

**Report of the Durham District School Board
Standing Committee Public Session
January 3, 2022**

The regular meeting of the Standing Committee of the Durham District School Board was held virtually.

1. Call to Order:

The Chair, Christine Thatcher called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

Members Present: Trustees Patrice Barnes, Chris Braney, Paul Crawford, Donna Edwards, Darlene Forbes, Niki Lundquist, Carolyn Morton, Linda Stone, Scott Templeton, Student Trustees James Kay, De-Mario Knowles, Kayla Malcolm

Regrets: Trustee Michael Barrett

Officials Present: Director Norah Marsh, Associate Director David Wright, Superintendents Gary Crossdale, Georgette Davis, Erin Elmhurst, Mohamed Hamid, Margaret Lazarus, Andrea McAuley, Heather Mundy, Stephen Nevills, Jack Nigro, Executive System Lead Robert Cerjanec, General Counsel Patrick Cotter

Recording Secretary: Kathy Fitzpatrick

2. Land Acknowledgement

The Durham District School Board acknowledges that many Indigenous Nations have longstanding relationships, both historic and modern, with the territories upon which our school board and schools are located. Today, this area is home to many Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island. We acknowledge that the Durham Region forms a part of the traditional and treaty territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, the Mississauga Peoples and the treaty territory of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation. It is on these ancestral and treaty lands that we teach, learn and live.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at this time.

4. Motion to Approve the Agenda

That the agenda be amended to add item 9.(a) Motion: Safety in Schools.

2022:SC01

MOVED by Trustee Scott Templeton

SECONDED by Trustee Niki Lundquist

THAT THE AGENDA BE APPROVED AS AMENDED.

CARRIED

5. Community Presentations

There were no community presentations at this time.

6. DDSB Presentations

There were no DDSB presentations at this time

7. Director's Update

Director Norah Marsh provided the following update for trustees:

Trustees were welcomed back to the first meeting of 2022 and thanked for their support since the last meeting at the beginning of December. Director Marsh acknowledged that the current situation has been a strain on the community and the system as the pandemic continues to force us to adapt at a rapid speed.

Prior to the presence of the most recent variant, staff were allocating all resources to keep schools open from September to December. This included teachers covering classes for colleagues who were away due to illness or self-isolation needs and not accessing their preparatory time, as well as allocating all available central staff to schools to keep schools open.

During the holiday season we received a report that the omicron variant is far more contagious than previous variants and spreading rapidly. Hospitals identified that the absenteeism rate for staff has increased four-fold. As a system this puts us in a dire situation for the safe operation of our schools as with the absenteeism of staff already, it is making it difficult to manage keeping schools open. Without additional measures, staff would have to look at regular closures of schools due to the lack of available staff for safe supervision of students.

Staff have continued to hire over the winter holiday break which included unqualified emergency occasional teachers and emergency educational assistants to back fill when qualified staff are not available. Staff are continuing to hire for all positions within the District to ensure that all schools are as safe as possible.

Director Norah Marsh shared that there was an announcement made by the province on Thursday, December 30, 2021. Communication was shared with families and staff regarding the province's plan. Staff have been working since Thursday to prepare, based on what they thought the plan would be this week. Given the high hospitalization rates this past weekend, the Chief Medical Officer shared that 1% of people will be hospitalized from COVID-19 and they will quickly run out of hospital space. Based on the province's announcement today, schools will be impacted as we are returning to step two of the provincial reopening plan.

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Schools will be closed to in-person learning until at least January 17, 2022, with the exception of very few students who are not able to access remote learning due to their exceptional needs. For all other students, they will transition to virtual/remote learning for at least two weeks. Staff have met with all system leaders to review how the system is going to adapt to the new circumstances. At this point formal direction in writing has not been received from the Ministry of Education. There may be a difference in what was reported through the media releases and press conferences and what direction Boards will receive in writing from the Ministry. Messaging to families will be based on the verbal briefing that was received from the Deputy Minister.

Emergency childcare will be provided in school sites primarily for healthcare workers and for staff who are involved in the limited special education in-person learning in our schools. There is an impact on our system in terms of our staff as there is a request for childcare to extend beyond regular hours to accommodate healthcare workers who are doing shift work and working during the weekend.

We have been asked to encourage all staff and students to be vaccinated. The medical community feels very strong that vaccination is a key strategy to mitigating the impact of this variant and COVID-19 within the community.

Staff will be communicating with families this evening the specific plan for moving to remote learning. The shift to remote learning is easier for secondary students as there is a one-to-one device deployment and the school schedule will remain the same with secondary schools shifting to remote learning on Wednesday, January 5, 2022. A message will be going out to families this evening. School staff will work on the shift in terms of the pedagogy and how different it looks in remote learning versus in-person learning.

There is a required change in scheduling for elementary schools because of the requirement for synchronous remote learning of 220 minutes per day. Based on feedback, we know that exceeding that time is overwhelming for students. School administrators are reworking school schedules and in terms of technology deployment, they are working on what the needs are within their community. Unfortunately, there is not sufficient technology for the one-to-one model for families with students in Kindergarten to Grade 6. Staff are committed to getting one device for every family that needs a device for connection purposes. School administrators will be looking for that information from families and staff will be working on the deployment plans, and for that reason elementary remote learning will begin on Thursday, January 6, 2022.

Where there is a need from a special education perspective for in-person learning, individualized conversations will occur to confirm attendance. Rerouting of transportation to schools will need to occur if necessary. The goal is that by Monday, January 10, 2022 classes will be in place.

Educators are being asked to pause on all assessments for a week as students adjust to the new learning environment. Staff are concerned with the impact this will have for secondary students in terms of grading. Previously, during a similar

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time the Ministry of Education had given approval to freeze all grades and that staff would only provide opportunities for improvement for students. The Ministry of Education has not given DDSB the authority for staff to freeze grades at this time, however we have the flexibility within the Growing Success Assessment and Evaluation Policy to direct educators, after the week of pausing assessments, that they use the most consistent grade and if there is a decline since moving to remote, that they do not lower the student's grade due to the challenging context of remote learning.

Director Norah Marsh recognized that there is a significant impact on staff because when schools close and staff are providing remote learning and taking on additional responsibilities, they may also have children at home. We will continue to accommodate staff as best as possible in terms of the dual roles they play.

Trustee questions were answered.

8. Recommended Actions

(a) Motion: Safety in Schools

Trustee Niki Lundquist provided an overview of the motions that she has brought forward to trustees with regards to safety in schools.

2022:SC02

MOVED by Trustee Niki Lundquist

SECONDED by Trustee Chris Braney

- (a) THAT THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, AND/OR HER DESIGNATES, TAKE ALL REASONABLE STEPS TO PUBLICLY REPORT DATA, TO THE EXTENT IT IS AVAILABLE, ON CONFIRMED AND PRESUMED CASES IN DDSB SCHOOLS;
- (b) THAT THE DDSB ENSURE FAMILIES AND STAFF HAVE A MECHANISM FOR SELF-REPORTING FOR THOSE WHO HAVE ACCESS TO TESTS, AND;
- (c) THAT THE BOARD PROVIDE INFORMATION ON SCHOOL AND CLASS CLOSURES AND UNUSUAL RATES OF ABSENTEEISM IN SCHOOLS COMMUNITIES.

2022:SC03

MOVED by Trustee Darlene Forbes

That the forgoing motion (2022:SC02) be amended to include the following:

- (d) SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT ALTER ITS DIRECTION ON THE COLLECTION OF THIS DATA, THE BOARD WILL REVISIT ITS POSITION.

CARRIED

2022:SC04

MOVED by Trustee Niki Lundquist

SECONDED by Trustee Chris Braney

- (a) THAT THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, AND/OR HER DESIGNATES, TAKE ALL REASONABLE STEPS TO PUBLICLY REPORT DATA, TO THE EXTENT IT IS AVAILABLE, ON CONFIRMED AND PRESUMED CASES IN DDSB SCHOOLS;
- (b) THAT THE DDSB ENSURE FAMILIES AND STAFF HAVE A MECHANISM FOR SELF-REPORTING FOR THOSE WHO HAVE ACCESS TO TESTS;
- (c) THAT THE BOARD PROVIDE INFORMATION ON SCHOOL AND CLASS CLOSURES AND UNUSUAL RATES OF ABSENTEEISM IN SCHOOLS COMMUNITIES; AND
- (d) SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT ALTER ITS DIRECTION ON THE COLLECTION OF THIS DATA, THE BOARD WILL REVISIT ITS POSITION.

CARRIED

2022:SC05

MOVED by Trustee Niki Lundquist

SECONDED by Trustee Scott Templeton

THAT MASKING FOR ALL STUDENTS, INCLUDING THOSE IN KINDERGARTEN AND JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN, BE MADE MANDATORY DURING IN PERSON LEARNING (SUBJECT TO CREDIBLE HUMAN RIGHTS EXCEPTIONS ONLY).

CARRIED

2022:SC06

MOVED by Trustee Niki Lundquist

SECONDED by Trustee Darlene Forbes

THAT THE DDSB, THROUGH ITS DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, LIAISE WITH REGIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH AUTHORITIES AND SEEK A COMMITMENT TO HOLD ACCESSIBLE AND EQUITABLE VACCINATION CLINICS FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS OF THE DDSB IN HIGH NEEDS AREAS, AND/OR IN AREAS WHERE VACCINATION RATES REMAIN LOWER THAN AVERAGE SO AS TO FACILITATE EASE OF ACCESS PRIOR TO THE SCHEDULED RETURN TO SCHOOL ON JANUARY 17TH.

CARRIED

9. Information Items

(a) Student Trustee Report

Student trustee James Kay provided an overview of the Student Senate meeting that took place on December 13, 2021. Human Rights and Equity Advisor Devika Mathur was a guest, and the group discussed the new draft Human Rights Policy. Together they discussed the importance of this policy as well as how student voice and values can be represented and incorporated into it.

Regional Updates:

Student trustee James Kay provided an update for the Northern Region and shared that they are approaching the final stages of the 'North Durham Introductory Video'. Upon completion, student senators will bring the video back to their respective schools and request that it be played in homeroom classes. This initiative will hopefully serve as one of many opportunities to promote and work towards the goal of uniting and connecting the three northern secondary schools and their students.

Student trustee Kayla Malcolm provided an update for the West Region and shared information with regards to the Community Hours, Resources and Places document where it was shared with the senators. Student trustee Kayla Malcolm introduced a new initiative for the region in hopes that the planning phase will soon be complete and ready to share.

Student trustee De-Mario Knowles provided an update on the East Region and shared that senators received an opportunity to converse about their respective schools. The majority of schools in the east hosted holiday-themed events and activities such as Warm and Cozy Day and a Festive Colour Day in order to get into the holiday spirit.

Working Groups:

Student trustee Kayla Malcolm provided an update on the Student Voice working group and shared that she met with the senators about having specific student representatives at their schools that were attached to their Student Activity Councils or Student Governments, such as grade level or homeroom representatives.

Student trustee De-Mario Knowles provided an update on the Equity Working Group and shared that they have begun to construct plans and initiatives that will occur during the course of the remainder of the school year. Some ideas that were discussed included the creation of social media posts that spread awareness about cultural holidays and creating resources that provide information about the use and importance of gender pronouns.

Student trustee James Kay provided an update on the Student Success working group and shared that they are continuing to work towards the project 'The INs and OUTs of Finding Help Resource'. Senators are working diligently to answer the 5 W's of finding help to provide a clearer picture for DDSB students on what finding help truly means and looks like. It is anticipated that this resource will take many months to complete and they intend on having a rough draft completed for May to tie in with Mental Health Awareness Month.

(b) AODA Compliance Update and LEAD Canada Process

Superintendent Heather Mundy provided trustees with an overview on the recent Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Compliance Audit and the

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LEAD Canada Process. The Durham District School Board (DDSB) submitted its annual AODA Compliance Report in June 2021. In August 2021, the DDSB was selected by the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility for an AODA Desk Audit. Working with the Senior Compliance Analyst from the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, DDSB staff reviewed the AODA compliance and updated the DDSB Employee Emergency Response Plan. The AODA Desk Audit was completed in November 2021.

(c) Trustee Attendance Records

Chair Carolyn Morton presented the attendance records from December 2020-November 2021 for the information of Trustees.

(d) Free Menstrual Products Update

Associate Director David Wright provided trustee with an update on the Free Menstrual Products Program. This program was approved by trustees on March 22, 2021 and is being rolled out over the next two school years. Associate Director David Wright also shared the financial information as well as that in October 2021 it was announced that a three-year partnership will take place with Shoppers Drug Mart to provide free menstrual products to school boards for students ages thirteen to eighteen.

(e) OPSBA Report

There is nothing to report at this time.

10. Committee Reports

(a) Equity and Diversity Ad Hoc Steering Committee, October 27, 2021

Patrice Barnes provided trustees with a summary of the October 27, 2021, Equity and Diversity Ad Hoc Steering Committee meeting.

12. Correspondence

- i. Halton District School Board (2 Letters)
- ii. Thames Valley District School Board

The above correspondence was shared with trustees for information.

13. Other Business

There was no other business at this time.

14. Adjournment

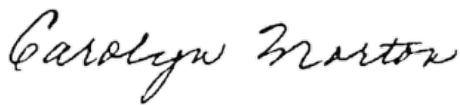
2022:SC07

MOVED by Trustee Christine Thatcher

THAT THE MEETING DOES NOW ADJOURN.

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:49 p.m.



Chair



Secretary