



2025/2026

REPORT of the **Student Advisory Council**

Presented to:

Honourable Tracy Schmidt
Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning

Presented by:

Student Advisory Council

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Letter to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning

Dear Honourable Minister Tracy Schmidt,

The Student Advisory Council is a necessary component of educational governance. Students must be stakeholders in their own learning, and their voices must be included in decisions that affect them. This council offers an invaluable opportunity for smart, driven, and community-minded high school students to make a change. It is our honour to present the annual 2025/2026 Student Advisory Council report.

On behalf of the Council, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude towards the staff of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning whose kindness, diligence, and attention to detail cannot be overlooked. It is the support and confidence in student voices that breathes life into our council. We also wish to thank the consultants and experts that graciously shared their time and wisdom with us. They showed us the work required to ensure every child receives a good education. We are grateful that our thoughts and perspectives were consistently met with genuine interest and enthusiasm. Finally, we wish to thank our fellow council members. It was inspiring to see them engage in sensitive topics with respect, eloquence, and impressive global citizenship. The opportunity to discuss pressing issues facing Manitoba's education system prompted us to think as leaders of tomorrow.

The Student Advisory Council 2025/2026 term had four meetings that covered an array of pivotal interests in education. The council provided consultations on policies concerning classroom support for students with learning disabilities, youth addiction and substance abuse, climate education, and AI in schools, as well as a few other topics. These discussions were led with open curiosity and a strong drive to foster deeper understanding of the subject in order to provide well-formed opinions. As a new shift in technology accelerates the digitalization of everyday life, one of the greatest challenges facing educators today is building fundamental skills for students to operate independently of artificial intelligence. AI has vast utility in the modern world, but it must not be to the detriment of critical thinking and numeracy skills in students. We believe the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning should offer guidance through regulation and policy during these unprecedented times.

As we reflect on our term, we are proud of the positive impact this council has had on our community. The opportunity to share our thoughts on policy allows us to pour the foundations of our own futures. It demonstrates that students have a place in government, and we hope that future Student Advisory Councils carry this responsibility forward with honour.

Respectfully,

Gwamile Dhlamini, Ivy Zheng, and Keegan Anderson, 2025/2026 Co-chairs

Introduction

The Manitoba Student Advisory Council, established in March 2021, works closely with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning to provide student perspectives and feedback that can help inform and strengthen the Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system throughout the province. It is through this student-centered council that we are able to bring together 30 Manitoban students between 14 and 18 years of age who come from a diverse array of backgrounds—whether that be educational, cultural, socioeconomical, or even geographical in terms of rural or urban settings.

What makes the Student Advisory Council unique is its focus on the student voice while connecting students with department professionals who can take student insights and have them be reflected in the decisions that help to shape Manitoba's education system. By allowing first-hand student insight, this council is able to bring something unique to the discussion: student voice.

This vision of student-involvement in the education conversation has shown continued growth and achievement through the Student Advisory Council. Over the course of the 2025/2026 term, during six meaningful consultations, passionate and dedicated students collaborated alongside equally passionate and dedicated department staff in a unified goal of strengthening our education system. Students graciously volunteered their time to engage in thoughtful deliberations and active participation, and also in discussions to share personal perspectives on their hopes and aspirations for Manitoban education.

The Student Advisory Council has had yet another highly anticipated and successful year in achieving the shared purpose of sharing the voices of the Kindergarten to Grade 12 students in Manitoba with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning. This year has been fulfilling and marked with transformative collaboration, significant personal growth, and new perspectives as well as development of skills and understanding. Each student demonstrated commitment and passion to strengthening our schools. Thus, it is with great honour and anticipation that we present the annual report of the 2025/2026 Student Advisory Council.

Highlights and Contributions

Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities in Manitoba Classrooms (October 20, 2025)

The Student Advisory Council (SAC) held a consultation session focused on supporting students with learning disabilities in Manitoba classrooms. Led by the Inclusion Support Branch, the session aimed to discuss the development of a support document to guide schools and independent learning institutions in accommodating diverse student learning needs. The Inclusion Support Branch presenters outlined the purpose of Manitoba's philosophy of inclusion under the *Safe and Caring Schools* framework.

We Discussed

- Recognizing Learning Disabilities in the Classroom: Definitions, early signs, and indicators of learning disabilities.
- Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities: Approaches for supporting students before and after diagnosis, planning for all students, and supporting self-advocacy.
- Classroom Inclusion: Effective strategies including guidance spaces, exam accommodations, use of technology for communication, extra tutoring, and individualized support.
- Planning for All Students: Creating a learning environment that accommodates diverse needs through inclusion and equity, and understanding each student's unique learning process.

We Contributed

- Provided personal and observed experiences with learning disabilities among classmates and family members, and through volunteering.
- Highlighted effective inclusion practices and accommodations they had seen in schools, emphasizing individualized support and technology use.
- Suggested improvements to the support document, including detailed examples of accommodations, students' stories, and practical guidance for teachers.

Our Reflections

- Valuing Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning's commitment to safe, caring, and inclusive schools.
- Recognizing that learning disabilities are diverse and require individualized approaches rather than uniform solutions.
- Noting the importance of equipping teachers with clear guidance, resources, and understanding to support student success.

Innagakeyaa Bimadizwin – “Towards the Good Life,” Unifying Voices for Youth Addiction System (October 20, 2025)

Cheryl Chorneyko and Ainsleigh Marcinyshyn, led a consultation focused on *Youth Addiction and Substance Use*. They opened a discussion about how youth seek support for substance-related challenges and explored ways schools can honour and respect students' diverse backgrounds and experiences. Students provided feedback to help shape provincial documents and policies supporting inclusion and youth well-being.

We Discussed

- Understanding how youth seek help and what resources they find most effective. Council members shared that young people often turn to peers, parents, caregivers, school staff, and trusted adults when they need information or help.
- When facing a crisis, most students identified emergency lines, addiction clinics, and counselors as key supports.
- Members also explored ways to reduce stigma around reaching out for help. They emphasized the importance of open conversations, creative outlets, and digital resources. The consultation also included conversations on cultural respect, where students shared examples from their school events such as Culturama, Culture Day, and Mental Health Clubs that celebrate diversity and promote inclusion.

Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (MACY) gathered the council's feedback on youth addiction to integrate their responses into MACY's framework.

We Contributed

- Council members actively shared their personal experiences and school-based initiatives that help promote student well-being.
- Shared that youth turn to trusted adults, counsellors, peers, and helplines for help.
- Suggested addressing vaping through support rather than punishment.
- Recommended stress management education and community-building initiatives.

Our Reflections

- Thought the addiction session was highly relatable and practical.
- Vaping and alcohol abuse remain major concerns for youth.
- Members felt heard, respected, and proud to represent student voices in discussions that promote inclusion, understanding, and well-being across Manitoba schools.

Highlights and Contributions

- Helped bring awareness to the reality of youth struggles and the importance of empathy and understanding from educators.
- For next steps, members expressed interest in developing more proactive programs, expanding mental health education, and continuing collaboration between schools, families, and youth organizations to support students facing addiction challenges.

Input on Teacher Professional Conduct Framework (November 17, 2025)

The Student Advisory Council had the pleasure of meeting with staff from the Teacher Certification and Standards Branch and the Commissioner of Teacher Professional Conduct. This consultation introduced the Council to the Commissioner and helped Council members learn about her role. She provided the Student Advisory Council with a presentation on how she and her team are working alongside Kindergarten to Grade 12 educational institutions to improve the school system—they are creating spaces and opportunities for students to share their experiences, as well as ensuring educational institutions remain a place of safety for students.

We Discussed

- The Commissioner and the panel's role in handling complaints of misconduct, what qualifies as misconduct, the hearing process, consent resolution agreements, and deciding how to move forward with disciplinary action.
- The five teacher competencies which are the minimum standards required to be issued certification and to maintain it, and the duty of teachers as role models.
- How the investigation process works and how complaints are followed up.
- The Online Registry of Certified Teachers and School Clinicians, how to access it, and what information will be found on it.
- The Manitoba Commissioner of Teacher Professional Conduct annual report, when it comes out, and where it can be found.



2025-2026 and 2026-2027 Student Advisory Councils gather at the Manitoba Legislature

Highlights and Contributions

We Contributed

- Advice on how to encourage the reporting of complaints of abuse and misconduct while discouraging frivolous complaints.
- Discussions about the types of students and school divisions the commission serves.
- Reflections on how the commission can be used for good, as well as how to increase the amount of misconduct reported.
- Thoughtful discussions on the differences between the provisions regarding students over and under 18 years of age and how the process would differ depending on certain ages, circumstances, and students.

Our Reflections

- Students were grateful that there is a government-led initiative to ensure they and their peers are taken care of and prioritized in Manitoba schools.
- The Online Registry of Certified Teachers and Clinicians is a helpful resource for students to view their teacher's educational background and current certificate status.

Grade 9 Mathematics and Financial Literacy Curriculum Development (November 17, 2025)

The Student Advisory Council was honoured to meet with Samuel Tougas and Nicole Allain Fox, who are leading the development of Manitoba's new Grade 9 Mathematics and Financial Literacy curriculum. Their presentation outlined the redesign of the current Grade 9 Mathematics program, including financial literacy as a core component. The consultation enabled students to share their experiences and priorities, and responses were collected on challenges in earning a Grade 9 Mathematics credit, financial decisions students have faced, are currently facing or expect to face, and important money-related topics.

We Discussed

- Financial literacy is an essential component of education, equipping students to make responsible, informed decisions and contribute to the provincial economy.
- Development of two new mandatory Grade 9 Mathematics courses by restructuring the current course into two consecutive courses, each delivered one per term, with financial literacy outcomes integrated.
- Discontinuation of Grade 9 Mathematics and Transitional Mathematics courses; implementation scheduled for September 2027.

Highlights and Contributions

- Student feedback was shared with committee members across Manitoba to guide course design and to identify students' interests and real-world financial topics.
- What major challenges do students face when earning a Grade 9 Mathematics credit, and what changes could support their success? What past, current, or future financial decisions make students wish they had learned more about financial topics, and which money-related concepts are most important for Grade 9 students to feel confident and prepared for the future?

We Contributed

- Shared perspectives on Grade 9 Mathematics challenges and financial literacy priorities.
- Reflected on the transition from Grade 8, workload, pacing, abstract concepts, gaps in foundational skills, and learning from teachers who were not math specialists.
- Discussed financial decisions such as budgeting, saving, managing paycheques, planning major purchases, and understanding the cost of living.
- Identified financial topics, including taxes, credit/debit, mortgages, loans, RRSPs, investing, fraud awareness, bill management, fundraising, and long-term planning such as interest, post-secondary tuition, and bank account management.
- Shared ideas on teaching practical life skills, including spotting scams, interpreting paycheques, tracking expenses, and making informed decisions.

Our Reflections

- Splitting Grade 9 Mathematics into two courses may strengthen understanding, confidence, and preparedness for senior years Mathematics.
- Students valued that their input would influence curriculum design and highlighted the importance of student voice in educational planning.
- Opportunities for real-world applications make mathematics more meaningful and engaging.



Council co-chair and members of the 2025-2026 Student Advisory Council present their Annual Report to Minister Tracy Schmidt.

Climate Education in Manitoba (February 9, 2026)

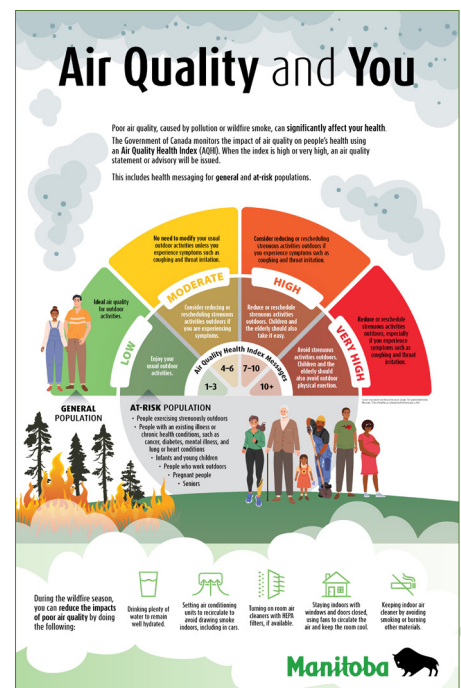
The Student Advisory Council focused on the importance of climate education and how it can be improved for students across Manitoba. In this meeting, students had the opportunity to meet with a consultant for Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, Heather Eckton. Heather led a powerful presentation on climate education in Manitoba that addressed how youth movements have helped bring attention to climate change, including the Paris Agreement and the 17 sustainable development goals. Overall, the meeting showed the importance of student involvement, climate literacy, and real-world action.

We Discussed

- Climate change impacts on students in Manitoba, such as poor air quality caused by wildfires and extreme weather patterns.
- Lack of consistent climate change education across schools in Manitoba.
- The integration of climate change education across all grades, not just when it comes to Earth Day.
- Importance of land-based experiences and hands-on learning when it comes to climate education.
- The main takeaway of climate education should be that climate change is solvable.

We Contributed

- Previous learning experiences about climate change in school.
- Ideas about student involvement, such as students creating presentations or games to educate others.
- Suggestions that climate education should encourage students to take action locally.
- Discussions on previous experiences that sparked interest in environmental issues, such as outdoor learning and community activities.
- Concerns that schools across Manitoba lack consistent climate change education.



An image from the Government of Manitoba that was shown to students during consultation.

Government of Manitoba. Air Quality and You. https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/docs/sector_coms/air_quality_eng.pdf

Highlights and Contributions

Our Reflections

- Schools should create opportunities for students to explore the topic of climate change independently and share what they've learned that can increase engagement and interest.
- Quality climate education should show how youth can be a part of the solution instead of fear-mongering.
- Including Indigenous perspectives is important for students to understand their connection and the need to maintain the environment.
- Real-world and local connections to climate education are more impactful and meaningful.
- Climate education isn't merely a "reminder in the calendar" and needs to be consistently integrated in curriculum across all grades.

AI in Education (April 20, 2026)

The Student Advisory Council participated in a consultation on AI in education, informed by Manitoba's AI in Education Summit. The session included perspectives from the keynote speaker of the summit, as well as education leaders and government leaders. The focus was on how AI is shaping education and how students can be prepared for an AI-driven future. The summit highlighted that AI is already transforming learning and emphasized the importance of ensuring students have the tools to succeed while maintaining strong core values during rapid technological change.

We Discussed

- The key themes of the AI in Education Summit, including curriculum, assessment, workforce skills, ethics, and future career preparation.
- The shift in student understanding of AI since 2024, from uncertainty to more regular use, while noting that guidelines still vary across classrooms.
- How students are using AI for studying, generating ideas and outlines, and supporting learning in subjects like math and science.
- How teachers are using AI for lesson planning, resource creation, and administrative support, alongside concerns about academic integrity and over-reliance.
- The provincial government's commitment to developing Guiding Principles on AI in Education, and the importance of building skills like critical thinking, communication, and AI literacy.

We Contributed

- Our experiences using AI as a learning support tool, emphasizing that it should enhance learning rather than replace independent thinking.
- The need for stronger AI literacy, including understanding how AI works, its limitations, and how to recognize bias and inaccuracy.
- Ideas on encouraging students to think independently before turning to AI, and to critically evaluate responses rather than accepting them at face value.
- Thoughts on strengthening key future skills like communication, collaboration, and resilience to support responsible AI use.

Our Reflections

- The idea that “AI will do the doing, but we will get paid for the thinking” stuck with many of us and made us think about what skills we actually need to be building right now.
- We recognized that many students are still figuring out how and when to use these tools responsibly, and that clear guidelines vary considerably across classrooms.
- We felt strongly that schools should be teaching students to critically evaluate what AI gives them, since it can be biased or just plain wrong.
- Some of us pointed out that students also need to learn how to fail and struggle, because if AI does everything, we will never build real problem-solving skills.
- Overall, we left wanting more structured AI literacy in schools, not just rules about usage, but actually understanding how it works and knowing its limits.

Presentation of the Report of the Student Advisory Council to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (August 17, 2026)

We had the opportunity to present our annual *Report of the Student Advisory Council* to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, Tracy Schmidt, along with department staff. The Minister’s opening remarks reminded us that our voices are valued and important to the improvement of education in Manitoba. Our report outlined our work and ideas over the past year and reflected our achievements and goals. We had the opportunity to ask the Minister some questions and gain an understanding of how our contributions are helping to shape the future of education in the province.

While the meeting signaled and celebrated the end of our term, it was also an opportunity to meet the incoming 2026/2027 Student Advisory Council members and share our experiences, insights, and hopes with them as they embark on the same

journey. We spent the day with our peers, connecting with each other and learning about the policy process of education in Manitoba and the history of the Legislative Building.



Members of the 2025-2026 Student Advisory Council along with Minister Tracy Schmidt

Conclusion

This report exists as a testament to the time, energy, and dedication of the Student Advisory Council, the Department Staff, and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning. In collaboration with one another, the 2025/2026 report is a proud example of what we've all achieved working alongside one another to not only keep conferences running efficiently, but also create a diverse, creative environment where ideas and perspectives can flow freely without judgement towards a common goal: the continued improvement of Manitoba schools. We offer our immense gratitude to everyone involved in the 2025/2026 Student Advisory Council, as well as the passion and teamwork they consistently exhibited throughout the year.

As the current term comes to an end, and we prepare to welcome the new wave of student voices, we'd like to thank the Minister, as well as extend that gratitude to the entire department. They've provided a platform where students across Manitoba can come together to share our perspectives and play an active role in representing

the student population in discussions involving Manitoba schools. Real, meaningful change and discussions have arisen from this opportunity where students can contribute to something as significantly impactful as the Student Advisory Council.

This council has been a meaningful one, inciting change, and we eagerly wait for what next year and the years to come have to bring to this enriched discussion with the persisting goal to serve the Minister in enhancing our education system and schools. The diversity and dynamic perspectives across the Student Advisory Council is the key to its success, and we look forward to all the undoubtedly impactful change to come, as well as looking back at all that we've accomplished thus far in celebration. This has been a significant year for us all and we leave with sincere gratitude for the support and engagement from each council member, staff member, and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning.

Sincerely,

The 2025/2026 Student Advisory Council



Members of the 2025-2026 and 2026-2027 Student Advisory Councils with Minister Tracy Schmidt

Photo Gallery: August 17, 2026, Student Advisory Council In-Person Meeting



Students engaged in a bingo icebreaker activity



Students get competitive in a fun game of Manitoba trivia



Council co-chair introduces Minister Tracy Schmidt to Student Advisory Council members



Council co-chair and members of the 2025-2026 SAC present the annual report to the Minister



Students engage in conversation with Minister Tracy Schmidt



Students tour the Legislative Building to learn about and explore the building's history

Appendix A: Schools Represented on the 2025/2026 Student Advisory Council

Balmoral Hall School

Collège Jeanne-Sauvé in Louis Riel School Division

École New Era School in Brandon School Division

École secondaire Neelin High School in Brandon School Division

École secondaire Sisler High School in Winnipeg School Division

École/collège régional Gabrielle-Roy in Division scolaire franco-manitobaine

Gimli High School in Evergreen School Division

Grandview School in Mountain View School Division

Grant Park High School in Winnipeg School Division

Institut Collégial St. Paul's Collegiate in Prairie Rose School Division

J.H. Bruns Collegiate in Louis Riel School Division

Maples Collegiate in Seven Oaks School Division

Margaret Barbour Collegiate Institute in Kelsey School Division

Minegoziibe Anishinabe School in Frontier School Division

Morden Collegiate Institute in Western School Division

Nelson McIntyre Collegiate in Louis Riel School Division

Peguis Central School

Pembina Trails Collegiate in Pembina Trails School Division

R.D. Parker Collegiate in Mystery Lake School Division

St. James Collegiate in St. James-Assiniboia School Division

University of Winnipeg Collegiate

Vincent Massey High School in Brandon School Division

Westgate Mennonite Collegiate

Appendix B: Terms of Reference

Student Advisory Council Terms of Reference

Purpose

Manitoba students are the cornerstone of our education system, and their perspectives are crucial in guiding the decisions that affect them. The Student Advisory Council empowers young people to actively participate and share their insights with the department, thereby playing a significant role in shaping the future of our education system.

Eligibility

Council members

- are Manitoba residents
- are in Grades 9 to 12 as of September 1 in the school year in which they serve
- represent the diversity of Manitoba students
- have an interest in issues related to education
- have the ability to work with other people and on a team
- engage in respectful, open discussions, and are accepting of differing viewpoints
- are not employed by the Manitoba government
- are willing to serve for a one-year term

Responsibilities

Student Advisory Council members are responsible for

- attending meetings
- participating in discussions/consultations to provide input to the Minister on aspects of the education system and how they affect the children and young people involved
- bringing youth insights to the department and the education sector to help inform the department's work
- providing other students with ways to share their perspectives and advice

- providing feedback on department initiatives and materials (e.g., surveys and reports)
- assisting in notetaking of meetings, and the drafting and reviewing of the annual report
- working collaboratively

Student Advisory Council Co-chairs

- attend all meetings and dedicate extra time to prepare for and facilitate them
- guide members toward productive dialogue and foster ongoing engagement between sessions
- demonstrate responsible, considerate leadership and commitment to the council's success
- write the annual letter to the Minister, and the introduction and conclusion of the annual report

Time Commitment

The Student Advisory Council is expected to meet at least four times within its year-long mandate; however, there may be additional sub-meetings to attend.

Remuneration

There is no remuneration. Council members from outside Winnipeg will be reimbursed reasonable travel expenses as per the Province of Manitoba's travel and accommodation policies.

