

DATE: January 17, 2012

TO: Board of Trustees or Conference Committee

FROM: Edgar Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: Metro Boards' Student Engagement Practices (Trustee Request #126)

ORIGINATOR: Tanni Parker, Assistant Superintendent

RESOURCE STAFF: John Macnab, Anthony Walsh

REFERENCE: October 11, 2011 Board Meeting (Trustee Colburn)

ISSUE

The following information was requested: provide information regarding the kinds of student engagement practices taking place with the administrations and trustees of the Metro Boards.

BACKGROUND

There is a range of practice regarding the existence, composition, purpose and operations of District Student Advisory Councils (DSACs) meeting with the administrations and trustees of the Metro Boards.

CURRENT SITUATION

Seven Metro Boards were contacted.

The four following boards do not have DSACs: Edmonton Catholic, St. Albert Catholic, Elk Island Catholic and Elk Island Public. The Elk Island Board of Trustees discussed creating a DSAC in 2010 but ultimately chose not to create a DSAC. The Superintendent of Elk Island Schools meets on an ad hoc basis at schools with student groups chosen by the school.

The following three boards do have DSACs: Calgary Public, Calgary Catholic, St. Albert Protestant.

The Calgary Board of Education has a program called Empowering Student Voice and Council. High School students register in Career and Technology Studies (CTS) credit courses and learn about leadership within the context of the Provincial Program of Studies. From these students, 21 are selected to sit on the Chief Superintendent's Student Advisory Council. This council meets with the Chief Superintendent at scheduled times without representation from the Board of Trustees. The students are required to assist in the planning and hosting of Leadership Symposia for other students.

The DSAC for the Calgary Catholic Board meets three times a year with district administration without Trustee representation. Student feedback from the meetings is forwarded to the Calgary Catholic Board of Trustees. The DSAC consists of one student each from Grade 10, 11, and 12 for each of the five high schools (three students per school) for a total of 15 students. Students volunteer for membership on the DSAC. Students who are chosen to become the Grade 10 DSAC representative are often the students who are subsequently chosen to be the Grade 11 and 12 representative in the following years.

There is an emphasis on representation of peers with the DSAC representatives giving presentations to the student body of their respective schools after each meeting. Student feedback from the meetings is forwarded to the Calgary Catholic Board of Trustees.

Examples of issues discussed at the DSAC meetings include:

- Action on Inclusion
- Student Resource Officer Program
- District Budget

Each year, students from the DSAC volunteer their time and energy through acts of service in the community. They also have the opportunity to participate in fundraising and awareness campaigns within their own schools. The DSAC led a Professional Development Day for Calgary Catholic Board high school teachers.

The DSAC for St. Albert Protestant Board meets with the Trustees without representation from district administration. There are 16 Grade 9-12 students whose names are put forward by schools. The DSAC consist of two Grade 9 students chosen at the school level from each junior high school and two students from each senior high school who meet with the Board of Trustees. Grade 6 students were included at one time but it was found the Grade 6 students had not developed the optimum independent thinking characteristics that would make the students' contributions meaningful.

Discussion types of questions are created ahead of time by the Board of Trustees and supplied to the students to allow them to consider their answers. Examples of a discussion questions are:

- What do you think is going well in our schools system and what needs to be changed?
- With reference to schools days starting later what are your views?
- What do you think about the programs for Internet safety?

The DSAC meetings are closed meetings, only the Board of Trustees and the students are present. There are no notes taken, the meetings are strictly verbal. The Board sometimes shares some information with the assistant superintendent of St Albert Protestant Schools. Trustees debrief with each other afterwards – the meetings and debriefing do not result in action items. Having a DSAC allows the Trustees to probe the student's interpretations of large-scale questions like those on the Accountability Pillar or the district survey to enhance the Trustee's understanding of the issue.

KEY POINTS

- Calgary Public, Calgary Catholic, St. Albert Protestant have regular meetings with a Student Advisory group.
- Edmonton Catholic, St. Albert Catholic, Elk Island Catholic and Elk Island Public do not have Student Advisory Councils.
- The structure of each council depends on the purposes to be achieved.
- The Calgary councils are part of a leadership training program for students.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT I Summary Table of Student Advisory Practices

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Summary Table of Student Advisory Practices

District	Student Advisory Council	Meets with Board	Meets with District Administration	Link
Edmonton Catholic	No			
Calgary Public	Yes	No	Yes	Empowering Student Voice and Council
Calgary Catholic	Yes	No	Yes	Student Advisory Council
Elk Island Public	No	One was discussed but not created		
Elk Island Catholic	No			
St. Albert Protestant	Yes	Yes	No	
St. Albert Catholic	No			