



OCDSB STUDENT TRUSTEE ANNUAL REPORT

2024

STUDENT TRUSTEES' FINAL REPORT - 2023-2024

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Report

Since Student Trustees were introduced in 1999, when the government mandated student representatives on school boards across Ontario, Student Trustees have been in the unique position to voice student concerns at the board table. Student Trustees act as the bridge between students and the boards and governments that serve them.

At the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, until the 2023-2024 academic year, two students have fulfilled this role, as elected by their peers to represent the 78,000 students throughout the entire district. Henceforth, three students will act as the Student Trustees for the Ottawa-Carleton DSB as a result of a policy change introducing an Indigenous Student Trustee to the board table.

The Student Trustees for 2023-2024 were Emma Hong, a Grade 12 student at Merivale High School, and Malaika Kamanzi, a Grade 12 student at Colonel By Secondary School.

For more information on the roles and responsibilities of Student Trustees, see [Policy P.017.GOV: Student Trustees](#) and [Section 55 of the Education Act](#).

The annual OCDSB Student Trustees' Report serves as a summary of the work that Student Trustees have undertaken throughout their terms. This report presents information on and work done by the Student Senate, initiatives at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, projects at the Ontario Student Trustees' Association, recommendations, and more.

1.2 Defining Student Trustees

In 1997, the Royal Commission published a report, "For the Love of Learning," detailing the need for student representation at school board tables in Ontario.

They cited the distinct differences in the experiences of trustees, administrators and teachers versus those of students, and argued that "instead of remaining passive participants in their own lives, [they] want kids to be formally entitled to have their views heard." (Begin and Caplan 1994, 46).

Today, Student Trustees embody those initial sentiments conveyed thirty years ago. As active participants sitting at the Boards of Trustees at school boards province-wide, Student Trustees draw on lived experiences in schools in advocating for their peers at board meetings in addition to chairing the Student Senate and working on provincial advocacy projects with the Ontario Student Trustees' Association (OSTA-AÉCO) and other provincial partners.

Furthermore, Student Trustees engage in outreach to the community with student groups, teachers and administrators, and the media as student representatives for their respective school boards.

2.0 Student Senate

2.1 Introduction to the Student Senate

The Student Senate is the official committee representing secondary students' views in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. After a policy change at the end of the 2022-2023 school year, its members changed from one Student Senator per secondary site to one Senior Senator and one Junior Senator per secondary site as well as three co-Presidents' Council representatives and representatives from five identity-based groups.

The Student Senate meets monthly at the Board Office. At meetings, the Senate discusses school-specific issues, consults senior staff and trustees on ongoing initiatives, and collaborates on various projects.

Staff supports empower the Student Senate to accomplish its goals each year. Thanks to Vice Principal Ann Arden, Vice Principal Neerja Malhotra, and Superintendent Reg Lavergne, the smooth operation of the Senate is possible, and the Student Senate is grateful for their ongoing contributions and commitment.

2.2 Student Senate Consultations

This year, the Senate had the privilege of consulting on the establishment of an Indigenous Student Trustee, the OCDSB's response to students in the midst of global events, artificial intelligence, the Safe Schools Reporting Tool, identity-based data collection, and the elementary program review. The Student Senate thanks all staff and trustees for their time and continued support of the inclusion of student voice.

2.3 Student Senators

School Name	Senior Senator (11-12)	Junior Senator (9-10)
AY Jackson SS	Mustafa Karimi	Tianxu (Willam) Dong
Bell HS	Alyssa Hu	Jasper Chen
Brookfield HS	Sarah Raouf	Asma Raouf
Cairine Wilson SS	Owen Murphy	Salome Kelly-Girald
Canterbury HS	Anna Zhuravel	Caitlin Arden
Colonel By SS	Patrick Vos Smith	Hayel Abu-Hamdan

Earl of March SS	Jeffrey Zhang	Derek Chuah
Elizabeth Wyn Wood Alt	Kandy Tran	N/A
Frederick Banting Alt	Violet Morgan	Kieran Short
Glebe CI	Alison Whike	N/A
Gloucester High School	Olivia Hawrylak	Rachel Mekis
Hillcrest HS	Rebecca Doherty	Zara Cruz
John McCrae SS	Chaimaa Amachki	Gavin Wu
Lisgar CI	Sami Ghozlani	Alyssa Shen
Longfields Davidson Heights	Rand Habani	Gloria Wen
Merivale HS	Skyler Ma	Anya Guo
Nepean HS	Finn Watson-Link	Miguen Ali
Osgoode Township HS	Ayra Tadjalli	Charley Toivonen
Richard Pfaff Alt	Maya Fabiyi	N/A
Ridgemont HS	Durkhanai Arbab	N/A
Sir Robert Borden HS	Leah Freedhoff	Linh Ngo
Sir Wilfrid Laurier SS	Alejandra Garate	Hawraa Assaf
South Carleton HS	Noor Abdullah	Hannah Hines
West Carleton SS	Jessica Ehoru	Carter Steadman
Woodroffe HS	Enoch Asare	Malika Ameziane
Woodroffe HS	Esther Paul	Jack Woodbridge
Sir Guy Carleton SS	Courtney Berndt	Dade Dullemond
Sir Guy Carleton SS	Wilbur Thiverge	N/A

Student Senators were instrumental in facilitating meetings and managing outreach to the community. The Student Senate secretaries and media officers supported the Senate and Student Trustees in successfully chairing the subcommittee.

Role	Student Senators
Secretaries	Alyssa Shen and Mustafa Karimi (Lisgar C.I. and A.Y. Jackson S.S.)
Media Officers	Leah Freedhoff and Anya Guo (Sir Robert Borden H.S. and Merivale H.S.)

2.4 Student Senate Subcommittees

The Student Senate's increase in size enabled more focused working groups to be established.

In the 2023-2024 school year, this manifested into three subcommittees to be formed: the Policy Subcommittee; the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Subcommittee; and the Outreach Subcommittee. Each of these subcommittees was chaired by two Student Senators.

Subcommittee	Chairs
Policy	Jeffrey Zhang and Hayel Abu-Hamdan (Earl of March S.S. and Colonel By S.S.)
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion	Jessica Ehoru and Gloria Wen (West Carleton S.S. and Longfields-Davidson Heights S.S.)
Outreach	Skyler Ma and Caitlin Arden (Merivale H.S. and Canterbury H.S.)

Each subcommittee undertook multiple projects throughout the year, developing comprehensive plans and executing them with the support of the Student Trustees and staff supervisors. Examples of work done includes policy change recommendations, the creation of the EDI Student Spotlight, creating Student Senate posters and distributing them across secondary sites in the OCDSB, and the launch of the Student Senate Newsletter (see Appendix A). The Student Trustees are grateful for the dedication and leadership demonstrated by Senators this year, and look forward to seeing the outcomes of further efforts.

2.5 Student Senate Report

This year, the Student Trustees compiled a report outlining various projects and initiatives of the Student Senate. The report contains descriptions of the Student Senate, insight into

meetings throughout the year, testimonies from Senators, and reports from subcommittee chairs. The report can be found [here](#).

2.6 Student Senate Social Media

As a result of the Student Senate Media Officers' efforts, the Student Senate Instagram account pivoted in content output from mostly informative posts to including relatable content about Student Senators and Student Senate meetings. This has resulted in growth in outreach, peaking at outreach to over 6000 community members.

3.0 OCDSB Initiatives

3.1 Implementing Student Senate Policy Change

Adapting to the challenges posed by a huge policy change became one of the main challenges in chairing the Student Senate. To mitigate potential difficulties, Student Trustees set goals in achieving various parts of the policy change at the beginning of their terms, in particular with regards to the implementation of representatives from identity-based groups.

After consulting with the Advisory Committee on Equity, Superintendent Mary Jane Farrish, Superintendent Shannon Smith, Superintendent Reg Lavergne, Vice Principal Ann Arden, Trustee Amanda Presley, and the Student Senate, the Student Trustees gained valuable perspectives on the best approach to implement this position. Ultimately, it was decided that the identification and selection process for this position would be developed by the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Subcommittee of the Student Senate with the Student Trustees as support for the process.

Ultimately, as the year progressed, Student Trustees and staff identified key issues with executing their initial plans, and in a decision made with the EDI Subcommittee, decided to defer the implementation to the following school year. However, significant progress was made by the EDI Subcommittee, laying the foundation for further developments in the 2024-2025 term. The Student Trustees deeply appreciate the guidance provided by staff and trustees, and the dedication by the EDI Subcommittee to this initiative.

Other aspects of the policy change included the addition of representatives from the Co-Presidents' Council. This change established a better partnership between the Student Senate and student councils across the district.

The biggest change to the Student Senate's structure was the increase in size. Following the model of similarly-sized school boards' Student Senates, the OCDSB Student Senate grew to increase representation of students in both the junior and senior divisions of secondary schools. This resulted in a need to change the way the Senate typically operated in years past, which ultimately manifested in increasing the number of secretaries, increasing the number and size of subcommittees (see 2.4), and changing how subcommittees and Student Trustees interacted. Most subcommittees were formerly

chaired by Student Senators and Student Trustees together, but this year marked a shift in how these subcommittees were led. As Student Trustees gained more responsibilities attributed to the Senate's increase in size, Student Senators took on the leadership of these committees with Student Trustees as participating members and support instead. This proved successful, as Senators led the members of their subcommittees in completing many significant projects.

3.2 Menstrual Equity Letter Motion

Period poverty remains an ongoing issue prevailing in schools everywhere. Despite half of all students menstruating, menstrual products remain inaccessible, which in turn has adverse effects on students' learning and wellbeing. Hence, a crucial step forward towards ending period poverty was taken when the provincial deal with Shoppers Drug Mart was established to guarantee the supply of menstrual products to students across Ontario. This agreement is set to expire this year, marking possible backwards progress.

In tandem with other Student Trustees in Ontario and in a continuation stemming from past Student Trustees' efforts to secure menstrual products for all students, Student Trustee Emma Hong conducted research and consulted with trustees and staff to propose a motion addressing period poverty (Dubinski 2024). After proposing the motion, which was moved and seconded by Trustees Aziz and Milburn, the motion was passed unanimously in March. The letter sent to the Minister can be found in Appendix B.

3.3 Muslim Youth Program

The Muslim Youth Program (MYP) is a proposed year-long course dedicated to support the growth and development of Muslim-identifying students within the OCDSB. According to the [2019-2020 Valuing Voices - Identity Matters Student Survey](#), 19% of students in grade 9-12 identify as Muslim, making it one of the largest communities in the OCDSB. Similar to other initiatives like the Black Youth Program (BYP) and the 2SLGBTQ+ Voices: Pathway Program, the MYP aims to provide students with an opportunity to earn a credit (IDC3O/4O/4U), while empowering them with skills and tools transferable to their post secondary studies and careers. As such, this program would promote inclusivity, student learning, and social responsibility by focusing on event organization, community engagement, and critical analysis skills. In addition, as intersectionality is heavily seen through our board, students would be able to collaborate with other student-led initiatives, as well as with community partners.

In efforts to verify the program's viability optimize its design, Student Trustee Malaika Kamanzi consulted with members of the Equity Team, notably Mary Jane Farrish, Kherta Mohamed, and Nabil Ahmed, Student Trustee Advisor Amanda Presley, Trustee Suzanne Nash, Trustee Lyra Evans, as well as with several OCDSB Muslim Student Associations (MSA) and the High Schools Muslim Association (HMA.) She also attended multiple BYP classes to observe the course's structure, event organization, and to gather feedback from enrolled students.

Although the idea is still in its early stages and subject to change, it has the potential of connecting multiple communities within our board and benefit students positively. Through this effort, Muslim-identifying students and others could foster a sense of belonging, develop leadership skills, all while learning about and promoting cultural awareness and acceptance. Following Student Trustee Kamanzi's latest consultation with Mary Jane Farrish in June, the creation of the course could be delayed to focus on building a community of people who would be interested in later committing to a course this big, through smaller events and activities that will be made available to students in the next year or two. During this time, feedback from involved students will be collected as a continuous attempt to understand major needs and interests.

3.4 Student Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence

At two Student Senate meetings, Student Trustees conducted consultations with Student Senators to hear their perspectives on artificial intelligence (AI). Subsequently, rich conversations around the harms of AI, the benefits of learning about it, and potential questions from students were held and recorded in a report created by the Student Trustees for senior staff. The report can be found in Appendix C.

4.0 OSTA-AECO Update

4.1 Advocacy Interest Groups

OSTA-AECO's organizational restructure resulted in the establishment of Advocacy Interest Groups (AIGs), which act as working groups focused on specific facets of Ontario's education system. There are four AIGs within the organization: Curriculum and School Community; Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; Truth and Reconciliation; and Student Well-Being.

Student Trustee Emma Hong was a member of the Curriculum and School Community AIG, where she worked on creating a guide to secondary school for younger students. Student Trustee Malaika Kamanzi was a member of the EDI AIG collaborating on a recommendation with the group on developing a framework or policy for Ontario school boards to implement confidential student reporting systems.

4.2 Public Education Interest Group Cabinet

This year, Student Trustee Emma Hong was selected to be the Communications Officer of the Public Education Interest Group's Cabinet. The Cabinet convenes frequently to discuss the status of public education, ongoing OSTA-AECO initiatives, conference session planning, and more.

As a part of the Public Education Interest Group, Student Trustee Emma Hong helped to organize the inaugural Public Education Interest Group Town Hall, a virtual conference designed for public Student Trustees to share ideas and hold meaningful discussions around education in Ontario.

Furthermore, she conducted outreach to rural and northern school boards in Ontario, advocating for their Student Trustees to acquire OSTA-AECO membership.

In addition, she, in collaboration with the Catholic Education Interest Group Cabinet's Communications Officer, interviewed Student Trustees and collected footage at various OSTA-AECO conferences to compile videos for internal and external use.

Moreover, Student Trustee Emma Hong contributed to the launch of a monthly newsletter sent to all public Student Trustees and wrote or edited subsequent editions. This newsletter features recent news in public education, highlights the work of Student Trustees, and updates the Public Education Interest Group on OSTA-AECO initiatives.

5.0 Recommendations

Following the completion of the Student Trustees' term, a few conclusions were drawn from various experiences. The following list comprises several future considerations in bolstering student leadership in the OCDSB.

- Establish policy-backed mechanism for Student Senate to make recommendations on board matters;
- Implement Identity-Based Student Group Leaders on the Student Senate through plans established by the 2023-2024 EDI Subcommittee;
- Pursue Student Trustee governance, giving Student Trustees the right to vote in board decisions and pass motions independently;
- Increase social media engagement and posting consistency, building a reliable means of communication between Student Trustees, the Student Senate, and students in the OCDSB in addition to setting an example of responsible social media use;
- Increase education on student leadership and how to make your voice heard in the OCDSB (learning about STs, Senate, delegations, voting in municipal/school board elections, connecting with elected officials) for younger students;
- Form partnerships with other student/youth advocacy organizations in Ottawa (ex. Ottawa Catholic School Board Student Senate, social justice organizations, Muslim Youth Program, Black Youth Program, 2SLGBTQ+ Voices, etc.);
- Create more comprehensive working groups on the Student Senate;
- Increase secretaries, social media team.

6.0 Closing Remarks

Being a Student Trustee has been both a huge challenge as well as an honour. Through interactions with peers, Student Senators, Co-Presidents' Council, other advisory committees, staff, and trustees, I have learned so much about what it means to be a responsible leader and how to truly care for my community by example.

Thank you to the students who trusted me to represent them at the board level. It was my privilege to serve as one of the 2023-2024 Student Trustees, and I am very grateful for this amazing opportunity.

Words cannot express the gratitude and admiration I have for the people that surrounded us during our term. The growth I have undergone is a testament to how supported I felt throughout the past year, and I could not have completed our term without the staff and trustees at the OCDSB. Thanks to my co-Student Trustee, Malaika Kamanzi; Superintendent Reg Lavergne; Vice Principals Ann Arden and Neerja Malhotra; Nicole Guthrie; Chantelle Olson; Student Trustee Mentor Amanda Presley; the Board of Trustees; senior staff; the Student Senate, Co-Presidents' Council; and everyone else who made my term incredible. My work could not have been done without all of the guidance and support.

Before running as a Student Trustee, if someone asked me what the school board did, I would not be able to answer. Now, I have seen the tireless work of staff and trustees and how they choose to engage in complex and challenging problems in schools simply to make schools safer and better places to learn. I understand their invaluable contributions and I am inspired to follow in their footsteps, whether that be in engaging with my community or otherwise.

I look forward to seeing the great strides in public education this board makes in the near future.

With gratitude,

Student Trustees Hong and Kamanzi

7.0 Appendices

Appendix A: Example of a Student Senate Newsletter from April 2024



Student Senate Newsletter - April Recap

The [Student Senate](#) represents students' views to the OCDSB, meeting once per month to discuss key issues. There are two Student Senators at each secondary school; if you have any questions, reach out to them!

April 4th Meeting Recap:

- Menstrual Equity Consultation
- Student Representation on the Senate
- Hate Speech & Discrimination
- Social Media Lawsuit
- Environmental Concerns
- Grade 11 Indigenous English Course
- Sub-Committee Updates

Menstrual Equity Consultation

The Menstrual Equity project is a Senate-led initiative that was originally approved in January 2021. As we are pushing for renewing product sponsorship, we are reviewing students' happiness with the products.

Are they available to all students? Do we have enough sizes/variety of products and are they being constantly refilled? Are students misusing the products (boys & gender neutral bathrooms)? And how can we further improve menstrual equity? All of these things are being discussed as we move forward with menstrual equity in the OCDSB.

Student Representation on the Senate

We have noticed that students generally don't talk to their Senators about issues pertinent to them - most students don't even know the Senate exists! We want student advocacy to come from all 77,000 students in the OCDSB, not just those on the Senate.

Hate Speech & Discrimination

Senators discussed the serious problem of hate speech and discrimination faced by students at school, and the lack of consequences faced by the perpetrators. We also reflected on the importance of diversity and identity-based clubs and initiatives in combating these issues, as well as how student leaders such as Senators can help build these connections.

Social Media Lawsuit

The OCDSB and three other Ontario school boards are suing social media companies Meta (Facebook, Instagram), Snap (Snapchat), and ByteDance (TikTok) for disrupting student learning and the education system. The lawsuit calls for social media products to be made safer for children, and asks for over one billion dollars in compensation.

School boards will not be responsible for any costs related to the lawsuit unless a successful outcome is reached. [Read more at ocdsb.ca](https://ocdsb.ca).

Environmental Concerns

During our last meeting, we discussed the board's efforts regarding promoting recycling. After the mixed results of introducing recycling programs at some schools, and the difficulty with waste not being organized correctly in bins - the importance and need of student-led, student-sustained recycling programs is clearer than ever!

Grade 11 Indigenous English Course

The Senate looked at the NBE3U course (English: Understanding Contemporary First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Voices), reflecting on its merits but also raising concerns about student engagement with Indigenous studies, teachers' framing of the content, and the lack of language-based learning.

Sub-Committee Updates

The Senate has multiple student-led sub-committees. This is where a lot of initiatives are brought forward and a lot of progress is made.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee:

The EDI Committee has been working on the implementation of needs-based Diversity Reps on the Senate (more to come next year!). They are also moving forward with their

spotlight project. (highlighting students contributions to EDI in their communities)
Nominations are still open for the [April EDI Spotlight!](#)

Outreach Committee:

The Outreach Committee is the committee responsible for making this monthly newsletter! Every month, we compile the important parts of our Senate meetings to send out to all OCDSB students. Our goal is to keep students informed about Senate initiatives. If you see something on the Newsletter that you're interested in, talk to your Senator about it and they will bring your point of view to the next Senate meeting! We are also working on the creation of a school presentation about the Senate.

Policy Committee:

The Policy Committee proposed promoting the equal celebration of cultural days of observance in schools to better represent the culture of *all* students. Some days of observance are heavily talked about and some are not. Additionally, a policy on improving the pronouns used in board policies (Ex. Replacing "he/she" with "they") has been proposed , in order to create a more inclusive and easier to read policy set.

Reach out to your Senators at your school!!! ([Student Senators](#))

Appendix B: Menstrual Equity Letter from the OCDSB to Minister Lecce



OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Office of the Chair of the Board

4 April 2024

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
438 University Ave, 5th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1N3

Dear Minister Lecce:

At our Board meeting on 26 March 2024, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board unanimously directed me to write to you to request that the Ministry of Education ensure menstrual products are procured, distributed and accessible for all Ontario schools on an ongoing basis, free of additional costs to individual school boards.

Board members noted that the existing partnership with Shoppers Drug Mart is due to expire this year, and that the Ministry has not yet indicated that this partnership will be renewed, or if a partnership with another provider will be established, or confirmed that supplementary funding will be allocated in the event that boards must procure the necessary menstrual products themselves.

Currently, the partnership with Shoppers Drug Mart has provided six million menstrual products annually to help address period poverty in schools. Student who lack access to menstrual products often skip classes as they are not equipped to engage throughout the day. Access to menstrual products is integral to the emotional and physical well-being of those who menstruate at school.

The Menstrual Equity program initiated by OCDSB student trustees in January 2021 has been well received within the District and there has been immense interest by students to continue this program. It has been noted that the Ministry has defined menstrual products as “a necessity, not a luxury”.

Many students face barriers in accessing menstrual products because of financial limitations and/or harmful social norms and attitudes surrounding menstruation. The lack of access to menstrual products is closely linked to poverty and disproportionately impacts youth, Indigenous peoples, Black and other racialized communities.

Ensuring that menstrual products are procured, distributed and accessible for all Ontario schools on an ongoing basis will support equitable treatment of students and their engagement in learning. Securing a continuing partnership with Shoppers Drug Mart (or another provider) or allocating supplemental funding will also reduce any potential burden on the strained budgets of Ontario school boards. We urge you, therefore, to secure the continued

funding, supply, and distribution of menstrual products for the well-being of Ontario students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynn Scott".

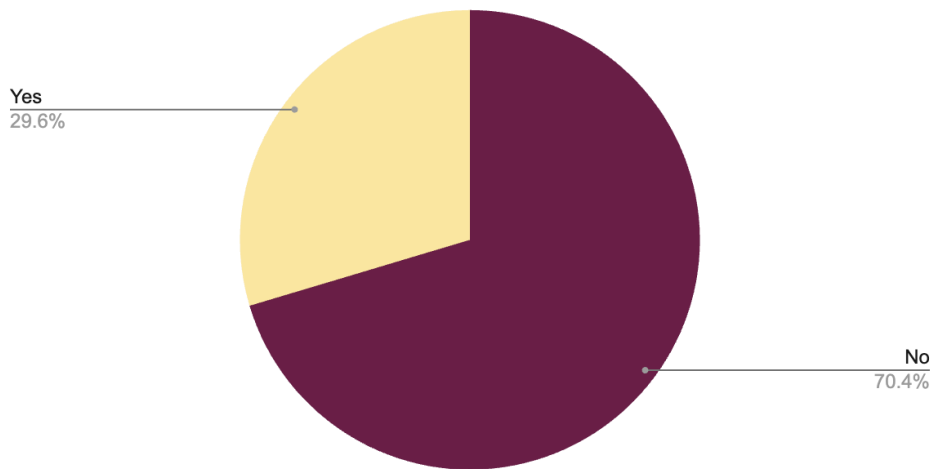
Lynn Scott
Chair, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

cc:

Trustees and Student Trustees, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
Senior Staff, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
Ontario Public School Boards' Association President and Member Board
Chairs
Corporate Records

- Student Senators also remarked upon an increasing “lack of thought” observed among their peers as a result of not having to think critically when completing assignments.
- **Mistrust between educators and students:** Teachers doubt the authenticity of students’ work as a result of the prevalence of AI usage in schools, negatively impacting how much students feel trusted by their teachers. This, in turn, affects students’ confidence in classrooms, and can discourage honest completion of tasks as students feel that regardless of whether AI is used, teachers will receive work in the same way. Additionally, usage of **AI detectors** by educators can exacerbate existing mistrust due to use of generative AI.
- **Unreliability of generated data:** ChatGPT and other similar AI models operate by generating the result with the highest accuracy percentage when compared to training data.
 - **Uncertainty:** Often, even if the accuracy percentage is relatively low (<90%), these models can produce misinformation. When students use this data in assignments, they become misinformed and spread the misinformation they received from generative AI models.
 - **Outdated data:** Most publicly-accessible models use outdated data as their training data to produce new results. This can result in increased misinformation through use of AI.

When asked if **Senators believed that it is too early for the OCDSB to have a stance/framework of reference/policy addressing AI**, Senators responded with the following answers:



Over 30 responses were collected.

Student Senators offered further thoughts in small-group discussions. The slideshow is attached in the links above.

8.0 References

References

Begin, Monique, and Gerald L. Caplan. 1994. *For the love of learning : report of the Royal Commission on Learning*. Shortened. N.p.: Queen's Printer for Ontario.

<https://qspace.library.queensu.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/03399261-0204-4422-a028-79a19f3f49ae/content>.

Dubinski, Kate. 2024. "Keep free pads and tampons in schools, student trustee tells education minister." *Canadian Broadcasting Company*, January 30, 2024.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/keep-free-pads-and-tampons-in-schools-student-trustee-tells-education-minister-1.7098471>.