

THE WINNIPEG SCHOOL DIVISION

STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS – Tuesday, February 20, 2024

1. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Committee members 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

Committee members approved the agenda as distributed.

3. WSD 2024/2025 BUDGET CONSULTATION

At the previous meeting, Committee members were 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. Committee members were 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. Committee members were informed that a 3.4% increase which equates to approximately \$51 per average household (2024 average home value in WSD \$246,700) 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.

STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS – Tuesday, February 20, 2024

- 2 -

Committee members were 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. Committee members held round table discussions to identify priorities under the three categories.

Committee members suggested that schools offer more programs that are not solely based on academics. Committee members expressed the importance of having Educational Assistants in the classroom to assist students with their studies. Committee members 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. Committee members agreed that larger programs may attract more qualified volunteer coaches as well.

Committee members agreed that additional after school programs and extra-curricular activities could encourage more students to attend school which may assist with mental health issues. This would also contribute to creating a sense of belonging for students. Committee members 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. Committee members suggested more access to mental health services and access to guidance counsellors.

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

Committee members were 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. Committee members were informed the Board of Trustees will be submitting the budget to the province by March 15, 2024.

4. WSD 123: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT 2023/2024

Committee members 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.

Committee members were encouraged to share the report with their respective student councils.

5. GENDER NEUTRAL WASHROOMS

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

Committee members were 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.

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

6. AIR CONDITIONING IN SCHOOLS

At a previous meeting, Committee members requested that air conditioning in classrooms be added to the agenda for discussion. Committee members were informed that in January 2022, WSD received a grant of \$2,591,000 from Manitoba Education for “operational improvements” to ventilation systems. Committee members were 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.

Committee members were informed that many of the older school buildings are not equipped to handle air conditioning units, including window/portable A/C units. Committee members were 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, Committee members requested that implementation of additional Indigenous Education courses be added to the agenda for discussion.

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

Committee members were 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. Committee members were informed that there are Indigenous education courses outlined in the curriculum and that it is the Principals responsibility to implement the courses. Committee members agreed that Indigenous culture should be woven into more

STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS – Tuesday, February 20, 2024

- 4 -

courses.

Committee members 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. Committee members were 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.

8. ENQUIRIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SCHOOL REPORTS

SCHOOL REPORTS

The student representative from Gordon Bell High School informed the Committee that Gordon Bell will be running a production of Fahrenheit 451 from March 7 – 19. The student representative from Elmwood High School informed the Committee that Elmwood will be running a production of Tarzan from March 11 – 13.

Student representatives from the following school(s) provided a written report on school activities: (attached)

- Gordon Bell High School

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Committee members requested that environmental programs be added to a future agenda for discussion. Committee members agreed that developing a pilot program for composting would be beneficial for the division and the environment.

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

Student Advisory Committee Round Table Discussions

Table 1

- Additional fine arts programs, more options, not just academic (ie choir, dance, theatre, football Taekwondo etc).
- More coaches, paid coaches
- Support for smaller classrooms, more Teaching assistants

Table 2

- Mental Health Services
- More Extra-curriculars and after school programs
- Support for class size but also expansion of physical classroom spaces
- Importance of student teacher relationships and the effect it has on student's mental health
- Stigma of speaking to guidance counsellor

Student Advisory Committee
Gordon Bell High School Report - February 20, 2024

Second semester has started and students of Gordon Bell have had an abundance of planning events and opportunities that strengthen our connection with the staff, students, and the community.

Fine Arts Department

Our Fine Arts Department has been busy with preparations with upcoming events and assemblies. Our Choral ensembles, dance groups, and band had a very successful and festive Winter concert. They all gave excellent performances, while expressing their love for the arts and the effort they had put into organizing the concert.

Our VOX has been actively fundraising for their trip to Toronto for May 2024. They have been fundraising in a variety of ways such as Singing Grams for Valentine's Day, selling Hot Chocolate, coffee, and sweet treats during Choral events, and more.

In February, selected members of our Choir groups registered with MB Sings. Over the course of a productive and inspirational weekend, they collaborated with singers from all over the province, under the guidance of guest conductors from North America. After two days of intense rehearsals, they will learn an engaging and difficult repertoire, which they will then present to friends and families in a final concert.

The Fine Arts Department has also started preparing for our Black History Month assembly that will take place on the 28th of February. They have prepared pieces that are influenced by Black tradition, history, culture, and art.

Gordon Bell's dance clubs are all actively preparing for performances for our schools assembly for Black History Month which we are excited to see and also preparing performances for the CNDC. (Canadian National Dance Championship)

The Drama Club is also preparing a production to perform 451 Fahrenheit which will take place on March 7-9th. The students are excited to present the production to audiences after all of their hard work and preparation. The group had the opportunity to meaningfully talk about issues of censorship, book banning/burning, and the challenges we face when creating art.

Gordon Bell's Band groups are currently preparing music pieces to perform at the school Black History Months assembly. They also gave out Singing Grams during Valentine's to students performing a portion of Careless Whisper.

Athletics

Gordon Bell Athletics has gotten our school spirit up. Our Varsity Boys Basketball team has headed out of the city to play. They were registered for the Neepawa Tigers Varsity Boys

Basketball Tournament from the 16th to the 17th of February. They played against Hapnot Collegiate Institute, Neepawa Tigers, Dauphin Clippers, and Virden Bears . We are proud of them for bringing Panther pride all over schools in Manitoba. We hope that as the Basketball season comes to an end, they will play their hearts out with a smile on their faces. The team played well and displayed great teamwork during their games. The team finished 5th overall after multiple close games with point differences of 2 or 3.

Gordon Bell also has middle years basketball teams that consist of students in grades 7 and 8. Both teams have been playing really well and students have been building their teamwork and basketball skills.

Student Council

Gordon Bell's Student Council Committee ended 2023 and started 2024 with a bang. Our Student Council president submitted an article for The Wolseley Leaf regarding the importance of volunteering, and why Gordon Bell students never pass up a volunteering opportunity.

Leading up to Valentine's Day, our Student Council planned a spirit week event. A week before Valentine's Day, our student council committee also actively promoted Candy Grams and Singing Grams that are open for students to send delicious treats or send a song to present to their sweethearts. Each day of Spirit Week, students dress up to the corresponding theme and collect points for their grade.

Student Council sold over 100 Candy Grams and 20 Singing Grams, all thanks to our marketing team that has been actively promoting the products every morning and lunch.

The next step for our Student Council Committee is to prepare for upcoming Spring Spirit Week and events that will take place all afternoon at our Green Space.

Our Stories Of Hope

Our Stories of Hope is a community funded project that allows for students to enter their stories of hope, challenges, growth, more, into a contest for momentary bursaries in their Grade 10 and Grade 12 year. This project allows students to share their stories that circle around strength and resilience, while having the artistic freedom to do so.

A lot of the stories include themes of mental health, grief, trauma, childhood, addictions, a major turning point in their life, and so much more. Students can deliver their story in many different ways such as an art piece, poetry, story telling, dancing, or singing, and more.

Every year, students from Grade 10, 12, EAL programs, Inclusive Ed, and Off-Campus students get the opportunity to enter the competition. Winners are announced and selected by the end of April, and cash prizes are given to students that have won.

Students that have chosen to do a cinematic piece that involves expensive equipment such as a camera, lights, and audio are currently working with TecVoc. They have offered

students that are entering the competition the use of their equipment with no cost. They have come to Gordon Bell multiple times to assist students in filming and to show how to use the equipment that they have provided to the students.

Power of Being You Conference

Several students in grades 7, 8, and 9 were given the opportunity to attend the Power of Being You Conference that was organized by the YMCA-YWCA and held at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. The 'Power of Being You' program is a newly designed conference for Youth ages 12 – 14. The conference focused on discussion and dialogue about issues youth in our communities face, including healthy relationships and boundaries, inclusion, consent, internet safety and building self confidence.

Late Start and Wellness Wednesdays

Starting at the beginning of second semester, Gordon Bell began following the late start schedule. Students in grades 10 to 12 begin classes at 9:50 with shortened periods in the morning. Grades 7 to 9 go to their homerooms from 9:00 am to 9:50 am in what we are calling Wellness Wednesday.

During this time, students are building community and relationships within their homerooms. This will soon be expanded to the jr. high community as a whole. Homeroom teachers are planning wellness activities where students will choose. Students will be able to interact with peers and other teachers that they do not normally get the opportunity to interact with. The main goals during this time are to build a strong community where students know their peers and other teachers in the middle years hallway.

Grad

Our grads have been preparing for one of the most important events of their High School careers. The Grad committee (teachers and students) are actively planning the Ceremony and their Safe Grad Dinner & Dance by having meetings to get everyone to share their thoughts and ideas. They have had meetings about the venue, cost, and attire for the day of their graduation. They are currently coming up with ideas of how and what to fundraise to lower the cost of tickets.

The grads of Gordon Bell attended open houses for different post-secondary establishments that they are interested in going to.

Our Textiles and Design Teacher is helping our Male-Identifying Grads by offering free suits, and taking their measurements at lunch.

Our graduating classes are savoring their last few months of High School. They are taking extra steps to ensure that their graduation ceremony will be memorable and something that they will cherish for the rest of their lives.

United Way

Our United Way group presented their idea to the Youth United Grant Committee to combat the increasing rise of homelessness and poverty in Downtown Winnipeg. They have planned to send out care packages to different shelters that include toiletries, water, snacks, etc. The Youth United Grant Committee has recommended funding for their project with the amount of \$1,000. Our group is very excited to receive the grant because they want to spread awareness of the issue to the school by having a school-wide presentation regarding their project, and why they are doing it.

The faculty and students at Gordon Bell are getting used to their second semester of classes. Our recent months together were filled with activities and joy. The Gordon Bell students will have access to additional events and opportunities as the weather begins to warm up. Together, they have been growing and celebrating their successes.

Sincerely, the Gordon Bell representatives

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