

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE PUBLIC REPORT

**Tuesday, April 6, 2021, 7:00 p.m.
Zoom Meeting**

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

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 Towaij (Superintendent of Programming and Learning K-12), 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), Julie Cyr (Manager of Early Learning), Dr. Cheryl Plouffe (Psychologist), Amy Hannah (Principal, Learning Support Services), Robert James (Principal of John Young Elementary School), 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), Steve Spidell (OCSSAN), Jean Trant (OSSTF-SSP ALT), Melodie Gondek (OSSTF- ESP ALT), Melanie Barclay-Wood (OSSTF), Susan Gardner (ETFO) Brian LeSage (ETFO ALT), Stephanie Kirkey (OSSTF), David Wildman (OCEOTA), Seema Lamba (ACE), Sonia Nadon-Campbell (SEAC)

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

Vice-Chair Penny called the meeting to order at 7:02 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 Blackburn,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Carried

3. Delegations

3.1 Drew Klein RE, Concerns with Student Mask Wearing Policy

Mr. Klein expressed concern about masking and social distancing mandates in schools. He noted that policies put in place by public health officials, although not intending to, are causing harm to students. He added that forcing masks and social distancing on age groups with low vulnerability to COVID-19 cause children to suffer physically, behaviourally, and psychologically and that this practice should be stopped. He feels contempt for having his son cover his face for eight hours a day indoors and outdoors which also limits facial recognition as well as disrupting verbal and non-verbal communication and emotional cues with his peers and teachers. He noted that long-term mask wearing in children can increase heart rate, and cause nausea, dizziness, headaches, skin problems, sinusitis, vision issues, and elevation in stress hormones that may impact immunity resilience and more. He recognized that he may be in the minority with this opinion and finds it difficult to believe that all parents can accept this. He urged the Board to immediately reconsider and eliminate outdoor masking policies, increase outdoor class time during the warmer months, and to phase in removal of indoor masking policies.

Trustee Fisher suggested that Mr. Klein reach out to local government officials or Ottawa Public Health (OPH) as they mandate the District's approach to masking policies.

In response to a query from Student Trustee Liu, Mr. Klein noted that his children have experienced skin issues, headaches, and psychological harm in the normalization of masking and expressed his concern for all children.

3.2 Joel Harden RE, Concerns Regarding School Safety

MPP Harden advised that he wanted to inform trustees of concerns from school staff, community members, and parents' that were relayed through his office. He noted that staff in communities with higher transmission rates are concerned for their safety and fear going to work. He noted that

he will continue to pressure the Ontario government to provide appropriate resources for schools to address COVID-19 measures.

In response to a query from Trustee Blackburn, MPP Harden expressed concern that the District is not receiving adequate funding as the \$1.6 billion of the provincial budget allocated for COVID-19 spending costs was not continued into the 2021-2022 school year. He added that many youth are experiencing mental health concerns which needs to be addressed by the provincial government.

In response to a query from Trustee Lyra Evans, MPP Harden noted that special needs educators, families, and students are the prominent voices that communicates to his office. He expressed his thanks to the District for their transparent discussions and focus on funding these special needs programs.

4. Briefing from the Chair of the Board

Chair Scott advised that OCDSB summer school registration for secondary students is now open. More information, including how to register and the list of programs, is available on the Continuing Education page on the OCDSB website.

She noted that April is Sikh Heritage Month and that the District is proud to recognize the local Sikh community and the important contributions that Sikh Canadians have made to this country.

14 April 2021 is International Day of Pink, a day to celebrate diversity and stand up against homophobia, transphobia, and all forms of bullying. While it falls within the April break, it is important to take the time to reflect on the efforts we can take to ensure all students feel safe, accepted and welcome at our schools.

5. Briefing from the Director

Director Williams-Taylor advised that April is Autism Awareness Month. Speaker sessions on this topic will occur on 8 April 2021 and 22 April 2021. The discussions focus on supporting individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder and also assisting families to access services. More details can be found on OCDSB website.

Group discussions will continue as part of the District's consultations on Police Involvement in Schools and the creation of a Human Rights Policy. Registration details can be found on the OCDSB website.

Planning is underway for end of year graduation ceremonies and this year, there will be a return to more school-based planning for commencement ceremonies with some central support. This allows schools to plan with local traditions and customs in mind and many schools have already communicated with students and families. More detailed communication can be expected after the April break. Graduation photos are underway and have been completed in many schools.

6. COVID-19 Update

Director Williams-Taylor reported that many have watched the changing COVID-19 landscape with concern. A rise in case numbers in Ontario and in our own community, combined with a growing understanding of the increased risks of transmission with Variants of Concern (VOC) has shifted the focus of conversations. While the District is planning for September 2021, the immediate focus is ensuring the safety of staff and students at the present time.

Since the 30 March 2021 Board meeting, the following key events have occurred:

- The provincial government announced a 28 day emergency lockdown period for Ontario, with schools remaining open, but increased restrictions on social gatherings and access to restaurants, retail and recreational activities;
- The Ministry of Education confirmed that the April Break will continue during the week of 12-16 April 2021 with additional safety measures in place following the break;
- The Easter long weekend provided a much needed respite for staff, students and families;
- As part of the District's commitment to safety, on 5 April 2021, Director Williams-Taylor met with the four area Directors of Education and with Ottawa Public Health (OPH) to discuss caseloads in Ottawa and the safe operation of schools;
- Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Vera Etches, advised that she and her counterparts in Toronto and Peel had written to the province encouraging a province wide shut-down;
- In the Director's meeting with Dr. Etches, the Director and her colleagues reiterated the urgent need for school-based employees to be prioritized for the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Dr. Etches shared a letter with all four area Directors, which has also been shared with trustees, staff and families, that explains that the safety measures in schools have been successful and schools should remain open, unless there is a province wide shut-down; and
- Director Williams-Taylor acknowledged the dedication of staff on the front lines in the difficult pandemic situation. She noted that, as leaders and stewards of this District, our job is to listen carefully, and to act prudently, and to try to ensure that all decisions - for current and future planning, use data and the expertise of medical professionals and others to guide decision-making, to bring as much stability as possible to these uncertain times. She added that the recently announced lockdown could be similar to the lockdown in February 2021; however, students may not be allowed into schools this time.

Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Vera Etches of OPH, was introduced to answer member's questions and concerns.

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

- Stronger measures are needed to focus on slowing the transmission of COVID-19 in communities, such as a stay at home order and businesses that are not essential, to be closed. Ideally schools should be closed last as they are essential for children;
- When deciding to close schools, OPH examines the whole context of the decision beginning with current situations in the community, as the vast majority of cases come from community acquisition. Transmission rates in Toronto and Peel regions are two times the rate of that in Ottawa. OPH also considers school metrics, such as outbreaks per student population compared to by region. For example, Toronto had 55 outbreaks and Ottawa had 8 outbreaks on 6 April 2021. The number of outbreaks in Ottawa has remained stable, in contrast, Toronto had 18 school closures on 5 April 2021. Outbreak increase trends are closely monitored;
- OPH is in discussions with school district directors regarding how schools are coping, managing, and affecting operations as more cohorts are being dismissed home for 14 days as infection rates increase;
- OPH has been informed that it is rare that a school has to close due to a lack of teaching staff. With 369 schools in the Ottawa region, many do not have active cases. Dr. Etches recognized the support that schools provide to students and families;
- Increases in community infection rates and outbreaks, the logistics of dismissing cohorts becoming increasingly difficult, and the capacity of public health to investigate and provide notifications/follow-up are all factors that OPH monitors to determine if schools should be closed. Currently, Ottawa has managed where Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) has not been able to "keep up";
- Vaccines in adults are voluntary. Once a vaccine is available for children, Dr. Etches expects a similar approach and does not recommend that vaccines be mandatory for students to attend schools;
- A target of 75 percent of the eligible population to be vaccinated (with targets already exceeding in many areas) should be adequate to provide herd immunity;
- Dr. Etches and her team will contemplate whether the COVID-19 self-assessment screening forms for OCDSB students and staff should include an additional question, to determine if a person filling the form and their families have followed the COVID-19 public health guidelines over the previous 1-2 weeks;

- Studies have been conducted on masking types and how different masks function. Three-ply masks with a filter layer have been studied against surgical masks and were found to be comparable. Three ply masks with a filter layer are desirable as there are financial and accessibility barriers in providing surgical grade masks to all;
- The term “outbreak” causes fear and concern, which is why accurate and rapid communication is important. OPH targets for communication to high risk cohorts are within 24 hours of learning of a positive case in order to mitigate transmission, although it is often that case that communication exceeds targets and occurs between 4-24 hours;
- If eye protection is consistently worn it will allow for less risk of exposure. OPH has been considering which type of eye protection could be used;
- Staff lunch rooms are often too small to maintain a two metre distance and there is a need to find alternate spaces for staff to take breaks;
- OPH has not discovered any cases attributed to ventilation at this time, although additional measures could be added such as emphasis in keeping doors and windows open in warmer weather;
- The increase in cases of infection within the student population and the community infection rate is difficult to correlate as students are tested more than the general population due to daily screening initiatives. When OPH examines the source of a positive case, they investigate any close contacts of the person that had tested positive. The majority of cases where students tested positive was due to someone in their household or social network being positive and not from someone in a school, which is known as the epidemiological link for the likely source of acquisition. OPH does not see evidence that schools increase transmission. Schools provide many health benefits and resources to students, and closing schools can be harmful;
- OPH is mapping neighbourhoods with higher rates of transmission and are now able to prioritize vaccinations in these more affected communities. Vaccines are being provided to people over 80 and have now expanded to anyone over 50 years of age in these communities, which should help lower transmission rates of educators and staff in the schools of the affected communities. Targeted school closures in higher affected areas when cases cannot be managed or investigated effectively, allow only a few schools to be closed instead of all schools in Ottawa;
- Asking one part of the city to close and stay home is almost impossible as the city and province are very interconnected. The Provincial Chief Medical Officer of Health was contacted by OPH who suggested that the entire province be shut-down as mobility between regions affects transmission rates across the city and province;

- The vaccine timeline and rollout plan is directed by provincial policy. The *Guidance for Prioritization of Phase 2 Populations for COVID-19 Vaccination* document outlines phase 2 of the vaccination program in which people over 60 and people with health concerns (such as transplant or cancer patients) and congregate care workers have first priority. Neighbourhoods at higher risk are also outlined in the document where people 50 and over are eligible. Timelines are set by examining the size of the population and amount of vaccines available. At this time, 25,000 doses of the Pfizer vaccine are received each week. The 21 identified highest risk neighbourhood approach is where educators will first have an opportunity to be vaccinated which accounts for 20% of Ottawa's population;
- The high risk neighbourhood approach for vaccines will include anyone who works or lives in the neighbourhood;
- Phase 2 includes the sequencing of the essential workers and part of the neighbourhood approach overlaps with essential workers. The first group of essential workers that cannot work from home includes elementary and secondary school workers, childcare workers, food manufacturing and distribution workers, agricultural and farm workers, and the second group includes retail workers such as grocery store workers. The age-based approach will prevent deaths and hospitalizations;
- When vaccines are available, individuals who work in close proximity with those with special needs are considered high risk and will have prioritized access to vaccines. Although the plan to reach education workers is not fully developed, it is expected that once educators workers can receive a vaccine, they will have some flexibility where they can receive it. When education workers reach age appropriate eligibility, they can register on the Ontario online or phone booking system. If they are in an identified high risk neighbourhood, they can use the public health booking system or if they are over 55, they can go to a pharmacy where the AstraZeneca vaccine is available;
- Vaccinations could be available for ages 40 and over by May 2021 with the goal of providing vaccine eligibility to every adult by the end of the school year;
- Schools could be used as a community hub to provide immunizations, with a school's permission. Education workers could take advantage of this school based approach and creating a list prioritizing age and risk would be a helpful approach. Inoculation plans will continue to adapt if provincial policy changes;
- If widespread asymptomatic transmission occurred, it would be expected that some symptoms would arise where further testing could then occur in identified areas to detect greater rates of spread. Variants of concern (VOC) appear to transmit more rapidly and cause more severe illness in younger populations. The GTA has had higher rates of VOC than Ottawa although Ottawa's VOC rates are growing. When OPH studied VOC spread in schools,

entire cohorts were tested when one student tested positive for a variant to discover any asymptomatic cases. This study indicated that there was no greater level of transmission in cohorts with VOC compared to other types of COVID-19;

- Dr. Etches and her team continuously examine variables that may lead to school closures. OPH will provide notice of any imminent school closure for families to organize childcare;
- In looking for asymptomatic cases in school communities, OPH offered testing at school sites on weekends in higher transmission zones; however, this approach did not uncover many COVID-19 cases. OPH will continue to adapt asymptomatic testing that will be available through the spring break. OPH will try a self-swabbing approach and is considering how to distribute and implement this program in the school community;
- Occasional teachers (OT) are included in full contact tracing in schools to identify those who need to isolate. OPH works with schools to understand who was part of a particular cohort, including OT's to ensure accurate contact tracing. OPH also takes into account if OTs were or were not in attendance on the days that a student of a cohort was infectious;
- Principals work closely with the school support team and nurse to determine who was present during the time of communicability and it is common that a positive case has no high risk contacts. Occasionally an OT may learn that a cohort they were instructing did have a positive case around the time they were present in the classroom which may cause concern; however, contacts are closely monitored during the time of communicability and if they were a high risk contact, they would be notified;
- If a OT thinks that they may have been exposed and were not notified, they should contact the principal or school nurse;
- Schools could share the protocols and the process used in determining high risk contacts to help alleviate concerns and raise confidence with OT's;
- It is difficult to change some of the driving factors of why transmission rates of COVID-19 continue to be higher in some areas as there are socioeconomic, precarious employment, and other contributing factors. OPH has continued to learn about supporting newcomers to Canada and have translated safety measures and COVID-19 guidelines in many languages, while also working with leaders in communities for more effective communication and to promote vaccines. Access to sick leave would allow families to stay home when ill and/or to be able to care for their children;
- Schools could have campaigns to promote vaccines in identified high risk areas to aid in OPH's neighbourhood based vaccine approach;

- Parent councils could help promote vaccines and relay communication to families and communities. Parent councils can share practical messaging about safety outdoors;
- Closing schools can reflect the severity of the pandemic situation to the public as some people are not taking it seriously;
- The median age of people who tested positive is 34, not the age of those who are admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). There is a vaccine strategy considered where it focuses on those age groups transmitting the virus in a context where transmission was not rapid; however, transmission is rapid and it reaches the older populations that have a higher risk of hospitalization and death. The age based approach will continue and will be adjusted based on provincial decisions and guidelines;
- OPH will consider having vaccines available to graduating grade 12 students by the end of the school year to allow for those residing in post-secondary residences;
- Although there is still more to learn about COVID-19 in schools, OPH is confident that schools are not the main source of transmission. Most cases are from the community and needs to be addressed. Dr. Etches noted that studies around the world indicated that COVID-19 measures in schools does make a difference and thanked all those involved for their hard work in keeping schools safe;
- Director Williams-Taylor thanked Dr. Etches for communicating and answering questions in a scientific and informed way;***Following a break at 8:40 pm the meeting was called to order at 8:45 p.m.***
- Regarding the decision for families to choose to send their child to in-person classes, each family has a choice which depends on their particular circumstance. Some families may be able to work at home with their children and others may not be able to and need to send their children to school. Each family needs to feel a level of confidence, and although there cannot be a no-risk guarantee in attending school, the District is doing everything to follow safety guidelines to reduce transmission in schools. Families must make decisions to allow their children to attend in-person school the same way that they decide if their children can attend their part-time jobs, parks, or the mall and each family has different variables to consider;
- Mental health supports, social-workers, and psychologists are available through District mental health promotion to ensure that educators are resourced in order to provide support to students. Each school has a process to follow for crisis intervention, as needed, and community health protocols with Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) are available to support students with significant challenges. District staff continue to ensure that psychologically healthy and safe classroom environments are available for students. School Mental Health Ontario has also provided action kits

specifically designed to support students during the pandemic. Although there are a number of resources, if a student feels that they need additional support, they can inquire at the school level to help facilitate additional support; and

- A regularly updated list of mental health resources and supports are available on the OCDSB website. A targeted social media campaign delivers resources from School Mental Health Ontario directly to students, rather than only sharing information on resources, to provide specific ideas and strategies to help support student mental health and well-being. School council speaker night series also have mental health sessions and staff are in discussions to see if recordings of these sessions can also be made available. School councils could also help “amplify” OPH messaging to families.

7. Matters for Action:

7.1 Report 21-026, Equitable Recruitment and Hiring Policy (J. McCoy)

Your committee had before it Report 21-026, seeking approval of a draft hiring policy (Equitable Recruitment, Hiring and Promotion Policy, P.105.HR, Appendix A).

Director Williams-Taylor introduced the report and noted that the government rescinded *O. Reg. 274* with the expectation that school boards would create a new policy reflective of the new expectations identified by the Ministry. In February 2021, the Ministry released Policy and Program Memoranda (PPM) 165 which outlined key foundational elements for the policy to be created.

Superintendent McCoy noted that the draft policy has incorporated the feedback from trustees, principals and vice-principal representatives, managers, senior staff, representatives from federations, and feedback from advisory committees including Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE), Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC), and the Human Rights and Equity Advisor.

Moved by Trustee Boothby,

That the Board approve Policy P.146.HR - Equitable Recruitment, Hiring and Promotion. On a point of order, Trustee Scott noted that the original motion should be moved and any amendments can be addressed one at a time.

An amendment moved by Trustee Lyra Evans,

THAT in Policy P.146. HR, section 1.0 a comma be inserted between the words “transparent” and “and”.

In introducing the amendment Trustee Lyra Evans noted that the addition of commas are important.

Chair Penny suggested that grammatical corrections be left to staff to ensure that substantive changes can be discussed.

On a point of order, Trustee Blackburn suggested the policy be revised with grammatical corrections and be presented at the Board meeting where members may further debate the policy.

Director Williams-Taylor noted that the District is past the time where they should have submitted a policy to the Ministry; however, deferring the item to the 27 April 2021 Board meeting will still allow staff to continue working on this policy. She noted that this is the recruitment policy that will be applied to the recruitment practice of the District in which unions and candidates should understand how it is applied to be equitable and fair as part of the timeline factor that could affect the hiring of employees;

Moved by Trustee Scott,

THAT further consideration of the motion to approve Policy P.146.HR - Equitable Recruitment, Hiring and Promotion be postponed temporarily.

On a point of order Trustee Bell advised that representatives from the Advisory Committee on Equity members present had queries and suggestions.

Chair Penny noted that Trustee Scott may move to table the motion.

Moved by Trustee Scott,

THAT further consideration of the motion to approve Policy P.146.HR - Equitable Recruitment, Hiring and Promotion be postponed temporarily.

Carried.

The debate resumed after the completion of item 7.2

Moved by Trustee Scott,

THAT the motion to approve Policy P.146.HR - Equitable Recruitment, Hiring and Promotion now be considered.

Carried

Trustee Ellis supported the importance of the placement of commas.

Trustee Lyra Evans suggested that a motion with all of the proposed amendments she submitted to trustees and staff be tabled, to permit debate and allow for sub-amendments and other amendments.

Trustee Scott noted that the first suggested amendment to insert a comma between "transparent" and "and" did not make sense and was clear before the suggested change.

Trustee Blackburn indicated that her understanding is that a comma is not required to be placed before the word “and” in a list.

Director Williams-Taylor noted that in a list, a comma is not required before the word “and” which is how she has written reports thus far without being corrected.

Trustee Campbell noted his preference in the use of the Oxford comma.

Trustees Blackburn and Schwartz suggested that a legal opinion be obtained regarding the legal importance of comma placement.

Executive Officer Giroux shared a suggestion from Manager Sinclair that commas should be added to be consistent with other parts of the document and that a legal opinion was not required.

*** Following a break at 9:52 p.m. the meeting was called to order at 10:00 p.m. ***

Moved by Trustee Schwartz,

THAT consideration of the motion to approve Policy P.146.HR - Equitable Recruitment, Hiring and Promotion be deferred to a future meeting to be determined.

Carried

Executive Officer Giroux suggested that any comments related to the report be submitted to Board Services for review.

7.2 Notice of Motion, OPSBA Policy Resolution Trustee Boothby

a. COVID Gap Funding

Moved by Trustee Boothby,

Whereas, the March 2021 Ontario Budget states “Our loved ones, our economy, our **education system**, our main streets and our communities have all been impacted by the global pandemic.”

Whereas, Minister Bethlenfalvy stated in his Budget Speech to Parliament, “young people have been among those disproportionately impacted by the economic impacts of the pandemic. So, we are protecting students today.... But also investing in their future success for tomorrow”.

Whereas, the March 2021 Ontario Budget recognizes the effects of COVID will be felt and need to be supported beyond the end of the pandemic, as evidenced by the additional and ongoing supports for Long Term Care for 4 years, Tourism for 3 years and Broadband for 5 years.

Whereas, the learning for many students has been significantly impacted by the stressors of COVID including significant amounts of time learning remotely, when remote learning is not the best suited to all students, lack of engagement, missing social interactions and escalation of new or existing mental health challenges.

Whereas, learning gaps that are not immediately identified and immediately remedied with extraordinary measures, will fall further and further behind their cohort and limit the opportunities every student deserves and must have to ensure future success.

Whereas, the current teacher to student ratio will not be adequate to provide the necessary capacity for immediate identification and remediation of COVID created or exacerbated learning gaps.

Whereas, protecting students includes mental health. According to 2020 survey results from Sick Kids Hospital, published February 2021, a larger proportion of children with previous mental health problems are struggling since the pandemic began, and 40 per cent of children with no previous mental health issues have experienced deterioration of their mental health.

Whereas, professional learning for teaching staff has been less available since the pandemic and has not been focused on local needs experienced by pandemic measures.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT OPSBA advocate for the Ministry to provide school boards with dedicated funding for an array of much needed supports best configured to meet each board's needs, including but not limited to:

- A. Additional teaching staff to provide immediate evaluation of learning gaps, using tools such as PM Benchmarks;
- B. Additional teaching staff to provide immediate remediation of identified learning gaps;
- C. Additional mental health staff to provide immediate mental health supports; and
- D. Additional funding for professional development for education staff to focus on gap closing and mental health supports.

In introducing the motion, Trustee Boothby noted that the provincial budget recognized the longevity of the effects of COVID-19 and that the Minister of Education noted that we need to invest in student success for tomorrow. She added that many students have experienced new or worsening learning gaps and mental health challenges as a result of the many challenges related to COVID-

19. Trustee Boothby expressed the immediate need to build capacity, resources, and identify the learning gaps and mental health challenges for students starting school in September 2021. She added that currently, educators and mental health workers are overwhelmed and that the District does not have excess resources to properly address these concerns and that it is important to reach students in need in a timely manner.

Trustee Lyra Evans suggested that OPSBA could remove “recommend” and “advocate” and use stronger language such as “demand”.

Trustee Boothby appreciated the concern raised and indicated that she was unsure if adding stronger language would help progress the issue. She added that Trustee Penny and herself will advocate strongly to the Crown about the importance of this issue.

Moved by Trustee Boothby

THAT OPSBA advocate for the Ministry to provide school boards with dedicated funding for an array of much needed supports best configured to meet each board's needs, including but not limited to:

- A. Additional teaching staff to provide immediate evaluation of learning gaps, using tools such as PM Benchmarks;**
- B. Additional teaching staff to provide immediate remediation of identified learning gaps;**
- C. Additional mental health staff to provide immediate mental health supports; and**
- D. Additional funding for professional development for education staff to focus on gap closing and mental health supports.**

Carried

b. Anti-Racism Data Research Funding

Moved by Trustee Boothby,

Whereas, in accordance with the Anti-Racism Act (ARA) and Anti-Racism Data Standards (ARDS), all school boards in Ontario will be required to collect race-based data by January 1, 2023, to support and promote evidence-based anti-racism organizational change and to meet organizational commitments and

accountabilities to reduce systemic racism and advance racial equity;

Whereas, prior to January 2023, there is much planning and preparation required for complying with, and implementing the ARA, the regulations and the ARDS, with input from affected communities, stakeholders, and partners.

Whereas, the veracity of the collection and analysis of such data requires building a trusting relationship within our communities by regularly engaging with Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities and other stakeholders to understand their priorities, concerns, needs, and interests in collection, use and analysis of data.

Whereas, many school boards have limited or no internal data collection and analysis capability;

Whereas, the collection and analysis of such data is complex and important work. School boards must be able to build internal capacity to provide consistent and relevant data analysis, that builds on previous years analysis;

Whereas, the hiring of consultants or a cycle of hire and furlough does not allow a consistent collection or analysis of data and the ability to spot trends and build trusted community relationships;

Whereas, school boards must know they will have sustainable funding to build internal data collection and analysis capacity;

Whereas, the ARDS states “there must be at least one manager who is accountable for oversight and ensuring compliance with the ARA, the regulations and the Standards”;

Whereas, redirecting school board’s existing data collection and analysis teams efforts to the ARA work, would mean vital data collection and analysis for local priorities may abandoned or not be addressed in a timely manner;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT OPSBA recommend, the Ministry of Education with the Education Equity Secretariat, as a priority, undertake a commitment to all school boards to:

- A. Fund, in addition to the 2021/22 GSNs, an additional Grant, in the amount of no less than two full-time equivalent Research Officers, for school boards to use in their data collection and analysis, as local needs dictate, such as hiring staff, funding third party expertise, funding systems/infrastructure, covering costs associated with community/stakeholder engagement.

- B. Starting with the 2022/23 GSNs, newly and permanently fund as outlined in Part A

In introducing the motion Trustee Boothby noted that there will be a government requirement, to be fully implemented on 1 January 2023, to collect and examine race-based data. She noted that this work will allow the District to further understand students and families to address the needs of the community. This data works best with consistent collection for analysis and trend observation. School boards are currently using their existing data capacity on other government or local initiatives which cannot be “put on hold” to address provincial needs.

Trustee Campbell agreed that the District cannot continue to accept mandates from the Ministry without additional staff or funding.

Moved by Trustee Boothby

THAT OPSBA recommend, the Ministry of Education with the Education Equity Secretariat, as a priority, undertake a commitment to all school boards to:

- A. **Fund, in addition to the 2021/22 GSNs, an additional Grant, in the amount of no less than two full-time equivalent Research Officers, for school boards to use in their data collection and analysis, as local needs dictate, such as hiring staff, funding third party expertise, funding systems/infrastructure, covering costs associated with community/stakeholder engagement.**
- B. **Starting with the 2022/23 GSNs, newly and permanently fund as outlined in Part A**

Carried

8. Report from Statutory and Other Committees

8.1 Advisory Committee on Equity, 25 February 2021

Moved by Trustee Bell,

THAT the report from the Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE), dated 25 February 2021 be received.

Carried

8.2 Special Education Advisory Committee, 3 March 2021

Moved by Trustee Ellis,

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

Carried

9. Matters for Discussion:

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

Your committee had before it Report 21-020, providing an update on the exploration activities undertaken to review the potential adoption of a universal screening tool in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board.

During the review of a universal screening tool the following information was considered:

- A universal screening tool would be used to address issues of underrepresentation in identifying learners with giftedness to establish learning profiles, potential challenges and inform educators when planning the curriculum for students;
- Implementing a universal screening tool within the OCDSB will assist all learners including gifted students that often have other exceptionalities. A tool would address the issue of students “missingness” from gifted identification;
- A universal screening tool could reduce barriers and provide equal access to screening for minoritized, racialized or lower socio-economic status students;
- A study of comparative school boards revealed that many use screening tools at the grade 3 and 4 level to look at student profiles and determine how to best serve their needs;
- OCDSB staff will review the findings from the study to determine when during the year to administer the screening tool, at what grade level and post screening how best to support students. The composition of the multi-disciplinary (multi-D) team and its purpose would also be reviewed;
- There would need to be consideration of professional development for staff who would be administering the screening tool;
- Staff propose to broaden the use of the current Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test (CCAT) to use the instructional strategies that are included with the test to enhance programming;
- The options for selecting a tool are complex with many considerations. The CCAT 7 had the advantage over other tools that were considered as it offered Canadian norm;

- The CCAT is a multidimensional test that considers non-verbal and quantitative abilities;
- In addressing equity issues, the CCAT 7 has replaced verbal prompts with visuals and considered language in terms of item development, removing colloquialisms. There are recommendations in providing flexibility on how the scoring is used for english language learners (ELLs);
- The CCAT would enable local norms to be utilized to compare students in the same school on a standardized assessment rather than Canadian norms that compare students on a national level;
- A project team will be created to review details and considerations of the screening tool to determine the final recommendation.
- Superintendent Symmonds summarized by noting that the screening tool has evolved over time moving closer to personalization and precision in meeting student needs. He advised that staff will continue to provide updates on the process.

During the discussion the following points were provided:

- Considering the use of local norms for screening is important in addressing equity issues in schools where a significant number of students may be disadvantaged. The differences among students would be easier to recognize and their abilities could be explored more thoroughly with an opportunity for placement in gifted programs;;
- In response to a question about different scoring for different groups of students, such as ELLs, Superintendent Symmonds responded that those decisions have not yet been finalized, but many discussions regarding equity have occurred as it relates to students and their backgrounds. Dr. Plouffe advised that there are considerations for ELLs as well as the programming options for these students once they have been identified as gifted;
- Staff have an interest in working with educator partners in understanding their perspective as it relates to the use of a screening tool. Conversations are planned with the federations to determine how the screening tool could be used to support educators;
- Trustee Ellis requested that staff consider consulting with the Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC) and the Advisory Council on Equity (ACE) on the use of the screening tool.
- In response to a query, Superintendent Symmonds advised that the intent of a screening tool is to find ways to identify students who may have exceptionalities at an early stage to ensure appropriate interventions;

The 10:30 p.m. vote received 2/3 majority to continue

- Dr. Plouffe advised that there is a need to be cautious with data derived from the screening tool and how it is used. There is a need for flexibility in the information received regarding students and using the information to individualize the programming. The focus needs to be on programming for all learners. Information gathered and programming needs must be aligned; and
- Trustee Campbell expressed an interest in seeing an estimate of cost for the implementation of the screening tool in future updates.

10. Information Items:

10.1 Report from OPSBA (if required)

There was no report from the OPSBA representatives.

10.2 New Ministry Initiatives Update (if required)

There were no new Ministry updates.

10.3 OSTA Update (if required)

Trustee Jennekens noted that OSTA will have a public meeting on 26 April 2021, and trustees are invited to attend.

a. 14 August 2020, OSTA Minutes

Provided for information.

b. 24 August 2020, OSTA Minutes

Provided for information.

c. 28 September 2020, OSTA Minutes

Provided for information.

d. 26 October 2020, OSTA Minutes

Provided for information.

e. 9 November 2020, OSTA Minutes

Provided for information.

11. New Business - Information and Inquiries

Trustee Campbell requested that staff provide guidance on walking to school, particularly student age guidelines.

Trustee Fisher indicated the importance of a staff response to student and family inquiries in a timely manner. This includes a response to the open letter from 80 parents to the director on students returning to school in September 2021.

Director Williams-Taylor responded that items brought forward regarding the opening of school in September 2021 were received and staff recognized that further clarification was required. Staff are preparing communications to answer commonly repeated questions in order to communicate a broad response to families.

12. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:44 p.m.

Keith Penny, Chair