



MEMORANDUM

Memo No. 21-036

TO: Trustees
Student Trustees
Special Education Advisory Committee

FROM: Camille Williams-Taylor, Director of Education and Secretary of the Board
Peter Symmonds, Superintendent, Learning Support Services

DATE: 26 March 2021

RE: **LSS Operational Review Update**

The following information provides an update and outlines next steps for the Learning Support Services (LSS) Operational Review.

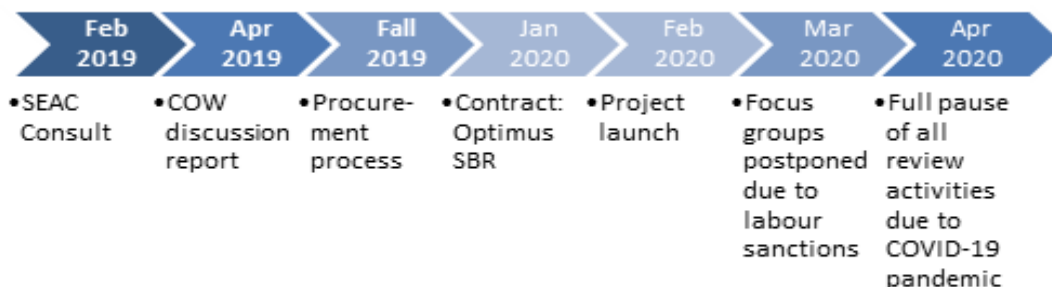
The Operational Review is intended to address concerns expressed by stakeholders, including the OCDSB Board of Trustees and the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), regarding the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process and the key components that support this process. In addition, concerns were expressed regarding how front line staff is directed to complete this work, how this translates into practice, and how it is perceived by stakeholder groups including staff, parents/guardians, and students.

On 30 October 2018, the Board of Trustees passed a motion that included:

THAT staff be directed to undertake an operational review of the process for identification, needs assessment (including the use of tiered interventions as a support for all students, and as identification and placement evidence), and placement for all exceptionalities

In order to objectively and efficiently accomplish the review, the District made the decision to contract external consultants. As outlined in Report Number 19-031, *Learning Support Services Operational Review of the Process for Identification, Needs Assessment and Placement*, the SEAC and Committee of the Whole (COW) worked with LSS staff to establish a scope of work to inform the Request for Service process. The Scope of Work included in the Request for Service is included in Appendix A and outlines the identified areas of focus.

The timeline below summarizes key milestones and impacts that have affected the completion of the LSS Operational Review.



In January 2020, the contract was awarded to Optimus SBR. Working with the team from Optimus SBR, based on the scope of work, a project plan including approach and timelines was developed. The project launch, discovery and current state assessment phases of the review commenced in February 2020. The impact of labour action led to the postponement of the scheduled stakeholder focus groups in early March 2020. The impact of the provincial shut down due to COVID 19 led to the full pause of the project in April 2020.

Given the period of time from the initial work to frame the LSS Operational Review and the impact of global events on the community and education system, the following plan has been developed regarding the timing and scope of the review moving forward.

Timing

There are significant concerns with a relaunch of the LSS Operational Review while educational processes and structures continue to be significantly impacted by the effects of the pandemic. The review represents a substantial investment of time (e.g., stakeholders and staff) and financial resources with the goal of identifying recommendations for system improvements. There is a significant risk that review of educational processes and stakeholder consultation completed while pandemic measures are still in place will not be representative of a more typical educational environment (e.g., limiting the review's validity & reliability).

In addition, there will be a sizable cohort of students and their families/caregivers (e.g., early learners and students new to the OCDSB) that will not have experience with our processes and structures in non-pandemic times. Understanding the perspective of those who are engaging in various special education processes for the first time will help to establish long term goals to improve equity of access and understanding of the model of special education programs and services in the OCDSB.

The following revised timelines for the completion of the LSS Operational Review are offered with a view to providing representative information to guide system improvements:



Importantly, the revised timeline will allow for a full cycle of special education supports and services for students, families and caregivers within a more typical education environment.

Despite delaying the Operational Review, LSS continues to work to address issues related to communication and understanding of the District's approach to providing special education programs and services. As described in [Memo 20-001: Learning Support for Students with Special Education Needs](#), LSS has developed and is preparing to launch the electronic resource. This tool designed for educators has incorporated strategies to promote the consistent delivery of high yield supports and services for students with special education needs from all exceptionality groups whether their educational program is delivered within a specialized program class or regular program class. The revised review timelines will allow the opportunity for further evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of the tool and may address many of the concerns brought forward.

Review scope

The goals and scope of the LSS Operational Review were developed in collaboration with SEAC and trustees. The length of time since the motion, steps taken to address concerns and evolving District priorities may have shifted focus areas of the LSS Operational Review. Within the revised review timelines it is suggested that goals and scope of the review be revisited through consultation with SEAC and trustees in order to ensure that review outcomes are meaningful and aligned to District priorities.

The OCDSB SEAC has represented a key stakeholder group in the LSS Operational Review. Continued consultation and input regarding next steps is essential and will be included in the agenda for the April 2021 meeting.

For any questions or concerns regarding the LSS Operational Review please contact Peter Symmonds, Superintendent of Learning Support Services at peter.symmonds@ocdsb.ca.

Attach.

cc Senior Staff
 Corporate Records