



REPORT of the
**STUDENT
ADVISORY
COUNCIL**

August 2023

Presented to:

Honourable Wayne Ewasko,
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 Wayne Ewasko:

We are delighted and honoured to present the Report of the 2022/2023 Student Advisory Council. As co-chairs, we had the pleasure of working with a dedicated and enthusiastic group of diverse Manitoban students who share the vision of ensuring that all students succeed, regardless of their background. This council, comprised of 30 students from across the province, has emphasized the need to include all voices in decision-making, particularly those of Indigenous peoples, LGBTQA2S+ identities, students with disabilities, and other marginalized communities.

This year, it was imperative that we carry forward and build upon the momentum of last year's council. We want to express our deepest gratitude to all the stakeholders and departmental staff who tirelessly contributed to the success of the Student Advisory Council over the past two years. Together, we have made significant strides in ensuring every student's needs are met, creating a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape.

Throughout our journey as the Student Advisory Council, we have witnessed the power of diverse perspectives and experiences. Council members have gained a first-hand experience of government operations, leaving us better equipped to shape government policies, now and in the future. We envision a continued commitment to excellence in education. We believe in the mission of Manitoba's education system to nurture talents in all students. By continually engaging with students and implementing evidence-based practices, we can ensure that the education system remains adaptable to the evolving needs of our diverse student population from both rural and urban settings. In our report, we have outlined key recommendations that we believe will enhance Manitoba's education system. We have also stressed the importance of continuing to address systemic challenges that may hinder certain student populations, such as barriers to mental health support, access to menstrual products, and effective delivery of remote learning. Through targeted initiatives and collaborative efforts, we can strive to eliminate these disparities and ensure that all students have equal access to quality education no matter where they live.

As we conclude our tenure as co-chairs and pass the torch to future council members, we are confident knowing incoming members will carry on the essential work of advocating on behalf of all Manitoban students. We encourage them to build upon the achievements of this council, foster meaningful partnerships, and elevate student voices at every level of decision-making. We recognize that this is only the first step in a journey towards a better future for our fellow students.

Serving as co-chairs has been an extraordinary privilege, and we hold unwavering faith in the continuous endeavours to realize equity, inclusion, and accountability within Manitoba's Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system. This collective effort is undeniably setting the groundwork for a brighter and more promising future for every single student across the province. Together, we are forging a path towards an enriched educational experience for all.

Respectfully,

Lily Rich, Co-Chair
Bijan Salimi, Co-Chair

Introduction

The Student Advisory Council was launched in March 2021 in response to recommendations from Manitoba’s Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education. The council is comprised of a diverse group of students from various grade levels and educational backgrounds across Manitoba. The council’s primary mandate is to provide valuable input and recommendations to Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning on matters that directly impact students’ education and well-being, directly from students themselves. The Council reports directly to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning.

The formation of the council in 2021 was rooted in the belief that students should play an active role in making the policies and decisions that impact their educational journey. The council ensures that student perspectives, concerns, and aspirations are considered by the department and the schools that they attend. Pupils are vital stakeholders in education, just as are parents, teachers, administrators, and government officials.



A word-cloud generated by students when they were asked to summarize their experiences in one word. Words that were repeated by multiple members are enlarged.

This vision was carried out through the council’s inaugural 2021/2022 term. Council members gained a first-hand experience of government operations and learned how to shape government policies, now and in the future.

Armed with insightful feedback from both council members and department staff, the council forged ahead its 2022/2023 term with the goal of building further momentum in consultations and initiatives. Once again, this mission has been achieved with absolute

excellence, thanks to engaged and thoughtful members paired with the efforts of dedicated and compassionate staff. Students shared personal experiences and provided pertinent feedback on the current state of education, along with their hopes for an ideal system where all students have their interpersonal, intrapersonal, and educational needs met.

When asked to summarize their experience as Student Advisory Council members in one word, there was an overwhelming sense of gratitude amongst the group. Words like “insightful” and “enlightening” highlight the diverse and nuanced perspectives shared by each member. Within each meeting, there was consistent dialogue and incredibly mature discussion on a wide array of student-centric subjects. Words like “difference” and “contribution” underpin the importance of this Council in platforming youth voices on a provincial level: This term has been a period of immense growth for the council, and it is with pride and satisfaction that members share the Report of the 2022/2023 Student Advisory Council.

Highlights and Contributions

During our time as a Council, we had the opportunity to attend eight meetings, where we collaborated with each other and various other department stakeholders. Topics discussed throughout the term are outlined below, highlighting specific insights and takeaways from each meeting.

1. Online High School

October 18, 2022

What do students find useful about remote learning?

The council believes one of the most beneficial outcomes of the pandemic was the improvement of remote learning. Remote learning was beneficial to students as it:

- Improved accessibility and organization for students, as class materials were easily accessible in one place, and lessons could be watched multiple times.
- Saved time, energy, and potential financial burdens by eliminating the need to commute to school, allowing students to learn at their own pace.
- Expanded course selection, which particularly benefits rural and northern communities, who may have limited access to sufficient staffing and course variety.

What difficulties do students face?

While there were benefits to remote learning, it is important to also look at the difficulties that arise, such as:

- Access to a stable internet connection and adequate technology, particularly in low-income and rural areas.
- The learning curve for students and teachers alike in adapting to the use of various applications, creating a schedule, acquiring proper recording assets, and effectively learning and teaching in a remote environment.
- Keeping students accountable, motivated, and engaged with their studies. As different students excel within certain learning environments, the remote environment can be challenging for some.
- A lack of in-person connections, which leads to a potential lack of social skills and interpersonal skills. Aspects like athletics, clubs, and other extracurricular activities that rely on being in-person are lost.

- Teachers trained for in-person instruction struggle to effectively teach in-person skills remotely, highlighting the difficulty of teaching a virtual class that was originally designed for the traditional classroom setting.

What should the Minister be aware of regarding students' views on the current state of Online High School in Manitoba?

- Online high school in Manitoba must ensure that courses are specifically designed for online delivery and not simply transferred from in-person classes to an online format.
- The lack of interpersonal relationships in an online setting may pose challenges for students' learning experiences, emphasizing the importance of fostering connections between peers and teachers.



Council members meet to discuss issues pertinent to Manitoba's education system.

2. Curriculum Renewal and Teacher Misconduct

November 23, 2022

We discussed:

- The current state of Manitoba's Science and Physical Education curriculum, including positive and challenging aspects of the student experience.
- Areas for improvement, both within the curriculum and the general classroom environment.
- How to optimally report teacher misconduct and support impacted students.
- The function and mechanics of public governance through Agencies Boards and Commissions (ABC) Training.
- The joint role of the Education Council with the Student Advisory Council.

We contributed:

- Insight into valuable aspects of the current physical education curriculum:
 - The current emphasis on healthy lifestyles and achievable, realistic goals for the average Manitoban.
 - The consistent mental health focus.
 - Lessons on the effects of supplements and vitamins on the body.
- Advice on areas of improvement:
 - Include the option of completely private and all-female change rooms to provide comfort for female students, while being sensitive to gender diverse students.
 - Offer a wider array of activities using streams like outdoor education; incorporate curriculum specifically for students with disabilities.
 - Widen the definition of what 'healthy living' can mean for everyone, taking into account human differences; focus on holistic wellness through conversations surrounding health topics such as dietary variety and differing lifestyle choices.
 - Increase resources on how to prevent obesity.
 - Reiterate the harms of substance use in young people, especially vaping and cannabis use.
- Feedback regarding the strengths of our science curriculum:
 - The focus on ethical scientific practice, data collection, and analysis.
 - The four-year nature of the course.
 - The real-world potential applications of the content.
- Advice on areas of improvement:
 - Increase focus on hands-on lab education as opposed to theory and lecture-based class time.
 - Heighten access to consistent science education.
 - Widen conversation around climate change and environmental science.
- Counsel on how to optimize support for individuals experiencing teacher misconduct:
 - Make contacts for reporting teacher misconduct accessible and simple to use.
 - Provide resources and warnings to show what misconduct can look or sound like, along with resources to halt it.
 - Simplify the definition of misconduct for the sake of younger students.



Student Advisory Council members in conversation with Deputy Minister Dana Rudy regarding her visit to the May 2023 G7 Education Ministers Meeting in Japan.

3. Student Engagement and Youth Leadership

February 13, 2023

The key themes in this meeting were *transparency, clarity, and inclusion*.

In this online meeting we:

- Participated in a presentation on youth leadership, presented by former Student Advisory Council member Kaydon Laurin.
- Engaged in a consultation session, where we responded to seven questions related to student engagement.

We contributed:

- Strategies to facilitate meaningful consultation among students and various stakeholders using student engagement and empowerment.
- Proposals for formats, tools, and support systems to overcome barriers including age, location, and socio-economic status in student consultation.
- Various important topics for consultations with students that will ensure student voices and perspectives will be considered.

Meaningful consultation should:

- Ensure accountability by sending a clear plan and goal for the consultation, including a follow-up to share progress and clearly demonstrate how student feedback is incorporated before the consultation session begins.
- Foster a safe and accessible environment with positive reinforcement, affirmation, open communication, and respect between all parties, where students feel trusted and comfortable sharing their experiences and insights and contributing to the conversation.
- Promote innovative thinking, creative expression, and collaboration with students across different areas and circumstances to ensure student-centered solutions.
- Recognize that problems facing students should be solved in collaboration with students and understand that the problem-solving process will differ depending on the people involved.

To engage and empower students we should:

- Recognize that youth are already empowered without adult intervention, and focus on using student insights in a way that is beneficial to students and makes them feel valued.

- Create a safe space for students to express themselves using traditional and non-traditional techniques, to allow for more opportunities for students to have a say in their education.
- Emphasize the importance of all voices, especially those of vulnerable students, using culturally appropriate engagement for students from different backgrounds.
- Utilize adults with connections to students, small group discussion, and collaboration between classes.
- Utilize different formats to collect information from students. With transparency, social media could be used; however, physical, non-digital formats should also be employed.



Student Advisory Council Fireside Chat | February 13, 2023

LIVE GRAPHIC RECORDING

Graphic recorder Miranda Maslany created a representation of our meeting insights and discussions in the image above.

4. School Leadership, the Poverty and Education Task Force, and the *Access to Menstrual Products Initiative*

May 8, 2023

We discussed

- How poverty relates to education and how the Poverty and Education Task Force helps with this issue. We also engaged in a survey to provide further insights on the issue of poverty in education.
- Period poverty in schools and society and how the Access to Menstrual Products Initiative is helping reduce it.
- Qualities that should be portrayed in a school leader, and issues within school leadership.

We contributed

Our thoughts on school leadership, expressed through the online survey sent to us after the meeting:

- School leaders should be visionaries and passionate about their work and their students.
- Leaders should involve students in decision and policy making, as it creates a more comfortable learning environment when students' thoughts are heard and considered.
- We suggested that leaders should be open to constructive criticism from students.
- Superintendents should be aware of the school leadership issues, handle them appropriately per school, and consider intersectional challenges within their division.

Our thoughts on Poverty and Education:

- The Poverty and Education Task Force final report shows how students' financial situations affect their academic and athletic performance in school.
- Schools should work to eliminate the barrier between low-income students and students in better financial situations.
- Schools should acknowledge that some students are compelled to work due to their family's financial situation, warranting the provision of special accommodations.

Our thoughts on the Access to Menstrual Products Initiative:

- Girls in schools strongly support the initiative as they find it very useful.
- Students feel that the implementation of the initiative was long overdue but has been effective thus far.

- We suggested reducing stigmatization surrounding period poverty, as well as expanding availability to include a variety of menstrual products.
- We identified ways to increase awareness of the initiative, such as putting up posters or broadcasting information on morning announcements.



2022/2023 returning Student Advisory Council member Samantha Martinussen engages with 2023/2024 Student Advisory Council members Aaditya Raj Singh, Lauren Field and Griffin Carnelley in a “Create your own political party” activity.

5. Presentation of Report to the Minister

July 25, 2023

We had the pleasure to present our Report to the Minister of Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, summarizing the content of the report and reflecting on our achievements and future goals. During this meeting:

- Outgoing members of the 2022/2023 Student Advisory Council had the chance to acquaint themselves with incoming members of the 2023/2024 Student Advisory Council.
- Deputy Minister Dana Rudy provided an overview of her experience at the 2023 G7 Education Ministers meeting in Japan. Students were able to consult the Deputy Minister on a variety of topics affecting education in Manitoba and abroad.
- The Minister received introductions from members and provided opening remarks. The Minister touched on the importance of this council and expressed gratitude for the youth perspective within government.

- Students asked the Minister questions, with topics ranging from divisional funding and class variety, to the Poverty and Education Task Force and graduation rates for Indigenous students.
- The Minister thanked the council for our efforts and presented Certificates of Completion to 2022/2023 members.



The Student Advisory Council presents their 2022/2023 Report of Annual Activities to Minister Wayne Ewasko.

Conclusion

This report is the result of endless communication, planning, and most importantly, commitment to education in Manitoba. We express the utmost gratitude towards the Minister of Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, as well as every staff member that has supported council members as we realize our duties. They have guided us on our path as a government advisory body, and they will forever remain an integral aspect of this group.

As we near the end of our term, we are left with a profound sense of excitement. The past two years have been a time to build this council's foundation and find where our inputs can be utilized effectively. Having taken this time, we have been able to move past dialogue and into action: we are now closely collaborating with the Poverty and Education Task Force to face issues of period poverty and menstrual product access; we have created concrete guidelines on how to empower youth through consultation while maintaining transparency and we have proposed concrete changes in Science and Physical Education to be enacted

in Manitoba's upcoming curriculum renewal. We have begun to exit our nascency and have developed immense confidence as a government initiative.

These outcomes are only the beginning. Incredible work has been done, and there are countless items left to explore. We are not simply passing a torch: we are passing a mandate to improve the education system in Manitoba and the lives of students across this province. We sincerely believe in the capabilities of our future members to fulfill this mandate with integrity.

Bearing witness to this council is a privilege like no other. All council members have an endless supply of ingenuity, creativity, and enthusiasm to bring to the public sphere. Our futures are bright, and our work will influence the lives of Kindergarten to Grade 12 students for years to come.

Sincerely,

2022/2023 Student Advisory Council



Remote Attendees: Suroor Ajani, Namirembe Afatsawo, Aadvika Mukherjee, Ivy Zheng, Rafia Oyewole, Stanley Gwanoya, Mackaila Bruce-Tapley, Nira Atwal, Gydel Gapua.

Back Row: Julian McArthur, Harisharn Bahra, Sydney-Rose Povey, Aaditya Raj Singh, Nilesh Dhakal, Jordan Gottfried, Griffin Carnelley

Middle Row: Assistant Deputy Minister Sonya Penner, Samantha Martinussen, Lauren Field, Ievgeniia-Diana Furda, Kristine Bolisay, Sally Leask, Pleasant Oyela, Hafssa Jamal, Brenda McKinney

Front Row: Deputy Minister Dana Rudy, Brianne Judson, Minister Wayne Ewasko, Lily Rich, Edlyne Raez, Bijan Salimi

Appendix A – 2022/2023 Student Advisory Council Members

2022/2023 Student Advisory Council Members	
Aaron Linke	Grade 12 student at École Edward Schreyer School in Sunrise School Division
Abdul-Wassay Mirza	Grade 10 student at St. John's-Ravenscourt School in Winnipeg
Aiden Anderson	Grade 12 student at J.H. Bruns Collegiate in Louis Riel School Division
Allison Beaumont *	Grade 10 student at Neepawa Area Collegiate Institute in Beautiful Plains School Division
Bijan Salimi *	Grade 12 student at Morden Collegiate Institute in Western School Division
Brianne Judson	Grade 11 student at Roseau Valley School in Border Land School Division
Ebubechukwu (Isabella) Nebo	Grade 10 student at Institut collégial Vincent Massey Collegiate in Pembina Trails School Division
Ella Hamilin	Grade 12 student at Murdoch MacKay Collegiate in River East Transcona School Division
IevgEniia-Diana Furda	Grade 11 student at École Secondaire Kelvin High School in Winnipeg School Division
Jordan Gottfried	Grade 12 student at Collège Lorette Collegiate in Seine River School Division
Josh Nienhuis *	Grade 12 student at Springfield Collegiate Institute in Sunrise School Division
Julian McArthur	Grade 11 student at École Secondaire Kelvin High School in Winnipeg School Division
Katherine Dueck *	Graduate of the Class of 2022 at Green Valley School in Hanover School Division
Layne Hunnie-Menow	Grade 12 student at Helen Betty Osborne Ininiw Education Resource Centre in Frontier School Division
Lily Rich *	Grade 12 student at Balmoral Hall School in Winnipeg
Mia Beetham Outingdyke	Grade 10 student at Portage Collegiate Institute in Portage la Prairie School Division
Michael Akinbode	Grade 10 student at Crocus Plains Regional Secondary School in Brandon School Division
Mya Dueck	Grade 11 student at Boissevain School in Turtle Mountain School Division
Namirembe Afatsawo *	Grade 11 student at Margaret Barbour Collegiate Institute in Kelsey School Division

2022/2023 Student Advisory Council Members

Nicholas Johnston	Grade 10 student at Landmark Collegiate in Hanover School Division
Nicholas Spenst	Grade 12 student at Collège St. Norbert Collegiate in Seine River School Division
Nira Atwal	Grade 10 student at Balmoral Hall School in Winnipeg
Rania Ibrahim *	Graduate of the Class of 2022 at The University of Winnipeg Collegiate in Winnipeg
Samantha Martinussen	Grade 10 student at Stonewall Collegiate Institute in Interlake School Division
Seung Woo Han	Grade 9 student at Collège Jeanne-Sauvé in Louis Riel School Division
Siya Patel	Grade 10 student at Crocus Plains Regional Secondary in Brandon School Division
Suroor Ajani *	Grade 12 student at Erikson Collegiate Institute in Rolling River School Division
Sydney Rose Povey	Grade 12 student at École Secondaire Kelvin High School in Winnipeg School Division
Viraaj Raina	Grade 11 student at Fort Richmond Collegiate in Pembina Trails School Division
Vuk Roca *	Grade 12 student at Collège Garden City Collegiate in Seven Oaks School Division

Appendix B – Terms of Reference

STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL TERMS OF REFERENCE

PURPOSE

Manitoba students are at the heart of our education system and their opinions should play an important role in the decisions that affect them. The establishment of the Student Advisory Council will enable youth to contribute their voice in shaping our education system in Manitoba.

ELIGIBILITY

Council members

- are Manitoba residents
- are between 14 to 18 years of age as of September 1 in the school year in which they serve
- represent the diversity of Manitoba students
- are knowledgeable about issues related to education
- have the ability to work with other people and on a team
- are approachable and effective communicators
- engage in respectful, open discussions, and are accepting of differing viewpoints
- may not be employed by the Manitoba government
- are willing to serve for a one-year term

RESPONSIBILITIES

The 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 who use them
- bringing youth insights to the department and the education sector to help inform our work
- providing other students with ways to share their perspectives and advice



- providing feedback to requests on department products (for example, surveys/discussion papers)
- working collaboratively

TIME COMMITMENT

The Student Advisory Council is expected to meet three to 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.

