



MEMORANDUM

May 28, 2024
Regular Board Meeting

TO Board of Trustees

FROM Shauna Boyce, Superintendent

ORIGINATOR Scott Johnston, Associate Superintendent

RESOURCE Parkland School Division Students

GOVERNANCE POLICY Board Policy 2: Role of the Board
Board Policy 12: Role of the Superintendent

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE BP 1: Division Foundational Statements
BP 2: Education Planning and Programming
BP 18: Role of the Student

SUBJECT **STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT**

PURPOSE

For information. No recommendation required.

BACKGROUND

The Board believes in, and supports, the inclusion of a student voice in its deliberations, and therefore enjoys opportunities to engage with students from across Parkland School Division on specific student engagement topics. The following report supports the Board's *Assurance Element for Stakeholder Engagement*, and contributes to the Board's consideration for *Board Policy 18: Role of the Student*.

REPORT SUMMARY

On March 19, 2024, The Board met with high school students from Connections for Learning, Memorial Composite High School and Spruce Grove Composite High School. The following report highlights the summary from these engagements with respect to the following engagement topics:

- Experiences of school and learning;
- Experiences of peer relationships, friendships, and how peer-to-peer respect is experienced; and
- Insights into preparation for the world after grade 12.

This report summarizes the thoughts that our students shared with our Trustees.

Administration would be pleased to respond to any questions.

SJ:kz



STUDENT ADVISORY REPORT

MAY 2024

Presented to the Board of Trustees, May 28, 2024

Scott Johnston, Associate Superintendent, Education and System Services

Resources: Trustee Reports

Our Students Possess the confidence, resilience, insight and skills required to thrive in, and positively impact, the world.

Background

Each year, the Board of Trustees conducts an engagement with Parkland School Division students. This year, on March 19th, Trustees met with nineteen grade eleven students from Connections for Learning (5), Memorial Composite High School (6), and Spruce Grove Composite High School (8). Several of the students in this year's engagement participated in a grade ten engagement with the Board of Trustees, last year. This year's engagement, therefore, provided Trustees with an opportunity to reconnect with students and determine how their perspectives may have changed.

Each Spring, students in grades four, seven, and ten complete the Alberta Assurance Measures surveys. Engaging this year's eleventh grade students provided the Trustees with an opportunity to speak directly to students about their survey results. The results summarized in the [Parkland School Division Annual Education Results Report](#) provides the students' perspective on survey measures for the past three years.

Student Advisory Overview

Our Student Engagement focused on the students' experience in school. Our mission states that: we assure supportive learning environments, meaningful experiences and healthy relationships that create opportunities to develop resilience, to gain diversity in perspectives and to achieve enduring success.

Students, were asked to speak about the following topics:

- The students' experiences of school and learning; notably,
 - The students' perception of what has changed from the previous year, and over the years;
 - The students' insights into learning, and how they are experiencing it;
 - The students' learning moments that they deemed to be insightful;
- The students' experiences of peer relationships, friendships, and how peer-to-peer respect is experienced; notably,
 - Providing insights into your feedback on whether or not "students follow the rules" or are respectful; and
- The students' insights into preparation for the world after grade 12.

Trustees engaged the students in small breakout groups, with an intent on ensuring the engagement was conversational, and open-ended as necessary.

The Learning Experience

Students expressed an appreciation for learning tasks that are engaging, and that demonstrate the teachers' interest and appreciation for how the students learn. When activities are "hands-on," our students shared that they are more interested in learning.

Students shared that there can be a perception of a negative connotation for those who ask for help, and so asking for help can be challenging. Students provided mixed perspectives on their ability to get help when they need it. They noted that there are many students, and so the teachers may not have time to get to everyone.

Students discussed their leaning within the context of the school building. Students from Spruce Grove Composite expressed that there is over-crowding.

Students commented on activities that encourage a sense of belonging; noting that there can be frustration for some students who may not make it on to a team. To this end, the students suggested that the school should find ways to ensure that students are involved, in activities in which they want to participate, even if they do not make the team. Some students shared that they truly appreciate their teachers and that they enjoy access to some very inspiring instructors.

The school workload can be an area of concern for students, and they noted that the workload increased into the eleventh grade. One student shared that if a day is missed, it is very challenging to catch up. The students discussed the challenges of math and shared that they felt that math is the subject that is most difficult for students. Some students noted that the writing prompts in English or social studies are not always interesting. Students added that the time of day also matters, as they find it more challenging to be engaged at the end of the day.

Students appreciate the arts, and a student engagement participant noted that their school is very arts and theatre oriented. Other students appreciated learning new languages, and to experience the international travel opportunities that language students have. One student noted great appreciation for their linguistics teacher, and added that linguistics has now become a key part of that student's identity. Overall, students shared that they appreciate the quantity and quality of optional courses available at high school, compared to the ninth grade.

Trustees asked the students to discuss what they would like to see changed in education. Students responded by speaking about the connection of education to the real world. Notably, students shared that they did not like how some tests are presented: "the tests feel old, not flexible." Several students shared that they are not overly fond of online learning. Others expressed that they do not like "stand and deliver teaching." They appreciate homework that is for practicing concepts, but do not appreciate "busy work". Some students identified that the challenge is with the curricula – subjects need to be more interesting, relevant, and motivating.

Students expressed that they would have appreciated Career and Life Management (CALM) to have taken place in the eleventh or twelfth grade; they noted that they were not ready for the learning in the tenth grade, but appreciated the lessons as they approach the end of high school. One student noted that the CALM course needs to be updated to include more life-learning, and better guidance at career tasks such as resumé generation.

Peer Relationships and Student Behaviour

Students expressed that the tenth grade can be challenging for students, as they transition from middle years to high school. They shared the experience of being in a new school with significantly more students in their grade. Students, therefore, have access to more friendships and the student participants in the engagement noted that it is not unusual for friendships to change.

Students shared that there are so many students, and so most students associate predominantly with their own friend group. One student captured that some students come from very small schools and small towns, and that there can be an abrupt change when they arrive at such a large school. One student suggested that there may be a discrepancy in the provincial survey results between students who arrived from small schools compared to those who arrived from larger schools.

One student suggested that teachers sometimes push their students too hard, and this might translate into negative behaviours between peers. Another student argued that teachers cannot make somebody respect someone else. Students shared that much of the negative peer interactions happen outside of the school (bus stops and social areas).

Students discussed the health concerns of vaping, and noted that there are many students who use vaping products too frequently. One student suggested that more time should be spent on harm reduction. Students shared that schooling seems to have changed since COVID, but also that relationships seem to be “rebounding”. Students noted that the “bad stuff” is often in focus, while the “good stuff” gets overlooked.

Students discussed cell phone use, and expressed that their use or access of the device in class is different for different teachers. Students shared that there are classes that are engaging and so they have no interest in their phones; yet with other classes, the approach to phones is the opposite, and they can be easily distracted. Students shared that the media influences their attitudes, and that there is an online culture that can be very distracting.

Some students noted that there is an appreciation for individual style, and that students own their identity and demonstrate that through the clothing they wear. Students shared that there enough students and so everyone should be able to find a group in which to belong. One student added that it is necessary to put work into having a friend.

On inclusivity, students shared that there are many opportunities for 2SLGBTQIA+ students. They added, though, that more resources to demonstrate the impact of prejudice, racism and inequity would be appreciated. Students provided a consideration for more celebration of diversity – focusing on what diverse groups have accomplished, rather than simply focusing on how they have been persecuted over time. Students shared that they expected to hear more about equity events such as Black History month.

Significantly, students shared that their parents' views and/or behaviours have an impact on students (both good and bad). Students reminded Trustees that they receive pressure from multiple sources, including their parents, their school and their place of work. They shared that they can feel when their parents or teachers are stressed, and that this has a significant impact on them. They requested that they hope each of these groups understands and appreciates that pressure, as they attend to their own stress of preparing for an unknown future.

Preparing for the Future

Students noted that they are looking forward to graduation. In preparation, some students recognize the value of volunteerism. One student appreciated an opportunity to volunteer in the Life and Work Skills (LAWS) program within the school. Other students spoke about the benefit of leadership opportunities in developing social skills.

Students expressed an appreciation for the Dual Credit Program. Overall, students suggested that they appreciate opportunities to explore career paths in depth (job shadowing, for instance).

Students are now thinking about scholarships, and they shared that they would like to know more about scholarship availability earlier in high school.

As the students are now at the mid-point of their high school progression, they are connecting with the emphasis on career path considerations. Some students shared that they are focused on post-secondary education (university and/or trades), while others are looking forward to starting their own business. One student spoke about participating in the Division's Education Planning Day, and noted that the opportunity to be involved in an engagement was inspirational in growing that student's sense of agency.

Conclusion

Trustees shared an appreciation for the opportunity to speak directly to students. After speaking with the students about their learning, their peer relationships, and their perspectives on the future, it is clear that the survey results do not tell the full story of our students lives. Our students contextualized their school experiences as positive; they appreciate the culture of their school and the work of their teachers. Notably, they appreciated an opportunity for all three high schools' students to engage with Trustees.