

STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 1-2024

To the Chair and Members
Winnipeg Public School Board:

February 20, 2024

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. Approval of Agenda

The Committee approved the agenda for February 20, 2024.

3. WSD 2024/2025 Budget Consultation

At the previous meeting, the Committee was requested to consult with their school communities to identify priorities for consideration as part of the upcoming budget process.

At a meeting held January 15, 2024, the Board of Trustees received the feedback from the school community which included; smaller class sizes, improved classroom instruction, greater academic engagement, increase attendance and graduation rates, improve maths and literacy achievement, additional learning support for teachers in school, provide universal nutrition program, phase-in no-fee lunch supervision, replace three school playgrounds annually, build powerful neighbourhood schools, enhance school safety, improve settlement services for newcomers and expand adult EAL to the Shaughnessy Park area and develop the R.B. Russell career lab.

On February 1, 2024, the provincial government announced funding for education in the amount of \$104.2 million. WSD received an increase of 1% (\$2.6 million) over last year's budget. The Committee was informed that the 1% increase in funding does not cover the costs related to inflation and operations maintaining staffing, programs and services. The government also invested \$30 million to expand the nutrition program and \$3 million to assist school divisions in reducing class size. The Division currently spends \$5 million on the nutrition program. The Committee was informed that a 3.4% increase which equates to approximately \$51 per average household on an average home value at \$246,700. This would allow WSD to maintain current programs, services and provide for fully funded nutrition and food programs as well as provide \$2.6 million to be allocated to budget priorities outlined by the school community. An education tax increase of 3% would allow for a budget that maintains current programs and services as well as a fully funded nutrition program, but would reduce allocations towards budget priorities brought forward by school communities.

The Committee was informed that the priorities were identified by the Board of Trustees based on feedback from the school community. The priorities were placed into three categories; improve student success, create "sticky" schools and community supports. The Committee held round table discussions to identify priorities under the three categories.

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The Committee suggested that schools offer more programs that are not solely based on academics. The Committee expressed the importance of having Educational Assistants in the classroom to assist students with their studies. The Committee also expressed support for additional after school programs, fine arts/music programs and sports clubs/teams and shared that schools with smaller student populations may not have the same access to extra-curricular activities. The Committee agreed that larger programs may attract more qualified volunteer coaches as well.

The Committee agreed that additional after school programs and extra-curricular activities could encourage more students to attend school which may assist with mental health issues. The Committee agreed that students are more likely to discuss concerns or mental health issues with a staff member they have a relationship with in the school community. The Committee suggested more access to mental health services and access to guidance counsellors.

The Committee also discussed class size and staffing ratios as well as the need for bigger schools and additional teachers.

The Committee was informed that the Board of Trustees is hosting a budget consultation meeting open to the public on February 26th at 7:00 p.m. at Tec Voc High School. Input on the draft budget can be submitted by email to board@wsd1.org or by registering at 204-755-0231 no later than February 22nd to appear as a delegation at the February 26th meeting. The Committee was informed the Board of Trustees will be submitting the budget to the province by March 15, 2024.

4. WSD 123: Continuous Improvement 2023/2024

The Committee received a copy of the WSD 123 Continuous Improvement report for review and information. The Committee was informed that the report provides an overview on WSD programs and services during the 2023/2024 school year. As part of the educational mandate in Manitoba, WSD addresses high levels of academic achievement in literacy and numeracy through planning with the Kindergarten to Grade 12 Framework for Continuous Improvement. These divisional plans outline clear outcomes, comprehensive monitoring processes, baseline data, and measurable targets for all students across diverse languages of instruction. The plan also includes strategic utilization of grants, the emphasis on enhancing instructional leadership, and the essential role of stakeholder involvement in developing school division plans.

The Committee was encouraged to share the report with their respective student councils.

5. Gender Neutral

At a previous meeting, The Committee requested gender neutral washrooms be added to the agenda for discussion. The Committee discussed the importance of providing safe inclusive accommodation to support 2SLGBTQI+ students.

The Committee was informed that 78 of the 79 schools in WSD have at least one designated gender-neutral washroom with the remaining school scheduled for construction this year as part of a broader renovation project.

The Committee discussed the possibility of making all washrooms gender-neutral. The Committee was informed there are many challenges to renovating the older buildings in the Division and can be quite costly. The Committee also acknowledged that many options should be available so that all students feel comfortable using facilities.

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6. Air Conditioning in Schools

At a previous meeting, The Committee requested that air conditioning in classrooms be added to the agenda for discussion. The Committee was informed that in January 2022, WSD received a grant of \$2,591,000 from Manitoba Education for “operational improvements” to ventilation systems. The Committee was informed the grant money was used to improve 434 ventilation units, upgrading to MERV 13 filters, adding CO2 sensors, HVAC replacement and improvement, duct cleaning, adding portable classrooms and air purifiers and implementing air balancing equipment optimization and engineering reports.

The Committee was informed that many of the older school buildings are not equipped to handle air conditioning units, including window/portable A/C units. The Committee was informed that the cost for the renovations to add air conditioning units in all WSD schools would be extreme, and is not feasible at this time. The administration is developing plans to ensure that where possible cooler spaces are available, however, as the climate continues to change the division may need to explore alternate options such as starting the school day earlier to avoid the heat of the day.

7. Indigenous Education Curriculum

At a previous meeting, the Committee requested that implementation of additional Indigenous Education courses be added to the agenda for discussion.

The Committee was provided an Indigenous Education Fact Sheet that outlines the various WSD initiatives that support Indigenous education, Indigenous students and Indigenous staff.

The Committee was informed that currently WSD spends approximately \$3 million on specific Indigenous programs and are taking steps to increase supports for Indigenous learning by assigning an Indigenous Way of learning teacher and support person to each family of schools. The Committee was informed that there are Indigenous education courses outlined in the curriculum and that it is the Principals responsibility to implement the courses. The Committee agreed that Indigenous culture should be woven into more courses.

The Committee also expressed the importance of Global Issues courses and agreed that it would be beneficial to make that course compulsory as it helps students to gain perspective of the world beyond their own experiences. The Committee was also encouraged to establish a model UN in their respective schools and that WSD is committed to sending teams to the Winnipeg In-Person Model United Nations Assembly May 2-4, 2024.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lois Brothers
Trustee Representative

In Attendance:

Voting Representatives

Daniel McIntyre Collegiate Institute High School
Elmwood High School
Gordon Bell High School
Sisler High School

Regrets

Argyle Alternative High School
Children of the Earth High School
College Churchill High School
Grant Park School
Kelvin High School
R.B. Russell High School
St. John's High School
Tec Voc High School
W.A.E.C.

Administration

Matt Henderson, Superintendent
Tarin Howard, Recording Secretary

Trustees

Lois Brothers
Perla Javate