COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)   **5 June 2018**

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Equity Objective - By 2019, the District will reduce barriers to learning to improve equity of access and opportunity for all students.

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board promotes "a culture that continually balances equity of opportunity and access for all". The equity objective states: "By 2019, the District will reduce barriers to learning to improve equity of access and opportunity for all students".

In May 2017, the Ministry of Education established an Education Equity Secretariat tasked with building increased capacity and delivering on Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan. Over the past year, these changes have shaped the direction of the work at the OCDSB. The Action Plan emphasizes that while equity is important in and of itself, it is also necessary for achieving our other goals related to learning, well-being, and engagement. As pointed out in the Equity Action Plan, our biases are embedded in our policies, practices, and processes. These biases may result, unintentionally, in systemic barriers and differential treatment. To challenge the status quo and take a critical look at our biases, we must work to carefully acknowledge, respect, and understand our differences and their complexities – we must aim to be more culturally responsive.

We aim to ensure all students feel safe, welcomed and accepted, and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations. To establish an inclusive culture, the following three dimensions have been identified as foundational:
1. Institutional equity – refers to the system and the values developed and reflected in the school board policies, practices and procedures;
2. Personal equity – refers to the mindset of the educators and the practices they engage in;
3. Instructional equity – includes knowing learners well and considering the curriculum, classroom practices and conditions which lead to a culturally responsive classroom.[1]

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[1] Ontario Ministry of Education. (2013). Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: Towards Equity and Inclusivity in Ontario Schools. *Capacity Building Series, K-12*. Secretariat Special Edition 35. ISSN: 1913 8490 (online).

Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy (CRRP) is a process that guides the development of our work by incorporating students' lives and identities into the curriculum in meaningful ways. CRRP focuses on several components, such as holding high expectations; building a community where learners see themselves; and adopting a critically conscious view which includes examining issues of power and privilege and exploring such issues as racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism/ homophobia, ableism, and other forms of oppression, and how these play out in the world and in schools.

In the fall, a central OCDSB team attended training sessions hosted by the Ministry of Education so that they could train school staff this year. This spring, two school teams are participating in two full-day sessions focused on CRRP so that the learning can be shared. These sessions include discussion about common language, resources available, checking biases, and power and privilege.

The equity theme is threaded through all aspects of our work. For example, revisions to the Student Success Model, 7-12, are being undertaken with an equity focus. Through a staff survey earlier this year, we heard a prevalent theme: we need to be responding to the needs of our students. From this feedback, Curriculum Services crafted the mission statement for Student Success:

> *We will serve our students as advocates, guides, and mentors by looking at the whole child to provide diverse, inclusive, personalized, and innovative opportunities, which are developed collaboratively with students and caring adults, to remove barriers and support student achievement and social growth while enhancing their sense of well-being along their success journey.*

The Student Success Model is but one example. The work to move us forward in our equity work is plentiful, such as:
- professional development sessions (e.g., poverty; Indigenous Education);
- the distribution of the *Equity Continuum: Action for Critical Transformation in Schools and Classrooms* to all principals and vice principals;
- the expansion of inclusive washrooms (currently at 70% of facilities, with continued expansion planned next year);
- establishment of a Black Youth Conference to share and learn about the lived experiences of Black students;
- implementation of the geographic model for special education;
- distribution of a resource collection labeled *Stories of Identity: Learning about self, others, and change* to all elementary school libraries;

- being a member of the Knowledge Equity Network hosted by the University of Ottawa;
- hosting of annual events (e.g., Date with Diversity; Indigenous Youth Symposium; Rainbow Youth Forum)
- hiring of a K-8 Indigenous Itinerant teacher;
- facilitation of LGBTQ2S student presentations through the Get Real Movement;
- engaging the community and applying a diversity/equity/inclusion lens through the Advisory Committee on Equity (ACE) on district priorities, including the budget, human resources, gifted program, and disaggregation of data;
- and the application of an equity, inclusion and human rights perspective to our organizational structures, policies, programs and practices.

For the purposes of this report, progress on the equity objective is organized according to the strategies outlined in the strategic plan, with a focus on the key work identified in the 2017-2018 Director's Workplan. The specific strategies for supporting the equity objective are:
- "Develop and implement enhanced methodologies to differentiate the allocation of resources to improve equity of opportunity for all students";
- "Identify students and groups of students who face barriers to learning and differentiate supports to close achievement gaps"; and
- "Review and ensure effective use of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit funding to increase First Nations, Métis, and Inuit graduation rates".

Each of these will be discussed in turn.

Develop and implement enhanced methodologies to differentiate the allocation of resources to improve equity of opportunity for all students.

Collection of identity-based data
To make progress on the equity objective and address systemic barriers, our community has challenged us to report on racialized data. Last year, the province adopted new legislation and a framework to guide us, as we move to collect data that will help us better understand our students and their school experience. Under our equity strategy, one key piece of work has been determining the methodology for the collection and use of identity-based data. This year, OCDSB staff joined a working group with the Education Equity Secretariat (Ministry of Education) and select school boards in Ontario to discuss a common methodology for the collection of this data. By devising a consistent approach across school boards, and with the Ministry, we are better equipped to determine where systemic barriers exist and to help eliminate discriminatory biases in order to support equity, student achievement, and well-being.

In working to develop this consistent approach, a number of issues were encountered. Differences of opinion within the working group often led to debate around the variables to include, the ways in which we define the identified groups, the age-appropriateness of specific questions, and the method for which the data could/should be collected. These were rich conversations that led to a greater understanding of the issues across

the province, which in turn informed the representatives from the Ministry of Education in their work and provided insight to be considered for Anti-Racism Data Standards.

On April 20, 2018, the Ontario government approved Anti-Racism Data Standards and a new regulation under the Anti-Racism Act, 2017, that requires specific public sector organizations (PSOs) to collect race-based data. These standards (available at https://www.ontario.ca/document/data-standards-identification-and-monitoring-systemic-racism) outline the requirements for PSOs to consistently collect personal information to allow for comparisons across sectors and over time. Over the next five years, mandatory data collection will be phased-in as we plan for implementation and secure the necessary resources.

Black Youth Conference
Even without current racialized data, we have heard feedback from the community that there is a need to support our Black students. To address feelings of isolation and not belonging that have been expressed amongst this community, the OCDSB established a Black Youth Conference. On May 14th, 2018, Black students and their allies gathered at Confederation Education Centre to share their lived experiences that impact academic success and well-being.

Under the theme, *A Day in the Life of a Black Student,* the students engaged participants and delivered four workshops:
- Double Standards and Stereotypes;
- Cultural Appropriation;
- Intersectionality; and,
- Black Empowerment.

Use of special provisions for English Language Learners
Another goal this year was to enhance use of STEP assessments for English Language Learners (ELLs) to increase use of special provisions. This need was identified and discussed in the Measurement Report on Learning presented in the fall of 2017. This report showed that the majority of students with special education needs received accommodations for provincial EQAO assessments in elementary; in contrast, the majority of ELLs did not receive special provisions.
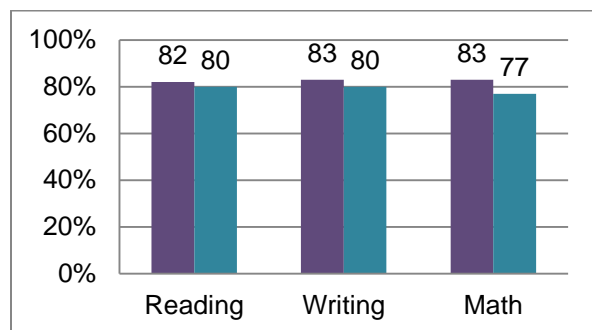

Figure 1. Proportion of students with special education needs receiving accommodations.
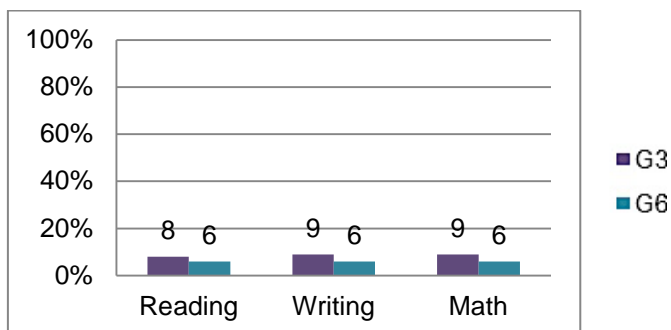

Figure 2. Proportion of ELLs receiving special provisions.

To increase the use of special provisions for ELLs, school staff was supported by Curriculum Services. Information regarding use of provisions, particularly to support the use of provisions during EQAO assessments, was shared through a presentation at a Principal Operations meeting and through several system memorandums. English Second Language staff and itinerants received training on Google Read and Write, and were tasked with connecting with principals and teachers to ensure understanding of provisions and accurate record-keeping of their use.

Although efforts have been made to address this need, data is not yet available to determine the impact of the work. Data from 2017-2018 EQAO assessments will be made available in fall 2018. At that time, we will be able to determine if there was an increase in the use of special provisions for ELLs or if additional strategies are required to further address this need. Once available, data on the use of special provisions will be discussed in upcoming measurement reports.

<u>Cultural-proficiency training</u>
This past year, the Human Resources Department launched bias-aware training called Beyond the Blink. This training is provided for managers and supervisors who are involved in the hiring process to help them be mindful of potential unconscious biases in their decision making process. The objectives of the training are to:
- Expand equity and inclusive lens on hiring practices;
- Enhance cultural competencies of hiring assessors;
- Increase awareness of conscious and unconscious bias that may impact equitable hiring; and,
- Review strategies to support equitable hiring.

<u>Updates to Resource Allocation Index based on Socioeconomics (RAISE) index</u>
The RAISE index is used by OCDSB staff to identify priority schools. RAISE is used by the Finance Department to allocate additional funds to school operating budgets that may be used to provide supports and services. In addition, the Human Resources Department uses RAISE in determining school staffing allocations where additional supports may be helpful in meeting the needs of students. The overall goal for using RAISE is to help mitigate the effects of socioeconomic or demographic barriers to learning.

In June 2017, the RAISE index was updated based on 2016-2017 data. This update was an important undertaking as it ensures that the index accurately captures the current characteristics of our neighbourhoods. Neighbourhoods are always evolving and these changes need to be reflected in the calculations of the index. Further, school openings and closures result in shifts of school populations and these changes also need to be taken into account when distributing resources. It is an important responsibility of the OCDSB to repeatedly revisit this index, and make updates accordingly, to ensure that we are making decisions based on the most accurate data possible.

The RAISE index is comprised of a set of indicators that research has shown to be associated with barriers to student learning. Statistical methods are used to combine the indicators into a single index-value for each school that identifies the level of need (in terms of barriers to learning) relative to other schools in the district. Indices for the elementary panel (JK to grade 8) and the secondary panel (grades 9 to 12) are generated separately. Allocation of additional resources to elementary and/or secondary schools is based on these relative needs. RAISE values of -1.0 and lower are considered to be lowest priority funding schools, while 1.0 and above are considered high priority. The breakdown of the number of schools identified as high and low priority, for elementary and secondary, is presented in the graphs below.
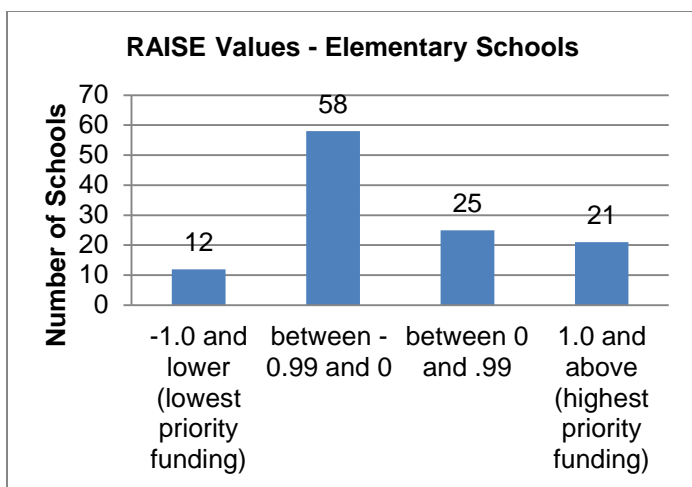

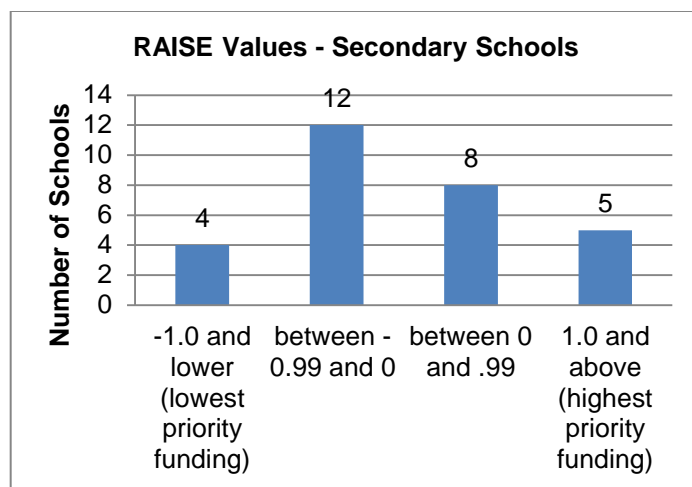Figure 3. RAISE breakdown for elementary schools.

Figure 4. RAISE breakdown for secondary schools.

To help mitigate the impact of socioeconomic factors on student achievement and learning, funds are allocated to support schools identified using the RAISE index. In 2017-2018, elementary schools identified in the RAISE index received a supplemental budget amount of $9.35 per student. Both elementary and secondary RAISE schools were able to request additional financial support for:

- Enrichment resources;
- Guest speakers and student workshops;
- Arts education and programming;
- Educational field trip transportation;
- Safe, healthy and accepting schools programming;
- Community outreach and engagement; and
- Tutoring and other individual supports.

Identify students and groups of students who face barriers to learning and differentiate supports to close achievement gaps

EQAO performance
As mentioned above, the OCDSB is working to gather identity-based data to better understand students and groups of students who face barriers to learning. Although

there is much work to be done, there is current data for monitoring progress of the following five groups of students:

- Females vs. males (48-50% vs. 50-52% of students);
- English Language Learners (ELLs; 20% of students);
- Students with special education needs (21% of students, not including gifted);
- Students who have self-identified as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit (FNMI; 2-5% of students); and
- Students residing in lower-income neighbourhoods (23-26% of students)[2].

When specific groups of students are not reaching their potential, disparity between groups of students are formed – referred to as an *achievement gap*. One of the ways in which the OCDSB monitors student performance and achievement gaps is by examining results from provincial assessments through the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). Success on this assessment is tracked at an individual student level and, as such, allows for comparisons of specific groups of students over time and in relation to the province (as reported in Report 17-085, *Measurement Report: Learning*).

The performance of all students, taken together as a whole, tends to be fairly consistent over time (within 4% from last year), with the exception of grade 9 applied math which evidenced an 8% decrease. The proportion of students meeting, or exceeding, the provincial standard on EQAO assessments increased in only two areas – both of which were in elementary reading. This demonstrates the need for significant work to improve outcomes for students, particularly in the area of mathematics which saw declines in all assessments. The results of all students are presented in details in the 2016-2017 Annual Student Achievement Report. Of interest for this report, is the comparison of performance of all students to those in the specific groups identified above, as well as trends over time.

Trends based on 2016-2017 EQAO assessments, compared to the average across the last three years of data, are presented in the graph below. Based on these results, there is evidence for gains made for students with special education needs[3] and students residing in lower income neighbourhoods. There is also evidence that the achievement gap is widening for English Language Learners (ELLs) and Indigenous students (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit; FNMI). There are limitations to these observations, given that some groups are comprised of small numbers of students and therefore we are to expect greater fluctuations over time; however, the data does provide insight on areas of growth and areas where additional strategies are needed.

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[2] Proportions of student population are based on 2016-2017 EQAO data (weighted proportions for grade 3 and 6 for elementary, and weighted proportions for both math courses and first-time eligible OSSLT for secondary).
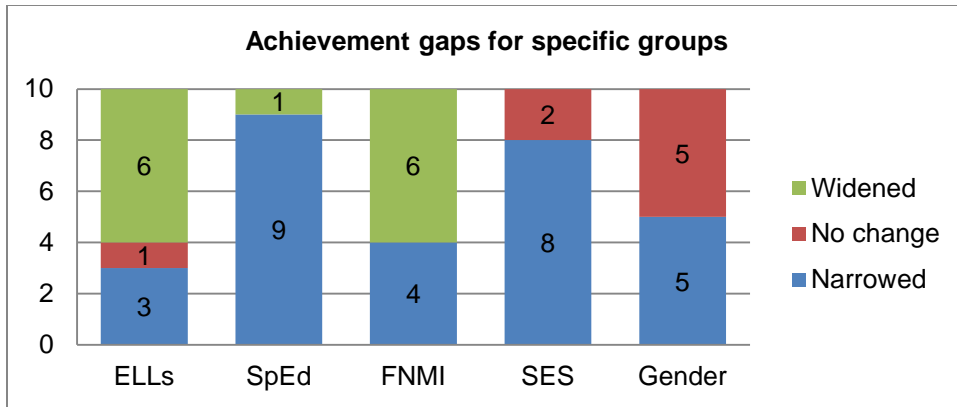[3] Analysis for this group excludes gifted students.

Figure 5. Number of assessments for which achievement gaps narrowed, stayed the same, or widened for identified groups of students (EQAO).
Note. Groups represented in the graph above are: English language learners (ELLs); students with special education needs (SpEd); students who have self-identified as Indigenous (FNMI); students residing in lower-income neighbourhoods (SES); and males vs. females (Gender).

Comparisons of the performance of specific groups of students to all students also yield valuable evidence of where progress is being made and where additional supports are needed to close achievement gaps. These comparisons, based on 2016-2017 EQAO results, are presented in the graphs below.
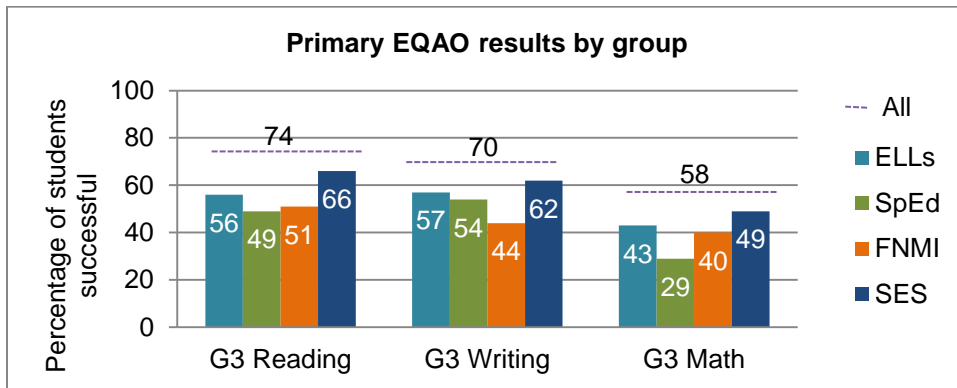

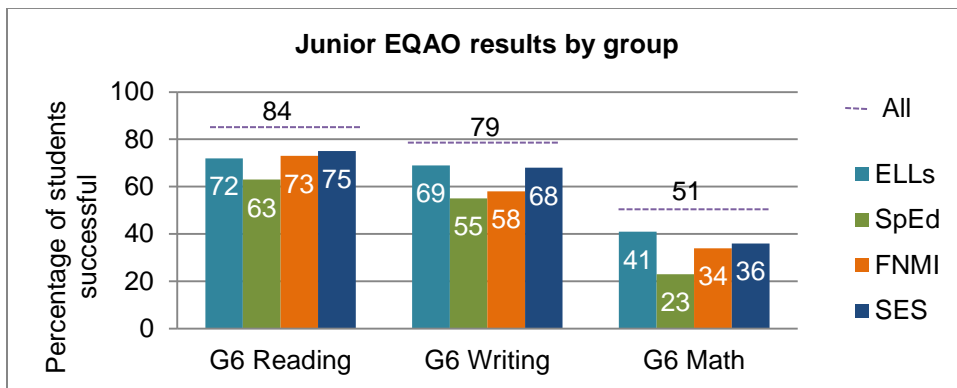Figure 6. Grade 3 reading, writing, and math EQAO results by group.

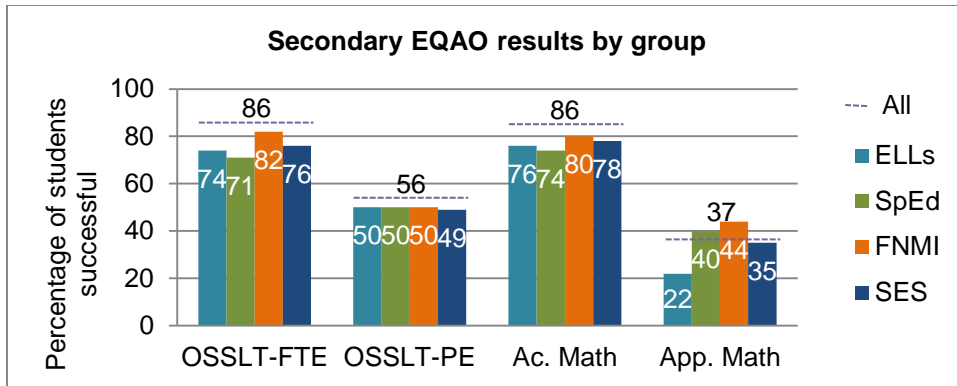Figure 7. Grade 6 reading, writing, and math EQAO results by group.

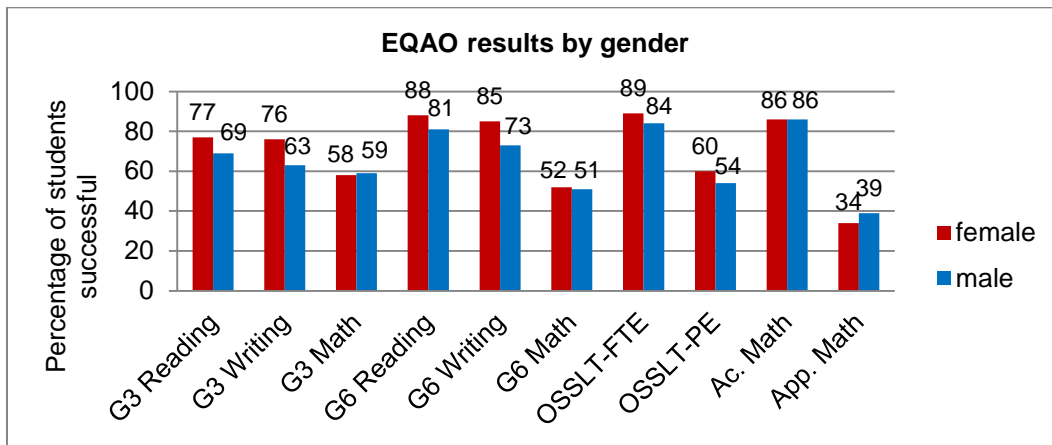Figure 8. OSSLT and grade 9 math EQAO result by group.

Figure 9. All EQAO assessment results by gender.

A fulsome discussion of these results was presented in the 2016-2017 Annual Student Achievement Report.

Across the elementary assessments, the largest gaps tend to be observed for students with special education needs (excluding gifted). Despite these gaps, OCDSB students with special education needs fare better than their provincial counterparts, and the narrowing of the gaps is progressing at a faster rate for the OCDSB than for the province.

Students with a Learning Disability (LD)
To better understand the achievement gap for students with special education needs, we took a closer look at students who comprise a relatively large proportion of that population: students with a Learning Disability (LD). Although students with LD represent a small proportion of the OCDSB population as a whole (approximately 4%), they represent a notable proportion of the students with special needs (approximately 15%).

Based on 2016-2017 EQAO results, students with LD were less successful on the elementary assessments as compared to all students as a whole. They were more successful, however, than students with a special education need (as a group) in all areas except grade 6 writing and math – on which they performed comparably well.

OCDSB students with LD also outperformed their provincial counterparts on all but one elementary EQAO assessment (grade 6 writing, for which performance was the same).
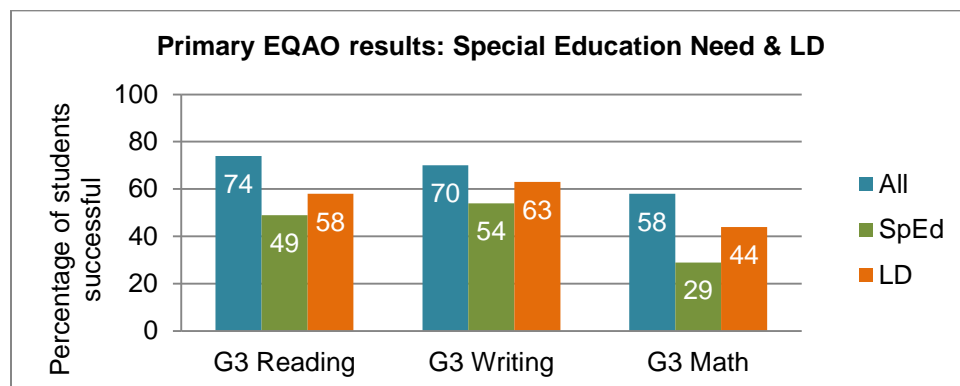

Figure 10. Grade 3 EQAO results for all students, students with a special education need, and students with LD.
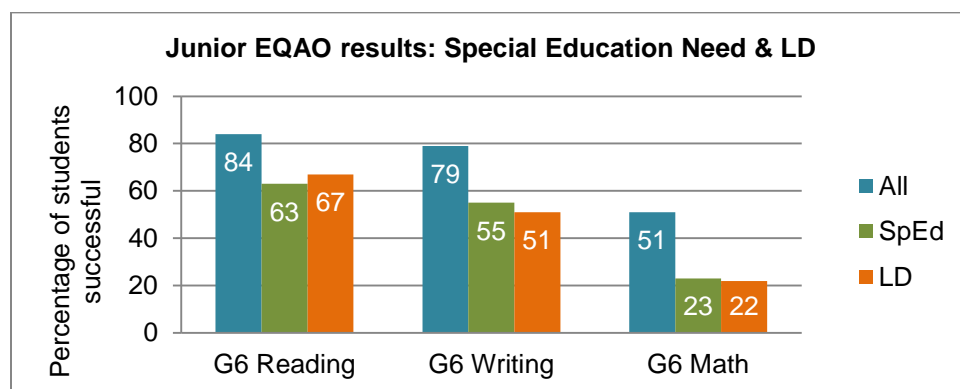

Figure 11. Grade 6 EQAO results for all students, students with a special education need, and students with LD.

At the secondary level, students with LD were less successful than all students on all EQAO assessments except grade 9 applied math – on which they were slightly more successful. As compared to students with a special education need (as a group), students with LD were more successful in grade 9 academic math and on OSSLT-FTE. Furthermore, OCDSB students with LD outperformed their provincial counterparts on all secondary EQAO assessments.

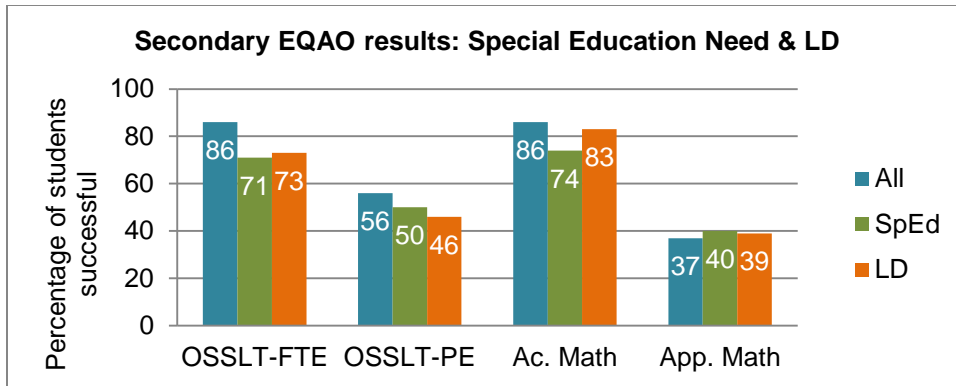**Secondary EQAO results: Special Education Need & LD**

Figure 12. Secondary EQAO results for all students, students with a special education need, and students with LD.

Based on this data, we see that although students with LD tend to be less successful than all students, they tend to outperform other students with a special education need. Further, OCDSB students with LD performed equally well or better than their provincial peers in every grade/panel and subject area. These results seem to suggest that OCDSB students with LD are well supported in their academic achievement when compared to students with similar profiles across the province. Students with LD, however, require continued support to close the achievement with all students. Further analysis of this data, and setting of specific performance targets, will help move this work forward.

Review and ensure effective use of FNMI funding to increase FNMI graduation rates:

English Course: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis and Inuit Voices
The District is gradually phasing in an English course with an Indigenous focus (NBE3U/C/E) as the grade 11 English course. This course is currently being implemented with all grade 11 students in one school. In September 2018, it will be implemented as a compulsory grade 11 course for students in nine secondary schools. To support the roll-out of the course, face-to-face learning sessions for teachers are underway with Indigenous community partners, Elders, fellow teachers, and Curriculum Services staff. Teachers take part in a combination of Indigenous Cultural Competency learning while diving deeper into the revised Indigenous Studies Curriculum. They are also provided with a list of resources and an opportunity to network through a virtual learning environment.

Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC)
The OCDSB will be launching an Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC), to ensure collaborative work with our Indigenous parents and partners, and the delivery of Indigenous education in an inclusive and equitable manner. The OCDSB has a strong framework for community participation in school board decision-making. The advisory committees to the Board are an important component of this framework. These committees allow community members to bring an important perspective to our work by providing informed advice to the Board.
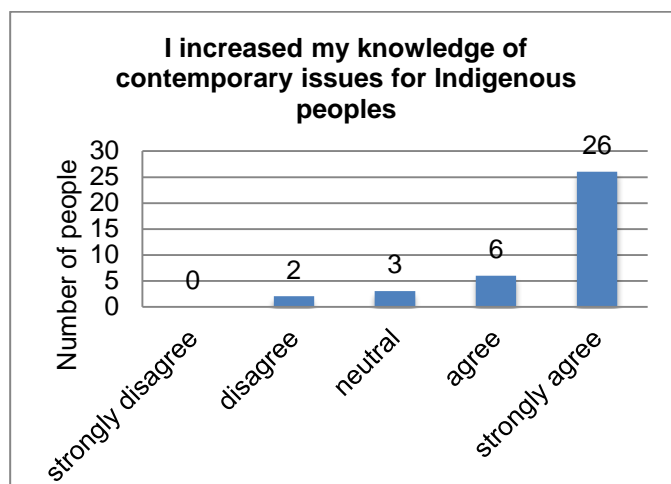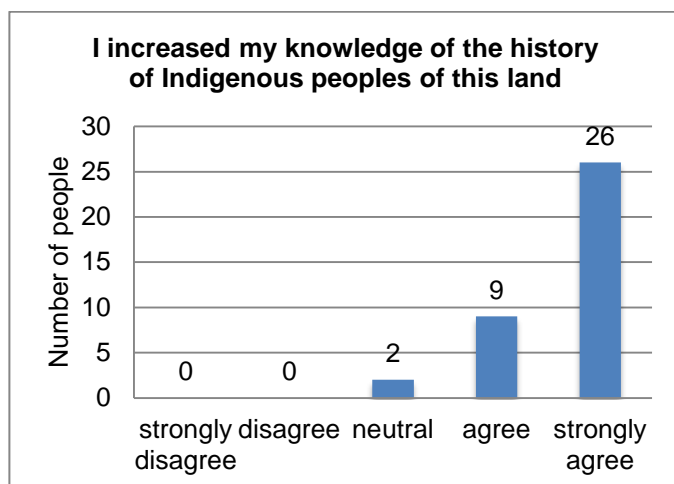
The mandate for the council includes:
- Providing advice and input to the Board Action Plan for Indigenous Education;
- Providing strategic advice on implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action for education;
- Assisting the Board of Trustees in its commitment to provide an equitable and inclusive education and work environment for Indigenous students and staff; and
- Advising the Board of Trustees on any issue affecting Indigenous students' learning and well-being. Through this relationship with the District, Indigenous students and their families may develop a more positive sense of belonging, well-being, and trust.
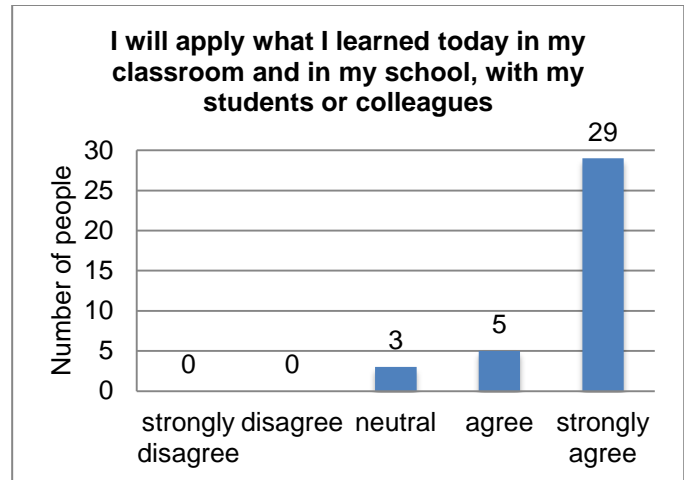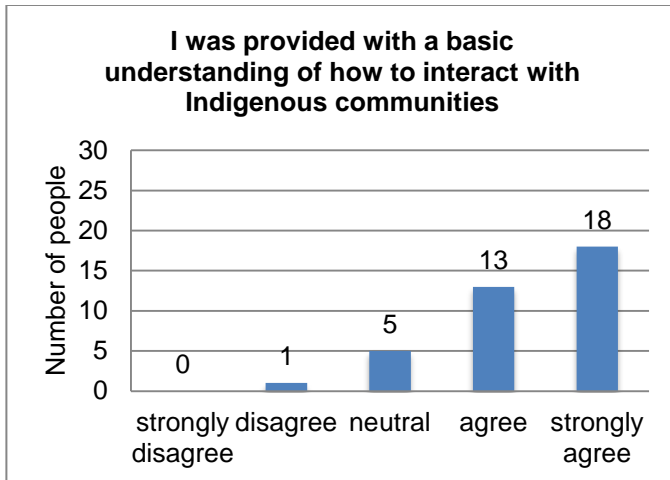
Professional Development
Opportunities for professional development took place throughout the school year. In October 2017, Trustees and senior staff had the opportunity to attend a professional development session with school staff and students at the Indigenous Cultural Lodge at Gloucester High School (Manidò Nagamon – Song of Spirit). This was an excellent opportunity for all present to better understand Indigenous education issues from both a system and a governance perspective.

Also in October 2017, a member from the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres delivered a session on cultural competency for about 45 OCDSB staff members (elementary and secondary). This session was supported by the presence of an Elder from the Indigenous community, and feedback suggested that it was a highly successful event (see graphs below). Qualitative feedback included statements such as: "I found the whole day very informative and hopeful for the future"; "it was a great presentation + should mandatory"; "great interactive workshop and realistic in the cultural awareness that is needed to be seen in schools"; and "most powerful work shop of my life, thank you".

Figures 13 & 14. Feedback from cultural competency PD session.

I was provided with a basic understanding of how to interact with Indigenous communities

Bar chart — Number of people:
- strongly disagree: 0
- disagree: 1
- neutral: 5
- agree: 13
- strongly agree: 18

I will apply what I learned today in my classroom and in my school, with my students or colleagues

Bar chart — Number of people:
- strongly disagree: 0
- disagree: 0
- neutral: 3
- agree: 5
- strongly agree: 29

Figures 15 & 16. Feedback from cultural competency PD session.

I Belong Here Program, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health

The Aboriginal School Liaison, through the I Belong Here Program, supports the OCDSB community through one-to-one visits, presentations, workshops, ceremonies, circles, and other events. The objectives are to:

- Act as an advocate for Indigenous students and their families between home and school;
- Provide in-school cultural support to First Nations, Inuit, Metis students;
- Improve academic achievement;
- Provide awareness and support in self-identifying as a First Nations, Inuit, Métis person at school; and
- Provide resources to help enhance cultural awareness and understanding to teachers/students/school board.

This work, funded by the OCDSB, took place in 39 schools and 110 classes (K-12), reaching over 6000 OCDSB community participants.

Indigenous Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (InSTEM) Pilot

A pilot program at Gloucester High School enables Indigenous students to experience STEM through the lens of both Indigenous cultural knowledge, and western science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The project is in partnership with Actua, University of Ottawa's Engineering Outreach program, and the Aboriginal Resource Centre. The goal is to create learning environments where Indigenous students see themselves being successful within the STEM fields of study, also providing cross-cultural learning experiences for participating non-Indigenous students. Through hands-on experiences, students engage in learning new technologies like 3D printing and laser cutting and create products aimed at addressing social and community issues. In 2016-2017, about 15 students participated during the lunch hour for course credit. This year, 2017-2018, the course has been added to the regular timetable and has 25 students enrolled.

Next steps

Moving forward on the equity objective, a primary goal is to build community trust. Although the District has increased its understanding of the need to check our biases and apply an equity lens to all aspects of our work, there is more work to be done. We have heard from our stakeholders that the OCDSB needs to gain community trust in public education because of their past experiences. By working together, through actively listening to and engaging our students, staff, parents/guardians, and community members, we aim to achieve this goal.

With this in mind, the Director of Education served on a panel at Ottawa City Hall on March 21, 2018, to discuss the District's progress since the launch of the report *Addressing Anti-Black Racism in Ottawa*. We have also been working with the Advisory Committee on Equity to revise the Board's policy, expand the scope, and clarify the structure. To drive system-wide change, the Equity Steering Committee is developing a District-level learning plan that is designed to reach all staff.

Next steps for each specific strategy under the equity objective have also been identified:

- Develop and implement enhanced methodologies to differentiate the allocation of resources to improve equity of opportunity for all students;
  As mentioned above, the collection of identity-based data will be instrumental in this work. This spring, the OCDSB received approval from the Ministry of Education for funding to support the work in preparation for this data collection. This work will include:
  - Hiring a researcher to review key documents, conduct an environmental scan, engage stakeholders through interviews and/or focus groups to capture stories of their lived experiences, and develop a process to measure and track the organization's culture shift (based on identified baseline) towards an equitable and inclusive learning and working environment (for students and staff);
  - Hiring a staff member in information technology to provide support in preparing for the collection and reporting of this data (i.e., analysis of the data collection, validation, system testing and readiness to report);
  - Developing a communications strategy to engage, listen and act upon feedback provided (an on-going process of sharing and being accountable as we move through development, implementation and measurement cycles); and
  - Building staff capacity around data collection and data use through an equity lens and how this informs context and content, decision making, pedagogy, access and climate/culture (i.e., communications and training for staff and community), hiring, promotion and measurement.

- Identify students and groups of students who face barriers to learning and differentiate supports to close achievement gaps;

An important next step under this objective was identified in the following motion approved by the Board at the May 15, 2018 Committee of the Whole meeting:
Be it resolved that, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board,

1. In commemoration of the 390th anniversary of the arrival in New France of the first student of African descent, joins the Orders of Government in adopting 2015- 2024 as the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent; and

2. Adopts and commits to the intent of the UN Decade for People of African Descent in Ottawa through our work to:
   i. Develop and undertake work on the Equity Action Plan;
   ii. Reduce barriers to learning to improve equity of access and opportunity for students of African descent;
   iii. Intentionally adopt practices to create a safe and caring learning environment that respects, promotes, and protects the human rights of children of African descent;
   iv. Collect and use identity-based data to measure our progress and inform decisions on policy and programs that impact the education of students; and
   v. Engage with parents and community organizations comprised of people of African descent in Ottawa to support their sense of belonging in the OCDSB education environment.

- Review and ensure effective use of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit funding to increase First Nations, Métis, and Inuit graduation rates;
  School leaders play a critical role in supporting Indigenous students at the OCDSB. A presentation by OCDSB staff at the Ontario Principals' Council's LeadON20 Forum discussed the importance of ensuring that Indigenous students have a learning experience that is free from discrimination, is culturally relevant, and is personalized to support the complex needs and specific strengths of Indigenous learners. The following four areas were identified for concentrated efforts:
  o Rebuilding the educational relationship with families and communities;
  o Reflecting Indigenous culture throughout school environment,
  o Fostering classrooms with responsive teaching practice; and
  o Having high expectations while providing elevated support.

Guiding Questions
The following questions are provided to support the discussion of this item by the Committee:
- How does our work align with Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan?
- How do we ensure equity at the institutional, personal, and instructional level?
- What does the evidence tell us about our progress?
- How will our work implementing identified data collection improve our understanding of our identified groups and the barriers that impact their learning?
- How does work on the equity objective intersect with the other objectives identified in the strategic plan?

_____   _____
Michele Giroux   Jennifer Adams
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(ext. 8607)   Secretary of the Board