



## **REPORT NO. 1, ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUITY**

DATE: 25 January 2018

A meeting of the Advisory Committee on Equity was held this evening commencing at 6:05 p.m. in the Mezzanine, 133 Greenbank Road, Ottawa, with Joanne John in the Chair and the following also in attendance:

- MEMBERS:** Nadine Clarke, Community Representative  
Elaine Hayles, Community Representative  
Jane Fjeld, Youth Services Bureau  
Sadia Nuh, Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO)  
Chukwuemeka Ndukwe, Community Representative
- TRUSTEES:** Chris Ellis
- GUESTS:** Tim Stanley, University of Ottawa  
Nimao Ali, EISC of Ontario  
Phillip Comeau, Tungasuvvingat Inuit  
James Thibeault, Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre (PQCHC)  
Richard
- STAFF:** Dorothy Baker, Superintendent of Curriculum Services  
Carol Ann Burrows, Equity and Inclusive Education Instructional Coach  
Jacqueline Lawrence, Diversity & Equity Coordinator  
Engy Masieh, Policy Analyst  
Sherwyn Soloman, Principal – York Street Public School  
Nancy Henry, OCDSB  
Ken Mak, OCDSB  
David Sutton, OCDSB  
Nicole Guthrie, Board/Committee Coordinator

### 1. **Call to Order**

Chair John called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

## 2. Approval of Agenda

Moved by Nadine Clarke,  
THAT the agenda be approved.

Diversity Coordinator Lawrence indicated that the minutes were not included in the agenda. She requested that items 3a and 3b be removed. The committee will have an opportunity to approve the minutes at the 22 February 2018 meeting.

Trustee Ellis requested an update on the event that is being planned by the Hillcrest High School Black History Month Club. Diversity Coordinator Lawrence indicated that the group is still in the early planning phase and further details on the event may be provided at the 22 February 2018 meeting.

**Moved by Nadine Clark,  
THAT the agenda be approved as amended.**

**- CARRIED -**

## 3. Black Youth Suspension and Expulsion Project

Ms. Ikram Ahmed, Project Manager Black Youth Suspension and Expulsion Program - Somali Centre for Family Services (SCFS), spoke of the Black Youth Suspension and Expulsion Program. She noted that the one year project, funded by Legal Aid Ontario, aims to reduce the number and length of suspensions and expulsions of Black students.

Ms. Ahmed noted the program is operating under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the District and she has had positive meetings with superintendents and principals. The program is also trying to work with other local co-terminus boards.

Ms. Ahmed advised that while the goal is to reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions of Black students, the program aims to discover underlying issues, learn more about discrimination and strengthen relationships with students, teachers, and parents.

The program has access to a legal team from May Irwin and Adam Defense Attorneys. The lawyers provide direct legal services at hearings and consult with the parents and the community.

Ms. Ahmed noted that the 15 to 20 cases reviewed by the program to date have successfully kept the students in school and the program has been warmly received in schools across the City.

Ms. Ahmed noted that many of the families utilizing the program are new immigrants and there is often a lack of understanding of the system and language barriers which can exacerbate matters.

The program has targeted schools with high and low concentration of black students to help promote the program and are hoping to recruit newly graduated law students and students in their last year of law school to serve as volunteers.

During discussion and in response to questions the following points were noted:  
Trustee Ellis requested that a copy of the MOU be distributed to all trustees;  
In response to a query from Ms. Hayles regarding the tracking of suspension rates, Ms. Ahmed noted that she will look into the matter of data collection;  
Students are referred to the program by the school, parents and their community;  
Superintendent Baker noted that expulsions and suspensions are addressed through the Safe Schools policies and procedures and that a progressive discipline approach is used to deal with inappropriate behavior;

In response to a query from Trustee Ellis regarding legal team involvement in suspension and expulsion hearings, Ms. Ahmed noted that every case is different, and that it depends on the nature and severity of the incident. If the suspension is less than 3 days a legal team would not be involved and the team at the SCFS would be engaged;

In instances where cultural interpretation is required it is conducted by councilors at the SCFS;

In response to a query from Mr. Stanley regarding less formal interventions, Ms. Ahmed advised that the program works at the school level and with staff before legal intervention is required;

Students can be directly referred to the program as a form of prevention;

Ms. Seillier remarked that Ms. Ahmed should reach out to the Michael Jean Centre at the University of Ottawa to recruit volunteers;

Ms. Clark remarked that the total number of suspensions and expulsions along with accompanying demographics and reasons would be of interest; -

The SCFS welcomes all volunteers but for this particular program they are appealing to law students;

In response to a query from Trustee Ellis regarding the ways in which ACE can provide assistance, Ms. Ahmed advised that students facing suspensions be referred to the program so that the SCFS can become involved in a positive way to help prevent further incident;

Trustee Ellis invited Ms. Ahmed to make a delegation to COW;

Ms. Ali expressed the view that the District can do more to keep students in the school. She noted that the capacity of need goes beyond that of the SCFS capability. She indicated that more outreach to parents would assist in bringing students back into the system;

The decision to gather demographic data such as race and ethnicity and to analyze its relation to school achievement will help the District make better education policies. Statistics collected during the program would be appreciated;

Chair John commented that committee members may be able to assist Ms. Ahmed with metrics and indicators;

Chair John expressed the view that often student frustration and aggression may stem from an underlying learning disability and she noted that the program may benefit from additional resources and psychologists who can identify exceptionalities and offer assistance;

In response to a query from Ms. Seillier regarding the process before suspension, Superintendent Baker noted that the District intervenes at many levels prior to suspension. There are policies and procedures which clearly outline the District's progressive disciplinary structure. She noted that aggression and conflict generally have a root cause and teachers and principals typically know the dynamic within their school. Staff works hard to ensure all incidents are dealt with and all of the voices are heard. The District has moved from a zero tolerance atmosphere to an inquiry based approach to learn more about what is triggering the student's behaviour. Each case is contextual and is treated differently; and

Ms. Ahmed expressed the view that black students are being suspended more than their peers.

#### 4. Policy P.008.GOV Advisory Committee on Equity

Your Committee had before it Policy P.008.GOV Advisory Committee on Equity. Superintendent Baker provided the following information on the process of the revision the policy:

The revised document was drafted with the assistance of Executive Officer Michele Giroux, Diversity Coordinator Lawrence and Policy Analyst Masieh;

The document has undergone numerous iterations to bring it into alignment with the policies of other advisory committees and to ensure it retains the spirit of the committee;

The list of organizations and agencies, formerly sections 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9, will be included as an appendix;

An accompanying procedure will be created; and

The document will move forward to the Directors Expectative Council and then be discussed at the 06 February 2018 Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting.

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

Trustee Ellis expressed concern over the timing of the process for approval. He noted that the committee is viewing the final revised version for the first time and he requested the committee be afforded time for the fulsome consideration of the policy;

Policy Analyst Masieh noted that the revised policy was sent to members in advance of the meeting and the changes in the document presented this evening were minor;

Ms. Fjeld agreed with the movement of sections 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9 to an appendix;

Revisions to the policy were made to increase the membership to be more inclusive and to help expand the conversation to ensure the right voices were invited. The policy revision aimed to strengthen the process which will better serve the Board;

Trustee Ellis requested that section 2.5 be modified to read “Community Member means a resident of the District who is a parent/guardian for a student who attends a school of the OCDSB, or an advocate for equity/diversity-related matters”;

Mr. Stanley requested that the second sentence of section 2.8 be revised to read “Equity goes beyond treating people the same and takes into account their individual needs and differences”;

The committee requested that an additional definition for systematic barrier be added “Systemic barriers are policies, practices or procedures that result in some people receiving unequal access or being excluded. Example: eligibility criteria that effectively exclude people based on a disability, such as requiring a job applicant to have a driver’s license even though there are ways to reorganize a job to use another form of transportation”;

Diversity Coordinator Lawrence advised that in the preparation of the policy. Ministry definitions were used for consistency;

The committee requested that section 3.1a be revised to read “provide strategic advice on any and all matters of diversity which support equitable education access and outcomes, student learning and well-being, and the development of citizenship”

Policy Analyst Masieh advised that section 3.2 was moved to the Roles and Responsibilities section. Section 3.2d will be added to the procedure;

Policy P.065.GOV Advisory Committee to the Board outlines specific policy which relates to the Advisory Committee on Equity. It is referenced in section 5.0;

Chair John noted that with a larger committee there exists the capacity for sub committees to broaden the outreach, communication and recruitment efforts;

Diversity Coordinator Lawrence indicated that committee composition was carefully considered to ensure diversity while helping to create capacity to move the work of the committee forward. She acknowledged that the meetings are open to the public and that all are welcome to attend. Keeping the composition under 20 was important for quorum and committee management;

Diversity Coordinator Lawrence noted that the roles and responsibilities section has been revised with greater specificity to ensure members understand their role implicitly. The revision should assist the committee in their recruitment efforts;

Trustee Ellis requested that in item 4.3 the word “may” be replaced with “shall” as the presence of Board members and staff is critical to the effective operation of the committee;

Superintendent Baker advised that the committee resume discussion of the policy at the 22 February 2018 Advisory Committee on Equity meeting; and

Policy Analyst Masieh indicated that the revised policy based on the discussion will be circulated to members. Changes made by the committee will be identified in red.

## 5. Round Table

Ms. Nuh, a Multi-Cultural Liaison Officer at Manordale Public School, expressed concern over the District's move to School Cash Online payment. She noted that many of the families she works with do not have access to technology to permit online payment. Many of her clients are illiterate in their own language and banking online is not common. She urged the District to continue to accept cash payments at schools.

## 6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:41 pm.

Joanne John, Chair  
Advisory Committee on Equity