

PEEL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Instructional Programs / Curriculum Committee of the Peel District School Board, held in the Brampton Room, the H.J.A. Brown Education Centre, 5650 Hurontario Street, Mississauga, Ontario on Wednesday, January 15, 2020 at 18:30 hours.

Members present:

Susan Benjamin, Chair
Robert Crocker
Nokha Dakroub
Sue Lawton
Kathy McDonald

Trustee also present:

Will Davies

Member absent: (apologies received)

Stan Cameron

Administration:

Adrian Graham, Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction Support Services
(Executive Member)
Peter Joshua, Director of Education
Michelle Stubbings, Superintendent of Education
Shirley-Ann Teal, Acting Superintendent of Education, Early Years

Nicole Fernandes, Board Reporter

1. Approval of Agenda

Chair Benjamin welcomed everyone to the meeting and wished them a Happy New Year.

IP-01, moved by Sue Lawton, that the agenda be approved.

..... carried

2. Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

3. Minutes of the Instructional Programs / Curriculum Committee Meeting, November 20, 2019

IP-02, moved by Robert Crocker, that the Minutes of the Instructional Programs / Curriculum Committee Meeting, held November 20, 2019, be approved.

..... carried

4. Celebrating Faith and Culture Backgrounder – January and February 2020

IP-03, moved by Kathy McDonald, that the Celebrating Faith and Culture Backgrounder for January and February 2020, be received.

..... carried

5. Poverty Report Update

Director of Education, Peter Joshua, indicated that the update report highlights progress on the Focus on Poverty Action Plan since January 2019. Noting that the Year 1 of the Action Plan will extend to June 2020 due to the complexity of the work involved, he explained that poverty intersects with other significant areas that impact student achievement. Director Joshua stated that high levels of poverty have a negative impact on students' EQAO and report card achievement. Reviewing the timeline of the Board's previous and current work on poverty, he recalled that the Poverty Indicators Report (PIR) and the Socioeconomic Vulnerability Index (SVI) report were presented in 2018, and the Focus on Poverty Action Plan was developed later that year. When ready, the student census data will be integrated with these reports. The five action areas of the Plan are: awareness and understanding of the impact of poverty; supports for families living in poverty; equitable allocation of human and material resources; equitable participation in programs; student success and well-being. Kim Bennett, Research Officer, noted that the progress report provides information on the Action Plan deliverables, some of which may be processes or products resulting from the work being done. She indicated that there are 66 deliverables within the five action areas of the Focus on Poverty strategy. Regarding the awareness and understanding of the impact of poverty, she spoke of the communication strategy, dissemination of the SVI and PIR to schools and online, developing school profiles relating to equity and poverty, and creation and use of Power BI dashboards. The development of resources for professional learning as a result of the literature review was highlighted.

Craig Caslick, Principal of Lorne Park Secondary School, and Laura Garner, Vice-Principal of Central Peel Secondary School, highlighted the supports and resources available for families living in poverty. Craig Caslick explained that he and Laura Garner outlined the work to create a Directory of Resources and Supports for Students and Families Affected by Poverty, including compiling a list of resources from across the Region, and developing a website to house the directory is being developed. In relation to improving school readiness of children in poverty, Craig Caslick noted the work of training and building links between the Region of Peel's EarlyON staff and elementary school staff. He reported that the Early Years department, in partnership with stakeholder organizations, produced and released a Partnership Handbook. Training on best practices outlined in the Handbook has begun. Paul Officer, Principal, Continuing Education, spoke about the case studies to support the Focus on Poverty work. He stated that a snapshot was taken at one school to review the manifestations of challenges faced by students and families in poverty and its impact. Issues include arriving on time, completion of homework, mental health, absenteeism, adequate food and shelter. Outlining the work of building relationships between schools and families, Kim Bennett noted the resources that help staff advocate for, and understand the needs of students and families living in poverty, the communication strategies being developed to respond to diverse needs, and the importance of creating schools as hubs from where families can receive support.

5. Poverty Update Report (Continued)

Regarding equitable allocation of human and material resources, Michelle Anderson, Coordinating Principal, Special Education Support Services, highlighted the Special Education Amount (SEA) claims project and its impact. Special Education staff reviewed the PIR with regard to low access to Assistive Technology (AT), and collected data on schools with lower number of SEA claims for AT, relative to the number of IEPs in that school. Michelle Anderson provided details and outcomes regarding the pilot project at three schools, Agnes Taylor, Clark Boulevard, and Ridgeway Public Schools on integration of AT into the classroom. Speaking of the psycho-educational assessments, the waitlist and the cost for private assessments, Michelle Anderson indicated that staff are working on a project at these three schools, to provide AT based on report card and EQAO data, rather than on psycho-educational assessments. Director Joshua highlighted the work of the Peel Learning Foundation (PLF). He advised that staff will continue to build connections with external organizations to raise awareness and increase fundraising.

Reporting on equitable participation in programs, Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Support Services, Adrian Graham, advised that barriers to access Regional Programs were reviewed. Staff will develop profiles of students living in poverty and currently participating in specialized and regional programs. Regarding Regional Programs, issues relating to transportation and fees, communication of financial supports, and application process are being reviewed. He drew attention to the need to review the location of specialized and regional programs for equitable distribution, to create more program options and to consider the advantage of locating programs in the home school. A report will be brought to trustees following an analysis of the data. It was noted that staggered entry for Kindergarten students is being eliminated following an awareness of the challenges faced by some parents, and the need to examine Special Education Gifted identification processes, as well as to determine underrepresentation of students living in poverty was highlighted.

On the action area of student success and well-being, Valerie Anderson, Leadership Development and School Support Services, reported that the Mental Health Strategy was initiated in 2012, with a focus on prevention and early intervention. She indicated that School Mental Health Ontario has developed resources, and she outlined the training and professional learning for staff to build capacity. Michelle Stubbings, Superintendent of Education, stated that the SVI report has been examined by administrators in her Family of Schools, and a school site plan to address learning needs has been developed at these schools. She noted that the descriptors regarding poverty and vulnerability are critical to inform a more targeted and individualized response to student needs while avoiding the stigma of poverty. She advised that teachers will engage in an iterative teaching and learning process, and use informative assessment tools and specific instructional strategies informed by the student profiles. They will evaluate the impact of their work and share best practices to build school and system capacity.

.....

Trustee Lawton retired from the meeting (20:00 hours).

.....

5. Poverty Update Report (Continued)

Questions of clarification and comments from trustees included: whether psycho-social assessments are completed for families in poverty; access to programs is also determined by the location of program; need to determine the ethnicity of students who are not accessing SEA claims; need for consistent practices in all schools with regard to removing barriers; whether social workers receive anti-oppression training; how can student councils include voices of students living in poverty; timelines be provided for deliverables.

In response to a comment that some families are afraid that Children's Aid will be called, Director Joshua acknowledged that the work is complex, and the Social Work department do all they can to ensure that the dignity and confidentiality of students are protected. Acting Superintendent of Education, Early Years, Shirley-Ann Teal, reported that the Ministry has announced that they will be funding additional EarlyON centres in the Region of Peel. Responses to further questions of clarification included: definition of poverty is indicated in the PIR and SVI report; while data is analyzed at the postal code level, schools are generally aware of specific instances of students in poverty through their knowledge of students; EDI relates to the general readiness of the overall student body; administration is reviewing actual administrative costs of Regional Programs and the cost of cafeteria food; schools determine how they will spend their technology budget and support is offered centrally to help schools finalize their decision.

A trustee asked as to whether the Cities of Mississauga and Brampton provide free bus tickets for students in need. Craig Caslick confirmed that there is information on the Region of Peel's website on how families in poverty can access supports for transportation. At the school level, students may contact their guidance counsellor. Regarding Regional Programs and transportation, Superintendent Graham indicated that the administration is discussing whether surplus amounts available from fees can be utilized to provide bus passes for students in need. With regard to children who do not have access to technology after school, as homework is increasingly being done online, the trustee asked whether support can be provided through partnerships with public libraries. Superintendent Graham confirmed that the Board has a program to provide library cards. He highlighted discussions held with Learning Technology Support Services to initiate a project for students to borrow portable devices with WiFi for use after school hours. A trustee asked about the timelines for the Elementary Gifted Review, commenting that the significant discrepancies in spaces allocated between the north and south of Peel needs to be addressed. Superintendent of Special Education Support Services, Shawn Moynihan, will be asked to follow up.

IP-04, moved by Nokha Dakroub, that the Poverty Report Update, be received.

..... carried

6. Question Period

Trustee Crocker congratulated Chair Benjamin on chairing her first meeting.

7. Public Question Period

There were no questions.

8. Adjournment

IP-05, moved by Robert Crocker, that the meeting adjourn (20:40 hours).

..... carried

..... Chair Secretary

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS/CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Instructional Programs/Curriculum Committee, held January 15, 2020, there were no recommendations to the Board.

FOR INFORMATION ONLY

1. Reports / Information Received

The Committee received the following reports / information: Celebrating Faith and Culture Backgrounder for January and February 2020; Poverty Report Update.

Prepared by:

Nicole Fernandes
Board Reporter

Submitted by:

Adrian Graham
Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction Support Services
