

DATE: November 3, 2020

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Student Senate 2020-2021 Work Plan

ORIGINATOR: Karen Mills, Director Board and Superintendent Relations

RESOURCE STAFF: Rachel Foley, Sean Jones, Nancy Petersen

REFERENCE: [October 4, 2016, Board Report – Strategic Plan Update: Student Senate 2016-17 Work Plan](#)

ISSUE

The Student Senate is presenting their work plan for the 2020-2021 school year to the Board of Trustees.

BACKGROUND

The Student Senate serves as a youth engagement model to promote active student participation in youth governance within education and to provide the Board of Trustees with a meaningful way to access student voice. To help focus the direction and energy of the Student Senate, they establish a yearly work plan informed by the voice of their peers. The Student Senate reports on their efforts to meet their work plan goals at three public Board meetings throughout the year.

This fall, Edmonton Public high schools selected up to two students per high school to provide representation on a 2020-2021 Student Senate. The 2020-2021 Student Senate met on September 23 and October 14, 2020, to complete the following tasks:

- elect three Student Trustees: Sarah Freeman, Helen Pan, Ellen You
- elect four Student Senate Executives: Chair Johanna Lau, Vice Chair Josh Karathra and Secretaries Maria Castaneda and Natasha Larson
- review engagement input from their peers and identify their first focus topic

CURRENT SITUATION

For the previous three years, Student Senators have gathered student input on the question, “What are the most important issues related to education and school for students today?” The material was then themed and Student Senators selected three topics and based their year’s work around projects related to the three topics.

While this process produced good learning and outcomes, it required a lot of time before topics were narrowed and project work could begin. Knowing that we would be off to a later start this year because the cancellation of classes disrupted the usual spring selection process for Student Senators, we introduced a new process. Last spring, the Board reaffirmed their valuing of student voice and asked

that the Student Senate work even more closely with the Board to support its work and inform its decision making. Given that direction, the administrative leads asked the 2019-2020 Student Senators to brainstorm topics they thought would be of interest to this year's students and aligned with the work of the Board of Trustees. Then, at their August planning meeting, the Board of Trustees discussed topics they wanted student input on to help inform their decision making. From these two sources, the Board's Governance and Evaluation Committee narrowed the lists down five possible topics:

- Amplifying the voices of Black and Indigenous students
- Budgeting process
- Climate change
- Measures of student success
- Raising awareness about students with disabilities

Student Senators were provided with an overview of each topic as well as reflective questions or further context for each one. They were then charged with collecting input from other students as to which topics were of most interest to their peer group. At their October meeting, Student Senators reflected on the information they collected and chose their top two areas of focus for the year, based on the engagement feedback and their group discussion. Because there was interest in all topics, administrative leads will work with the Student Senators to find ways to also explore the other three topics.

Additionally, throughout the 2021-2021 school year, the Student Senate will provide youth perspective to Board and Division initiatives. The Board of Trustees and Division administration will be able to access youth voice through the Student Senate about a broad range of topics relevant to students.

KEY POINTS

- Student Senators elected three Student Trustees and four executives.
- Using youth voice, the Student Senate has identified two priority topics as their area of focus this year.
- The Student Senate will provide youth perspective to the Board of Trustees and Division administration about a range of topics throughout the year.
- Student Trustees will report their progress towards their work plan goals at the February 9, 2020 public Board meeting.

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