

BOARD PUBLIC MINUTES

Tuesday, March 30, 2021, 7:00 pm
Zoom Meeting

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

Staff: Camille Williams-Taylor (Director of Education), Mike Carson (Chief Financial Officer), Janice McCoy (Superintendent of Human Resources), Michele Giroux (Executive Officer, Corporate Services), Dorothy Baker (Superintendent of Instruction), Prince Duah (Superintendent of Instruction), Mary Jane Farrish (Superintendent of Instruction), Eric Hardie (Superintendent of Instruction), Shawn Lehman (Superintendent of Instruction), Shannon Smith (Superintendent of Instruction), Peter Symmonds (Superintendent of Learning Support Services), Nadia Towaij (Superintendent of Program and Learning K-12), Kevin Gardner (Manager of Financial Services), Petra Duschner (Manager of Mental Health and Critical Services), Richard Sinclair (Manager of Legal Services and Labour Relations), Stacey Kay (Manager of Learning Support Services), Pamela LeMaistre (Manager of Human Resources), Julie Cyr (Manager of Early Learning), Sandy Owens (Manager, Business & Learning Technologies), Diane Pernari-Hergert (Manager of Communications & Information Services), Amy Hannah (Principal, Learning Support Services), Christine Kessler (Principal, Learning Support Services), Nicole Guthrie (Manager of Board Services), Rebecca Grandis (Senior Board Coordinator), Darren Gatley, Michael Guilbault (AV Technician)

1. Call to Order -- Chair of the Board

Chair Scott called the public meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. She 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 the Agenda

Moved by Trustee Boothby, seconded by Trustee Lyra Evans,

THAT the agenda be approved.

Chair Scott noted that item 8.4, School Year Calendar Key Dates 2021-2022 Update, of the agenda will be discussed at a future meeting.

Moved by Trustee Boothby, seconded by Trustee Lyra Evans,

THAT the agenda be approved, as amended.

Carried

3. Delegations

3.1 Adrian Gollner RE, Early French Immersion Program at Cambridge Public School

Mr. Gollner noted that his son attended Cambridge Public School (PS) for junior and senior kindergarten but moved to Devonshire Public School for the French Immersion (FI) program. Mr. Gollner noted that he was on the Cambridge PS school council for two years during which the council identified the need for an English with a Core French program to provide a strong language basis for the local newcomers to Canada. He suggested that the absence of this program could explain why Cambridge PS only has 55 students. He added that families who are geographically close to the school, chose to place their children in other schools with French programs. He noted that on 22 March 2021, Trustee Bell, area residents, and local politicians spoke strongly for the need of an early French Immersion (EFI) program. He presented several comments from the meeting which outlined the need for an FI program at Cambridge Public School and queried which actions the Board will take to address this.

In response to a query from Trustee Lyra Evans, Mr. Gollner noted that without an FI program at Cambridge Public School, students will continue to attend other schools to meet their needs which could impact and damage the community.

In response to a query from Trustee Ellis, Mr. Gollner agreed that similar situations could be occurring across the District which would be an equity concern.

Chair Scott noted that the Board will be providing a response in the future.

3.2 Linda Kruus RE, Concerns with the Quadmester Model for Secondary Students

Linda Kruus, a parent of two secondary school students, identified that she was one of the 83 parent signatories who sent an open letter to Director Williams-Taylor that outlined concern over the announcement of continuing the current quadmester secondary school model. She queried if the Ministry of Education supports the current secondary school model

and whether any Ottawa Public Health (OPH) recommendations will be considered in planning for the model. She added that the decision to select a secondary school model should be delayed and that the model should be open to suggestions and changes. She also expressed the importance that staff acknowledge concerns from families by revising the model and that any changes should be clearly communicated.

3.3 Tanya Trevors RE, Concerns with the Quadmester Model for Secondary Students

Ms. Trevors queried how the District will address the shortcomings of the current secondary school quadmester model. She emphasized that the District has identified the quadmester model strengths and weaknesses over the 2020-2021 school year and that this model should be revised to reflect what was learned. She pointed out that the Thoughtexchange survey from February 2021 revealed that many families and students also expressed their concerns with the quadmester system. She requested that youth mental health and equitable access to education be factored into the quadmester planning, as well as considering the lessons learned from other school districts and provinces in their secondary models. She added that she would like the District to have a more optimistic approach and to “think outside the box” with new COVID-19 measures being put in place by September 2021.

3.4 Melissa McLaws RE, Concerns with the Quadmester Model for Secondary Students

Ms. McLaws, the mother of two secondary students from Nepean High School, noted that her children are disengaging from school due to the structure of the quadmester model. She noted that COVID-19 has been around for a year and the District must take into account the impact that COVID-19 has had in schools and with students. She asked that the District consider these impacts, the science, and evidence in planning for the 2021-2022 school year. She added that the vaccine roll-out should be factored in and that if the District decides to not include a full-time in person learning option for students, that an explanation must be provided to families.

3.5 Sara Tedford RE, Concerns on Returning to the 2021-2022 School Year

Ms. Tedford, the mother of two secondary students from Nepean High School, expressed her concern about the secondary school quadmester model. She requested a response to the open letter sent to the Board. She added that, with much of the community expected to be vaccinated by September 2021, that secondary school planning for the 2021-2022 school year be flexible and consider this and any new factors that may occur.

4. Report from the Board (In Camera)

The Board met in camera this evening and Vice-Chair Penny reported that there were no recommendations.

5. Briefing from the Chair of the Board

Chair Scott reminded the community that the District is currently holding two consultations; police involvement in schools and the creation of a new human rights policy. More information about group discussions and how to share feedback on these topics can be found on the OCDSB website.

She noted that 2 April 2021 is World Autism Awareness Day and the month of April is recognized as Autism Awareness Month. The goal of this month is to help in the building of stronger, more inclusive communities for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder. As part of this effort, the District will be hosting a series of speaker events in April 2021. These three sessions are intended to help families overcome challenges and support children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. More details can be found on OCDSB website.

6. Briefing from the Director

Director Williams-Taylor reported that OCDSB summer school registration for secondary students begins on 6 April 2021 and that the program for students in grades 6 to 8 begins in May 2021. More information, including how to register and the list of programs, is available on the Continuing Education page on the OCDSB website.

Director Williams-Taylor recognized that 31 March 2021 is International Trans Day of Visibility. This day is dedicated to celebrating the accomplishments of transgender and gender diverse individuals while raising awareness of the work that still needs to be done to achieve transgender justice. It serves as an important reminder of the responsibility we all hold to ensure students of all gender expressions and identities feel safe, welcomed, and accepted in our schools.

Several significant religious occasions have occurred and are occurring in the District. The Jewish community celebration of Passover began on 27 March 2021. On 4 April 2021, many Christians will celebrate Easter, with Orthodox Christians marking this at the end of April. Also in April 2021, the Islamic community will begin Ramadan. Despite the current COVID climate, the Director hoped that families can all find special ways to mark these important occasions.

7. COVID-19 Update

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

During the presentation, the following highlights were noted:

- The 2020-2021 school year brought change and unpredictability; however, the District has and will continue to adapt and adjust accordingly to improve outcomes for students, staff, families, and the community for the 2021-2022 school year;
- COVID-19 outbreaks have increased in schools, relative to the increase in communities, but not at the same rate, demonstrating the effectiveness of containment measures in schools;
- Increases in the number of staff on the “do not attend list” have caused additional staffing pressures, driving some classes to transition to remote learning;
- In working with Ottawa Public Health (OPH) and the coterminous boards, the testing model in Ottawa is more comprehensive than other districts. Since testing began in January 2021, of 156 Ottawa schools, 8005 individuals were tested of which 3315 were students with only 16 students testing positive for COVID-19;
- Phase 2 of the vaccination plan includes elementary and secondary school-based staff;
- The secondary quadmester model has had a 5 % decrease in the credit failure of higher needs schools and discussions with other directors and districts revealed similar improvements; however, this achievement also includes increased student anxiety and effects on well-being;
- The District has implemented a number of responses to concerns voiced from students, staff, and families outlined in the Thoughtexchange survey;
- The District is 1 of 24 Ministry-designated districts to host in-person students. Although each of the 24 designated-districts has specific guidelines to follow, the districts do not share the same delivery model;
- It is extremely unlikely that children under 16 will be vaccinated by September 2021;
- Director Williams-Taylor addressed an item from the open letter she received, regarding quadmester continuation as administrative convenience, noting that there is nothing convenient about this situation. She noted that the 2020-2021 school year has been difficult and expects continued difficulty for the 2021-2022 school year. She added that the lack of predictability creates instability, tension, and stress. Impacts on staff creates stress to deliver programs that meet families’ expectations;
- Based on feedback on the quadmester model, the District will work to instruct students and staff how to use alternate days at home more effectively to ensure that school work is structured and assigned in a manner so that students and educators can use the day productively;

- The District is prepared to allow all students to return to in-person schools in September 2021 providing that the Ministry and health authorities indicate that it is safe to do so in terms of contact tracing;
- If the secondary model were to return to a full four course semester model of approximately 25 students in a class and switching classes four times a day in the current COVID-19 situation, hundreds of students could be sent home causing many class closures in the event of a confirmed case. The four course model would greatly increase the number of close contacts as opposed to the quadmester model where in the event of a confirmed COVID-19 case, only 15-16 students might be at home;
- A return to a full semester model would have to begin in August 2021. The next opportunity would be February 2022 to allow for proper course time allowances;
- Some students from vulnerable schools have identified that they prefer the quadmester model and moving forward, the District recognizes the importance of flexibility to meet specific student needs;
- Families of Ottawa Carleton Virtual (OCV) students identified that a return to in-person learning is a priority. In the 2020-2021 school year, 22% of students were registered in OCV campuses with only 6.5% registered for 2021-2022. The Ministry indicated an expectation that virtual options are to remain; however, the District has already prepared for this decision and will maintain plans for a virtual structure with improvements from what was learned;
- Stability is an important factor in planning for the 2021-2022 school year and the District will proceed slowly and prudently as moving forward too quickly and then having to revert back could disrupt the stability of the District for students, staff, and families. The goal is to move to the desired outcomes slowly and safely;
- The District is in communication with other districts to share in the learning of best practices to ensure the best possible outcomes in planning for the 2021-2022 school year; and
- Director Williams-Taylor stressed that all members of the community should continue to practice prudence and good COVID-19 habits to keep schools safe.

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

- A designated board title is given by the Ministry to a district where an expectation for cohorting be part of the school structure and where close contacts are fewer than 100 per student per week. This informs the size of and how many classes can be held;

- Many districts across the province have implemented a similar one course model due to explicit direction from the Ministry;
- The District currently retains its status as a designated board and has received direction to not make large adjustments, plan with prudence, and to anticipate further guidance from both the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education in opening schools in September 2021;
- The quadmester and octomester models allow for course completion to be aligned to complete the semester at the end of January 2022. This would allow for schools with either a quadmester or octomester model to begin the full four course semester at the same time in February 2022, in the event that the Ministry and health experts provide authorization;
- Trustee Fisher expressed concern that many students are falling behind and that staff are experiencing severe stress. He recognized that his three children's school experiences have not been positive which has affected their well-being. He expressed the view that the District is not doing enough to "challenge" Ministry decisions that do not allow for flexibility in planning;
- The Board has had many discussions on how to engage students and have them attend in-person school as much as possible, and although the Ministry has removed some restrictions, many parents would be dismayed if the District allowed all students to return and staff would be concerned for their safety at this time. The District will entertain possible ideas for school planning providing they fall under the collective agreements and legal obligations;
- The Ontario College of Teachers and the Ministry have come to an agreement to allow second-year teaching students to apply and have a temporary teaching certificate to allow for coverage in teaching shortages. Each university has strict guidelines for this to work, such as the student teacher only being allowed to teach at the location of their practicum. This limits these student teachers to only provide services in District schools where their practicum is located. When student teachers are in the classroom portion of their program, they are not eligible to provide support;
- There are no rapid home tests available as part of the monitoring and tracing of COVID-19. Even though these rapid tests are a good indicator, they are not as effective as the proper swab test;
- The District has worked to support educators by developing a common scope and sequence and long range plans for every curricular area, including assessments and resources, for the elementary level in both English and French programs for grades 1-8. Coaching weekly supports and all departments are coordinated to further support educators. Furthermore, a cross departmental K-12 newsletter entitled "The Learning Network" is shared weekly with all school staff. It is created by all departments,

highlighting resources, tasks, and supports. The resources are created for both in person and virtual learning to best support all educators;

- The scoping sequence and long range agenda was developed to centralize any curriculum adjustments for consistency as one teacher may make different adjustments in course material from another to create a more manageable pace in workload for students;
- There is value in having a two-course model, providing that the issue of the accelerated pace of coursework can be addressed to alleviate student stress;
- Associate Director Reynolds and his team are working to consider how to conduct a safe in-person commencement ceremony for grade 12 students; however, there are currently many limitations and the solution must be fair to all students and families;
- Staffing absences have caused some class or school closures due to teachers' need to self-isolate or their children's need to self-isolate in which they must also do so. Central dispatch has a list of emergency occasional teachers to deploy where needed, although occasional teachers have their own concerns of health and safety when called upon to fill staff absences which can add to staffing complexities. If schools determine that it is not safe to conduct a class there is minimal notice which is not ideal; however, multiple strategies are in place to minimize disruption;
- The decision to close a school means that all options have been exhausted as principals, vice-principals, central coaches, and even superintendents have stepped in to teach classes in order for schools to remain open;
- Changes related to COVID-19 testing may also have an effect on staff and student absences due to a longer period before testing can occur as testing used to occur on day 5 and has now been moved to 7 days which causes delays. As case numbers rise, testing volumes also increase causing delays in receiving testing results;
- The District anticipates that most education workers will be vaccinated by September 2021 which could help address the staff absence issue; and
- In response to a query from Trustee Campbell, Director Williams-Taylor committed to seeking clarification from the Ministry regarding the rationale for a differentiated approach between school districts in Ottawa for this year's secondary school program delivery model.

8. Matters for Action

8.1 Confirmation of Board Minutes:

8.1.a 23 February 2021 Board

Moved by Trustee Ellis, seconded by Trustee Schwartz,
THAT the 23 February 2021 Board minutes be confirmed.

Trustee Lyra Evans requested that section 8.7 of the minutes be amended to indicate the following: Trustee Lyra Evans noted that, considering the Ministry directive on including trustees in the hiring process for senior staff, that Policy P.087 HR, Selection of Supervisory Officer, be reviewed before proceeding with the selection process and suggested that a Special Board meeting be scheduled within the next three weeks to approve any recommended changes to the policy.

**Moved by Trustee Ellis, seconded by Trustee Schwartz,
THAT the 23 February 2021 Board minutes be confirmed, as amended.**

Carried.

8.2 Business Arising from Board Minutes

There was no business arising from the 23 February 2021 Board minutes.

8.3 Receipt of Committee of the Whole Report, 9 March 2021

**Moved by Trustee Penny, seconded by Trustee Schwartz,
THAT the Committee of the Whole report, dated 9 March 2021, be received.**

Carried

*****Following a break at 9:00 pm the meeting was called to order at 9:05 p.m..*****

8.4 Report 21-034, Academic Staffing Plan for the 2021-2022 School Year (J. McCoy)

Your Committee had before it Report 21-034 seeking approval of the academic staffing plan for the 2021-2022 school year.

Superintendent McCoy provided a presentation highlighting key points of the report. She noted that a more fulsome review was presented at Committee of the Whole (COW) on 9 March 2021.

Moved by Trustee Blackburn, seconded by Trustee Schwartz,

THAT the academic staffing plan for 2021-2022, as set out in the Addendum and Appendices A, B, C and D to Report 21-034, subject to fluctuations in enrolment and emerging Ministry or regulatory requirements.

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

- Although there is a reduction in full time equivalent (FTE) teaching staff, support teacher staffing levels have been maintained to provide continued support to meet student needs;
- Student Achievement Through Equity (SATE) examines research and intersections with students in English language learners (ELL) programs, socioeconomic status, and other targeted student groups to remove barriers and to create a culturally responsible pedagogy for a more focused approach in student achievement and positive outcomes. A fulsome report on SATE will be presented at a future meeting;
- The next phase of the budget is not expected to have any disproportionate reductions in administrative and support staff although this also depends on the timely release of Grants for Student Needs (GSN). Despite Ministry statements to plan for no additional funding, if the pandemic situation continues, funding should be provided. A reasonable conservative estimate for projections has been used in the budget development plan and strategy; however, it is likely that a deficit budget will be recommended. Enrolment growth is not expected to occur until the COVID-19 pandemic is under control. Staff anticipates the Ministry's position to adjust monthly on the changing health conditions in the community;
- There has been an approximate reduction in enrolment of 1,100 students, 800 of which were from kindergarten and 300 were from other grades;
- Many initiatives have been included to provide equity to classrooms through central coaches that support schools, program and learning groups led by Superintendent Towaij, Superintendent Hardie's work in Innovation and Learning by examining student success and experiential learning opportunities, and Superintendent Baker's team providing an equity focus as well as the Indigenous Education team. These and other initiatives help guide teachers and inform their practice in equity. Learning Support Services (LSS) has continued to provide effective use of funding supports and special education needs funding is expected to be 8-12 percent beyond the allocation from the province when finalizing the budget. The District's commitment to providing support goes beyond the number of staff by utilizing effective reallocation of existing staff;
- The number of academic staffing positions added in the 2020-2021 school year was due to the additional COVID-19 sustainability funding

of over \$30 million from the province which was based on projected, not actual enrolment. Until the province provides more information on any additional funding, staffing will be reduced as outlined in the report;

- Director Williams-Taylor noted that adding funding does not always create desired equitable changes. Having more educators doing the same thing does not advance equity; educators need to be engaged differently to realize the change that needs to occur for equitable outcomes. Flexible deployment of resources can help meet student needs. Initiatives such as destreaming math will have a long-term equitable impact, as well as the translation of core District work, like consultations, into other languages such as Somali and Arabic. Feedback from these communities indicates we are getting better at responding to their needs;
- Without additional teaching positions provided by the previous COVID-19 funding, class sizes are expected to increase. Strategies include prioritizing in-person school class sizes by shifting larger class sizes to OCV, and reallocating existing staff to in-person positions. Class sizes will continue to be monitored in future;
- The District must maintain class size maxima and always considers the highest needs schools, and the supports they need, in planning decisions;
- Trustee Lyra Evans expressed concern regarding the reduction in FTE teaching positions, noting that this could negatively affect the most vulnerable students in the District;
- The proposed staffing report is within compliance of the set regulations;
- With reduced student enrolment, maintaining staffing levels in the support areas means students are receiving proportionally more support; and. Reduction in staff reflects the reduction in student enrolment.

Moved by Trustee Blackburn

Seconded by Trustee Schwartz

THAT the academic staffing plan for 2021-2022, as set out in the Addendum and Appendices A, B, C and D to Report 21-034, subject to fluctuations in enrolment and emerging Ministry or regulatory requirements. (Attached as appendices A, B, C, D, and E)

For (9): Trustee Scott, Trustee Penny, Trustee Blackburn, Trustee Boothby, Trustee Campbell, Trustee Ellis, Trustee Hough, Trustee Jennekens, and Trustee Schwartz

Against (2): Trustee Bell, and Trustee Lyra Evans

Abstain (1): Trustee Fisher

Carried (9 to 2)

9. Matters for Discussion

9.1 Report from OPSBA Representatives (if required)

Trustee Boothby reminded trustees to complete a survey on the equity and inclusion audit which is open until 22 April 2021.

10. Board Work Plan

The Board Work Plan was provided for information.

11. Matters for Information

There were no matters for information.

12. New Business -- Information and Inquiries

There was no new business.

13. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:11 p.m.

Lynn Scott, Chair of the Board