended lockdown on the school community, how the situation has affected them as individuals and observations in the wider community.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- An educator for secondary students expressed concern over potential knowledge gaps and the delivery of equitable and student success support in this time of change;
- Ms. Pingue expressed concern that students are being penalized for the quality of work submitted or for late submissions. These measures do not take into account socio-economic disparities, lack of resources or the ability for working parents to support students with their assignments. Withstanding the discipline of teachers or school administration does not contribute to the well-being of students;
- Ms. Garcia noted that the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services (OCISO) have mentors to help with schooling in a program called Youth Ottawa Community Immigrant Services (YOCISO), free for all newcomer youth, ages 12 to 24;
- Trustee Scott stated that at the Board meeting of 26 January 2021 the trustees passed a motion to write a formal letter to the Ministry of Education requesting affordable internet access to families;
- Ms. Pingue noted that in spring of 2020, Parents for Diversity (P4D) created a multilingual PDF where parents could click on a message requesting support from the child's teacher and a Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) in their own language. This communication tool could help parents and caregivers advocate for their children's education during the distance learning period. During this support campaign, it seemed as though there was not enough capacity within the District for MLO support;
- Ms. Garcia submitted that OCISO and The District had created and implemented outreach formulae for the Ottawa Carleton Virtual (OCV) beginning January 2021. Services provided by MLOs can be accessed through school administration. MLOs have been distributed evenly

among all OCV campuses. In the brick and mortar schools, MLOs are assigned to three or four schools each. She noted that there have been some service gaps, however work is being done to address those issues with System Principal of Equity, Melissa Collins;

- Ms. Sweeney shared that in some instances, online learning has further impoverished families and inequalities have been exacerbated in a mode of education that forces parents, most often mothers, to step away from their jobs to ensure support for their children's education. She supports an initiative to create packages of learning material to be completed independently; this way of learning is more flexible for families who are balancing multiple priorities during school hours;
- Unstable internet connectivity is a barrier for online learning; and
- Mr. McHugh noted the success of the Indigenous Education Hubs, created through federal funding under the Inuit Child First Initiative, and implemented at the Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families. These hubs produce results in the academic progress of these students. He offered to connect with others about the program should they be interested in building new solutions for support in the community.

Ms. Lamba requested a comment from staff on student achievement data since the launch of the 2020-2021 school year. Superintendent Baker replied that elementary and secondary report cards are forthcoming. There are challenges in monitoring the impacts of COVID-19 in an ever-changing environment. She noted that with English Language Learners (ELLs) there is evidence of increased student engagement since the provincial school closures in March 2020. One of the reasons is a greater familiarity with technology equipment, logging into the classrooms and participating in a remote setting. For the English Literacy Development (ELD) programs, extra staffing supports the goals of personalized learning. She noted that some parents do not have a breadth of knowledge when using technology. There have been conversations with the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership (OLIP) and the OCISO about delivering support in ways that facilitate learning for parents. Schools are also creating opportunities to assist parents with learning. Oftentimes older siblings are being tasked to assist the younger members in families. Data is being collected on the enrolled students who have opted out of synchronous learning in the OVC school and do not appear online for class work. Dedicated teachers are being hired for these students who will develop packages of learning materials to be sent home for these families. She highlighted that since the shift to remote learning, the District has made collective efforts to personalize learning and consider individual life circumstances for all students.

3. Reports

3.1 ACE Report, 26 November 2020

Moved by Carrie-Lynn Barkley,

THAT the Advisory Committee on Equity Report of 26 November 2020 be received.

Carried

3.2 ACE Report, 29 October 2020

Moved by Carrie-Lynn Barkley,

THAT the Advisory Committee on Equity Report of 29 October 2020 be received.

Carried

3.3 Committee of the Whole Report

Ms. Lamba reported on the following topics from the Committee of the Whole (COW) meetings on 8 December 2020 and 12 January 2021:

- A hiring policy was introduced with the intent to increase the representation of under-represented groups during the hiring process. Superintendent McCoy will present the policy later in the meeting;
- The ME Project was approved;
- An informative presentation was given on Decoding Dyslexia. Attention was drawn to upcoming recommendations expected on the Ontario Human Rights Commission's (OHRC) Right to Read inquiry. These recommendations are expected to be released publically in spring 2021;
- The facilities renewal project plan features a 20 year plan for accessibility;
- Learning Support Services presented Report 20-115 on Specialized Program Class (SPC) Referral Information 2020-2021 regarding the placement process for the current school year; and
- Learning Support Services presented Report 20-110 on Supports for Students with Giftedness (Elementary) to update the Board on pilot projects for learners with giftedness.

3.4 Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Programs

There was no report for the Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Programs.

3.5 Superintendent's Report

a. Membership Subcommittee

Superintendent Baker addressed concerns that had been raised regarding the last election process and indicated that all processes as outlined in the draft procedure as approved by ACE were followed. She indicated that as ACE has recently nominated two co-chairs, a membership subcommittee is to be established once the committee begins to review its membership needs. In accordance with ACE policy P. 008 GOV, a new membership subcommittee needs to be established to include the co-chairs and up to three members nominated by the Committee. Should members wish to be a part of the membership subcommittee, they are encouraged to contact Ms. Karshe or Ms. Grover. Approval of the nominations will be held during an ACE meeting.

4. Consultation

4.1 Human Rights Policy Consultation with ACE (C. Tanner)

Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner reported that the Board of Trustees approved a consultation plan for the development of a human rights policy. Until March 2021, phase one of the consultation process will continue to occur at the District's advisory committees level and through an internal human rights policy working group. Public consultations will be conducted using online community forums, small focus group discussions, existing networks of partnership organizations, along with an online survey to gather input from employees, students and families. Should people prefer to offer feedback in the written form, an email address was created, associated with the consultation process. Phase two will begin in May 2021 where groups will be re-visited to make further suggestions on the draft policy. A recommended draft policy will be presented to the Board of Trustees in October. She noted that consulting on the procedure associated with a policy is not commonplace; however, to establish the steps to lodge a human rights complaint, an in-depth consultation with the school community is both necessary and important.

Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner reviewed the presentation, highlighting the following:

- The Right to Education contains the right to be free from discrimination and access to education equally with equal opportunity;
- The rights of Indigenous people include the right that teaches truth about indigenous histories, cultures, traditions and perspectives;

- The human rights policy will be for everyone: students, staff, board of trustees, parents, guardians, and caregivers and community;
- The human rights policy will have primacy over other policies and procedures within the board, because human rights are constitutional; and
- The Ontario human rights code protects people from discrimination however it does not specifically include other factors that are protected, for example, in international human rights legislation or in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Four question categories were circulated in advance of the meeting for comment:

1. What do you think are the most important human rights issues for the OCDSB to address? Why?
2. Grounds protected from discrimination under the Ontario Human Rights Code include race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, record of offences, marital status, family status and disability. Are other factors that should be considered? Why?
3. When someone has a human rights concern, there are many ways it can be addressed. How do you think the OCDSB can receive and respond to a human rights concern in a way that makes that person feel safe? How can we ensure the process is accessible and effective for everyone?
4. How can the OCDSB best communicate with staff, students and families to help them understand their rights and responsibilities and to understand how to raise a human rights concern if they have one?

During the presentation and in discussion the following points were noted:

- Enshrine the Convention of the Rights of the Child into the human rights policy;
- Include, not only discrimination, but harassment and bullying into one comprehensive human rights policy;
- Filing a complaint must be made possible outside the domain of the school principal or senior staff;
- Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner noted that her role is arm's length from the District which includes investigatory powers and the ability to make recommendations for change;

- Provide District-wide education sessions on familiarizing students and staff with their own rights as humans. Communicate the contents of the policy in a way that is comprehensible for everyone, in multiple languages;
- When developing a human rights policy and procedure, address the common fear of repercussions;
- Equitas, a human rights organization based in Montreal, could be leveraged to help tie the teaching of human rights into the curriculum. The organization has created training modules for educators and tools for children to promote human rights, non-discrimination and peaceful conduct within the classroom;
- There are embedded exclusions and bias in school classrooms because the stories of LGBTQ2S+ people are not often taught to children. Erasure from narratives is discrimination. Reproducing a cultural of norms is discrimination. Accounts of bi-racial, queer families are seldom on a reading list for children. The representation of the vast richness and diversity of all communities and all histories belong on the curriculum for an education that promotes human rights. Stories of oppression tend to be amplified and socialized in education, above the stories which provide great examples of leadership by racialized, minoritized folks.
- Build a policy that can become a mechanism where students and families can register a concern when the curriculum is not reflective of diversity;
- On average poverty and mental health challenges lead to lesser outcomes for people. Discrimination involves identity, socio economic status and mental health stigmas;
- Provide students with an on-boarding package (with information on accessing MLOs) and a staff orientation handbook highlighting human rights; and
- Define a glossary of terms in human rights policy considerations. Formulate language that students can understand and use to advocate for their own human rights.

In response to a query from Ms. Hayles, Human Rights and Equity Advisor Tanner noted that her position is currently funded through the Ministry of Education on a Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA). This contract is subject to renewal annually.

5. Presentation

5.1 Report 20-114, Equitable Recruitment and Hiring Policy (J.McCoy)

Your Council had before it Report 20-114, describing the proposed policy for equitable recruitment and hiring at the District.

Superintendent McCoy reported that the draft policy was developed to comply with a draft Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM), released by the Ministry of Education following the repeal of *Ontario Regulation 274 - Hiring Practices*. Since 2013, under the former regulation, a mandatory hiring process was in place for long term occasional teachers or permanent teachers. School boards were required to follow a certain process in terms of who could be considered for hiring, based largely on seniority, as well as the technical qualifications that are recognized by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). Many school boards, including the OCDSB, have been advocating for the repeal of the regulation or for significant revision to provide school administration with greater ability to make hiring decisions based on factors relating to merit and to support the District's diversity, equity and human rights objectives. When the regulation was repealed in October 2020, the government issued an interim set of hiring guidelines for school boards to follow pending the release of a PPM. The draft PPM underwent a brief consultation process in November 2020. Until the final PPM is released, the District will not be in a position to bring a final hiring policy to the Board of Trustees because the PPM provides specific requirements to be included in the school board policy. The guiding principles of the policy aim to align with the principles articulated in the Indigenous Education, Human Rights and Equity Roadmap 2020-2023 to ensure fair, consistent and transparent processes for hiring are established, including ways to maximize employment opportunities for new teachers who are entering the profession, ensuring that the requirements and selection criteria for hiring are available are important considerations.

Superintendent McCoy stated that the policy is intended to provide high level, guiding principles and specific directives. The Human Resources Department is in the process of developing procedures which will guide implementation of the policy, with specific information on hiring practices. She invited input from the committee on considerations to be included in the policy, the procedure and the implementation of the procedure.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- At the COW meeting of 12 January 2021, the notion to ensure monitoring and evaluation is incorporated into the policy was raised;
- At the COW meeting of 12 January 2021, the notion to re-evaluate the intent of the PPM was raised with respect to "promoting the hiring of staff from under-represented groups and staff with demonstrated experience, including lived experience, working with Indigenous people or equity seeking groups". It must be determined whether the PPM

intends to promote the hiring of under-represented groups or hire those who have lived experience working with specific groups. If the purpose is to hire to increase the representation of under-represented groups, no candidates, other than the specific under-represented group members, should be considered for the job. If under-represented groups have to compete against non under-represented groups who have demonstrated experience, possibly the qualified under-represented groups will not be chosen for discriminatory reasons, including unconscious bias.

- The PPM stipulates that a school board may develop special programs to specifically target positions for underrepresented groups and implementing these programs is a step forward to closing the equity gap;
- The District has an Indigenous Education, Human Rights and Equity Division, which was formally announced in September 2020, with the launch of the 2020-2021 school year;
- Superintendent McCoy noted that generating diverse hiring panels is a strategy currently being discussed. Principals from various sites may be asked to collaborate and participate on different hiring panels;
- A plan for a staff survey is underway to determine a baseline on diversity amongst staff. The last survey was conducted more than 10 years ago; and
- Employees on the casual employment list will receive a link to the staff survey.

Ms. Lamba solicited the committee on its desire for another purpose built ACE meeting to review a final policy. Superintendent Baker advised that conversations have occurred at the senior staff level pertaining to the capability of advisory committees to hold additional meetings outside the regular schedule with Board support, as provided for in the committee policies. Legal precedent was examined as a part of a recent request. Executive Officer Giroux has been consulted and a fulsome answer is expected on ways to balance the needs of the committees with the provisions of the policies. In the case of another ACE review of the final hiring policy, timelines are unknown and may require a short turnaround time from Human Resources once the final PPM is released.

Superintendent McCoy included her contact information in the chat function to enable further engagement with members of ACE. Ms. Lamba shared her contact information and invited more comments from the committee to be able to raise them at a future COW meeting. Superintendent Baker noted that when an advisory committee

representative brings forward a discussion point at COW, it is intended to be reflective of the sentiments from the advisory committee.

6. Standing Items

6.1 Update from Steering Committee Representatives on Police Involvement in Schools

Superintendent Baker reported that Superintendent Farrish began the initial actions from phase one of the consultation plan. The public engagement consultation begins in phase two. Phase two engagement opportunities will be published with stakeholder groups when dates are set. Staff are in the process of completing the tendering facilitation for the sessions. There are three representatives from ACE on the Police Involvement in Schools Steering Committee. The steering committee met once to-date. Ms. Sweeney added that the first meeting held fruitful discussions. Ms. Pingue commented on the group's expansive diversity and mentioned that there was a good start to beginning this work.

6.2 Valuing Voices: Identity Matters Survey and Suspension Data Analysis

Superintendent Baker reported that the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) met once. The next meeting is scheduled in February 2021.

It was agreed that the standing item should read: "Valuing Voices: Identity Matters Student Survey". There will be a series of four reports that emerge from the collected data.

7. New Business and Event Announcements

Trustee Bell announced that a motion was passed at the 26 January 2021 Board meeting to approve an allocation of up to \$75,000 annually to support the hiring of a full time equivalent (FTE) Transgender and Gender Diverse Student Support Coordinator. She noted that there had been a part-time employee fulfilling a similar role in the past. Trustee Scott noted that the motion was passed unanimously and there is a strong commitment to equity, inclusion and anti-racism within the District.

Mr. Doucette reflected that a future discussion may be added to the agenda about equity and diversity initiatives currently enshrined in the budget allocations. Trustee Scott shared that the first meeting of the budgetary planning cycle is set for 2 February 2021 at Committee of the Whole, Budget meeting.

In response to a query concerning timelines around the final discussions at the Board level to determine the 2021-2022 budget, Trustee Scott noted that normally a school year budget for the following year is approved in June and submitted to the Ministry of Education. Information on grants is provided by the Ministry at the end of March or beginning of April. Next, Financial Services develops a staff recommended budget in consultation with the various

departments of the Board and there is an opportunity for members of the public to delegate or non-voting representatives of advisory committees to speak on behalf of committees. Trustee Scott noted that a presentation on the budget process could be presented at ACE for additional information on budgetary decisions.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:52 p.m.