

DATE: October 4, 2016

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Strategic Plan Update: Student Senate 2016-17 Work Plan

ORIGINATOR: Sandra Stoddard, Executive Director, Governance, Strategic Services and Support for Schools

RESOURCE

STAFF: Marnie Beaudoin, Nancy Petersen

REFERENCE: N/A

ISSUE

The Student Senate is presenting to the Board of Trustees a summary of their annual work plan highlighting the four priority topics generated by District students that will make up this year's plan.

BACKGROUND

At the public board meeting on April 5, 2016, students from the District Legacy student cohort brought forward a proposed youth governance model for approval. The model recommended the establishment of a Student Senate comprised of representation from across District High Schools. Once established, the Student Senate would then elect three members to serve in the role of Student Trustee. In their report, the Legacy students also identified that the proposed Student Senate model reflected alignment with Priority 1, Goals Two (Success for Every Student) and Three (Success Beyond High School) as well as Priority 2, Goal One (A Focus on Well-being and Student Citizenship) of the District Strategic Plan.

The Student Senate model of youth governance was unanimously approved by the Board of Trustees for implementation in the 2016-17 school year, along with a budget allocation and the opportunity for evaluation and reporting back to the Board in spring of 2017. To enable implementation of the model, staff from Governance and Strategic Support Services were assigned oversight to the operation of the Student Senate and the provision of support to schools in their implementation of the model. Staff from Research and Innovation for Student Learning are conducting the evaluation of the model and staff from Communications are providing social media, media and communications support to the Student Senate. Staff time and costs associated with the operations of the Student Senate are being tracked to inform an appropriate funding allocation on an ongoing basis.

In the spring, following Board approval of this model, each high school utilized a common District approach to support the identification of their school's Student Senators. In June 2016, the Student Senators attended an orientation session to prepare them for their role. The orientation session provided the students with the opportunity to meet each other, learn more about Edmonton Public Schools and explore the concept of youth governance.

The first official Student Senate meeting was held on September 9, 2016. The purpose of this meeting was to hold Student Trustee elections and ready all Student Senators to go back to their schools and facilitate a

process of student engagement to inform the development of this year's Student Senate work plan. Student Senators were provided a common question and tools to support student engagement in a manner best suited to their own school community. The common question, "*What is an important topic or area of interest related to learning and school success for the students at our school?*" was designed to inspire authentic youth engagement and input reflecting the diversity of students across District high schools.

As part of the engagement process, Student Senators used the Strategic Plan as a first level of vetting for the topics identified by the students of their school. Should a topic not align with the Strategic Plan, it was considered to be out of scope to the mandate of student governance and thus was not included as a potential topic for the Student Senate work plan. The Senators then worked with their peers to rank the topics that reflected alignment to the Strategic Plan from most important to least important for the students at their school. This resulted in a list of the top three to five priority topics emerging for the students at each high school.

Student Senators brought their school's list of priority topics to the Student Senate meeting on September 21, 2016. At this meeting, the Student Senate participated in a process to:

- share amongst themselves the feedback from each of their school communities
- group the feedback from across District high schools into emerging themes
- discuss the themes and narrow them to topic areas
- ensure alignment of the topic areas to the District Strategic Plan
- prioritize the topic areas to inform the basis for this year's work plan

Using this collaborative approach, the Student Senate collectively identified their four priority topics that will shape their 2016-17 work plan. It had been anticipated that this process would result in three priority topic areas emerging. Once the actual process was completed four of the seven priority topic areas identified by the Student Senators received a comparable ranking of importance and the Student Senators voiced that they wished to build a work plan around all four priority topic areas. These four areas were unanimously agreed upon in a show of hands vote by the Student Senate.

To support Student Senators in fulfilling their responsibilities throughout the 2016-17 school year, each high school principal has identified a Student Senate teacher representative to work with their school's Student Senators at the school level.

CURRENT SITUATION

On September 21, 2016, members of the Student Senate identified the following four priority topic areas of high interest to youth in Edmonton Public Schools. The priority topics areas are:

1. **Student Health and Wellness:** reflecting alignment to Priority 2: Goal One *A Focus on Well-being and Student Citizenship*. This priority topic area received the greatest weighting from the Student Senate with stress, mental health and preventative supports being some of the key concepts that emerged.
2. **Curriculum:** reflecting alignment to Priority 1: Goal Two *Success for Every Student*. This priority topic area generated discussion regarding the importance of student voice in Alberta Education's development of future K to 12 provincial curriculum, as well as the importance of learning experiences that are meaningful and engaging to students.
3. **Preparation for Life Beyond School:** reflecting alignment to Priority 1: Goal Three *Success Beyond Schooling*. This priority topic area reflected the strong awareness and connection from students between what they do in school now and what they will need to be successful once they complete Grade 12.

4. **Successful Learning in School:** reflecting alignment to Priority 1: Goal Two *Success for Every Student*. This priority topic area generated discussion regarding *how* students learn in school today, with flexibility and strong teacher-student relationships emerging as key themes.

There were three additional priority topic areas that were identified but did not receive sufficient support from the students to be included in their work plan this year. These three areas were: Infrastructure, Access to Technology and Resources and Extra-curricular.

NEXT STEPS

At the October meeting of the Student Senate, Senators will have the opportunity to explore each of the four priority topic areas in more detail order to establish outcomes they wish to achieve related to each priority topic area. Outcomes will be developed to reflect alignment to the District's Strategic Plan and with consideration to balancing students' work load with the work of the Student Senate. In order to support the Student Senators in achieving their outcomes, once identified, the following structure will be put in place:

- working groups will be established in support of each priority focus area
- working groups will identify the key activities they will participate in, stakeholders groups they will engage with and relevant data they will analyze to inform their work over the coming months
- working groups will report back to the Student Senate around their progress related to the established outcomes of their priority focus area.

Over the 2016-17 school year, the Student Senators will work in collaboration with each other, their school peers, Student Senate teacher representatives, school principals and District Administration to address these priority topic areas in a manner that is engaging, meaningful to District youth and aligned to the District's Strategic Plan and direction. At the February 28, 2017, public board meeting the Student Trustees will provide an update to the Board of Trustees regarding their work plan progress. They will also provide Trustees with a final summary of their year's work upon completion of their term.

KEY POINTS

- Student Senators engaged with students from each of their high schools around a key question to inform the identification of priority topics that to serve as a basis for their 2016-17 work plan.
- The four priority topics that will inform this year's Student Senate work plan are:
 1. Student Health and Wellness
 2. Curriculum
 3. Preparation for Life Beyond School
 4. Successful Learning in School
- At an upcoming meeting the Student Senators will establish outcomes for the priority topic areas, form working groups and develop action plans in support of each priority topic area.
- The Student Trustees, on behalf of the Student Senate, will report back to the Board of Trustees a summary of their progress around the outcomes related to each priority topic area at a February public board meeting.

ATTACHMENTS and APPENDICES

N/A

NP:np