



August 2025

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,

It is with great pride that we, as co-chairs, have the honour of presenting you with the 2024/2025 Student Advisory Council annual report. The Student Advisory Council is made up of a diverse group of students living across Manitoba, who represent their peers by voicing their perspectives as students, sharing regional insights, and contributing to meaningful discussions that help shape our current education system in Manitoba. By fostering a space of respect and openness, our council played a pivotal role in driving meaningful changes in Manitoba's education system.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest thanks to the staff of the Education and Early Childhood Learning Department who supported us with patience, guidance, and unwavering encouragement. Their support gave us the opportunity to lead this council with meaning and purpose and helped us to contribute toward significant change in Manitoba's education system. Additionally, we are immensely grateful to the consultants and experts who generously shared their time and wisdom with us. These discussions deepened our understanding of Manitoba's education system, inspired us to think critically about the changes we can make, and challenged us to broaden and diversify our perspectives on education. We truly valued the opportunity to share our input on current issues in schools and appreciated their genuine eagerness to hear our perspectives as students. Lastly, we extend our appreciation to our fellow council members. Their thoughtful dialogue, respectful collaboration, and dedication have made this council a model of what student governance can achieve. We are grateful for the returning and previous council members whose wisdom has grounded our work and helped build continuity across terms.

Throughout the year, we focused on several key educational priorities while deepening our understanding of the importance of integrating Indigenous perspectives into Manitoba's education system. We believe that education must honour the truths of the past while empowering students with knowledge that can help to build a more equitable future. These conversations were some of the most powerful moments of our term, and we leave this experience with a deeper understanding of what reconciliation in education can truly look like. At the same time, other consultations on topics such as emergency management, the social studies curriculum, and the menstrual products initiative provided us with the opportunity to engage in diverse issues that are currently affecting students in Manitoba. As wildfires continue to have an impact on communities across our province, the emergency management consultation felt especially relevant. This consultation highlighted the importance of communication and preparation, and the role that students can play in shaping responses. As we reflect on this term, we are inspired by the changes we see happening in our community, and hope that the future Student Advisory Councils can continue to build on this foundation.



The *Report of the Student Advisory Council* for the 2024/2025 year reflects the tireless efforts of each council member to advocate for an education system that is inclusive, equitable, and transformative. **Despite our differences, we have found common ground in the belief that all students deserve to be seen, heard, and valued.** Our passion for student voices in education decision-making led to meaningful contributions that we hope will positively impact Manitoba's education system for future generations of students.

Serving as co-chairs this year has been an unforgettable experience and a tremendous honour. We are proud of the work we've done together, and more importantly, of the community we've built. As we conclude this year, we remain hopeful for the future of education in Manitoba and confident that the voices of students will continue to guide it forward.

Respectfully,

Ava May and **Landon Sanderson**, 2024/2025 Co-chairs

Introduction

Established in March of 2021, the Student Advisory Council provides input on issues that directly affect education across Manitoba to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning. The council is made up of 30 students from Grades 9 through 12, representing various backgrounds, schools, and communities across Manitoba.

The Student Advisory Council's main goal is to ensure that student perspectives and voices are reflected in the decisions that shape their education system and school experiences. The unique voice of each student on the council helps build and strengthen the future of education in Manitoba. We believe that students are invaluable in creating a positive school environment.

Throughout the 2024/2025 term, the Student Advisory Council participated in many discussions, had incredible opportunities to learn about Manitoba's education system and the ongoing projects that are being developed, and saw how Indigenous perspectives are helping shape the future of education in Manitoba.

The Student Advisory Council has once again fulfilled our goal, with our success made possible by the dedication and collaboration between our passionate members and department staff. The 2024/2025 term has been a transformative journey, filled with diverse perspectives, meaningful discussions, and significant growth. It is with great pride that the Student Advisory Council presents this year's annual report of the Student Advisory Council 2024/2025.

Highlights and Contributions

During our time as a council, we had the opportunity to attend six meetings and consultations, where we had the honour to meet with Member of the Legislative Assembly for Lagimodière, Tyler Blashko, and Deputy Minister Brian O'Leary, as well as staff from various areas within the department. These dynamic presenters truly listened to us and built a space where everyone felt respected and connected, and where we were encouraged to think creatively. They made it easy for our council to speak up, share ideas, and get excited about the future of learning and education.

Our meetings have provided us with meaningful insights and offered a platform to express our perspectives on issues that are directly affecting students in Manitoba. Topics discussed throughout the term are captured in this report, with specific insights and takeaways from each meeting highlighted.



The Q & A session led by Minister Tracy Schmidt at the August 18, 2025, in-person meeting.

Education Governance and Treaty Education for All (October 29, 2024)

The Student Advisory Council was honoured to meet with Jeff Kehler, Assistant Deputy Minister of the System Performance and Accountability Division, and Brett Schmall, a consultant in the Indigenous Excellence in Education Division. Jeff's presentation, "Education Governance," provided valuable insights into the governance within the Manitoba school system. Brett's presentation, "Treaty Education for All," explored the significance of treaty education in Manitoba and its implementation.

We discussed

- the Constitution Act's influence on education and the following key legislation: (1) The Public Schools Act, (2) The Education Administration Act, and (3) The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Act
- the role of our local government in education and authority distribution within the Kindergarten to Grade 12 system, including policy application and impact
- Treaty Education for All and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action

We contributed

- engaging discussions on local democracy and funding allocation within school divisions
- inquiries about funding priorities and their impact on student programming, transportation, and curriculum development
- perspectives on how the public can seek greater autonomy and involvement in conversations about taxation and infrastructure within the education system
- insights on how to better support Indigenous students
- reflections on our experiences with treaty education in our community, including participation in cultural revitalization efforts
- ideas for how we can integrate treaty education into the curriculum and foster a more inclusive and informed student body

Our Reflections

- Students and parents play a vital role in engaging with the education system.
- Treaty education centres on relationship building, accessibility, and immersion for all students.
- Direct learning from Indigenous leaders, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers is essential for understanding Indigenous teachings.
- Indigenous perspectives should be embedded across all curricula.

The Elders and Knowledge Keepers Initiative and Student Advisory Council Promotion (November 28, 2024)

The Student Advisory Council had the pleasure of meeting Mona Moquin, a consultant in the Indigenous Excellence in Education Division. Mona led the discussion on the Elders and Knowledge Keepers in Schools Initiative and taught the council about *Mamàhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With*. During the meeting, students were given the opportunity to share their experience with the Student Advisory Council and why they wanted to be a part of it, along with providing feedback on the application process.

We discussed

- the four strategies that guide action in an Indigenous-inclusive education system: (1) authentic involvement, (2) putting students at the centre, (3) understanding world views, values, identities, traditions, and contemporary lifestyles, and (4) an inclusive and culturally safe learning environment
- how the foundations of an Indigenous-inclusive education system (relevance, relationship, respect, reciprocity) can aid us in understanding and engaging with our community
- the *Elders and Knowledge Keepers in Schools Guidelines*
- how we first learned about Manitoba's Student Advisory Council, and the strategies we can implement to strengthen outreach and encourage a diverse range of students from across Manitoba to join
- the 2024/2025 Student Advisory Council infographic (see Appendix C) and the importance of having diverse perspectives on our council

We contributed

- ideas on how we can integrate knowledge about the Elders and Knowledge Keepers Initiative in our schools and communities
- our first impressions of the council and suggestions on how we can promote the group to a wider audience to attract a vast array of applicants from a variety of schools across Manitoba
- our opinions on the council's current demographic and our hope that it continues to grow and become more diverse with time

Our Reflections

- We would like to see youth advisory opportunities for students in the Indigenous Excellence in Education Division.
- Opportunities to work with Elders and Knowledge Keepers give us a chance to reposition ourselves as learners.

Highlights and Contributions

- Learning is a lifelong journey, and we must be open to receiving the knowledge.
- It is important that schools are involved in the promotion of the Student Advisory Council and are encouraging students to apply, especially in northern Manitoba schools.
- Posting on social media, acting as ambassadors in our schools, visiting schools, and hosting webinars with Q & A sessions are some ways that we can promote the Student Advisory Council in the future.

Emergency Management and the Access to Menstrual Products Initiative (February 25, 2025)

The council engaged in two consultations focused on Emergency Management with Allyson Demski, Manager of Communications and Emergency Preparedness, and the Access to Menstrual Products and Period Poverty Initiative with Dawn Wood, Assistant Director of the Indigenous Excellence in Education Division. These sessions offered valuable insights into how schools prepare for emergencies and highlighted important efforts to address period poverty. A major focus of the conversation was students' experiences during emergencies and whether they feel adequately informed and prepared. The meeting concluded with the council offering thoughtful feedback on the Access to Menstrual Products Initiative.



Manitoba faced its worst wildfire season in 30 years, prompting the declaration of two separate provincial state of emergencies to protect communities and support evacuation efforts.

We discussed

- the four phases of emergency management: (1) preparedness, (2) response, (3) recovery, and (4) mitigation
- the role of emergency managers in planning, coordinating, and ensuring that school communities are prepared for hazards
- the response to COVID-19 and the development of emergency management programs for Kindergarten to Grade 12 education in 2025
- the effects of period poverty and its impact on education

Highlights and Contributions

- how the Access to Menstrual Products Initiative aims to reduce the impact of period poverty by providing free menstrual products to school divisions, independent and First Nations schools, domestic violence shelters, and sector agencies

We contributed

- concerns about the lack of information regarding emergency protocols in schools, and a discussion about the need for future improvements
- ideas for future interventions to ensure students are aware of what to do during an emergency
- discussions surrounding the importance of engaging students in conversations about menstrual health in order to promote awareness and make accessing menstrual products easier
- opinions on the Access to Menstrual Products Initiative, and feedback about the initiative based on our school experiences with period poverty

Our Reflections

- Clear communication is essential for making students feel prepared for emergencies and informed about emergency processes.
- Providing access to menstrual products to anyone who may need them will promote health and equality in students, ensuring that no one is held back by a lack of access to essential hygiene products.
- The menstrual product initiative's current success suggests a strong need for future expansion beyond the pilot program.

Manitoba Education System Q & A and Social Studies Curriculum Renewal Consultation (April 24, 2025)

The Student Advisory Council was provided with a valuable opportunity to meet with Tyler Blashko (Lagimodière MLA), Deputy Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning Brian O'Leary, and the Manitoba social studies team. Students began the meeting with a Q & A session with MLA Tyler Blashko and Deputy Minister Brian O'Leary, during which they were able to discuss current issues within the education system and how they are being addressed. Council members gave personal accounts of some of the issues that they are encountering in the school system, and how these affect their daily learning. Members also had a consultation with the Manitoba social studies team, during which they discussed the current social studies curriculum and potential opportunities for improvement in future social studies curriculum.

Highlights and Contributions

We discussed

- factors that contribute to low student engagement and attendance in school
- limits to student opportunities due to overpopulated classes or a lack of student financial support
- funding sources for staff, and the financial realities of educational support
- student mental health issues, and mental health support
- the social studies curriculum and its renewal

We contributed

- our opinions regarding increasing class sizes and how large class sizes can affect a student's education
- personal experiences with undiagnosed learning difficulties and struggling in school without adequate support
- input regarding both online and in-person bullying, highlighting our experiences with racially motivated bullying
- ideas on how students can be better supported in understanding global issues and conflicts
- thoughts on the current social studies curriculum and our vision for the future

Our Reflections

- Schools should have access to stronger support systems, such as early learning disability screenings, accessible environments, and improved staff-student communication, to ensure equitable education amid growing student populations.
- Access to mentorship programs and financial support for students wanting to engage in extracurriculars could help students stay engaged in school.
- Due to the repetitive and sometimes surface-level nature of social studies, often shaped by individual teaching styles, mandating a Global Issues course could offer students a broader, more relevant understanding of today's world.
- Students want to learn more about local heroes and activists, fostering connections that resonate with their own experiences and community realities.

Highlights and Contributions

Presentation of the Report of the Student Advisory Council to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (August 18, 2025)

The Student Advisory Council had the pleasure of presenting our *Report of the Student Advisory Council* to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, Tracy Schmidt; the Deputy Minister, Brian O'Leary; and department staff. Our report summarized each of our meetings, highlighted our valuable contributions to the education system, and provided reflections on our achievements and future goals. Additionally, we had the opportunity to pose questions to the Minister and gain a stronger understanding of how our insights and experiences are helping to shape the future of education in the province.

Andrew Reimer and Crystal Simmons from the Governance and Policy Branch of Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning joined the meeting and facilitated a dynamic group activity. Students took on the roles of key education partners to explore the challenges of policy making within Manitoba's education system.

As our term ended, we gathered with the incoming 2025/2026 Student Advisory Council members at the Manitoba Legislative Building, eager to welcome them to this new chapter. In addition to presenting the report, we shared moments of our successes as a council, the challenges we faced, the lessons we learned, and our hopes for the future of the Student Advisory Council.



Outgoing 2024/25 council members along with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, Tracy Schmidt.

Conclusion

This report was made possible thanks to all the members of the Student Advisory Council and the support and guidance of the Education and Early Childhood Learning Department staff. We are extremely grateful to the hardworking student notetakers and writers, who each graciously dedicated their time to ensure that our work as a council was thoroughly documented. Our work here reflects the many meetings and consultations that we had this year, and the teamwork and effort of everyone who was involved in the 2024/2025 Student Advisory Council.

We are incredibly proud of all the work we have accomplished as a council. We sincerely thank the Minister for providing us the opportunity to represent the voices of students across Manitoba. This platform that we have been given has allowed us to contribute to the ongoing conversations in the education system and reaffirms the importance of our shared goals of improving the future of education in Manitoba schools.

We look forward to the future and what it holds for the next generations of students that will continue the Student Advisory Council's mission: to create change, amplify student voices, and make our schools better places for all. We optimistically await seeing how the future Student Advisory Council builds on our work, and how their unique and fresh perspectives and passion continue to drive change in the education system. We are forever grateful for the support and wisdom of each council member, the staff members, and the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning.

Sincerely,

The 2024/2025 Student Advisory Council



Outgoing 2024/25 and incoming 2025/26 council members along with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, Tracy Schmidt.

Photo Gallery: August 18, 2025, Student Advisory Council In-Person Meeting



Erica Roberts, the department liaison, welcoming council members as the in-person meeting begins.



Students discussing their ideas in a role-play activity.



Students competing in group games and challenges.



Students actively engaged in a discussion.



Presentation of the 2024/2025 annual report of the Student Advisory Council.



The Q & A session led by Minister Tracy Schmidt.

Appendix A: Schools Represented on the 2024/2025 Student Advisory Council

Balmoral Hall School

Collège Jeanne-Sauvé in Louis Riel School Division

Collège Miles Macdonell Collegiate in River East Transcona School Division

Collège Stonewall Collegiate in Interlake School Division

École Secondaire Oak Park High School in Pembina Trails School Division

Glenlawn Collegiate in Louis Riel School Division

Grant Park High School in Winnipeg School Division

Lord Selkirk Regional Comprehensive School in Lord Selkirk School Division

Manitoba School for the Deaf

Maples Collegiate in Seven Oaks School Division

Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute

Morden Collegiate Institute in Western School Division

Neepawa Area Collegiate Institute in Beautiful Plains School Division

Nelson McIntyre Collegiate in Louis Riel School Division

Niverville High School in Hanover School Division

Pembina Trails Collegiate in Pembina Trails School Division

Portage Collegiate Institute in Portage la Prairie School Division

R. D. Parker Collegiate in Mystery Lake School District

St. Mary's Academy

Steinbach Regional Secondary School in Hanover School Division

Vincent Massey High School in Brandon School Division

Windsor Park Collegiate in Louis Riel School Division

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.

Appendix C: 2024/2025 Student Advisory Council Infographic

