

STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 2-2023

To the Chair and Members
Winnipeg Public School Board:

November 30, 2023

The Student Advisory Committee reports as follows:

1. Land Acknowledgement

The Committee stated that the students, staff, and communities of Winnipeg School Division are committed to truth and reconciliation through building relationships with Mother Earth, the original peoples of this land and the stories that bring us together. We acknowledge the place in which we gather is on Treaty 1 territory, the homeland of the Red River Métis and the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe, Ininiwak and Dakota Oyate peoples.

2. Election of Committee Chair

The Committee was informed that at the Inaugural meeting of the Board of Trustees held on September 11, 2023, Trustee Lois Brothers was appointed as the Board's representative and Trustee Perla Javate was appointed as the Board's alternate representative to this Committee.

The student representative from Sisler High School volunteered to Chair the meeting.

3. Approval of Agenda

The Committee recommended that an opportunity be provided to discuss additional items. The Committee approved the revised agenda for November 30, 2023.

4. WSD 2024/2025 Budget Consultation

The Committee was informed that on March 6, 2023, the Board of Trustees approved a budget for the 2023/2024 school year in the amount of \$454,832,200. The Committee was informed that the Province of Manitoba had established a consultant team to guide the development of a new education funding model, initially intended for implementation in the 2023/2024 school year. However, it was later disclosed that the new funding model would not be ready as anticipated, and the Province confirmed that the same formula would apply for the 2024/2025 Budget.

In preparation for the budget announcement, the Board is requesting that parents/guardians share feedback on priorities for schools and the community, programs that should be expanded, and how budget resources could be better distributed to reach those who need them the most. The deadline for this feedback is December 15, 2023, with discussions to take place at the next meeting.

The Committee was informed that the budget for WSD is approximately half a billion dollars, with a collaborative effort from the Board to formulate budgetary priorities. The Committee was informed about the importance of receiving input from student councils regarding school needs such as increased access to technology, universal nutrition programs, and the expansion of IB and AP programs.

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5. Future Agenda Items

The Committee was informed that members may wish to consult with their school student council to identify topics for discussion at a future meeting.

The Committee was informed that concerns raised by students last year encompassed issues such as classroom technology, transportation challenges, cafeteria food options, a shortage of substitute teachers, and a desire for increased focus on Indigenous studies and representation.

A student representative from Gordon Bell shared insights into their successful breakfast program, designed to support students from low-income and refugee families, and suggested the potential benefits of implementing similar programs in other schools. This matter will be considered for discussion at the next meeting.

The Committee also shared the following topics for future discussions:

- Implementation and construction updates on gender-neutral washrooms;
- Need for a second sewing teacher;
- Request for a dedicated mental health specialist due to increasing student anxiety, as well as enhanced mental health resources, including a school psychologist, more mental health programs and safe spaces;
- Inadequate English language programs for students whose first language is not English;
- Desire for more sustainable programs such as composting;
- Implementation of additional Indigenous education in the curriculum;
- More after school programs to assist with homework, job and scholarship opportunities;
- Request for air conditioning in classrooms during hot summer months;
- Concerns about safety including hold and secure practices;
- Wi-Fi problems and general need to address technology issues in school.

6. Discussion Points

The Committee agreed to add discussion points to the agenda. The Committee discussed implementing gender-neutral bathrooms in schools, emphasizing the need for additional facilities to address overcrowding and support 2SLGBTQI+ students. A student representative from Daniel McIntyre Collegiate Institute (DMCI) High School expressed concerns regarding short bathroom stall doors in the female bathrooms. The Committee was informed that there are challenges of implementing gender-neutral bathrooms, especially in older buildings like DMCI High School where structural constraints make it difficult to modify existing facilities. The Committee also discussed appropriate number of gender-neutral washrooms based on school size and designs of gender-neutral bathrooms, including the option of private spaces within a common restroom area.

A student representative from Gordon Bell High School shared a concern about limited prayer rooms for religious freedom in schools. The Committee discussed the importance of creating quiet and safe spaces for students to pray and raised issues of principals, teachers and staff monitoring prayer rooms. The Committee also shared concerns about outdated technology in schools, highlighting the issue of teachers using personal devices due to technological limitations, including a Wi-Fi outage.

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The Committee shared insights on school lunch programs, expressing concerns about the variety and nutritional value of food. The Committee discussed a shift towards less balanced, ready-to-go items and increased prices in cafeterias post-COVID. The Committee suggested exploring more culinary programs among schools where students contribute to making lunches, potentially reducing costs and improving the quality of meals.

The Committee discussed the limited French immersion programs and science course options, as well as the impact it has on students' post-secondary aspirations. A student representative from Gordon Bell High School shared the difficulty in taking all three science courses and the limitation on course availability, leading to taking online classes or classes in Winnipeg Adult Education Centre after graduation. The Committee was informed that the challenges posed by smaller schools is due to fewer teachers being able to teach other courses. The Committee also discussed the challenge of scheduling conflicts within enrichment programs and the accessibility of Advance Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs across schools in WSD. The Committee was informed that the Superintendent recognized the need to address these issues to ensure equitable access to high-quality education and will take it back to the Board for discussion.

The Committee discussed issues related to transportation, including requesting a stop service. The Committee was informed concerns regarding public transit may be brought up with City Services and to call 311 to lodge a complaint. The Committee was informed that the concerns regarding transportation will be brought forward to the Board, as well as MSBA.

The Committee was informed that students should bring security concerns to the principal.

7. For Information

The Committee was provided information on Guidelines for Board Advisory Committees, COVID update, School Grants/Proposals, New Structure/Clusters, as well as Lead in Drinking Water Testing and Mitigation Results.

The Committee was also encouraged to attend bi-weekly regular board meetings to stay informed about ongoing events and updates within WSD. The Committee was informed they register as a delegation to present topics they may wish to discuss.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lois Brothers
Trustee Representative

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In Attendance:

Voting Representatives

College Churchill High School
Children of the Earth High School
Daniel McIntyre Collegiate Institute High School
Elmwood High School
Gordon Bell High School

Administration

Matt Henderson, Superintendent
Michelle Lejano, Recording Secretary

Regrets

Argyle Alternative High School
Grant Park School
Kelvin High School
R.B. Russell High School
Sisler High School
St. John's High School
Tec Voc High School
W.A.E.C.

Trustees

Lois Brothers
Perla Javate