

## Equity Advisory Circle Meeting Notes

**Thursday June 19, 2025 at 9:00 AM.**  
Zoom and in-person in North Bay Boardroom

### **Present:**

Melanie Gray, Superintendent of Teaching and Learning  
Tim Graves, Executive Superintendent  
Lisa Lamoureux, Principal of Student Well-being, and Equity  
Erin Plourde, Canadore College Community Inclusion Coordinator  
Niki Hutchinson, Youth Engagement Lead, North Bay District Health Unit  
Marcus Etienne, PIC Chair  
Louise Sargent, Trustee  
Amanda Mathias, Indigenous Education Lead  
Nathan Moore, CAS Teacher Liaison Youth in Care  
Lana St. Louis, Mental Health Lead  
Deborah Robertson, Multi-Cultural Society  
Chris Walkling, Principal of SAWB K-12  
Margaret Soroye, NNDSB Teacher  
Heidi McMillan Executive Assistant

### **Regrets:**

Alison Clarke, Acting Principal of Special Education  
Seth Compton, OutLoud North Bay  
Jeannie Vaillancourt, North Bay Metis Council  
Ashley St. Pierre, Education Counsellor Moosedeer Point FN  
Lyudmyla Boyko, Multi-Cultural Centre  
Kelly Huston, Indigenous Teacher Lead  
Sujala Niroula, Multi-Cultural Society  
Katrina Aguiar, The Drop/Mental Health & Addictions Worker West PS Health Centre  
Howard Wesley, Trustee

### **Land acknowledgment by Principal Lamoureux**

#### **Talking Circle – Welcome EAC members**

Superintendent Gray welcomed everyone to the meeting and had introductions around the circle.

***“As we close this school year, I invite you to share one moment that either deepened your understanding of equity, one challenge that remains, and one intention you carry forward to continue creating inclusive, just learning spaces for all students.”***

- Members reflected on equity experiences and challenges.
- Highlights included student engagement at the Indigenous Youth Circle retreat and removing barriers to post-secondary access.
- Emphasis placed on hearing directly from students through participation in youth events.
- Participants shared powerful moments and learning experiences related to equity.
- Themes included student determination, alternative education success, and addressing poverty and learning disabilities.
- The need for emotional connection and improved support systems was emphasized.
- Advocacy for alternative learning spaces and access to menstrual hygiene products discussed.
- Importance of partnerships in deepening anti-racism efforts highlighted.
- Appreciation expressed for relationship-building and equity work throughout the year.

### **Near North Equity Update – Principal Lamoureux**

- LIFT projects praised for their impact on equity and student well-being.
- Many LIFT teams will be applying for funding and continuing to support the equity funding and project with student equity & well-being.
- Student Senate has concluded for the year. Best wishes to all members as they graduate and transition to post-secondary education. We are proud of their efforts in supporting their school communities.
- IYC (Indigenous Youth Circle) held a year-end retreat with an overnight stay at Nipissing University from June 5–6. Indigenous Graduation Coaches collaborated with students during the event. Secondary Principals were invited to the dinner, which included a red dress seal skin craft workshop led by artist and speaker Vanessa Brosseau. Vanessa brings healing, truth, and courage through her work. She is also a dedicated community volunteer and board member of the North Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, sharing the story of proclamation across the province. Her journey is one of kindness and strength—please consider following her TikTok account **Resilient Inuk**.
- Pride Flag Raising Ceremony was held at City Hall on June 2, 2025, with Principal Lamoureux and Jessica Feick in attendance. The event showcased community support and inclusion.
- First Annual Pride Day at Canadore College will take place on June 20, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., bringing students together for a day of celebration featuring lunch, games, arts activities, and prizes. Students from WFSS, LLC, and Mapleridge will participate.
- The event is a collaborative effort between NNDSB and Canadore College, aimed at fostering connection and inclusion. City Police are involved to help break down barriers and ensure a positive, welcoming experience for all students. OutLoud and Big Brothers Big Sisters will also be in attendance.
- The goal is for students to leave feeling safe, supported, and celebrated.

### **Mental Health Update – Lana St. Louis**

- Lana St. Louis and Principal Lamoureux attended the provincial Mental Health Ontario conference May 27<sup>th</sup>.
- Insights were gathered on mental health and well-being initiatives and implementation strategies.
- Plan to introduce student and teacher well-being champions in all secondary schools with future expansion planned for elementary schools.
- Professional development to be delivered three times a year, focused on mental health.
- Staffing shortages remain a challenge; plan to train staff in brief service delivery.
- Integrated child and youth mental health teams will meet monthly.
- Ongoing collaboration with coterminous boards and mental health agencies underway.

#### **Training in Brief Solution-Focused Therapy**

- Aligned with PPM 169: Student Mental Health.
- Training began for regulated mental health professionals in brief solution-focused therapy.
- Approach provides four to six support sessions, targeting students with moderate mental health needs.
- Aims to bridge students to external mental health services during waitlist periods.

#### **Upcoming Training in Single Session Counseling**

- Scheduled for fall, involving the entire mental health team.
- Single session model suitable for immediate, one-time support—especially in secondary schools.
- Designed for use by both regulated and unregulated professionals.
- Useful in environments affected by inconsistent student attendance (e.g., snow days, extracurriculars).

#### **Expanding Mental Health Literacy in Classrooms**

- Goal for the upcoming year is to increase delivery of universal mental health literacy programs.
- Programs selected based on data trends to target specific needs.
- Focused on teaching essential mental health skills to all students.
- Initiative designed to address existing gaps and promote preventive education.

#### **Collaborative System Building with Community Partners**

- Ongoing collaboration with coterminous school boards and Hands, the lead community agency.
- Efforts aligned with PPM 169 to create a coordinated Child and Youth Mental Health System.
- Monthly implementation team meetings held to define roles and map services.
- Objective is to ensure timely, appropriate, and accessible care for all students.

### **Near North Board Achievement Plans Presentation – Principal Walkling**

- Emphasis placed on using demographic data to identify and support underserved student populations.
- Plans to review agreements and refine strategies around data use.

### **Student Achievement and Equity Update – Reflection and Forward Planning**

- **Purpose and Reflection**
  - Current period is one of reflection—reviewing the past year and setting intentional direction for future efforts.
  - Student Achievement and Board Achievement Plans serve as tools for guiding schools and staff in defining and pursuing student success.
  - Emphasis placed on moral imperative: ensuring all students succeed, driven by commitment and shared values.
- **Legislative Context and Ministry Priorities**
  - Bill 98 (Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023) introduced clear measures of educational accountability in Ontario.
  - Ministry priorities include literacy, mathematics, graduation rates, and post-secondary readiness.
  - Student well-being and engagement are central pillars in addition to academic achievement.
- **Consultation Process**
  - Broad engagement with students, staff, principals, and community groups during the spring-to-fall consultation window (April–October).
  - Student voice, including Indigenous Youth Circle input, is actively shaping planning.
  - Board accountability includes demonstrating how student input is integrated into planning and action.
- **Indicators and Data Monitoring**
  - Eleven required indicators published annually in April and available on the board website.
  - Literacy and math performance measured via EQAO assessments.
  - Report card data, observations, and teacher assessments also used to track progress and identify equity gaps.
- **Early Literacy Assessment**
  - All K–2 students screened for reading difficulties in alignment with Ministry mandates.
  - Full elementary panel has adopted the Acadience screening tool, with high levels of teacher-driven implementation.
  - Progress monitoring remains a priority to support early intervention and long-term success.
- **Demographic and Disproportionality Data**
  - Growing use of demographic data (collected every three years) to identify disparities and tailor supports.
  - Data analysis reveals patterns of disproportionality—e.g., by gender and socioeconomic status—in student outcomes.
  - Example: Achievement gaps in Grade 3 and 6 mathematics narrow significantly by Grade 9.
- **Graduation and Credit Accumulation**
  - Steady increase in students earning 16+ credits by end of Grade 10 post-COVID.
  - Graduation rates have improved by 3.5%, outperforming provincial averages in some areas.
  - SHSM, dual credit, co-op, and experiential learning programs continue to be areas of strength.
- **Student Readiness and Voice**

- EQAO now includes student voice components; students from low-income backgrounds reported feeling more prepared post-assessment.
- Findings challenge assumptions and offer insights for future planning.
- **Attendance and Presence**
  - Chronic absenteeism recognized as a significant barrier to achievement.
  - Focus shifted toward promoting presence, rather than punishing absences.
  - Working group of principals established to align practices in monitoring, outreach, and family communication.
  - Attendance data showed catastrophic lows during COVID, with signs of recovery in 2023–24.
- **Family Engagement and Survey**
  - Family voice being sought through school advisory councils, parent involvement committees, and a public survey open until October 31.
  - Survey includes 10 questions (3 open-ended) aligned with provincial priorities.
- **Looking Ahead**
  - Demographic data collection expected to resume in next cycle; crucial for identifying and supporting marginalized groups.
  - Commitment to privacy and responsible use of data, while ensuring equitable planning and interventions.
  - Board remains accountable to community voices (students, staff, families, partners) in shaping achievement and equity plans.

## Reports/Updates

### SEAC (Special Education Advisory Committee) – SO Graves

- Emotional coaching – SEAC is developing a one-page guide to help families access special education resources.
- SEAC budget recommendations submitted to the board.
- Special Education Plan was approved at the last board meeting.
- Encouragement to recruit new SEAC members.

### FNAC (First Nations Advisory Committee) - SO Gray

- FNAC met virtually on June 4<sup>th</sup> virtually to strengthen relationships and plan for next year.
- Discussions centered on Education Service Agreement and aligning with Indigenous Board Action Plan.
- IEAC met in person on June 18<sup>th</sup> at Almaguin and focused on board wide strategies. Strong engagement working through the consultation process for the BAP for Ind Education.

### PIC (Parent Involvement Committee) SO Gray

- Held final meeting the evening of June 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Moving forward Kyla Kadlec will be supporting PIC.
- Final meeting was positive with updates from Principal Samuel on “Childhood Unplugged” and presentation from Principal Walkling around student achievement and Land St. Louis around student Mental Health.
- Looking for ways to get more parents out and create a new plan for the new school year

## Trustee Update

- Board of trustees accepted two trustee resignations and expressed appreciation of the work done by the outgoing members.
- Upcoming board budget meeting scheduled for July.

## Community Agencies Update from our service partners

- **Canadore College**

- Canadore College organizing Pride Day with feedback collected via QR code surveys.
- Police and community organizations involved to foster safe, inclusive environments.
- Northeastern Ontario Multicultural Center opened a new location and continues anti-racism initiatives.
- Public Health updates shared regarding new Ontario standards and ongoing partnerships.

**Northeast Multicultural Center**

- New Location announced with Open House June 19, 2025, from 11 am – 2 pm.
- Focus remains on anti-discrimination and equity initiatives.

**CAS**

- Taking appointments for school transitions in August.
- A few students taking advantage of summer learning.
- Principal Simser is working hard with summer programming through ECPP.

**North Bay Health Unit**

- Indigenous Peoples Day will be held on June 20 in Mattawa.
- New Ontario health standards are being introduced, with a preview expected in August.
- Many upcoming changes; optimism expressed about continued collaboration with school boards.
- School updates include strong partnership with Nipissing University.
- Sundridge reported a successful school year with partnership.
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***Group Activity: Closing Circle – Reflections on our Equity work this year and goals for 2025-26***

- Being respectful of everyone's commitments and running short on time so we will carry forward the closing circle to next meeting.
- SO Graves acknowledge Principal Lamoureux's work and leadership.
- Driving force of the community relationships and growth through Lisa's leadership.

***Next EAC date: October 15, 2025***