

**DATE:** June 8, 2021

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT:** Student Senate Work Plan Update

**ORIGINATOR:** Karen Mills, Director, Board and Superintendent Relations

**RESOURCE**

**STAFF/STUDENTS:** Rachel Foley, Sean Jones, Nancy Petersen, Student Senators

**REFERENCE:** [November 3, 2020, Board Report: Student Senate 2020-2021 Work Plan](#)

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## ISSUE

The Student Senate is presenting to the Board of Trustees a final update of their work in support of their 2020-2021 Work Plan.

## BACKGROUND

At the November 3, 2020, public Board meeting, Student Senate brought forward a report to the Board introducing their Student Trustees and executive. For their 2020-2021 work plan, the Student Senate established that their key focus would be on amplifying the voices of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) students.

The Student Senate provided a second update on February 9, 2021. They shared that they had selected three projects, each supported by a committee: a magazine, a podcast, and workshop and club materials. As the projects progressed, the workshop and clubs group divided into two separate groups.

## CURRENT SITUATION

**Club Resources:** The club resources group collaborated with students and staff across the Division to develop a set of 10 comprehensive resource packs. The goal of these resource documents is to amplify the voices of BIPOC students by acting as a guide for social justice clubs in schools and as a general educational resource page for students to use. Each pack contains a variety of curated resources: book listings, lessons, podcasts, scholarship notices, and opportunities. They also feature amazing students and staff who have made positive contributions to the BIPOC community. All 10 bundles are posted on the Student Senate website for students and staff to access.

The process of creating these resource packs was long and at times challenging, but ultimately very rewarding. Our group began by identifying the types of resources that would best amplify the voices of BIPOC students but would also be convenient for quick classroom use and online learning. After deciding on these categories, we began the long process of actually gathering our resources and filling out our list. One of the main categories we were hoping to include in our project was interviews with students and staff from across the Division who had positively impacted the BIPOC community. To accomplish this, we began by creating a nomination form that could be used by any student or staff member in the

Division to nominate their peers to be featured in our project. After a few days, we began receiving nominations and soon had a large list of nominees, both students and teachers, from a wide range of schools. We then reached out to these nominees with interview questions that prompted them to share their contributions to the community as well as to share advice on how others could have a positive impact on the BIPOC community. It was really rewarding to have the opportunity to read the nominees' stories and to know that we were not only amplifying these individuals' voices, but hopefully inspiring others to make their voices heard and to contribute to the BIPOC community. After months of gathering resources and collaborating with individuals across the Division, we were finally able to put all of our resources together into 10 bundles and create a finished project that we can be proud of.

**Magazine:** The magazine group created *Our Authentic Voices*, an online zine for BIPOC students to share their art, poetry, stories and, overall, voices. We relied on students in the Division to send in their responses which in some ways worked for us and in others was our biggest obstacle. On one hand, it seemed to be the only way to collect a diverse range of voices and works; however, getting students to send in responses was a challenge. Despite working as hard as we could to advertise and create opportunities for students to send submissions to us, we had a hard time getting material. This was definitely something we overlooked in terms of how much content we would get based on how this year has affected everyone; we can't expect that anyone was ready to load more on their plate than they already had. When we realized we weren't going to get a large influx of works sent in, we had to be resilient and create our own content in the form of recommendation lists of BIPOC artists.

It's been rewarding having the opportunity to see, read and reflect on the brilliant creations of the artists. On top of that, being able to create a space for students to share their art is always so fulfilling; it can be difficult as a young artist to find somewhere to show your work or to find people to hear your voice, it feels amazing to have been a part of making an opportunity for that.

**Podcasts:** The podcast group planned and recorded several episodes of *Senate Speaks*, a series that features interviews with a diverse group of individuals, from current Edmonton Public Schools students, to authors, academics and advocates. To achieve this, we coordinated our efforts and each of us volunteered in roles such as research and writing, guest relations, technical coordination and hosting. We asked for input from our fellow Senators, as well as classmates, friends and family to find individuals with interesting stories to share and experiences in different fields. We quickly learned that finding a recording time that worked with everyone's schedules was a challenge, but we settled on evening time slots that worked well. Technically, we had to find a recording solution that was remotely accessible to students, staff and our guests and ended up recording Google Meet sessions and then importing these into WeVideo for editing and final production. It was fascinating having the opportunity to speak with such a diverse group of individuals and we appreciate their willingness to contribute their knowledge and expertise. We found that, as we got going, the process that we've developed for producing the podcast should be relatively easy for next year's Senate to pick up, should they wish to continue adding to the *Senate Speaks* podcast series.

**Workshops:** After working for approximately five months to develop two anti-racism workshops, the materials for both were released onto the Student Senate website on April 18, 2021. The group wanted the workshops to be easily used by anyone, so we designed many supporting materials as well as the main slideshow. Each workshop includes an instruction sheet, script, slideshow, a completion pamphlet and certificate and feedback form. Both workshops aim to raise awareness about the prevalence of racism. The *Responding to Racism* workshop focuses on allyship and responding to racism as an individual and a school. The *Addressing Racial Prejudice* workshop focuses more on the representation

of the Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) community and its effects. The overall purpose of these workshops is to help teach a generation of students about the effects of racism and how to take a stand against it so that we can hope for a future without racism.

Prior to the workshops' release, a run-through of each was completed by two W.P. Wagner teachers who volunteered to pilot the workshops with their class.

For the workshops, we arranged for videos from four guest speakers, each recognized for their contributions to the BIPOC community. Each of these videos is closed captioned to ensure that it is accessible and that students can still understand the video if the sound fails, particularly in online settings.

With the possibility of next year's Student Senators continuing this work, we have created two feedback forms, one for teachers and one for students. This feedback will help future students improve the existing workshop. Additionally, the *Responding to Racism* workshop includes a pre-workshop questionnaire to help students reflect on their experiences with racism to provide a more in-depth and engaging workshop experience. We expect more classes to participate in the workshops towards the end of June, after exams.

**Other opportunities:** In addition to working on their projects, Student Senators had the opportunity to participate in the following activities:

- Sharing happenings at their schools or information about other projects they were involved in that may be of interest to their fellow Student Senators. At meetings, Student Senators shared about a student wellness club being formed, EPSB's Career Day, the Division's Equity Advisory Committee, the City of Edmonton Youth Council, and a U of A EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) panel.
- Sitting on the Superintendent's Equity Advisory Committee; two Student Senators participated in this work and the committee provided the Superintendent with a recommendation report supporting the development of a model to collect race-based data.
- Contributing to the Early Years and the Anti-racism and Equity policy reviews via the online surveys.
- Discussing the proposed Strategic Evaluation Framework being developed by the Board. The conversation, facilitated by Trustee Draper, focused on the potential measures for evaluating student success.

## KEY POINTS

- The Student Senate chose Amplifying the voices of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) Students as their theme for the year.
- The Student Senate held nine formal meetings and students also committed time outside of regular meetings to further work on their projects.
- To amplify student voices, the students created 10 club resource packets, an e-zine, six podcasts (with a seventh planned) and two workshops. All materials are available to Division staff and students through the [Student Senate website](#).

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