

## 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 Thursday, October 27, 2016 at 18:00 hours.

Members present:

Stan Cameron  
Robert Crocker  
Sue Lawton  
Kathy McDonald  
Janet McDougald  
Suzanne Nurse

Trustees also present:

Omar Baboolal, Student Trustee South  
Nokha Dakroub  
Harkirat Singh  
Ranbir Singh, Student Trustee North

Member absent: (apologies received)

Rick Williams, Chair

Administration:

Poleen Grewal, Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction Support Services  
(Executive Member)  
Joy Uniac, Superintendent of Education, Early Years (Executive Backup Member)  
Patrika Daws, Superintendent of Education  
Jeff deFreitas, Coordinating Superintendent  
Pertia Minott, Superintendent of Education  
Scott Moreash, Associate Director, Instructional Support Services  
Tony Pontes, Director of Education  
Gale Solomon-Henry, Superintendent of Education  
Brian Woodland, Director, Communications and Community Relations Support Services  
  
Nicole Fernandes, Board Reporter

### 1. Approval of Agenda

In the absence of Chair Williams, Board Chair McDougald chaired the meeting. A revised page for Item 10.2, We Rise Together: The Peel District School Board Action Plan to Support Black Male Students, was circulated.

IP-38, moved by Harkirat Singh, that the agenda, as amended, be approved.

..... carried  
2/3rds' majority

### 2. Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

**3. Minutes of the Instructional Programs / Curriculum Committee Meeting, September 14, 2016**

IP-39, moved by Suzanne Nurse, that the Minutes of the Instructional Programs / Curriculum Committee Meeting, held September 14, 2016, be approved.

..... carried

**4. Celebrating Faith and Culture Backgrounder – November 2016**

IP-40, moved by Nokha Dakroub, that the report re Celebrating Faith and Culture Backgrounder – November 2016, be received.

..... carried

**5. EQAO Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics – Primary Division (Grades 1-3) and Junior Division (Grades 4-6); EQAO Assessment of Mathematics – Grade 9; Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) Results 2015-2016**

Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Support Services, Poleen Grewal, noted that the report contains the results of the 2015-2016 EQAO assessments, and that a more in depth analysis of the results will be brought to the next Committee meeting. Chief of Research and Accountability, Angela Mashford-Pringle, reviewed the trends over time for the EQAO assessments. Over five years, the primary division reading results increased by 7%, there was no change in writing, and mathematics results decreased by 6%. She noted that Peel's results were fairly consistent with provincial results. Junior division results over five years increased by 8% for reading and 7% for writing, but decreased by 5% in mathematics. Angela Mashford-Pringle indicated that the junior division trends for Peel were higher than provincial trends. With regard to gender, she advised that females scored higher than males in reading and writing, but performed only slightly better than males in mathematics. Trends over time for English Language Learners (ELL), students with special education needs, and French Immersion students, were reviewed.

Referring to the Grade 9 assessment of mathematics, Angela Mashford-Pringle indicated that the percentage of students at or above provincial standard in Peel was similar to that of the province in academic mathematics, but was lower in applied mathematics. She advised that results for male students is better than for females in both academic and applied mathematics, and she noted the results for ELLs and students with special education needs. With regard to the OSSLT results, the percentage of successful fully participating first-time eligible students between Peel and the province was the same, but for all first-time eligible, and fully participating previously eligible students, Peel results were higher by 2% compared to the province. Angela Mashford-Pringle reviewed the trends over time for gender, ELLs, and students with special education needs.

(Continued overleaf)

**5. EQAO Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics – Primary Division (Grades 1-3) and Junior Division (Grades 4-6); EQAO Assessment of Mathematics – Grade 9; Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) Results 2015-2016**  
(Continued)

The administration then responded to several questions of clarification asked by trustees. With respect to the gender gap, Instructional Coordinator, Maria Luisa Lebar spoke about the purposeful and intentional focus on engaging boys in the curriculum, including through use of non-fiction literature, technology, and choice of task selection that reflects their interests and culture. Superintendent Grewal, stated that EQAO has made some changes to the test with regard to engagement of boys and to reflect culture, but not to the extent of improvements to the curriculum in Peel.

Instructional Coordinator, Mary Fiore, reported that the EQAO assessments of mathematics focus on knowledge, understanding, application and thinking, and contain multiple choice as well as open response questions. She spoke about the process followed by EQAO to develop questions used each year, and she confirmed that staff will follow up as to whether EQAO has changed the structure of the mathematics assessments, in view of the decline in results over ten years. Superintendent Grewal, noted that this is the third year of the EngageMath action plan, which is reviewed each year to consider data collected by schools and from EQAO. Increasing the content knowledge of mathematics has been identified as a significant aspect both by the action plan and by schools. She added that understanding of vocabulary is important for the mathematics assessments and, for some students, there is the dual challenge of mathematics and language.

In reply to a question on lower achievement by Peel's special education students compared to the province, Superintendent Grewal noted that there is a renewed focus by the Ministry and the Board with regard to special education students. Indicating that all students take the same test, she expressed the opinion that there should be some modifications for students with special education needs. She also noted that Peel offers a higher number of programs for special education students, which is why a higher number of families needing access to programs move to Peel, and there is higher proportion of students with developmental disabilities in Peel than the province. A trustee asked that the special education data be broken down by disability, and another trustee asked that a comparison of this data for other school boards be undertaken to determine co-relation. Research Officer, Rosanne Brown, confirmed that Research and Accountability staff have the breakdown of the Board's EQAO special education results by exceptionality and accommodation for the past four to five years.

Responses to further questions of clarification included: applied mathematics is taught in all Peel secondary schools; percentage range for each level of achievement; data for Gifted students is exempt from EQAO reporting on results for students with special needs; students who are marked as exempt from the tests are given a zero mark; the passing mark for OSSLT is 75%; EQAO does receive feedback regarding the questions which they may review and revise.

(Continued overleaf)

**5. EQAO Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics – Primary Division (Grades 1-3) and Junior Division (Grades 4-6); EQAO Assessment of Mathematics – Grade 9; Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) Results 2015-2016 (Continued)**

Board Chair McDougald advised that she has compared the results for the first EQAO assessments in 2005-2006, and observed that Peel students have scored very well in reading and writing. She noted, however, for the past 10 years, there has been no progress in mathematics. She spoke of possible reasons for this scenario, including curriculum content and assessment content, and suggested that the matter of unsatisfactory mathematics results should have been taken up much earlier with the Ministry or the EQAO. Referring to disappointing Grade 9 applied mathematics results, Chair McDougald remarked that such results erode confidence, which plays a significant in student success. She expressed interest in reviewing the detailed report on the EQAO assessments that will be brought to the next Committee meeting, and having a more in depth discussion with trustees, including on the relevance of the EQAO tests. On a trustee's suggestion that this issue be brought to the attention of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, Chair McDougald indicated that this can be done following discussions among trustees.

IP-41, moved by Nokha Dakroub, that the report re EQAO Assessments of Reading, Writing and Mathematics – Primary Division (Grades 1-3) and Junior Division (Grades 4-6); EQAO Assessment of Mathematics – Grade 9; Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) Results 2015-2016, be received.

..... carried

**6. We Rise Together: The Peel District School Board Action Plan to Support Black Male Students**

Superintendent Grewal noted that staff have been working on the report for over one year, including reviewing research and undertaking a superintendent inquiry. She acknowledged the work of Harjit Aujla, Coordinating Principal, First Nations, Metis and Inuit/Equity, Phiona Lloyd-Henry, Equity Resource Teacher, Hiren Mistry, Instructional Coordinator, Equity and Inclusive Education, and Melissa Wilson, Instructional Coordinator, First Nations, Metis and Inuit/Equity. Poleen Grewal advised that, while the student focus group consisted of secondary black male students, the Action Plan has been developed to support all K-Grade 12 black students.

Contextualizing the Board's action plan to support black male students, Harjit Aujla referred to the Board Plan for Student Success, and highlighted the goal of "Achieve inclusion for all through our continuous progress on equity". Phiona Lloyd-Henry highlighted the comments made by Director of Education, Tony Pontes, at the Starting Point event about committing to take action on inclusion to make sure all students succeed. Noting that the report is a working document, Phiona Lloyd-Henry reported that the work on the initiative started in the Spring, and provided information regarding the focus groups with 87 black male students, questions asked of the students, student background and education, expected or suggested pathways, and parent or guardian education. She reviewed students' responses which reflect their perceptions, perspectives and experiences, with reference to what they liked or disliked about school, factors that helped or prevented them from engaging or succeeding in school, and suggestions for supporting them in school.

**6. We Rise Together: The Peel District School Board Action Plan to Support Black Male Students (Continued)**

Harjit Aujla stated that the action plan has been co-created with the Equity and Inclusion team, and staff will be undertaking consultation with the community. Reviewing the table contained in the report, he provided detailed information on the aims, activities, short-term outcomes and the long term outcomes associated with each of the four focus areas of the action plan: engage with the community; deliver anti-racism and bias awareness professional development (PD), which will be for all staff at all levels of the Board; integrate the experiences of black Canadians into curriculum, through delivering culturally relevant pedagogy; inspire black student leadership and engagement, among males and females. Superintendent Grewal noted that the aims of each focus area are the goals and the activities listed are the actions for each goal that are being considered at this time. She stated that the first focus area is engagement with the community, and it is expected that community consultation will help to refine the action plan.

An extensive discussion followed, with trustees expressing their appreciation to Superintendent Grewal and staff involved in developing the report. Comments from trustees referred to the importance of acknowledging the concern regarding marginalization of black male students, and that this report is a starting point in changing mindsets and behaviour.

Several questions of clarification were responded to by the administration, including: students surveyed did not identify a dominant factor for success, but rather a collection of factors; consultation with the community is expected to be completed by the end of this year, following which timelines for activities will be finalized; participation by unions and federation during community and staff collaboration is feasible; PD will involve the Leadership team, administration, school success staff, and ‘train the trainer’ sessions; universal application for bias awareness and anti-racism training; student leadership and mentorship programs begin in Grades 6-8; expanding the literature review to include research done in other jurisdictions; report has been shared with the Deputy Chief of Police as well as with the Police/School Liaison team; terms of reference for this study did not include biases faced by black teachers. In response to a trustee’s query about measuring the progress on the action plan to determine its success, Superintendent Grewal indicated that changing mindsets and attitudes takes time. She spoke of the need for further dialogue, including on suggestions relating to undertaking a student census, and she advised that there have been discussions at the Ministry of Education and York University with regard to collection of race-based data for students.

.....

IP-42, moved by Stan Cameron, that the meeting proceed beyond 20:30 hours to complete the agenda.

..... carried

.....

**6. We Rise Together: The Peel District School Board Action Plan to Support Black Male Students (Continued)**

Further questions of clarification and comments were responded to with regard to: mandating university programs for student teachers to teaching in diverse classrooms; identifying mentors for students and reaching out to mentors in unexpected places; mentoring programs should also be available for students who are succeeding; judging, labelling and stereotyping leads to discrimination. Concluding the discussion, Superintendent Grewal thanked trustees for the mandate to undertake this initiative, and commended staff who worked on the report. Commenting on the marginalization of black male students in schools, she spoke of the need for educators to make sure that these students are made to feel a part of the school community, and for the Board to work alongside the community to address this issue.

IP-43, moved by Kathy McDonald, that the Instructional Programs/Curriculum Committee recommends to the Board:

That, the Action Plan, as contained in the report “We Rise Together: The Peel District School Board Action Plan to Support Black Male Students” (APPENDIX I), be approved.

..... carried

**7. Question Period**

Trustee McDonald thanked Board staff who were involved in the report on We Rise Together: The Peel District School Board Action Plan to Support Black Male Students (Item 6 of these Minutes), and she expressed optimism about moving forward. She remarked that the overwhelming majority of teachers, staff and administration are excellent employees, but the attitudes of some staff can damage students’ confidence.

**8. Public Question Period**

Janet Francis, a retired school teacher, asked about ways to present curriculum that will engage students by using their talents. She commented that many difficulties can be avoided, if students are using their gifts and strengths. Chair McDougald responded.

Victoria Wright, a former Peel student and Secretary of United Achievers’ Club, spoke about the difficulties faced by her child, and she thanked Vice-Chair Nurse for her help. She stated that the report We Rise Together: The Peel District School Board Action Plan to Support Black Male Students, did not refer to issues related to mental health. She asked whether black male elementary students were surveyed, and whether parents of elementary age black boys will be surveyed so that the Board can get parental perspectives. Victoria Wright stated that black female students fare much better than black male students, and asked whether information was gathered on factors for this success. She queried whether training, as outlined in the report, will be mandatory, and whether all schools must participate in Black History Month. The administration responded.

**8. Public Question Period (Continued)**

Ann Clarke asked whether all teachers are required to be trained to teach students with special education needs. She remarked that there appears to be many racialized children who are being identified with special education needs. Reporting that she has had to become very involved in her child's education, she expressed concern that her child may find the transition into secondary school to be challenging. She stated that it would interesting to understand the reasons for black female students succeeding in school. Chair McDougald responded.

Nadine Williams expressed appreciation for the report. Stating that she is a local poet and author, she spoke about her work with the York Region DSB, and about her attempts to have her works used in Peel. She asked about opportunities for local artists to collaborate with the Board on Afro-Caribbean resources. The administration responded.

Karen Hinds, whose child attends a Peel school, spoke about her child's experience in French Immersion and asked whether another report will be prepared that takes into consideration the experiences of black students in K-Grade 8 in relation to French Immersion. She suggested that a survey of black girls can also be useful. Superintendent Grewal responded.

Carl James commended the work on the report and the action plan. He asked about steps to be taken to measure achievement of black male students, as well as overall achievement. Remarking that gathering more data will not prevent the action plan from moving forward, he referred to Peel's workforce census and queried as to whether it can be customized to survey students. He suggested that research and information from Britain may also be of help. The administration responded.

**9. Adjournment**

IP-44, moved by Nokha Dakroub, that the meeting adjourn (21:30 hours).

..... carried

..... Chair ..... Secretary