

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITY REPORT

**February 25, 2021**

**6:00 pm**

**Zoom Meeting**

**Voting Members:** Deepika Grover, Ayan Karshe, Nasrin Javanfar, Seema Lamba, Elizabeth Sweeney, Bronwyn Funciello, Carrie-Lynn Barkley, Ryan Doucette (Young Leaders Advisory Council), Maria Teresa Garcia (Ottawa Community Immigrant Services), Kahmaria Pingue (Parents for Diversity)

**Non-Voting Members:** Elaine Hayles, Bob Dawson, Said Mohamed, Yazhuo Zhang, Inini McHugh (Indigenous Education Advisory Committee), Ruth Sword, Rob Campbell (Trustee), Justine Bell (Trustee), Breanna Pizzuto (Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools), David Wildman (Ottawa Carleton Elementary Occasional Teacher's Association), Edil Adan Ahmed

**Staff and Guests:** Donna Blackburn (Trustee), Masoud Karimi (Student Senator), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Instruction), Eric Hardie (Superintendent of Instruction, Innovation & Adolescent Learning), Melissa Collins (System Principal, Equity), Reg Lavergne (System Principal of Instruction and Innovation), Joan Orcheski (Manager, Research, Evaluation and Analytics Division), Sue Rice (Equity Instructional Coach), David Wildman (Ottawa Carleton Elementary Occasional Teacher's Association), 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 6:04 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

Chair Grover welcomed Student Senator Masoud Karimi to participate in the meeting.

Ms. Sword introduced Brenna Pizzuto, the new representative for their organization, Spiritual Care in Secondary Schools. Ms. Pizzuto is experienced in the fields of health care, social services, mental health and suicide prevention.

**Moved by Kahmaria Pingue,  
THAT the agenda be approved.**

**Carried**

2. Community Discussion - Open Space

2.1 Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap: Ways to Align ACE's Activities to the Roadmap

Co-chairs Ms. Karshe and Ms. Grover led an open forum focusing on ways to align ACE's activities to the Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap 2020-2023 (Roadmap). The concept was to use the Roadmap as a guideline to plan committee work. The Co-chairs emphasized the importance of being intentional with the committee's work and of utilizing the life experience and expertise presented by the membership.

In response to discussions centered on the Roadmap's strategic action tracker document, the following points were noted:

- The committee consensus was to partner with the goals of the Roadmap to steer the ACE agendas;
- Prioritize the sentiment that all children matter, regardless of their identity, and ensure equitable concern for all demographics;
- To ensure that the goals of the Roadmap are realized, use an intersectionality approach to tackling gaps in equity. Design interventions that may address the complex layering of race, class, gender and disability;
- Take a directive approach in some actions listed on the tracker, where possible, rather than receiving information after the action had been realized, outside of a consultation with ACE (i.e., the annual equity accountability report and school improvement plans);
- There is an absence of people with disabilities represented in strategic goals, aside from the legally-required compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*;
- The word 'minority' is not a specific identification and this is problematic when efforts are being made to enact systemic change;

- There are other advisory committees of the board which represent the interest of marginalized groups, such as the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and The Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC). Co-chairs Karshe and Grover intend on connecting with the committee leads to discuss sharing upcoming committee workplans;
- Consider how to assure the long term achievement of the Roadmap;
- A District advisory community organized for the advocacy of families who live in poverty has not been established; therefore it is critical that ACE bring forward the concerns of socio economic status (SES) to the forefront of discussions;
- Develop a message that focuses on what all students and families share. Delve into the barriers that affect everyone in the school community; and
- For more information about the issue of experiencing poverty, contact a representative from The Social Planning Committee of Ottawa or ACORN Ottawa/Gatineau.

Chair Karshe suggested that ACE may want to re-evaluate the goals of the committee and create a mandate based on the premises outlined within the Roadmap.

Superintendent Baker commended ACE for its role in co-creating the Roadmap. She was pleased to hear the membership express an interest in contributing to the work that is being done on an administrative level. She noted that relevant District initiatives are intended for future ACE agendas, and reflected on some of the important presentations that ACE has consulted upon during the 2020-2021 school year, such as the review on Police Involvement in Schools and the development of the Human Rights Policy.

### 3. Reports

#### 3.1 Superintendent's Report

##### a. Indigenous Education, Human Rights and Equity Organization Structure

Superintendent Baker reported that the Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Division was officially launched in September 2020. She reviewed the organizational chart, noting that recruitment has begun for additional staff support members, such as a community engagement coordinator and a second equity coach with a focus on anti-racism initiatives. She focused on the interconnectivity between

the work of the entire team and the partnership with the ACE and IEAC advisory bodies.

During the discussion period, the following points were noted:

- The District offers a broad range of special education programs, designed to enhance the educational success and the welfare of students accessing special needs. The Learning Support Services (LSS) Department works with parents, caregivers and school personnel to ensure that the learning needs of the child are met;
- The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) is a statutory committee of the board as required by *the Education Act* and *Ontario Regulation 464/97*;
- The Roadmap discusses the overrepresentation of special education students in disciplinary data and the representation of special education in various District programs;
- The Roadmap includes support and programs for students with exceptional needs. Detailed information can be found in the OCSD's annual Special Education Plan, published on the website; and
- Mental health resourcing is typically a subject examined by SEAC through the work of the LSS professional services staff, however with ACE's interest in additional mental health support for Black male students, there is a common cause between the two advisory committees.

Ms. Sweeney shared that special education students are seeking cultural support within the school community. Disabled students search for moments of empowerment to meet with other students who have disabilities. She suggested creating forums for students with disabilities to encourage them to find their own defined community. She noted that these opportunities were not available when she was in school and as an adult those communities are vital towards supporting her well-being. She added that oftentimes shame and stigma grow around the disabled identity, as though being disabled is a feature to overcome, rather than one to embrace and build a community around.

Trustee Campbell supported the concept that special education extends beyond the Individual Education Plan (IEPs), formalized testing and the 12 recognized exceptionalities in Ontario. He noted that disability can be understood as a human rights issue,

recognizing the need for enhanced community participation and involvement.

Co-chair Grover expressed the view that it would be prudent to appoint representation to the Equity Steering Committee from ACE, IEAC and SEAC. Superintendent Baker noted that there is an opportunity to re-envision the structure of an expanded committee to assess which voices are missing and include students and families. She highlighted that the existing organizational chart is a colonial diagram and plans to work with the team on an improved graphic depicting the relationships between the staffing roles.

3.2 ACE Report, 28 January 2021

**Moved by Carrie-Lynn Barkley,**

**THAT the Advisory Committee on Equity Report of 28 January 2021 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 2 February 2021 and 9 February 2021. Chair Karshe noted that the COW meetings are accessible to the public via the YouTube live stream on the District's events calendar website.

**Topics reviewed on February 2, 2021 (Special Committee of the Whole)**

- The purchase of new portables;
- Potential changes to the school electoral zone boundary to align with the changes to the City of Ottawa's revised ward boundaries. The last comprehensive electoral zone boundary review by the school board was in 2006;
- Four principles will be used to review the school zone boundaries: communities of interest, present and future population trends, physical/geographic features as natural boundaries, and representation by population;
- A discussion on the Ottawa Neighbourhood Equity Index should be considered when examining the changes in the school zones, especially any impact on under-served communities;
- Next steps include background research, data collection and modelling, creating options for a new trustee zone system and finalizing models, public consultations and approval by the Board;and

- Public consultations will take place in September and October 2021. Changes will be in place prior to the next municipal elections in 2022.

In response to Ms. Lamba's query about potential equity considerations in the divisions, Trustee Campbell responded that the City of Ottawa ward boundaries must be adhered to and the process is citizen and voter oriented. It was noted that the review is not a revision to the school attendance boundaries. In alignment with the City of Ottawa initiative to review the boundary wards, the District is proposing a review to provide a comprehensive approach to examining ward boundaries. When examining school attendance boundaries, the District can focus on neighbourhoods on a smaller scale, in more detail, to include considerations for communities that are marginalized and with lower socio economic data; however, electoral zones examine areas by comparative size calculated by the electoral population for the zone.

Ms. Hayles expressed the view that the school attendance boundaries present an inequity, limiting where students may attend classes. She noted the desire to discuss a student's right to choose their designated school at another time.

Lastly, Ms. Lamba noted that the following two recommendations brought forward from Indigenous Education Advisory Council that were passed by the COW on 9 February 2021:

1. THAT the Board allow the Indigenous Education Advisory Council to appoint representatives to the Committee of the Whole and Committee of the Whole, Budget, respectively.
2. THAT the Board of Trustees write a letter to the Minister of Education to allow the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board to have an Indigenous Trustee.

### 3.4 Committee of the Whole, Budget

Ms. Funciello reported on the following highlights from the COW Budget meeting on 2 February 2021:

- Staff provided an overview of the 2020-2021 revised estimates and budget process;
- Academic staffing discussions and approval take place in March 2021 at COW and Board;
- It is expected that the government will announce the Grants for Student Needs (GSNs) in the month of April 2021; and
- A draft budget will be presented on 26 May 2021 with an opportunity for public delegations on 1 June 2021. Based on the current schedule,

the budget will be debated on the 9 and 15 June 2021 with Board approval on 21 June 2021.

Ms. Funciello highlighted that there will be opportunities for community consultation and input into budget priorities. She announced that Financial Services staff have been invited to present at ACE on 29 April 2021.

In response to a question of clarification, Trustee Campbell explained that the GSNs are grants that provide the bulk of funding to the District from the province of Ontario. These grants are heavily dependent on student enrolment figures. Regardless of the general socioeconomic status of the population within a designated municipality, the schools will receive the identical grants for each enrolled student.

Ms. Hayles reminded the committee that in the ACE meeting of January 28 2021, it was disclosed that the Human Rights and Equity Advisor position is a Ministry-funded position subject to renewal annually. She expressed the view that in order to ensure that the Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Division is adequately staffed to serve its 72,000 students, the Human Rights and Equity Advisor position must be deemed a permanent position within the OCDSB.

Chair Karshe suggested that the permanent position for the Human Rights and Equity Advisor role may be presented as one of the main recommendations for the ACE budget priorities or a formal letter may be written to the Board of Trustees with the recommendation.

Co-chair Grover reported that in correspondence with Chief Financial Officer Mike Carson, the Financial Services team was asked to present on the budget from an equity perspective and to examine the funding that is specifically allocated to championing equity.

Chair Karshe noted that she and Co-chair Grover are soliciting to strike a sub-committee of ACE, by the will of the committee. The subcommittee will examine topics and ideas with a targeted focus, such as the budget. Ms. Funciello contributed that a budgetary sub-committee would assist her in the role of the COW Budget representative to speak on behalf of the ACE membership. She noted that there will be opportunities for ACE to provide input into the budget and comment on staff recommendations therefore, she recommended not limiting the feedback to one specific request in regards to a hiring practice at this early stage in budget planning.

### 3.5 Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Programs

Ms. Javanfar reported on the Advisory Committee on Extended Day and Child Care Programs of 27 January 2021, updating the ACE members on pertinent discussions that may inform considerations of equity. She noted that due to COVID-19 there are many staffing challenges and enrolment is

low. She mentioned that the District was making an effort to connect with parents to assess their requirements for service. From an equity standpoint, she shared that there was a notable reduction of the number of families who are on the waiting list for subsidies.

#### 4. Presentations

##### 4.1 Report 21-014, Analysis of Disproportionality and Disparity in Grade 10 Credit Accumulation (M. Giroux)

Your Committee had before it Report 21-014 on the Analysis of Disproportionality and Disparity in Grade 10 Credit Accumulation.

Superintendent Baker explained that the information collected on grade 10 credit accumulation is the second report on the identity-based data collection in a series of four to be delivered in the calendar year 2021. Subsequent reports will focus upon student achievement and program streaming, in addition to a sense of belonging at school. Over the years the voices from the school community and the advisory committees have illuminated the disproportionality and disparity in achievement. The students and families who completed the *Valuing Voices: Identity Matters* Survey in January 2020 provided the District with quantitative data to enable the Research, Evaluation, Analytics Division (READ) to triangulate sources and enable a research-based report on the validity of the deficit in similar achievement levels for all students. She affirmed that the District's response to addressing the disproportionality-disparity continuum is embedded in the District's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan and The Roadmap.

Manager Orcheski reported that the review of credit accumulation data is integral to the District's commitment to creating a culture of innovation and a culture of caring, and has served as a key indicator of the Ministry's Student Success/Learning to 18 initiative since its inception in 2003. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that students who attain a minimum of 16 credits by the end of grade 10 are "on track" to graduate within five years of starting high school, whereas those who do not are at an increased risk of becoming disengaged from learning. She noted that credit accumulation attained by a certain grade has served as a key metric, not only in the annual student achievement report to inform the Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and Well-being (BIPSAW) and School Improvement Plan for Student Achievement and Well-being (SIPSAW) process, but in a recent context, the marker was designated on The Roadmap to monitor progress towards eliminating systemic barriers and biases.

Manager Orcheski highlighted the framework for analysis, the definition of disproportionality and disparity, measuring equity and an overview of credit accumulation from 2015, onward. She placed prominence on the



following sets of data, as this report marked the first time credit accumulation data was disaggregated by identity:

- Grade 10 students who self-identified as Indigenous on the *Valuing Voices* Survey were 0.77 times less likely to earn 16 credits by the end of grade 10 compared to their peers. Students from First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities were all underrepresented in the data relative to their representation in the population of grade 10 students;
- Grade 10 Indigenous, Black, Middle Eastern, and Latino students were underrepresented in the credit accumulation data given their relative size in the overall grade 10 student population. They were less likely than other students to earn 16 credits by the end of grade 10;
- Compared to their representation in the grade 10 student population, students who identified as trans girl/woman, not sure, gender fluid, non-binary, and gender non-conforming were less likely to attain 16 credits by the end of grade 10; and
- Students who self-identified as having a disability(ies) are slightly under-represented in the credit accumulation data with a disproportionality rate of 0.97 compared to students who did not identify as having any form of disability.

Manager Orcheski noted that governance priorities on the use of identity-based data include the development of an Open Data policy for the District and the establishment of data sharing protocols and agreements with First Nations communities in support of their right to have ownership, control, access, and possession of their data. She shared that representatives from across the community formed a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to support ongoing work on reporting with identity-based data to ensure alignment with the *Data Standards for the Identification and Monitoring of System Racism*. Qualitative follow-up on the data continues to unfold in dialogues at the school-level and in student success initiatives.

System Principal Lavergne reported on the specific initiatives in Student Success and Innovation and Adolescent Learning.

Some of the key initiatives planned, or being undertaken, include:

- Indigenous and Black Students graduation coaches supporting students through targeted funding by the Ministry of Education;
- The Summer Learning Program was introduced in 2020 to support Indigenous students in the attainment of credits. The success of this program has led to an expanded focus to support Black students, an initiative to be implemented in the summer of 2021;

- The Annual Equity Accountability report to support monitoring of the Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap;
- In the schools with more underserved students, where credit attainment has been below average, additional resources have been allocated, such as more professional development on using experiential learning to build equity. Progress is being made: In a comparative analysis between the first semesters of 2019 and 2020 school years, there has been a 5% reduction in term failures within the eight secondary schools serving a large percentage of at risk populations;
- The Authentic Student Learning Experience Tool (ASLE), an OCDSB innovation, moves beyond completing missing assignments but focuses on student voice and recovery plans that take into account the student interests; and
- School-Within-A-College (SWAC) re-engages high school students by inviting them to participate in a collaborative learning experience at Algonquin College.

System Principal Lavergne noted that while significant improvements in engagement are evident with some of these changes, locally developed and applied pathway courses have been failed at higher levels than academic courses. Underserved students are more likely to end up in these pathways. Communications staff is drafting a multi-lingual letter which will provide parental support on how to make decisions regarding grade 9 pathways, recommending the academic pathway if families are unsure, and how to connect pathways to student interest.

Superintendent Hardie highlighted the "Project True North" being piloted in ten schools, which is an example of experiential learning to enhance equity. Using primary document research, such as personnel files, students are contributing to a historical database, which will be the first soldier-by-soldier database ever created on the No. 2 Construction Battalion, a predominately Black battalion. He hopes to expand the True North pilot to include more schools, to build more capacity for authentic student learning. Mr Dawson expressed his interest in the project and Superintendent Hardie was receptive to connecting with him on the subject.

Superintendent Hardie drew attention to the data in the report which provides information on the achievement for specific students with certain identities, thereby assigning human faces to the data points. He maintained that the discussion must remain about supporting specific students, who have had specific experiences. The next steps to address inequities require truly understanding the degree to which these students

have been underserved in the educational system which was designed fifty years ago. To be innovative in education includes using experiential learning to redesign courses. Collaborations between the Indigenous Education, Equity, Learning Support Services and Student Success Teams are ongoing to attempt to understand perspectives on learning from an identity-based point of view.

Chair Karshe encouraged the members of the committee to speak and requested that staff listen and hold space for the member's response to the information being presented. The membership contributed the following points in discussion:

- Identify learning shortcomings in elementary school rather than in secondary school;
- Educate youth to become successful citizens after graduation as opposed a concentrated effort to successfully graduate high school;
- Broaden the notion of success to extend beyond a voting member of society who has employment;
- Implement ASLE across the District, with a primary focus on the schools containing the three Community Indigenous Learning Centres (Lodges): Gloucester High School, Sir Guy Carleton Secondary School, and the Ottawa Technical Secondary School;
- Study and report on the intersectionality of the data;
- Remove the barrier of student mobility between schools within specified geographical boundaries. Develop a school-boundary transfer policy that permits enrolment in any school offering programs that best suit the needs of the student;
- Improve access to the District website to enable simplified navigation to a webpage which explains options for students and families who are experiencing credit deficiencies; and
- Assign a graduation coach to English Language Learners (ELL).

Superintendent Baker clarified that there are two graduation coaches for Black students assigned to Woodruff and Ridgemont High Schools. The embedding of those coaches is important to the success of the students and the intention is to acquire further funding from the Ministry to expand coaching programs. There is a large population of ELL in those two high schools. There are 18 instructional coaches for ELL working with students and families. She concurred that, in general, more improvements can be produced from the District in areas of translation and interpretation for newcomer families.

In response to a query by Trustee Campbell question, Manager Oracheski stated that the disproportionality values on page 7 of Appendix A reflect calculations based on: (i) the full population of students and information from the student information system where students can only identify from one Indigenous community and reporting is based on combined numbers of students who self-identify as First Nations, Metis, or Inuit; and (ii) the subset of students who responded to the Valuing Voices survey which allowed students to select multiple identities. Differences in values will be impacted by both the sample (i.e., full population and subset) and the way in which students identify and are categorized.

Ms. Pingue shared that though she earned a master's degree in education, she expressed anguish that as a mother of two secondary students, she is unable to assist her children through their educational journey; they have disengaged from learning due to teaching practices. She underscored the importance of the provision of mental health services in the Black student community. She commended the ways of Reach Inspire Soar Empower (R.I.S.E.) Academy, an alternative private high school, which uses inquiry-based motivations to create personalized programs for their students. She reflected that though the strategies for success seemed like an adequate plan for change in the future, supporting students who are currently in school is vital to the lives of young people. A lack of empathy on the part of administration and teachers is an area that requires scrutiny. Consider that each family possesses a different set of needs; therefore one group email does not satisfy the role of proper communication with the entire school community.

Ms. Pingue raised the concern that the two graduation coaches who are supporting the Black students are likely overwhelmed with their workload. She suggested enlisting the help of volunteers and tutors in the Black community or through universities to come together to provide additional support to secondary students. She noted that it was only after 30 years of following a path of education that she experienced a course taught by a Black professor. Seeing themselves represented in educational role models affects students greatly. Children's early experiences shape what they imagine to be possible.

Other members of the committee provided emotional testimonies of their lives as students inside the public school system where they were guided by the words of teachers who discouraged them from following an academic pathway. The same discouraging advice was given to their children many years later. Limitations were placed upon them through teacher bias.

Ms. Hayles identified that in the presentation of the raw data there lacks an acknowledgement that the children themselves are intelligent. She

noted that the educational system requires repair; brilliance is found within every student.

Chair Karshe summarized the complexity of an “overarching divide” between the school system and the needs of a student. Families who have experienced a breakdown in communication or system support will show reluctance to seek guidance from the same point of contact. She proposed a future opportunity for ACE to discuss how to traverse a complex school structure. She presented a possible opportunity, outside of a formal meeting context, to join together in a peaceful meditation for transformational healing with the intention to ensure that the next generation of students are benefiting from their lived experiences inside schools.

Co-chair Grover stated that she and Chair Karshe have requested the email addresses from Board Services to enable connection around the formation of certain subcommittees. She noted that if any person wishes to remain apart from these communications, to connect with Coordinator Fenton notifying her of a preference to withdraw from additional communications from the ACE Co-chairs.

5. Standing Items

5.1 Update from Steering Committee Representatives on Police Involvement in Schools

The item was deferred until 29 April 2021.

5.2 Equitable Hiring and Recruitment Policy and Procedure

The item was deferred until 29 April 2021.

5.3 Valuing Voices: Identity Matters Student Survey Data

The item was deferred until 29 April 2021.

6. New Business and Event Announcements

6.1 Future Breakout Rooms for Discussions

The item was deferred until 29 April 2021.

6.2 Speakers Lists

The item was deferred until 29 April 2021.

6.3 ACE Subcommittees

The item was deferred until 29 April 2021.

6.4 Other Announcements from Members

The item was deferred until 29 April 2021.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:11 p.m.