



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE PUBLIC REPORT

**Tuesday, March 9, 2021, 7:00 p.m.
Zoom Meeting**

Trustees Present: Lynn Scott, Keith Penny, Christine Boothby, Rob Campbell, Justine Bell, Donna Blackburn (Trustee), Chris Ellis, Lyra Evans, Mark Fisher, Wendy Hough, Jennifer Jennekens, Sandra Schwartz, Charles Chen (Student Trustee), Joy Liu (Student Trustee), Amy Hannah (Principal, Learning Support Services)

Staff Present: Camille Williams-Taylor (Director of Education), Brett Reynolds (Associate Director), Mike Carson (Chief Financial Officer), Janice McCoy (Superintendent of Human Resources), Michele Giroux (Executive Officer, Corporate Services), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Instruction), Shannon Smith (Superintendent of Instruction), Prince Duah (Superintendent of Instruction), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Eric Hardie (Superintendent of Instruction), Shawn Lehman (Superintendent of Instruction), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Nadia Towajj (Superintendent of Programming and Learning K-12), Carolyn Tanner (Human Rights and Equity Advisor), Petra Duschner (Manager of Mental Health and Critical Services), Kevin Gardner (Manager of Financial Services), Julie Cyr (Manager of Early Learning), Cheryl Plouffe (Psychologist), Christine Kessler (Principal, Learning Support Services), Stacey Kay (Manager of Learning Support Services), Sandra Owens (Manager of Business & Learning Technologies), Diane Pernari-Hergert (Manager of Communications & Information Services), Richard Sinclair (Manager of Legal Services and Labour Relations), Nicole Guthrie (Manager of Board Services), Rebecca Grandis (Senior Board Coordinator), Darren Gatley (Board/Committee Coordinator), Michael Guilbault (AV Technician)

Non-Voting Representatives Present: Christine Moulaison (OCASC), Christine Lanos (OCEOC), Robert James (OCEOC Alternate), Rachelle Sintic (OCSSAN), Susan Gardner (ETFO), Jean Trant (OSSTF-SSP), Melodie Gondek (OSSTF- ESP), Brian LeSage (ETFO), Troy Cluff (OSSTF-District 25), Stephanie Kirkey (OSSTF), Pat Dixon (OCEOTA), Seema Lamba (ACE), Sonia Nadon-Campbell (SEAC), Max Forzley (Student Senator)

1. Call to Order - Vice-Chair of the Board

Vice-Chair Penny called the meeting to order at 7:17 p.m. He acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Territory and thanked the Algonquin Nations for hosting the meeting on their land.

2. Approval of Agenda

Moved by Trustee Hough,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Moved by Trustee Blackburn that item 9.2 be moved before item 9.1

Moved by Trustee Hough,

THAT the agenda be approved, as amended.

Carried

3. Delegations

3.1 Debbie Hameluck RE, Report 21-023, Academic Staffing Plan for the 2021-2022 School Year

Ms. Hameluck urged the District to consider offering students in specialized programs comparable programming choices for Ottawa Carleton Virtual (OCV). She noted that her nine year old son with Downs Syndrome and Autism has difficulty integrating into the in-person classroom setting and would not be able to engage in the current virtual classroom model. She agreed that in-person learning is best for students; however, with health concerns at home, in-person learning is not a viable option during the pandemic. She expressed the need for the District to provide more inclusive and equitable options for special needs students in remote learning.

In response to a query from Student Trustee Liu, Ms. Hameluck noted that her son receives 20 minutes of synchronous learning with his teacher and periodic asynchronous learning throughout the day which works well for him.

3.2 Genevieve Harte RE, Report 21-023, Academic Staffing Plan for the 2021-2022 School Year

Ms. Moulaison, speaking on behalf of Ms. Harte, noted that when the pandemic initially required the public to stay at home, she had significant concern for her own safety due to the violent tantrums from her six year old. She noted that the six hours of quiet when her children were at school was crucial. When schools were initially closed and children were confined at home, Ms. Harte could not find any relevant information to help with her situation at home; however, after her children were home for a few weeks she noticed that they were sleeping better and had less anxiety. She added that children with Autism have difficulty with transitions and that going to and from school were significant challenges for her children. The

consistent schedule of being at home has allowed her children to cope more effectively.

3.3 Maya Taleb RE, Report 21-023, Academic Staffing Plan for the 2021-2022 School Year

Ms. Taleb spoke on behalf of her special needs daughter. She noted that her daughter wished to continue in her virtual program where she is comfortable with her teacher, friends, and educational assistants who are familiar with her specific needs. Her daughter does not want to transition to another class as the unfamiliarity with students and staff would increase her anxiety. Having mobility and other health concerns, Ms. Taleb's daughter would like the District to support her with an effective remote learning program where she can feel safe and supported at home.

3.4 Vanessa House Milley RE, Secondary School Planning for 2021-2022

Ms. House Milley noted that the survey sent to families from the District, had many students expressing their frustration, depression, anger, and struggles to get through the 2020-2021 school year. She added that the main comment from the survey revealed that the quadmester system does not work well for students as focusing on one course a week feels rushed and does not allow for proper retention of course material. She noted that her daughter, at in-person elementary, is doing better than her children in secondary virtual classes. She explained that the District's decision to continue with the quadmester model does not reflect the wishes of students or families and she has started a petition in response. She encouraged the District to develop a model that follows public health guidelines while accommodating mental health and academic considerations.

In response to a query from Trustee Schwartz, Ms. House Milley noted that returning to full time in-person learning would be most ideal. She noted that the main issue with the quadmester model is having one course a day and that having two courses a day would be preferable. She drew attention to the stress that students feel in having a course compressed into two months and that many students are experiencing mental health issues from reduced social interaction, all of which could be alleviated when students are able to return to the regular in-person model.

3.5 Diana Carney, RE Secondary School Planning for 2021-2022

Ms. Carney expressed her concern with the quadmester model and advised that the District should aim to return to a 35 hours a week, 40 weeks a year model. She noted that the quadmester model does not properly serve students by having each afternoon primarily as asynchronous learning without teacher support. She added that students will not be prepared for post-secondary education and that the plan

appears to be a worst-case scenario and does not take into account the vaccine rollout.

Trustee Fisher thanked Ms. Carney for her feedback and noted that one constraint is that the Board is designated to follow certain directives from the Ministry. He suggested that families could also reach out to their local Member of Parliament and to the Ontario Government.

3.6 Lisa Greaves RE, Report 21-023, Academic Staffing Plan for the 2021-2022 School Year

Ms. Greaves, a mother of two children in grades 9 and 12, expressed her concern of returning to the quadmester model as other districts appear to be planning for a return to the regular in-person model. She noted that there are mental health concerns associated with remote learning that are not being addressed as there is minimal social interaction. She noted that data indicates that there is minimal COVID-19 transmission in primary and elementary schools and that after vaccinations occur, there should be no reason to expect further transmission in secondary schools. She expressed concern of the impact on teachers and their ability to provide adequate instruction with enough time for lessons to be absorbed by students and that the quadmester model provides one third less instructional time than other students in the country receive.

3.7 Sarah Young RE, Report 21-023, Academic Staffing Plan for the 2021-2022 School Year

Ms. Young noted that she is a mother of children in grades 9 and 12. In October 2021, she started the Grade 9 Parents Network for distraught families. She expressed the view that students are facing severe mental health issues with anxiety and depression. She noted the severity of the situation and that some children are attending therapy for families able to do so. She added that there needs to be a demand for funding and resources from the Ministry to provide mental health coordinators in secondary schools.

In response to a query from Student Trustee Liu, Ms. Young suggested that the District needs mental health coordinators in secondary schools and other mental health supports.

In response to a query from Trustee Bell, Ms. Young noted other factors that could aid students' mental health beyond mental health coordinators could include organized walks for students to meet each other and athletic departments could work to provide outdoor activities. She noted that students need to socialize in-person and they require peer and community support to organize and motivate them.

4. Briefing from the Chair of the Board

Trustee Scott reported that the District is leading two important policy consultations which focus on developing a human rights policy and conducting a policy and practice review of police involvement in schools. These consultations will include surveys, virtual focus groups' discussions, and larger virtual community meetings. Staff, students, families, and community members are encouraged to join these discussions and share their perspectives.

The District is hosting a series on Black Excellence. The discussions are intended for all families, secondary students, and staff and will be live streamed on YouTube. Participants are encouraged to share questions in advance to inform the discussion. The first session is 10 March 2021 at 7:00 p.m. More information is available on the OCDSB website.

5. Briefing from the Director

Director Williams-Taylor reported that in order to help prepare for the 2021-2022 school year, schools across the District provided families with an online form to confirm whether they want their children to return to in-person or virtual learning. She asked that parents discuss this with their children and complete these forms by the end of day, 14 March 2021. If families have not received the form or have questions, they should contact their principal.

The District will be launching its first, Valuing Staff Voices – Staff Equity and Engagement Survey. The survey is voluntary, anonymous and confidential. Participation will allow the District to better understand the demographics and engagement of staff. This information will guide strategies to support workplace inclusion and equitable practices, identify areas to improve staff engagement, and promote the health, safety, and well-being of all staff.

6. COVID-19 Update

Director Williams-Taylor provided a presentation for the COVID-19 update.

During the presentation, the following highlights were noted:

- The District COVID-19 “do not attend list” is governed by Ottawa Public Health (OPH);
- Ministry initiatives for COVID-19 testing on District sites occurs on evenings and weekends to avoid congregation during school hours;
- The Board has written to the Ontario Government to advocate for education workers to be prioritized for vaccines. Frequent communication occurs with the Ministry regarding vaccinations, stability, and funding. The senior team and the Council of Directors of Education (CODE) have also worked to advance the voice of the community;
- Dr. Duschner, Manager of Mental Health and Critical Services noted that there is an increase in youth and community mental health challenges. Understanding that families and students are impacted differently, District staff refrain from pathologizing when discussing mental health with youth and

instead focuses on a wellness approach. Promoting mental health in schools focuses on maintaining social connections, practicing good habits, and maintaining structure and routines to manage stress. Partnerships with School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO), intervention for students that require additional support, child and youth workers, psychology and social work staff in District schools, and facilitating the use of community resources can provide/promote mental health support for families and students. Funding received in September 2020 was used to add 2.5 new social worker positions, two of which identify as Indigenous and Black to recognize different student needs;

- The structure of the in-person elementary has received positive feedback and supportive data. The Districts' goal is to have secondary students return to in-person classes as the current quadmester model is not ideal, which is also reflected in the Thoughtexchange survey. Return to the quadmester model would only be expected as a worst-case scenario. Recent information has indicated that accelerated vaccinations for all adults over 16 could occur by September 2021 with clinical tests for children who are under 16 expected to occur by July 2021. This will provide additional safety at in-person schools. The District has been working with OPH to determine how to expand the quadmester model from one course to a two course model. The cohort model has been retained as it is easier to transition to an in-person cohort structure as health guidelines permit;
- The District is anticipating public health guidelines to relax some restrictions by September 2021 which could allow for a return to the in-person semester model. In some vulnerable schools, students have indicated that the current quadmester model is favourable, with credit failure down 5% and other schools across the District by 3%;
- Programs for students with special education needs or unique learning profiles were made available in a virtual setting as part of the pandemic response. These types of programs best serve students in-person as they cannot be replicated in the full capacity in a virtual setting;
- The District must adhere to timelines for staffing and the OCDSB is not the first district to request that families choose the in-person or virtual model. Decisions on course selections occur at the same time each year to determine staffing for over 4,500 classrooms with a variety of qualification requirements. Districts across the province are offering various options including not offering virtual models, only virtual in secondary, and some with a variety of approaches; however, all districts agreed that in-person is the most ideal option;
- Director Williams-Taylor noted that she does listen to concerns from the public and that some senior staff have met with OCV students to discuss and determine if any interventions could occur immediately to address current

student issues. These discussions have impacted local OCV plans which will be monitored through their superintendent of instruction; and

- The current secondary model has allowed for low rates of COVID-19 transmission in schools and public health guidelines will determine the return to in-person learning.

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

- The District will examine personalized approaches by working directly with the families of students that need to remain in the virtual model due to health concerns and who also have special education needs. Although the remote individual education plans (IEP) will not be equivalent to the in-person model, needs will still be met, staff will be allocated, and central supports will be leveraged to aid students who require the virtual setting;
- Conversations with the Ministry have indicated that they will take a more individualized and responsive approach in decision making. The Minister of Education has suggested that there could be a more timely release of Grants for Student Needs (GSN) to allow the District to make plans in a more constructive way. The Ministry has also indicated that districts are not to expect additional funding as seen in the previous year. The Ministry is planning prudently which will be reflected in a differentiated approach as each district has a different reality to avoid any instability;
- To support students in remote classrooms for the 2021-2022 school year, learning support teachers (LST), learning resource teachers (LRT), and educational assistants (EA) will be allocated to support OCV students directly;
- The masking policy for the District is governed by the province. Local public health units may suggest further safety measures for districts to follow if deemed necessary;
- The availability of mental health services has been communicated to families through school newsletters, information sent directly from schools, and the District website, which has a link to the mental health webpage that outlines both in-school and community resources. There has been a 20-30% increase in referrals to clinical staff. Mental health lesson plans and resources for teachers are shared by SMHO through principals meetings, newsletters, and memos. Elementary and secondary teachers are encouraged to use the materials to provide lesson plans and activities through stress management instruction and activities in maintaining mental health and wellness for students;
- The Ministry has indicated their continued support for mental health services; however, it is unclear what funding may be provided. There have been some misconceptions regarding funding and priority items and where changes can

be expected. The 2020-2021 school year had enrolment rates that were significantly lower than the projected rates and funding was made available to increase stability. The District is now required to plan for the 2021-2022 school year based on the most recent student enrolment rates;

- The approximately \$20 million in additional funding for the 2020-2021 school year was used to provide staff as part of the pandemic response in teachers, custodians, and technology for remote learning;
- An additional 65 custodial positions were placed in schools for the 2020-2021 school year for enhanced cleaning during school hours;
- Mechanisms are in place for students that wish to amend their decision to attend either OCV or in-person for the 2021-2022 school year; however, this process is primarily reserved for extreme or unique circumstances as significant changes can affect the stability of the District; and
- Elementary teachers reported that teaching in virtual settings can be challenging as there is uncertainty whether a student is at their computer when cameras and microphones are turned off. Elementary teachers also noted that they are unable to intervene or summon aid when witnessing emergencies. The OCDSB was the only board that did not have any significant reorganizations which teachers found helpful and encouraged the Board to continue the practice of predictability and stability.

9:14 break

7. Matters for Action:

8. Reports from Statutory and Other Committees

8.1 Advisory Committee on Equity, 28 January 2021

Moved by Trustee Jennekens,

THAT the report from the Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE), dated 28 January 2021 be received.

Carried

8.2 Special Education Advisory Committee, 3 February 2021

Moved by Trustee Bell,

THAT the report from the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), dated 3 February 2021, be received.

Carried

8.3 Audit Committee, 17 February 2021

Moved by Trustee Schwartz,

THAT the report from the Audit Committee, dated 17 February 2021, be received.

Trustee Blackburn noted that her attendance was not recorded.

Moved by Trustee Schwartz,

THAT the report from the Audit Committee, dated 17 February 2021, be received, as amended.

Carried

9. Matters for Discussion:

9.1 Report 21-029, Academic Staffing Plan for the 2021-2022 School Year (J. McCoy)

Your committee had before it Report 21-029 to submit to the Committee of the Whole (COW) for discussion and approval, the academic staffing plan for the 2021-2022 school year.

Superintendent McCoy provided a presentation on Report 21-029, Academic Staffing Plan for the 2021-2022 School Year.

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

- Learning support teachers (LST) and learning resource teachers (LRT) for Ottawa-Carleton Virtual (OCV) will be allocated from within the approved complement based on enrolment, needs within the school, based on on recommendations by Learning Support Services (LSS);
- The District will continue to create larger virtual class sizes in order to reallocate resources to in-person schools. Staff will monitor class sizes to ensure that in-person classes, such as schools with larger populations of marginalized students, and, to the extent possible within the approved complement, make adjustments to ensure we are meeting students' needs. Some teaching positions are generally held back in order to address larger than expected class size scenarios to achieve more acceptable class sizes;
- Equity is always a consideration when determining class sizes, the allocation of resources, and support services for schools;
- The proposed reallocation of 3.5 full time equivalent (FTE) LRTs for Learning Disabilities Specialized Intervention Programs (LD SIPs) is not a reduction in the resources reallocated to these programs, but rather a change in the delivery to support a fully congregated model;
- In-person classes have increased in some schools due to a number of factors such as growing population in areas and students transitioning back to in-person from OCV; however, staff are working to ensure

class sizes do not increase too significantly. Certain schools are examined more than others to ensure that the resources are differentially allocated based on the needs of those schools. Staff are optimistic that the Ministry will provide additional funding, to support health and safety for students through smaller class sizes as needed;

- Director Williams-Taylor noted that staffing is not the only area that staff deliberate when considering equity. To date, only 14 COVID-19 transmissions have occurred over the entire 2020-2021 school year in 147 schools with 60,000 students and 5,000 staff. When considering how to allocate resources from an equity perspective, access to language, information, and communication emerged as a significant priority in communities where English is not the family spoken language. Staff also consider student achievement in underserved schools as a priority, as the pandemic has exacerbated the student success “gap” in some marginalized communities;
- Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) discourage classroom size flexibility as elementary teachers already have the largest class sizes in the District and would welcome aid in advocating for funding to maintain current staffing;
- A supplementary memo was provided regarding Specialized Program Classes (SPCs) which outlined a plan to close the Primary Special Needs (PSN) at W.E Gowling Public School and the Developmental Disabilities Program (DD) at Queen Elizabeth Public School; however, there are plans to open an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) program at Queen Elizabeth Public School;
- The DD program has changed to an ASD program at Queen Elizabeth Public School as there have been a number of vacancies in the DD program; however, staff will reassess this option in the future should the need arise;
- Although OCV classes are expected to be larger than in-person, both in-person and OCV class sizes must be within the regulated class size requirements outlined in *Ontario Regulation 132/12*. Current class sizes are not expected to be larger for the 2021-2022 school year and virtual schools will have supports to meet students’ needs; and
- Both in-person and OCV classes across the District are combined to generate average class size figures.

The 10:30 vote did not pass the required 2/3 majority and the meeting was adjourned*

9.2 Report 21-020, Universal Screening Tool Exploration and Update (P. Symmonds)

10. Adjournment

At adjournment, the following item remained as unfinished business:
Report 21-020, Universal Screening Tool Exploration and Update

Keith Penny, Chair