



Trustees Discuss Concern for the Provincial Government's Proposed Plan for Remote Learning

At the May 4 board meeting, CDSBEO Trustees discussed their concern regarding the province's intention to continue with online distance learning for students.

"The provincial government plans to move forward with online learning for the next calendar year," began Chair Lalonde. "The concern for myself, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, and many other school boards across the province, is that distance learning was brought in to support the continuation of learning during COVID, and to provide learning opportunities for students under these special circumstances."

Chair Lalonde noted that OCSTA has discussed their concerns with the province, including how this may affect and disrupt student learning experiences across Ontario.

"Overall, long-term implementation of distance learning will mean that education services will suffer. Online learning may create significant disadvantages for various marginalized groups, including rural students without access to broadband networks, those without access to devices, students who require special education services, as well as the complex considerations for small rural schools and remote communities. Social inequities are a major concern. This plan was put in place for COVID, and we have been asked to take a position. We believe that the best education is an education in person."

Vice-chair Wilson noted that she believes the mental health of children is suffering.

"The amount of screen time that is being imposed on students is unacceptable, and I am not in support of long-term online learning. I think its implementation would be a great disservice to our children and their future."

Trustee Cooney noted the importance of the school boards to represent the unique characteristics of their individual communities, and the best way to deliver education services based on need.

"It's impossible to think that one governing body could support all of these communities virtually, given their very individual needs."

Trustee McAllister expressed her concern, noting that there is room for online learning in some circumstances, such as to provide more robust course selection for secondary students, but that these courses are more effectively implemented when they are managed and facilitated by a teacher.

"I have always felt that students need a choice in some circumstances, such as for secondary course selection. However, they should be monitored and supported closely by qualified teachers, preferably within the school environment," she explained.



A recent statement issued to the province by OCSTA President Patrick Daly stated:

“Reports that the government is considering expanding access to online and remote learning threatens to undermine the quality of education for students and is of deep concern to Ontario’s 29 publicly funded Catholic School Boards. These significant concerns and serious implications include negatively impacting the quality of learning experiences and equity in opportunity for students, including the potential for immediate and long-term reductions in funding, as well as the ability of Catholic and other school systems to realize their distinct missions.”

The motion was passed to send a letter to the Premier, all MPP’s, and the Ministry of Education.

Special Education for Administrators – Building Capacity

As part of the professional development plan for leaders, all vice-principals within the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario took part in the Catholic Principals’ Council of Ontario’s (CPCO) Special Education for Administrators Additional Qualification Course (SEA-AQ) during the 2020-2021 school year. Superintendent of School Effectiveness, Heather Gerber, the course instructor, shared with Trustees, the rich learning that took place during the course to build leadership capacity and best practices to support students with special education needs.

Providing consistent professional development such as this helps ensure that our leaders are equipped with the most current policies, documents, and procedures to ensure student success for all learners. To build leadership capacity for school leaders in meeting the needs of students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), the Ontario Ministry of Education has created subsidies for the Special Education for Administrators Additional Qualification Program (SEA-AQ).

“This course was offered to all CDSBEO vice-principals who did not already have the qualification,” began Superintendent Gerber.

“The course looked at the Ontario Leadership Framework, Ice Monographs, videos, readings and how school leaders can use these tools to ensure an inclusive education setting for all students. We looked at our Mental Health Strategy, Equity Plan, Strategic Plan, Board Improvement Plan, and School Improvement Plans, to name a few. Additionally, we hosted several guest speakers from within our Board to ensure the learning had a local flavour!”

Superintendent Gerber noted that many different technologies were used and embraced throughout the course. Participants engaged in creative learning using various tools with assignments that encouraged ingenuity around inclusive education, and how administrators can impact special education programs in a positive way. The practicums looked at relevant



legislation, literature, and policies and included data, considerations of benefits to schools, parents, and students. Additionally, participants were asked to make connections to board and school improvement plans, demonstrate the application of theory to practice, include personal reflections and next steps.

"One of the main ideas I reiterated as key learning during this course was the phrase – *move out of judgement and into curiosity*. Too often we judge parents or students not knowing their background, not knowing if there are mental wellness concerns, a history of trauma, or intergenerational trauma. It is our job as educators to become behaviour detectives and help our students regulate and feel safe, so that they are able to access their curriculum and learning," explained Superintendent Gerber.

"Thank you, Superintendent Gerber, for this enlightening presentation," concluded Chair Lalonde. "It is always wonderful when educators can come together and collaborate and share ideas to enrich the learning experiences for our students."

School Board Progress Reports, Graduation Rate & Student Success Update

The Ministry of Education has recently released the 2018-2019 provincial graduation rates. The data collected by the Ministry is based on the cohort of students who started grade 9 four years prior (in 2014-2015). The information is retrieved through the Ontario School Information System (OnSIS). Annually, the Ministry of Education provides the Board with a graduation rate based on a four and five-year formula.

Effective CDSBEO Student Success initiatives play a significant role in graduation rates. Superintendent of School Effectiveness, Natalie Cameron, presented details on the results of the latest graduation rates, as well as information on some of the initiatives which are helping CDSBEO students to experience a successful graduation outcome.

"Each year, the Ministry of Education reports on our progress across ten key indicators in the School Board Progress Reports. These indicators include grade 6 reading results, grade 10 literacy, the percentage of students who have completed 16 credits or more by the end of grade 10, the percentage of students who have completed 23 credits or more by the end of grade 11, and the percentage of students who graduated with an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) within four or five years of starting Grade 9," began Superintendent Cameron.

These key indicators have shown a high rate of success for CDSBEO learners and based on the latest statistics released by the Ministry, the CDSBEO four-year graduation rate was 87.5 per cent (provincial rate 81.4), and the five-year graduation rate was 90.4 per cent (provincial rate 87.2).



"Student success initiatives help to ensure our students are achieving a successful graduation outcome. Our goal is to support students in their chosen pathway," noted Superintendent Cameron.

Superintendent Cameron highlighted several initiatives within the school that are helping secondary students to be engaged in their learning, including opportunities for virtual reality exploration, and support for course selection, pathway planning and career research through myBlueprint – a tool to help students discover post-secondary learning options beginning in grade 7.

"The Student Success Teams at each school also focused on supporting each and every student whether it is with assignment completion, anxiety coping tools, attendance, or mental health supports," explained Superintendent Cameron. "Teams meet regularly to discuss student progress and then pay particular attention to the students most at-risk. There are daily check-ins, calls home, virtual chats, and attendance checks, when students demonstrate signs of disengagement. The Student Success Teams put strategies in place to help re-engage our learners."

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, CDSBEO students were still eager to take part in Dual Credit opportunities, which were delivered virtually, with some face-to-face delivery of OYAP and trades programs.

"Our two partner colleges, Algonquin and St. Lawrence, were very accommodating and continued to support our Dual Credit students by offering virtual classes as well as engagement opportunities for younger students. Algonquin College and St. Lawrence College both met frequently with our Dual Credit and OYAP coordinators to trouble-shoot and discuss the best ways to support learners. They have also coordinated with Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) leads to offer Dual Credit courses that would help support completion of credits for SHSM students."

Additionally, as many co-op students had difficulty maintaining placements due to periods of lockdown, Student Success Teams provided alternate experiential learning opportunities through certifications. These certifications were previously used primarily for SHSM students but were made available to all Co-operative Education learners this year.

Superintendent Cameron provided many testimonials and success stories shared by learners and educators in several video testimonials, as well as details of the many virtual trades events and career fairs, which were hosted by the Board for students and parents.

"Thank you so much Superintendent Cameron, for providing this update," concluded Chair Lalonde. "It is wonderful to see that our Board has worked hard to continue to provide enriching learning opportunities for our students in these exceptional circumstances, and we are grateful to see the successful graduation outcomes for our Board."