

DATE: June 7, 2022

TO: Board of Trustees

FROM: Darrel Robertson, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Student Senate 2021-2022 Work Plan Summary

ORIGINATOR: Karen Mills, Director, Board and Superintendent Relations

RESOURCE STAFF: Sean Jones, Nancy Petersen

REFERENCE: [November 30, 2021 Board Report: Student Senate 2021-2022 Work Plan](#)

ISSUE

The Student Senate is presenting to the Board of Trustees a summary of their work in support of their 2021-2022 Work Plan.

BACKGROUND

At the November 30, 2021, public Board meeting, Student Trustees brought forward a report to the Board introducing their Student Trustees and executive. At that meeting, the Student Trustees also shared with the Board that the Student Senate had selected anti-discrimination, mental wellness and transitions in education as their project themes for the year.

At the March 8 Board meeting, the Student Senate shared that they had formed seven smaller groups to work on their chosen topics from different perspectives. Each group completed a detailed project plan, which included a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) outcome, environmental scan, project overview, action plan and evaluation plan.

All groups were interested in gathering feedback from students, so developed a single survey to collect student voice. The Student Senators used the feedback to direct the focus of their work.

CURRENT SITUATION

All groups made great progress on their projects. The following summaries submitted by the students highlight each team's work.

- **Anti-discrimination:** This team subdivided to developed two projects. The first delivers content around anti-racism to elementary students in three different ways. A video incorporates three guest speakers from across EPSB who discuss introductory concepts such as what racism, anti-racism, and privilege are in a child-friendly manner. This then leads into the activity portion in which students can visualize the concept of privilege rather than it solely being presented as an abstract concept - the activity is then debriefed in the video as well. The last part of this package are discussion questions that were created as an additional resource to supplement the video and the activity. The questions are meant to evoke positive and constructive conversation, and

ensure that all students can contribute, regardless of their background. The second project is a slide presentation on how students can respond when faced with discrimination. Beginning with important definitions for words related to anti-discrimination, the presentation moves on to discussing how students can report and respond to discrimination in the school environment, avoid and deal with discrimination, and help those who have faced discrimination. With assistance from an EPSB teacher, the presentation is tailored to helping students advocate for themselves and others. Included in this presentation is an activity for students to understand how intersectionality affects their everyday lives.

- **Mental wellness 1:** Given the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, the group created an online event. They asked school counselors from four Division high schools to create brief videos regarding mental wellness, which will be posted to the Senate website for student access. The counselors got to choose from a supplied list which topics they were interested in talking about. Since mental wellness is such a broad term, the student senators determined through the student survey which topics students were interested in learning about, such as managing stress, dealing with burnout, working through difficult emotions, practicing mindfulness and self care, and supporting others with their mental health. Additionally, under each topic, the team identified questions related to that topic for the counselors to answer.
- **Mental wellness 2:** This group developed a section of the Student Senate website to help students find the mental health resources they need. A page is dedicated to links separated into categories so that students can find exactly what they're looking for to read, listen to, or watch related to their individual mental health challenges. The page will have three sections, one dedicated to stress management, one dedicated to burn out, and one dedicated to depression. In each section, students can find quick links to articles, books, podcasts, videos and more. The website is meant to act as a resource hub to help students find what they need in these difficult times. Though small right now, the site is designed to grow as resources are added.
- **Mental wellness 3 –** This group created a series of blog posts to raise awareness and increase access to information to help Division students deal with stress and its repercussions. The group began by discussing the idea of how to improve the mental health of the students and concluded that students needed resources and information. Informed by the student survey, they developed posts on stress, how the current crisis has affected our lives, and empathy and mindfulness. The group's desire was to not only make posts but also share the voices of others. In order to do that, they interviewed students, keeping their privacy in mind at all times.
- **Transitions in education 1:** To better prepare junior high students for adventures in high school, this group recorded a panel of high school students who answer questions about success, failure, stress, and time management. The high school students provide advice about how to manage a schedule, how to prioritize, and how to make the most of the high school experience.
- **Transitions in education 2:** The goal of this group was to create a page for the Student Senate website that provides junior high students with access to insights and advice from current high school students to ease their transition from junior high to high school. The web resource includes a Frequently Asked Questions section, in which common questions from junior high students are answered by high school students. One goal of the webpage was to design it to have an appealing aesthetic and easily navigated layout for junior high students so that it would catch their interest. The high school students' responses were collected through a submission

process where any high school student at EPSB was offered the chance to answer one of the Frequently Asked Questions in a short video format. These videos were then compiled and added to the project's webpage so that any junior high students could easily find current EPSB high schoolers' answers to their questions regarding the transition to high school.

- Transitions in education 3: This group helped demystify life after high school by inviting current high school students to pose their questions via Instagram and creating a panel of EPSB alumni to respond. They have collected the conversations in a summary document to serve as a more long-standing resource.

All project work can be accessed through the Student Senate [website](#).

The Student Senate wants to thank staff in the Division's Diversity, Comprehensive School Health and Specialized Learning Supports units for reviewing project materials. Your guidance was so helpful!

Other opportunities: In addition to working on their projects, Student Senators had the opportunity to learn through the following activities:

- Electing three Student Trustees: Ryan Fang, Angelina Raina, and Jasmine Virk
- Electing four Student Senate Executives: Chair Helen Pan, Vice Chair Anish Rana, and Secretaries Syeda Abidi and Ryaan Mian
- Sharing happenings at their schools or information about other projects they were involved in that may be of interest to their fellow Student Senators
- Gaining a better understanding of Division governance through a presentation by staff
- Learning about the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and its relation to their project work
- Providing feedback on the draft 2022-2026 Strategic Plan being developed by the Board
- Participating in an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion workshop

In March, the Student Senate said a fond farewell to advisor Ms. Marko, who left the Division for an opportunity with Alberta Education.

KEY POINTS

- For their 2021-2022 work plan, the Student Senate selected anti-discrimination, mental wellness and transitions in education as their project themes 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 carry out their work, Student Senators formed seven smaller groups.
- Each group delivered projects designed to benefit students. All materials will be available to Division staff and students through the [Student Senate website](#).
- In addition to their project work, Student Senators participated in a variety of other learning and feedback activities.

SJ:KM:NP:km