

STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 3 -2021

To the Chair and Members
Winnipeg Public School Board:

November 23, 2021

The Student Advisory Committee reports as follows:

1. Acknowledgement of Indigenous People of Canada

The Committee was informed that the meeting of the Student Advisory Committee is taking place on Treaty One Land and the traditional homeland of the Metis nation.

2. Election of Committee Chair

The Committee was informed that at the Inaugural Board meeting, held September 13, 2021, Trustee Chris Broughton was appointed as the Board's representative and Linda Schatkowsky was appointed as the Board's alternate representative to this Committee.

The alternate student representative from College Churchill High School volunteered to Co-Chair the Student Advisory Committee meeting.

3. Budget Consultation 2022/2023

The Committee received an overview on the Budget Consultation for the 2022/2023 school year.

The Committee was informed that on March 9, 2021, the Board of Trustees approved a budget for the 2021/2022 school year in the amount of \$421,039,400. The Committee was informed that last year under direction from the Province, property tax levels were frozen at the 2020 levels, leading to a reduction of 0.54 percent on the property tax levy for WSD homeowners. This reduced provincial investment in education resulted in reductions of \$4,457,395 for WSD. School divisions across the city were required to make similar reductions to their budgets. The Committee was informed that without the option to raise revenue through property taxes, WSD was unable to fund programs that are unique and valued within the WSD community.

The Committee was informed that it is anticipated the provincial government will continue to fund education at the same level as last year and freeze property taxes once again this year. This may result in a significant loss to programs and services for students. The Committee was informed that as WSD begins discussions and consultations with the public regarding the 2022/2023 budget, several significant factors must be taken into consideration including, drop in enrolment, rising labour costs, inflation, provincial funding and the cap on property taxes.

The Committee was informed that since 2018 there has been significant drops in student enrolment (33,000), 2019 saw a drop of 1.05 percent, 2020 was down 9.62 percent and 2021 was down 2.32 percent. The Committee was informed that the pandemic would have resulted in many families opting to provide homeschooling for their children. The Committee was informed that the drop in enrolment directly results in a reduction of provincial funding which represents 60 percent of WSD of the overall funding for WSD.

The Committee was informed that salary and benefit costs represent 87 percent of WSD's budget. Arbitration rulings in the spring of 2020 significantly increased labour costs for the 2020/2021 fiscal year and will continue to have significant impact on the 2022/2023 budget. The Committee was informed the Province has not provided any additional funding to cover increased labour costs. The Committee was informed that WSD will continue to make appeals for additional funding.

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The Committee was informed that year-over-year inflation in Manitoba as of October 31, 2021 is at 4.7 percent. The inflation rate primarily impacts labour agreements, but impacts other goods and services as well.

The Committee was informed that provincial funding, excluding the effect of enrolment, has increased at the rate of 0.6 percent over the last few years, which is less than the rate of inflation in Manitoba including non-pandemic years.

The Committee was informed that property tax revenue represents 40 percent of the overall funding for WSD, which has been capped at 2 percent for the past few years. Overall funding for WSD is approximately 1.16 percent which does not allow for adequate funding for all of the programs and services offered by WSD.

4. Bill 64 – Education Modernization Act Update

The Committee was informed that on September 1, 2021, the interim Premier of Manitoba announced that Bill 64 – the Education Modernization Act would be removed from provincial business due to public concerns expressed regarding various components of Bill 64, namely the proposed governance model.

The Committee was informed that the withdrawal of Bill 64 allows WSD to continue to provide valuable services and programs such as Nutrition programs, Housing assistance, Health connections, Reading Recovery, Math Pathways, Autism programs, Anxiety Programs, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Programs, and many more, all of which are vital services to support students, families and the community.

The Committee was informed that although Bill 64 has been withdrawn by the provincial government the Minister of Education stated of the four pillars outlined in the “Better Education Starts Today” (B.E.S.T.) strategy, Governance, High Quality Learning and Outcomes, Future Ready Students and Excellence in Teaching and Leadership, the only one that was of concern was Governance, and stated there was still commitment to implementing the other three pillars.

The Committee was informed that while WSD supports some of the key priorities outlined in B.E.S.T. strategies to improve student outcomes, any changes to the delivery of education in Manitoba must be piloted by the government to ensure that new initiatives will contribute to the educational success of the child. The Committee was informed that the outcomes must demonstrate an ability to benefit the unique needs of supporting our students and school communities.

The Committee was informed that WSD will continue to be engaged in discussions with the Province to maintain programs and services for our students.

5. Covid – 19 Update

The Committee was informed that Public Health officials announced new public health orders that came into effect on October 5, 2021. The Committee was informed that although the province has moved to restricted (orange) level of the Pandemic Response System, schools will remain at caution (yellow). The Committee was provided an overview of the “Restoring Safe Schools” plan outlined by the Provincial government.

6. School Resource Officer Program

The Committee was informed that at a meeting held November 1, 2021, the Board of Trustees approved a motion to distribute the results of the evaluation of the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program to all District Advisory Committees for information.

The Committee was informed that as part of the 2021/2022 Budget discussions the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program was discontinued effective July 1, 2021. Prior to the removal of the SRO program an evaluation of the program was conducted.

The Committee was informed that the initial goal of the survey was to determine if the program should continue, however, difficult budget decisions resulted in the SRO program being terminated prior to the compilation of the survey results.

The Committee was informed the survey was completed by WSD student's grade 7-12, parents/guardians and WSD staff. The Committee was informed that the survey captured information regarding the SRO's ability to establish positive relationships with students, whether or not students felt safer at school with SRO's present, and if SRO's helped to keep school and neighborhoods safe. The Committee was informed that the results of the survey had indicated that the SRO program and objectives required more awareness and understanding by students, staff and parents/guardians.

The Committee was informed that WSD will continue explore alternate options to partner with organizations to keep our students, schools and community safe.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chris Broughton
Trustee Representative

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In Attendance:

Voting Representatives

College Churchill High School
Elmwood High School
Gordon Bell High School
Grant Park School
Tec Voc High School

Regrets

Argyle Alternative High School
Children of the Earth High
School
Daniel McIntyre Collegiate
Kelvin High School
R.B. Russell High School
Sisler High School
St. John's High School
W.A.E.C.

Administration

Julie Smerchanski, Director
Brenda Lapointe, Board and Community Liaison Officer
Paul Kochan, Secretary-Treasurer/CFO
Nichola Batzel, Principal Children of the Earth School
Elaine Mayham, Guidance Counselor Children of the Earth School
Sandra Voyer, Resource Teacher Children of the Earth School
Jonathan Fast, Vice-Principal (acting) Gordon Bell High School
Tarin Howard, Recording Secretary

Trustees

Linda Schatkowsky
Chris Broughton (Regrets)