



## Measurement Report: Engagement Report No. 18-005

---

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)

16 January 2018

**Key Contact: Michele Giroux, Executive Officer, Corporate Services, 613-596-8211 ext. 8607**

### **Engagement Objective - By 2019, the District will increase opportunities for engagement with and among our students, staff, families and broader community.**

The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board promotes “a culture which actively encourages involvement in public education to support positive outcomes”. The engagement objective states: “By 2019, the District will increase opportunities for engagement with and among our students, staff, families and broader community”. Strategies to support this objective are:

- “Develop tools to support parent involvement in learning and well-being; and
- Develop strategies to enhance communication and dialogue with and among staff, students, families and community partners to improve the delivery of public education”.

Both of these strategies involve building authentic partnerships to improve educational outcomes. Such partnerships are “essentially a process of engagement, not a product. It is a way of doing things, rather than an outcome in itself”.<sup>1</sup> It is important to keep this in mind, as we carry out our work in this area. It is through these authentic partnerships that schools and families engage in “co-producing student learning”.<sup>2</sup>

The OCDSB has been working to increase opportunities for engagement as a strategic objective in and of itself, and as a strategy for making progress on the District’s other four key objectives. This work attempts to balance the width and depth involved when engaging stakeholders. For the purpose of this report, key work on engagement will be organized by strategy and discussed as evidence of progress.

#### **Strategy: Develop tools to support parent involvement in learning and well-being**

This strategy aims to facilitate parents’ ability to be involved in their child’s education by building a strong communications infrastructure which ensures parents have easy and timely access to information. Over the past three years, the OCDSB has been developing tools to facilitate communications and information sharing with parents. In

---

<sup>1</sup> Healey, M., Flint, A. & Harrington, K. (2014). *Engagement through partnership: students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education*. York: Higher Education Academy.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Education, Student Achievement Division (2012). *Co-producing Learning: The Family Path. Webcasts for Educators*. Retrieved from: <http://www.curriculum.org/secretariat/coproducing/>

the past year, the District has successfully launched a series of new and/or enhanced tools which provide a solid foundation for ensuring parents have access to timely information from the District, school, and classroom.

**Tools for supporting parent access to information:**

- New District and school websites;
- Staff, student, and parent portals;
- Newsletters; and
- Social media presence.

New District and school websites

In August 2017, the OCDSB launched a new district website. In October 2017, all school websites were also migrated to the new platform. The new websites are better organized, easier to navigate, contain simpler language, have translation to over 100 languages, the capacity to relay urgent announcements, and are mobile friendly. The websites are fully accessible and include a Browse Aloud Accessibility Feature, meaning that every page has a tool that features text-to-speech conversion (reads any selected text aloud); text magnification (enlarges text and reads it out loud); MP3 generation (converts selected text into an MP3 audio file); screen mask (blocks distractions on screen with a tinted mask); and web page simplification (removes clutter from the screen, displaying only the main text).

The website migration ensures consistency in communication standards for all schools, but also facilitates website maintenance and significantly improves our ability to better support school principals in communicating with parents. The next step in the development of the website is the launch of a new OCDSB app. The app moves key web content information into a push notification environment based on the user preferences (i.e., parents will be able to select the schools and type of information they want to receive).

Staff, student, and parent portals

In August 2017, the District launched three new portals – a student portal, a staff portal and a parent portal. The portals, launched one year ahead of schedule, serve as a single access point for information, tools, and resources.

The staff portal is a critical step forward for the District in terms of our internal communications and information management infrastructure. The OCDSB did not have an intranet environment, internal communication mechanisms were limited, and employees had to access software tools, information and resources in different places. The staff portal has a single sign-on, which is role based and allows employees to quickly and easily locate the information and tools that they need. For educators, the staff portal brings their administrative tools (GEM, Google, Employee Inquiry, etc.) and their educational tools (Desire 2Learn, Career Cruising, IEPOnline) together in one space. This will be instrumental in building capacity, improving efficiency, and optimizing the functionality of our resources.

The student portal is similar in many respects to the staff portal. It has a single sign-on which provides students with access to all of the tools available to students.

The parent portal is open to all parents, and does not require login credentials. It currently serves as an information source, but improved functionality will be added to the parent portal over the next two years. These additions will include online form completion, online payments, reporting of student absences, and more.

### Newsletters

While websites create repositories for content, newsletters and email communication ensure key messages are provided to parents. The District has made a number of investments in our communications infrastructure to enhance our capacity to update parents by email.

The OCDSB uses a weekly School Council Newsletter to communicate with engaged parents on a regular basis. The newsletter has over 1200 subscribers and is often redistributed by school principals and/or school councils in whole or in part. Statistics from 2016-2017 show that typically around 40% of subscribers open the newsletter each week.

This year, the District has also regularized distribution of a monthly newsletter, called Keeping You Connected, which is sent to all families. This is sent at the start of every month, and includes highlights from Board meetings, information about key dates and upcoming initiatives, or information important to all families in the District.

### Social media presence

The growth of technology has changed the way in which the District engages with the parent community and has introduced opportunities for interactive communication. The OCDSB has District accounts for Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, and schools manage additional social media platforms for their individual communities. In the last year, the District has used social media, YouTube specifically, as a tool for improving parent access to Board meetings.

In February 2017, the OCDSB began using YouTube as a platform for livestreaming meetings so that parents and community members can watch anytime, from any location, removing the barriers associated with physical attendance at Board meetings. From February through to the end of the school year, videos of individual Boardroom meetings were viewed from 42 to 738 times. The high number of views suggests that this tool has been successful in helping the OCDSB reach parents who may have not otherwise had the opportunity to attend the meeting.

### **Tools for parents to support learning:**

In addition to supporting our capacity to communicate with parents, the District has also been working on tools to help parents support learning. Some examples include:

- Voilá Learning;
- Parent involvement in School Learning Plans; and

- Interactive insight platform.

### Voilà Learning

Voilà Learning is an ed-tech organization that specializes in learning through virtual reality. Viola Learning's virtual campus is a valuable tool for families because it promotes learning while playing in an interactive setting. The OCDSB invests in this service so that every student has access to the virtual learning space, which connects them to online teachers who are ready to help with math, French, and English, four times a week. This tool aims to bridge the gap between home and school, and feedback suggests that this is particularly successful in cases where students are in a French Immersion program and have non-French speaking parents at home. Of the students and parents using the system, 95% report finding it helpful/very helpful. Students register to use the system on an annual basis; with the number of registrants growing each year since the service was acquired in 2014-2015. The number of regular users (i.e., using the virtual campus at least twice a week) has also been increasing over time, as shown below.

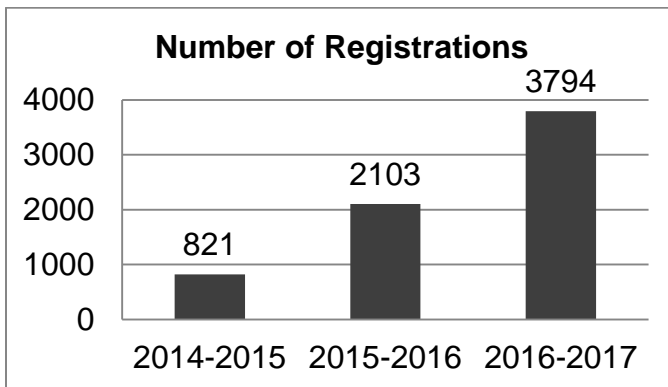


Figure 1. Number of registered Voila Learning users.

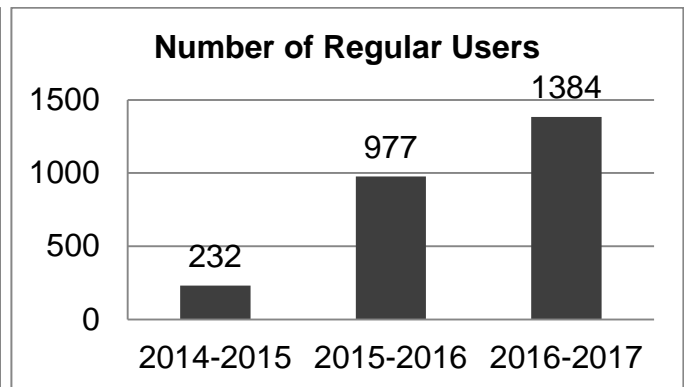


Figure 2. Number of regular Voila Learning users.

### Parent involvement in School Learning Plans

Each fall, school teams develop strategies to support student learning and well-being through School Learning Plans (SLPs). SLPs are an important tool for schools, as school staff aim to focus their work and areas of growth, plan for monitoring progress, and communicate the plan to their community. To optimize the use of SLPs, the OCDSB is encouraging student and parent engagement in this process. Although parent involvement is in the early stages, schools are communicating the SLP to parents to help them support their child's learning at home. In May 2017, schools were surveyed on whether or not they had involved parents in the SLP yet, and if so, how that was done. Of the 116 schools that responded, 99 reported involving parents in some way. Schools that involved parents in the SLP, tended to do so through their school council ( $n=89$ ). A smaller number of schools employed other strategies, including school communication, math nights, open houses, focus groups, surveys, and use of bulletin boards.

Although less frequent than parent involvement, a number of schools have also begun directly involving students in the SLP. Of the 115 schools that responded in May 2017,

57 reported involving students. Mostly commonly, students were involved through focus groups ( $n=17$ ), Student Council/Student Senators ( $n=9$ ), and SpeakUp projects ( $n=7$ ). Student voice is an important part of the SLP and continued engagement in this area will be used to further enhance this work.

### Interactive insight platform

Communications tools are helpful for parent involvement, but parent engagement requires additional strategies. To better support parent engagement, the District uses an interactive insight platform. An interactive insight platform takes engagement beyond the unidirectional provision of information gives stakeholders the opportunity to share their input, as well as the opportunity to hear input from others. This contributes to student learning and well-being by providing stakeholders with a voice that shapes public education.

The OCDSB uses thoughtexchange™ as a mechanism for stakeholders to share their thoughts, learn the thoughts of others, and identify those thoughts which most resonate with them. In 2016-2017, the OCDSB obtained a license agreement which allows for the use of this tool in multiple settings. These exchanges have been useful for engaging staff, students, parents, and community members in consultation on important decisions, such as the 2016-2017 accommodation reviews. Thoughtexchange™ participation rates for the accommodation reviews were very high, as presented in Table 1. Overall, participants shared 7,915 thoughts (phase 1) and assigned 267,703 stars (phase 2).

Table 1. *Total number of participants in the thoughtexchanges on the accommodation reviews.*

Parents	Students	Staff	Other/Unknown	Total
2,938	594	507	95	<b>4,134</b>

This year, the thoughtexchange tool is being used to engage stakeholders on a variety of topics. The extended use of the tool is made possible through a simplified version of the application which allows for sharing and starring of thoughts simultaneously (as opposed to two separate phases). This allows for exchanges to happen at a single point in time, and can be a useful strategy to engage people during an event. This has been successful in the following scenarios so far this year:

Table 2. *Thoughtexchanges conducted.*

<b>Audience</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Thoughts shared</b>	<b>Stars assigned</b>
Principals, Vice-principals, Managers, etc. at System Leaders' Meeting	How can your team incorporate the Exit Outcomes in their work to support student achievement and well-being?	426	266	1,621
		<i>Read the results here: <a href="http://bit.ly/ocdsbleaders">http://bit.ly/ocdsbleaders</a></i>		

Principals at a monthly super-intendency meeting	What are some next steps/strategies/initiatives that you will be undertaking in order to address student well-being in your school?	130	162	2,313
		<i>Read the results here: <a href="http://bit.ly/SLP_2017-18">http://bit.ly/SLP_2017-18</a></i>		
Parents at an information night for a secondary school	What are your top priorities for your child's education this year?	116	64	1,031
		<i>Read the results here: <a href="http://bit.ly/OCDSB_priorities">http://bit.ly/OCDSB_priorities</a></i>		

The success of a school-level exchange to engage parents has inspired a new strategy for using the tool. The staff members of the Research, Evaluation, and Analytics Division are undergoing training so that they may support individual schools in using this tool to engage their communities in support of student learning.

This tool is unique in that it can be used to enhance communication *with and among* stakeholders; therefore is it also useful for making progress on the second engagement strategy, focused on enhancing communication to improve the delivery of public education.

**Strategy: Develop strategies to enhance communication and dialogue with and among staff, students, families and community partners to improve the delivery of public education**

This strategy is focused on giving stakeholders a voice and really listening to what they have to say. By enhancing communication with and among stakeholders, the OCDSB gains perspective and is better able to serve our students. The OCDSB has undertaken a variety of projects to better engage stakeholders, including:

- Initiatives funded through the Ministry of Education's Parents Reaching Out Grant;
- Speaker Series;
- Parent Conference;
- Use of an online chat platform during meetings;
- Analysis of survey data to inform practice; and
- Targeted engagement of at-risk populations:
  - Indigenous students/families;
  - The LGBTQ+ community;
  - English Language Learners; and
  - Youth who are homeless/at risk of homelessness.

Initiatives funded through the Ministry of Education's Parents Reaching Out Grant

The Ministry of Education's Parents Reaching Out (PRO) grants are designed to support the identification of barriers to parent engagement in a community, and to find local solutions. Through this funding, 82 OCDSB schools (77 elementary schools and five high schools) will offer Math Nights, Healthy Living Workshops, Safe Technology

Presentations, and many other initiatives this year. Funding also supports parent involvement at the District level through the OCDSB Annual Parent Conference and School Council Training Day, as well as the Speakers Series for the 2017-2018 school year. Funding is up to \$1000 per school (\$80,199 across schools), with District funding being \$12,500, for a total PRO grant funding of \$92,699 for the 2017-18 school year. The number of school councils receiving funding, as well as the overall amount of funds received, has been increasing over time (see figures below).

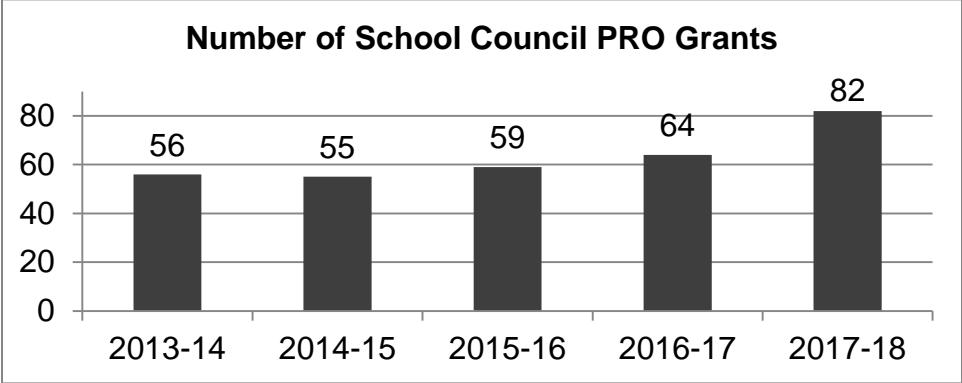


Figure 3. Number of School Councils to receive PRO Grants over the years.

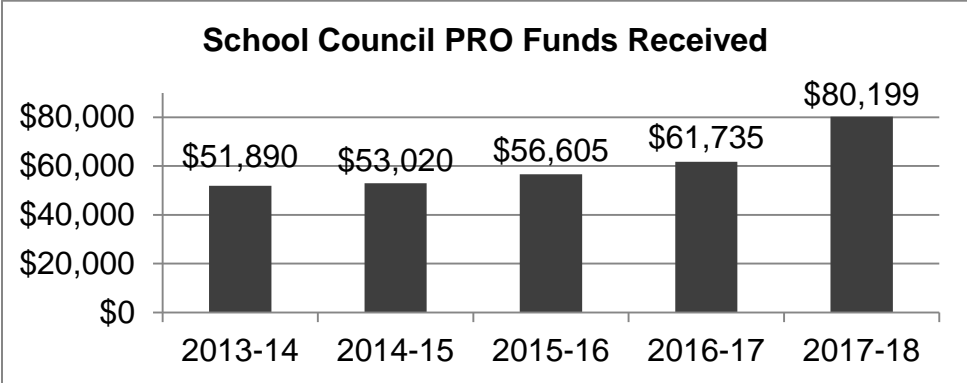


Figure 4. Total funds School Councils received in PRO grants over the years.

The District supports schools and school councils in applying for this funding. Specific supports are provided to priority schools, as identified by the Ministry of Education. Principals of priority schools are invited to a PRO grant teleconference and are provided with resources to help develop a successful proposal. Last year, of the 12 priority schools identified, eight schools received PRO funds. The initiatives for these schools focused on math, parent engagement, character development, family wellness, study skills, and bullying prevention.

Speaker Series

The OCDSB Speaker Series offers free presentations to the community and seeks to provide parents and educators with access to leading ideas in education. The series is sponsored by the District's Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) and supported through the PRO grant funding discussed above. Last year, parents who attended the Speaker Series had the opportunity to learn more about: speaking out against racism and

intolerance; gender identity and gender expression; First Nations, Métis and Inuit student well-being; and the importance of sleep in children and adolescents. By hosting these events for the community, the OCDSB provides families and educators the opportunity to learn collaboratively in support student learning and well-being.

**Parent Conference**

The OCDSB’s annual Parent Conference is a highly-valued opportunity for parents and educators to learn together. The conference was initiated in 2015-2016 by the Parent Involvement Committee (PIC), with the support of the OCDSB, the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Ottawa-Carleton Assembly of School Councils (OCASC), and the Ministry of Education’s PRO Grant. To ensure equity of access for all parents, the OCDSB is proud to offer free registration, child care, parking, and refreshments at this annual event. For the last two years, 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, the conference was held in conjunction with School Council Training Day.

The 2017-2018 conference was a successful event, attracting approximately 150 parents. It gave parents the opportunity to interact with trustees as well as board staff, including the Director and superintendents. Feedback was very positive, with the majority of parents reporting that:

- the conference was ‘quite’ or ‘extremely organized’ (94%);
- the keynote speaker was ‘quite’ or ‘extremely engaging’ (83%);
- the information provided by the keynote speaker was ‘quite’ or ‘extremely useful’ (79%);
- the workshops they attended were ‘quite’ or ‘extremely engaging’ (66%);
- the workshops they attended were ‘quite’ or ‘extremely useful’ (69%);
- the conference and workshops provided them with ‘extremely’ or ‘quite valuable’ information to help with their child’s learning (72%)
- they felt ‘quite’ or ‘extremely comfortable’ asking questions (79%);
- they found it useful having various partners with information booths available (85%);
- they were, overall, ‘quite’ or ‘extremely satisfied’ with the conference (89%).

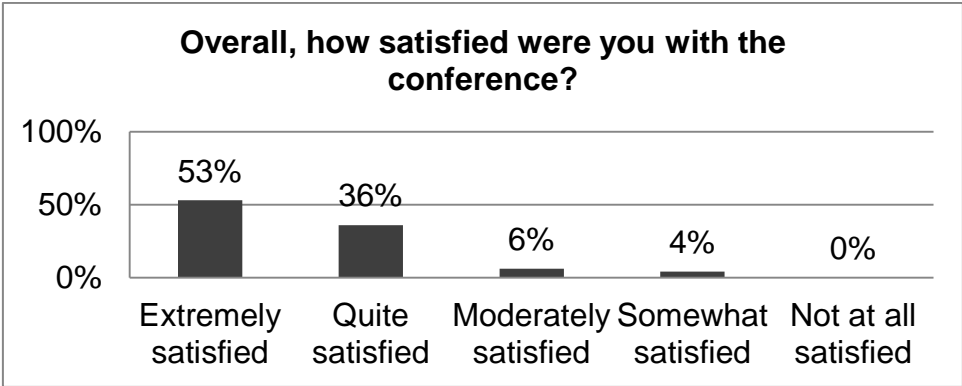


Figure 5. Satisfaction with parent conference.



### Use of an online chat platform during meetings

As a strategy for engaging staff and promoting conversations, the OCDSB uses Today's Meet as an online chat platform during meetings with principals. This gives principals the chance to share ideas and learn from each other. It also gives the District the opportunity to learn more about principal perspectives, so that we can respond to their questions and address issues. By giving staff members a voice through an online chat, there are opportunities for even the quietest individuals in the group to share their insights, deepen their learning, and contribute to important discussions. Thus far, anecdotal staff feedback has been positive as principals have been engaging in this activity.

### Analysis of survey data to inform practice

An important strategy for engaging stakeholder to improve the delivery of public education is regularly seeking their views and input on their experiences. As such, the OCDSB regularly surveys parents and students, with a staff survey planned for this year. A parent survey on school climate was conducted in 2015-2016, with those results presented in the previous measurement report on engagement (Report 16-114); the next parent survey is scheduled for later this year.

The EQAO Questionnaire is administered to students every year, and provides useful insight on the supports that grade 3 and 6 students receive from their parents at home. The graphs below depict the proportion of students who responded 'every day or almost every day' to various statements about parent engagement in comparison to the average across the three previous years as well as the provincial average from last year. OCDSB students tend to report reading with their parents more often than students province-wide. However, responses to the other items demonstrate that OCDSB reports of engagement tend to be lower than the province. Comparisons to the average across the last three years suggest that engagement is either increasing or fairly stable in most areas. The one area where there has been a notable decline for both grades is: "We look at my school agenda".

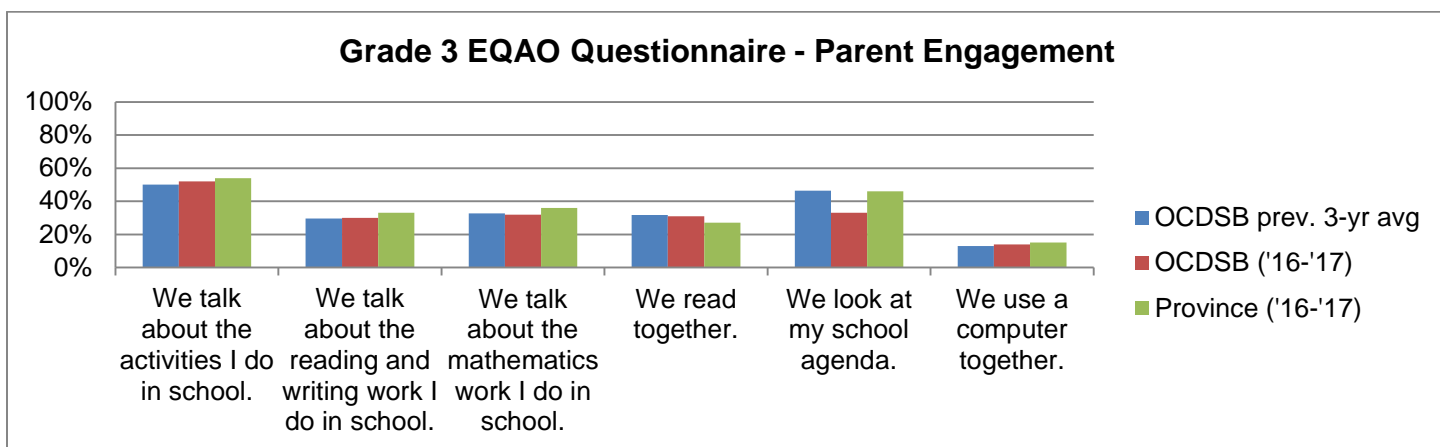


Figure 6. Student responses to questions about parent engagement (Grade 3 EQAO).

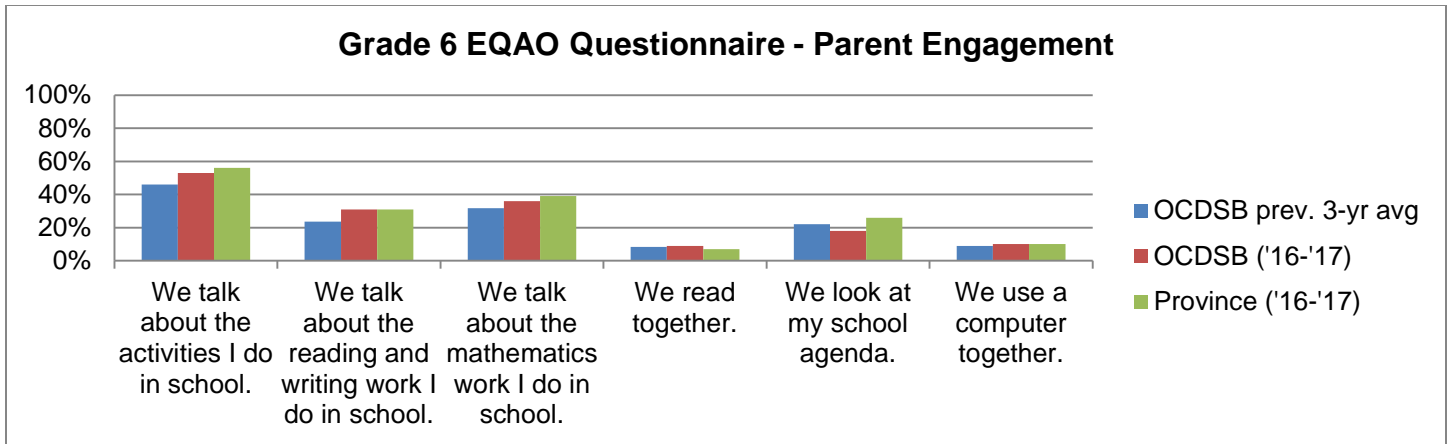


Figure 7. Student responses to questions about parent engagement (Grade 6 EQAO).

Parental engagement is but one piece of enhancing dialogue with stakeholders to improve public education. A critical component of engagement is that with the students themselves. The EQAO Questionnaire asks questions about student engagement, particularly around reading, writing, and mathematics. The graphs below show the proportion of OCDSB students who responded ‘most of the time’ to each item on the EQAO Questionnaire last year (2016-2017) in comparison to the average across the three previous years as well as the provincial average from last year. The results demonstrate that OCDSB students tend to be more engaged than their provincial counterparts. Compared to the previous three years, trends are mixed with decreases more frequent in grade 3 and increases slightly more frequent in grade 6.

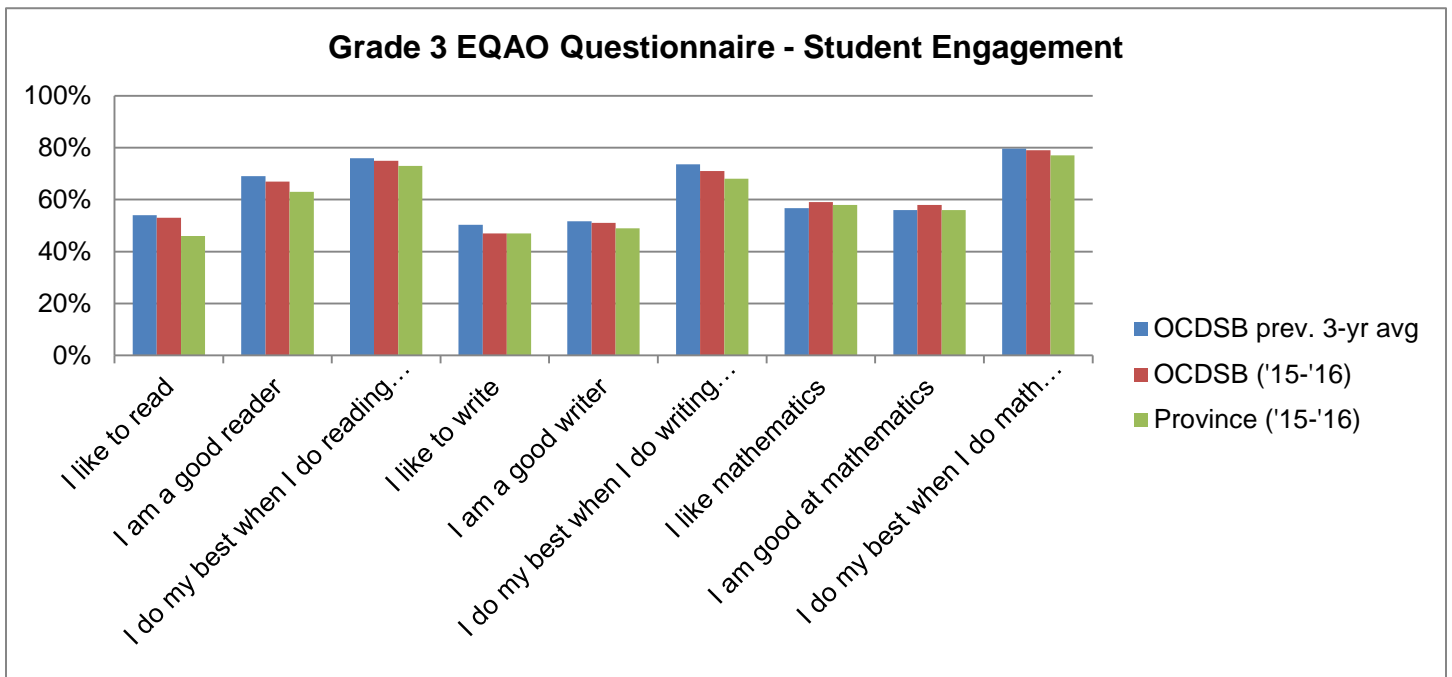


Figure 8. Student responses to questions about engagement (Grade 3 EQAO).

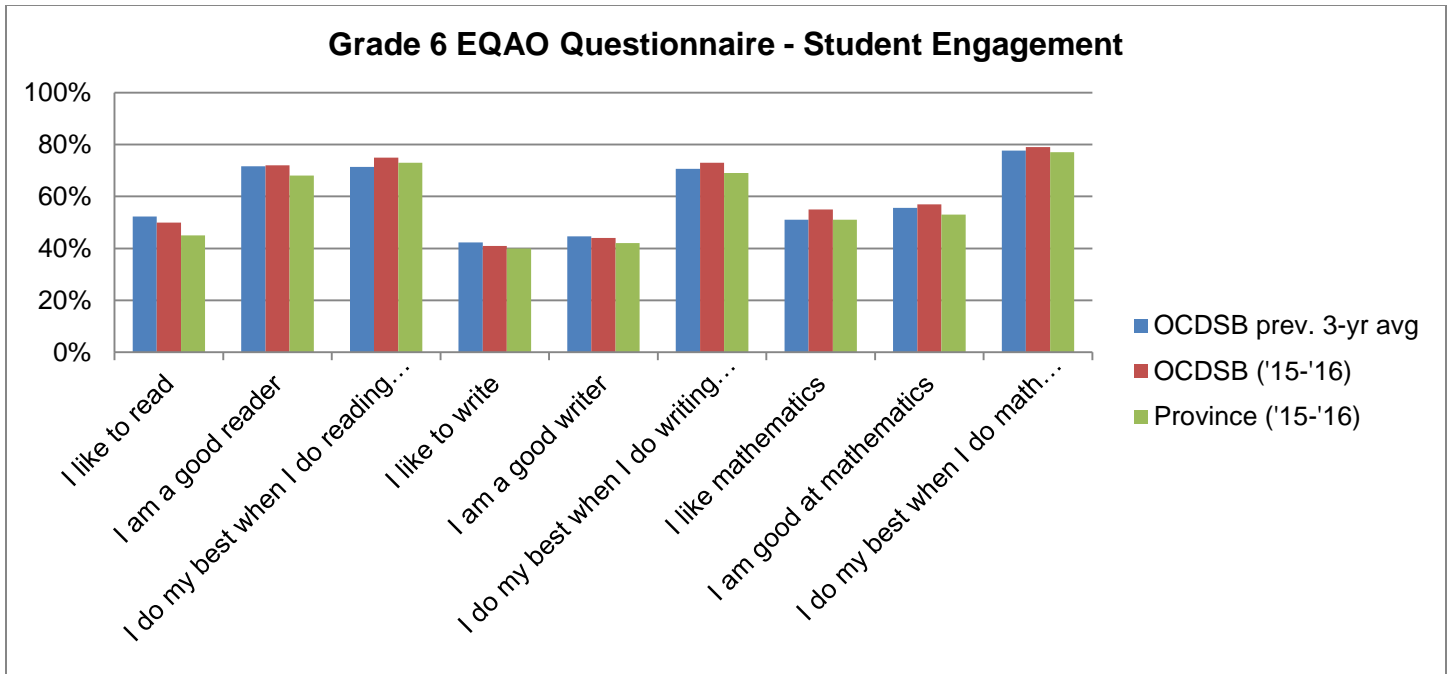


Figure 9. Student responses to questions about engagement (Grade 6 EQAO).

The grade 9 EQAO Questionnaire data also provides insight into student engagement in mathematics. The proportion of students who responded 'agree' or 'strongly agree' to a series of statements are graphed below, separated by math course (applied vs. academic). It is interesting to note that, for both courses, more students reported liking math as compared to the average across the previous three years. Although there was an increase in the proportion of students in the applied course that reportedly liking math, there was a decrease in students reporting that they were good at math. For both the applied and academic groups, a relatively high proportion of students reported doing their best. The similarity between the groups for this question is particularly interesting given the differences between applied and academic for the other two question items.

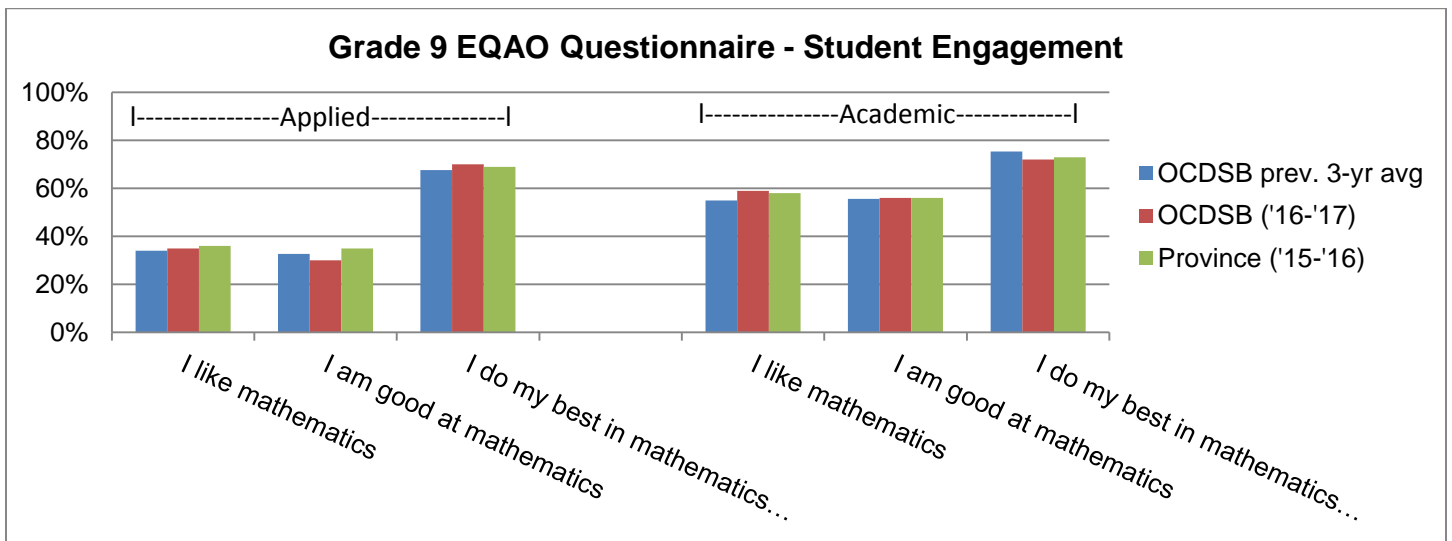


Figure 10. Student responses to questions about engagement (Grade 9 EQAO).

### Targeted engagement of at-risk populations

In our work to enhance communication with stakeholders, it is important to take an equity lens. From the literature and OCDSB data, we know that specific populations face unique barriers and are therefore less engaged than their peers. The 2011 Student Survey revealed that students who identified as Aboriginal or LGBTTTQ tended to be less engaged than their peers. We also know that English Language Learners and their families have unique communication needs and therefore benefit from tailored engagement strategies. Lastly, youth who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness tend to be a disengaged population and so the OCDSB has been working directly with Youth Services Bureau to engage this community. This important work to engage at-risk populations highlights the intersection between the engagement and equity objectives of the OCDSB strategic plan.

### Engaging Indigenous students/families

The 2011 Student Survey revealed that students who identified as Aboriginal tended to be less cognitively and emotionally engaged than their non-Aboriginal peers. To address this area of need, the OCDSB made a number of significant investments, including the expansion of the Indigenous Education team. This expansion included a Student Support/Re-engagement Coordinator for Indigenous students, which has been instrumental for enhancing communication and engagement with Indigenous students and families. The Student Support/Re-engagement Coordinator works with students, staff, families, and community partners (e.g., Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre; Odawa Native Friendship Centre; Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health), as well as with Elders and Traditional Knowledge Carriers.

In 2016-2017, the Student Support/Re-engagement Coordinator facilitated a range of supports for students including: information on Indigenous community resources; holistic well-being; academic support; cultural teachings; tutoring; school transitions; re-engagement at school; registering for school; one-to-one support; advocacy; mentorship; and liaison with school and family. Overall, 48 Indigenous students received support through the Coordinator. The table below highlights the volume of supports provided last year.

Table 3. *Supports provided by the Student Support/Re-engagement Coordinator.*

<b>Number of...</b>	
Indigenous Students Supported:	48
Re-Engagement Students (i.e., students who were re-engaged into the school system):	19
Referrals Received (typically from schools to seek support from the Coordinator):	24
Referrals Sent (typically to a community partner):	14
Student One-to-One Sessions (meeting at a cafe; doing a smudge together; etc.):	200
Student Circles (small group gatherings with Indigenous and non-Indigenous students):	41
Parent/Guardian Meetings (typically in the families' home):	82

Meetings with School Staff (to support Indigenous students):	213
Elders' Support/Guidance (where Elders provide insight on engaging students):	8
Community Partner Meetings (to build connections with the community):	45

### Engaging the LGBTQ2S+ community

Engagement of the LGBTQ2S+ community is a priority for the OCDSB as well as the greater Ottawa area. Annually, Ottawa hosts the Capital Pride parade to promote a safe and inclusive space for the LGBTQ2S+ community to advocate, educate, and celebrate. The OCDSB has an established relationship with the Ottawa Capital Pride Organization, which serves as a key strategy for engaging the LGBTQ2S+ community. The OCDSB's participation in the Pride parade demonstrates our dedication to providing a safe and welcoming atmosphere for all students, staff, and families.

In August 2017, thousands gathered for what was estimated to be the biggest Pride parade in Ottawa's history – with a record of over 300 OCDSB participants. The parade included local businesses, service organizations and allied community groups. The OCDSB was honoured to be chosen from among these groups to lead the way and carry the Pride parade banner. As an organization, we are proud to help foster a strong and vibrant Rainbow Community within the Nation's Capital region. This is further supported through OCDSB events, such as the Rainbow Youth Forum and Spring Fling, which will be discussed in detail in the next annual measurement report on equity.

### Engaging English Language Learners

Engaging students and families whose primary language is not English can pose unique challenges. Thoughtful strategies are needed to help increase their engagement, given the language barrier. One of the ways that the OCDSB works to engage English Language Learners (ELLs) is the translation of communication materials. In 2016-2017, the OCDSB invested in translation services to provide communication materials to ELLs. The changes to the District website also support this work through its new translation capacity. Although considerable work has been done to increase the amount of translation available, there is still significant process to be made to improve both the quality and the timeliness of translation services.

In addition to translation, the OCDSB employs a number of strategies to engage ELLs. These strategies include:

- Encouraging teachers to use Multicultural Liaison Officers (MLOs) at parent conferences, interviews, and/or where required so that parents feel fully supported and understand important information in their first language;
- Encouraging classroom teachers to share the STEP tool at interview times so that parents understand and see the assessment tool we use to identify, plan, track, monitor and assess;
- Encouraging parents to develop their child's primary language literacy skills;
- Supporting teachers in considering culturally responsive pedagogy, choosing texts and planning with all students in mind.

- Choosing appropriate leveled texts and allowing appropriate modifications and/or accommodations so they can be successful;
- Creating activities with multiple entry points for all learners; and
- Ensuring the physical environment in the school is representative of the school population (parents and students see themselves in the hallways, classrooms, newsletters, school activities).

### Engaging youth who are homeless/at risk of homelessness

*A Way Home Ottawa* reports that 903 youth stayed in emergency shelters at some point in 2015<sup>3</sup>. The report discusses the specific needs of homeless youth and highlights how when a youth leaves home, they are often losing their primary support network. As such, schools provide a support network for homeless youth that can have an incredible impact. The OCDSB has been working with Youth Services Bureau to support and engage homeless youth in Ottawa. At Youth Services Bureau, students are provided with flexible opportunities to complete courses, volunteer hours, the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), earn an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or certificate, and apply to post-secondary education. Relationships are established and youth are provided with personal support, assisted with job applications, post-secondary transitions, and are reconnected with traditional school and Continuing Education. The partnership with Youth Services Bureau has allowed the OCDSB to serve students that would not have otherwise had these opportunities. The table below presents the outcomes of this work since 2014. So far this year (2017-2018), there are 46 students registered in school, 7 credits earned, and two OSSD requirements completed. These numbers will continue to be tracked throughout the year.

Table 4. *Services provided in partnership with Youth Services Bureau, in support of homeless youth.*

<b>Number of...</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	<b>2015-2016</b>	<b>2016-2017</b>
Students registered in school	48	52	106
Credits earned	34	92.5	151
OSSDs granted	4	3	4
Students who logged volunteer hours	3	6	9
Successful OSSLT completions	3	3	6

### Next Steps

The District has made significant investments in our communications infrastructure to ensure that we have consistency and high quality information available to parents, staff, students and the community. Our work on websites, portals, apps, communications platforms, electronic records, and the automation of forms are a huge strategic investment. We have built a very strong and broad foundation, however, we need capacity to go deep in particular areas. This is most notable in terms of our capacity to support school-to-home communications. Maintaining websites, newsletters, and social media platforms are time intensive for principals. Bringing consistency to the infrastructure greatly facilitates their work and our ability to support them centrally.

<sup>3</sup> A Way Home Ottawa. (2016). *Initial findings and recommendations*. Ottawa, ON: Burkholder Harris. Retrieved from <http://endhomelessnessottawa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/AWHO-report-digital-ENG-2.pdf>

However, in order to maintain the quality of the information and resources, to optimize the functionality of reports and to monitor the work, the District will need to consider investing dollars in a dedicated central position to support this work.

Another area where additional strategy and investment may be required is in translation. Google Translate is the common business tool and it can be very effective, but also has limitations. Many of those limitations can be addressed by streamlining the complexity of language that we use when communicating with stakeholders. However, a more comprehensive strategy for translation would benefit the District.

**Strategy: Develop tools to support parent involvement in learning and well-being**

As discussed above, work has been underway to engage parents in learning and well-being through involvement in the School Learning Plans. Although this work is off to a great start in some schools, the goal is for *all* schools to be engaging in this work, so that parents across the District are involved in these plans. Furthermore, the way in which we engage parents will continue to evolve. Currently, most of the parent involvement is simply receiving communication about the plan, which is typically done through school councils. Next steps will be for Curriculum Services to compile information for schools to use as a resource when engaging parents in the School Learning and Well-being Plans. This resource will serve as a useful tool by outlining the continuum of ways in which parents can be engaged in this process. This will support school teams as they reflect on their current practices, as well as how they can go deeper in the future.

Other important work this year will include a parent survey. This survey will be administered to all parents in the District and will cover topics related to school climate. The results will be used to better understand the parent perspective and to further support student learning and well-being.

**Strategy: Develop strategies to enhance communication and dialogue with and among staff, students, families and community partners to improve the delivery of public education**

Thus far in the 2015-2019 strategic plan, a key focus has been to enhance dialogue with parents. From that work, we have improved our communication tools and strategies, and will continue making progress this year. A next critical step will be to improve communication with and among staff. Again, use of technology will be an important strategy for engaging this group of stakeholders. Further, to better understand staff needs, a staff survey is planned for later this year. This survey will provide staff with the opportunity to share feedback on their engagement and well-being, and this data will be used to guide future work. The specific survey tool is currently under consideration and will be weighed against the need to gather staff perspective on school climate. While survey details are being finalized, consultation with the federations has been underway as another strategy for understanding the engagement and well-being of staff. This consultation has already begun, but its continuation will be important work for this year. This will help us actively encourage staff engagement in support of positive outcomes for students.

work is planned for supporting at-risk populations. One area where specific strategies are underway is in support for students with special education needs and their families. A new online platform for students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs) will be implemented for Term/Semester 2 in early February 2018. This platform promotes greater communication and dialogue between staff responsible for both the development of IEPs and their implementation in classrooms. Parents and students play an important role in the development of impactful IEPs. Currently, most parent involvement comes in the form of completing a questionnaire in the fall or providing input into draft IEPs. The online platform places greater emphasis on the role of parental and student involvement and provides all staff with the capacity to note consultation related to the IEP as it occurs.

As we move to the online platform, Learning Support Services is working with principals to develop better strategies for involving students and parents in the development and review of IEPs and more effective tools to monitor the implementation of IEPs in classrooms. Our goal is to ensure that individualized programming for students with special education needs involves parents, students and staff in a collaborative process designed to close the gap for students.

### **Guiding Questions**

The following questions are provided to support the discussion of this item by the Committee:

- How does our communications infrastructure support engagement?
- How do we continue to improve our understanding/awareness of the barriers which impact the engagement of parents, students, and staff?
- What are the key issues or opportunities that could further our work on engagement with stakeholder groups?
- How does work in the area of engagement support the other strategic objectives?

---

Michele Giroux  
Executive Officer  
(ext. 8607)

---

Jennifer Adams  
Director of Education and  
Secretary of the Board