



OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



STUDENT TRUSTEE REPORT, JUNE 2019

A Year-End Summary of Our Work, Connections, and Experience
Student Trustees Samantha Lin and Isaac Glassman

Prepared for:
OCDSB Board of Trustees

Presented on:
25/06/2019

INTRODUCTION

As the academic year 2018-2019 comes to a close, we Student Trustees Glassman and Lin are, pleased to present this report to the board to share a few of our most memorable moments from this year and update the board on the progress we have made over the course of the year.

Our work includes, but has not been limited to, the various themes set out in our Student Trustee Report of Winter 2018. We have built off some of the ideas presented in our previous report and departed from others. Overall, we have a fantastic year filled with learning and impact. We are honoured to share our work with the board of trustees in this Student Trustee Report of June 2019.

Samantha Lin and Isaac Glassman
2018-2019 Student Trustees

CONTENTS

OCDSB STUDENT SENATE	4
.....	
Board Consultations	4
.....	
The Town Hall Activity	5
.....	
STUDENT TRUSTEE WORK AT THE OCDSB	6
.....	
Communication Strategies Within Schools	6
.....	
Student Trustee Video	6
.....	
PROVINCIAL ADVOCACY: OSTA-AECO	7
.....	
Pre-Budget Submission	7
.....	
The OSTA-AECO Vision Document	8
.....	
E-Learning Survey	9
.....	
OSTA-AECO Conferences	9
.....	
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES	11
.....	
Student Senate Meeting Attendance	11
.....	
Engaging with Students	11
.....	
CONCLUSION	12

1 | STUDENT SENATE

BOARD CONSULTATIONS

Student Senate has been heavily involved with various OCDSB consultations throughout the course of this year. These consultations embody our Board's commitment to engaging in genuine student voice. A timeline of the consulting-sessions follows:

October 2018: Executive Officer Giroux and her team “pre-consulted” Senate on the 2019-2023 strategic plan; that is, requested feedback on how to best engage students in the true city-wide consultation. Senate provided information as to which media, questions, and formats would most appeal to students for the online Thoughtexchange stage of the consultation.

November 2018: Dr. Petra Duschner and her team consulted Senate with regard to the upcoming OCDSB Mental Health Strategy Plan. Senate provided rich feedback on a variety of topics, including pragmatic use of social media and the challenge of getting mental-health “buy-in” from students. This consultation inspired Senate to discuss these issues long after the event itself, particularly within the Town Hall format we developed.

November-December 2018: The Strategic Plan Consultation Thoughtexchange received over 1000 student contributions, more than ever before.

January 2019: Student Senate, the OCDSB President's Council, and students from every high-school participated in a focus group, held by Executive Officer Giroux and her team, to further organize and evaluate the ideas shared in the Thoughtexchange.

March 2019: Student Senate was consulted on the types of communication employed within their schools. Results from this consultation can be found in the following section.

May 2019: The Draft Strategic Plan was distributed to the community for feedback. Senators provided Student Trustees Glassman and Lin with various suggestions as to the design, wording, and accessibility of the document.

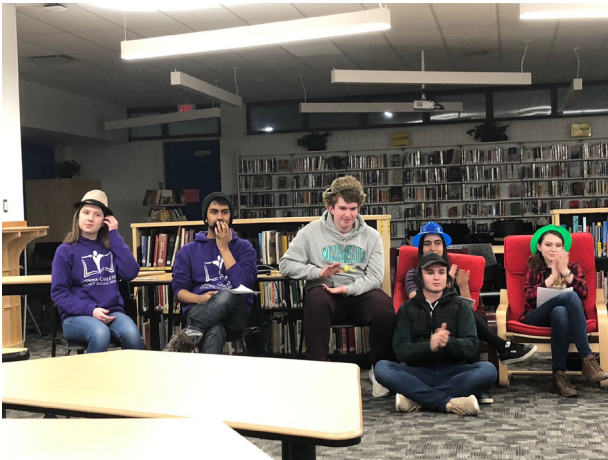
THE TOWN HALL ACTIVITY

A major theme that we wanted to focus on this year was communication: from administration to students, from students to administration, and between the students themselves. Knowing that schools can have drastically different communication channels already established, we asked our student senators what types of events or activities allowed effective communication to occur.

Many valuable activities were presented such as Lunch With the Principal and email and in-person announcements. It was finally decided upon that the unique structure of the Town Hall was an adaptable and feasibly implemented activity for all schools.

A Town Hall is an event hosted by students to allow student council members and administration to answer any questions the student body has about resources provided at the school, school policy on various topics, and how to get help. They are incredibly important to allow for good two-way communication at schools.

During a Student Senate meeting, a Mock Town Hall was held and used to present the formatting and structure of a Town Hall to the student senators. Many had never had hosted or been a part of a Town hall before and the hands-on experience allowed them to see logistically how a Town Hall would be held.

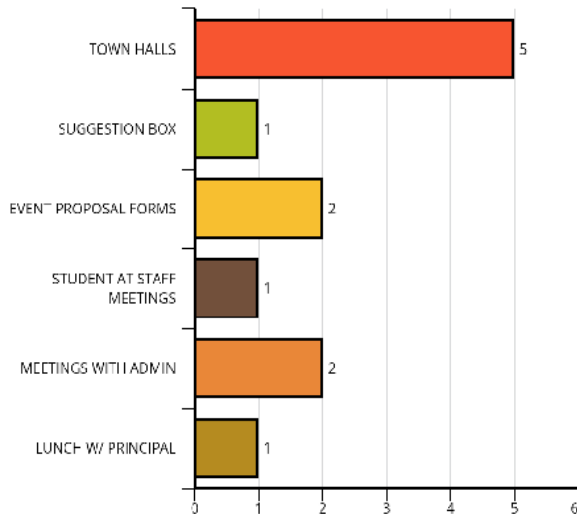


ABOVE: Student Senators were assigned various school-roles to enact during the mock Town Hall. Although this acting may sound foolish, it is actually a useful tool in embodying—and therefore considering—perspectives other than one’s own.

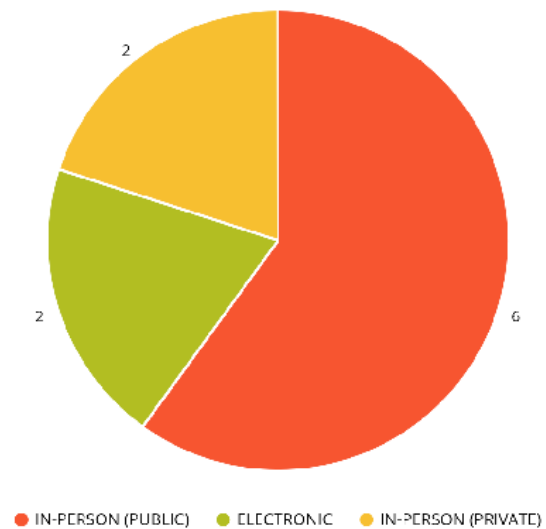
COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN SCHOOLS

We had the opportunity to present various communication strategies that could be used within schools to secondary school principals. In order to ensure that the data we were presenting was representative of the students themselves, we created a survey that was given to student senators. We received many in-depth and valuable answers. We compiled the data and categorized it, then used graphs to display our results.

Effectiveness of Student-to-Staff Communication Strategies



Effectiveness of Methods of Engagement



STUDENT TRUSTEE INFORMATION VIDEO

As the school year wrapped up, and it was time to elect two new student trustees for the new school year. We realized that many students are not aware of the responsibilities of the role of student trustee and so we created a promotional video for the role. With the help of Superintendent Lehman and Mr. Jordan Knarr, we filmed a Q+A style video that was casual but very informative about the specifics of being a student trustee.

The video can be found at <https://youtu.be/kwY2GuypZ8A>

OVERVIEW

The 2018-2019 work of the Ontario Student Trustees' Association (OSTA-AECO) has been both broad and effective. In addition to providing unparalleled professional development for the student trustees of Ontario, OSTA-AECO has been at the forefront of student advocacy throughout this year of tumultuous education politics. Details of OSTA-AECO's various achievements this year follow:

PREBUDGET SUBMISSION

OSTA-AECO released our first-ever Pre Budget Submission at the beginning of February. The document was sent to the Ontario Legislature's Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, in addition to being a submission to the Minister of Finance's budget consultation. Included in the submission are five specific funding-allocation recommendations on the Learning Opportunities Grant, Capital Repairs, the Rural and Northern Education Fund, and Student Trustee Support Funding. The report was well-received, and, although the government did not act upon any of our recommendations (as with almost all other education-stakeholder submissions), this financial manifestation of student voice set the benchmark for student government submissions for years to come.



02 The Foundations of Success

Addressing Capital Repairs

Why?

In 2002, Ontario schools faced a capital repair backlog of \$5.6 billion.¹¹ This backlog has increased significantly to \$15.9 billion¹² today, and is projected to reach \$17 billion by the end of the 2018-19 school year.¹³ Ending this state of disrepair requires a dual-track approach, concurrently addressing the root causes of the capital repair backlog while providing clear funding streams to reduce and ultimately eliminate the accumulated unfunded renewal needs.

A school in good state offers a safe environment for students to comfortably learn and excel in their studies. It is integral that repairs required by school boards be addressed, understood,

and executed to increase the longevity of schools.

Currently, a substantive backlog exists. Countless repairs in schools across the province must be made, but very few are being executed, leaving students to attend schools in various states of deterioration.

The students of Ontario will benefit academically with a variety of improved school infrastructures such as temperature-regulated classrooms, accessible water fountains, and reliable electric services.

(1) The provincial government should increase investments in the School Renewal Allocation to be 2.5% of school replacement value to rectify a root cause in Ontario's funding capital repair backlog.
Current Cost: \$360.7 million (2018-19)
Additional Investment: \$1.06 billion

The School Renewal Allocation (SRA) provides school boards with funding to address the cost of renewal and renovation needs to schools. It is primarily funded through student enrolment and includes various benchmark renewal costs, considerations for the age of buildings, and the unique design features of schools. The SRA is funded at \$360.7 million for the 2018-19 school year.¹⁴

The root cause of the backlog in renewal needs is the inadequate base funding provided by the SRA. Current industry standards, supported by the Auditor General and Education Equality Task-force Report, state that 2-4% of a building's replacement value should be invested in renewal expenditures annually.¹⁴

THE OSTA-AECO VISION DOCUMENT

The OSTA-AECO Vision Document, our organization's first, set a broad, bold, and ambitious roadmap to change our education system for the better. The Vision Document laid out 35 recommendations, encompassing various areas of education policy, across 6 pillars:

1. Enhancing Equity
2. Funding Formula Reform
3. Strengthening Rural & Northern Schools
4. System Modernization for 21st Century Learning
5. Supporting Student Well-Being
6. School Board Governance

The Vision Document was rooted in both research and student voice, and incorporated results from 3 surveys from 20,000 Ontario students in the past 7 years and testimonials from students across the province. The document was presented on May 6, 2019, at Queen's Park. Education stakeholders and politicians all-over Canada were hugely impressed by the document, and have adapted recommendations into their own strategic or vision-based plans.



PILLAR 3: STRENGTHENING RURAL & NORTHERN SCHOOLS

Out of Ontario's 72 school boards, 70 of them have schools in rural areas. There are clear discrepancies between learning in an urban school or a rural one that can come in the form of fewer courses offered, longer bus commutes to school, and less experiential learning opportunities, to name a few. Students across the province deserve to receive a rich educational experience regardless of their geographic location by minimizing barriers and optimizing learning opportunities for rural and northern students.

SUPPORTING EVERY RURAL SCHOOL: EXPANDING THE RNEF MODEL

Realizing that rural students face significant differences in comparison to urban boards, the GSNs provide the Geographic Circumstance Grant to help eliminate significant barriers.

The grant consists of several allocations, such as the Remote & Rural Allocation to account for the higher cost of procurement for rural boards, the Supported Schools Allocation that enhances the viability of certain programming or staffing allocations like ECEs¹⁰, and the Rural & Northern Education Fund (RNEF).

The unique aspect of the RNEF is that unlike almost any other block funding section of the GSNs, it is mostly funded on a school-by-school basis, rather than board-by-board. This has allowed for rural schools in large urban boards that would not have received support under a board-wide funding determination have received support. For example, in the Peel DSB, several schools in Caledon (a rural area) received \$55,000 in funding in 2017-18 for crucial staff allocations, expanded technical, arts, and athletic course program-

ming¹¹ due to the structure of this funding model.

Funding through the RNEF is determined through a calculation of the number of rural students on a school-by-school basis based on the Statistics Canada definition and two formulas calculating the density of rural student enrollment in a board¹². The funding structure of the RNEF, combined with its requirement that resources only go to schools where at least 50% of its students are rural¹³, has allowed for schools across rural & northern Ontario to get the extra funding they require.

This innovative funding stream has allowed for deeply impactful school-level investments in 70 of Ontario's 72 school boards. This is due to the unique model of the RNEF, which is why

RECOMMENDATION 3.1

OSTA-AECO recommends that the provincial government expand the school-by-school model of the RNEF to the rest of the Geographic Circumstances Grant and other aspects of the GSNs, ultimately providing all rural & northern schools across Ontario with the support they need.

THE OSTA-AECO E-LEARNING SURVEY

As a result of the provincial government's announcement of mandating 4 e-learning credits for secondary students, OSTA-AECO launched an online survey to gather student input. Both students who have and have not taken E-Learning courses were invited to share their thoughts on this topic. Nearly 5000 responses have been submitted from students across the province.

OSTA-AECO BOARD COUNCIL CONFERENCE

The OSTA-AECO Board Council Conference, held in Ottawa, was a great success. Student Trustees from all across the province came together to learn, discuss, and work on specific initiatives ranging in scope and effect. Highlights of the conference included a keynote address on anti-bullying strategy by Ottawa City Councillor Allan Hubley, an education-policy panel featuring OSTA-AECO Alumni and executive education-stakeholders, boardroom simulations, and Vision Document feedback, development, and design sessions.



LEFT: Student trustees from across the province debate and discuss the OSTA-AECO Vision Document. Every trustee provides a different perspective, ultimately creating a rich mosaic of student voice.

RIGHT: Student trustees engage in a mock board-meeting during which a faux-resolution is introduced, debated, and voted upon.



OSTA-AECO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The OSTA-AECO Annual General Meeting, hosted in Toronto, provided essential professional development for incoming student trustees and a sense of satisfaction and for outgoing student trustees who, like Student Trustees Lin and Glassman, are due to finish their terms soon. The conference was filled with valuable sessions, speakers, and discussions for Student Trustees of any experience level. Highlight keynote addresses included those delivered by the Hon. Lisa Thompson, Ontario Education Minister, and Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the Canadian New Democratic Party. Student trustees were invited to ask questions to both speakers, and great discussion ensued. As well, the AGM included sessions during which outgoing student trustees shared best-practices, helpful tips, and succession plans with their according “incomings.”

RIGHT: Jagmeet Singh, federal leader of the New Democratic Party, speaks of the importance of youth involvement in politics. Great discussion ensued.



LEFT: The Honourable Lisa Thompson, Ontario Minister of Education, explains some of the education-policy changes we have seen this year. Student trustees were largely unsatisfied with the Minister’s reasoning.

4

RECOMMENDATIONS

RATIONALE

Although we certainly have learned to structure and understand formal motions and recommendations to the board from C.O.W., Board, and Budget meetings, the following are various informal recommendations that we as Student Trustees would like to suggest to the Adult Trustees of the board. From observation, experience, and reflection of our year as Student Trustees, we believe that Adult Trustees should consider:

RECOMMENDATIONS TO TRUSTEES

1. Attending at least one OCDSB Student Senate meeting every year to directly experience the work of the Senate and engage with Student Senators on a personal basis. Senators greatly appreciated the company of Adult Trustees to answer questions about Board finances, politics, and issues that the Student Trustees may not be familiar with. As well, having adult “allies” at Senate meetings reinforces the idea, to the Senators, that the OCDSB has a strong commitment to student voice.

2. Attending at least one Town Hall or similar event at each high-school in your zone once a year. These Town Hall events, explained earlier in this report, give students and teachers alike an opportunity to air questions about school life in a stress-free environment. Often, trustees are able to answer students’ questions pertaining to a wide variety of fields, particularly board governance, finance, and lesser-known board policies. As well, it means a great deal to students to see truly interested adults in attendance of these events. If you are unsure as to how to attend one of these meetings, contact the OCDSB Student Trustees and they will facilitate your attendance.

3. Connecting with the Student Senators in each of the high-schools in your zone. Again, if you are unsure as to how to contact these students, talk to the Student Trustees for the current academic school year and they will facilitate the connection. Student Senators immensely appreciate your efforts to connect with them, as it is validating for their position and self-esteem within the role.

CONCLUSION

Being student trustees has been, without a doubt, the greatest honour and experience that we have had in our lives. Becoming part of the community—more so family—of the OCDSB has allowed us to learn, grow, and make a difference on every level of our Board. The incredible year we have had would not have been possible without the help, care, and unconditional commitment of a few individuals. Firstly, a huge thank-you to our Student Senators who devoted their year to serving and representing the students of their school. We engaged in valuable discussion and debate that will certainly stay with us for the rest of our careers. Secondly, a special thank you to both Superintendent Lehman and Vice Principal Gagnier, without whom we would not have been able to succeed in this position. The guidance and support of Superintendent Lehman and Vice Principal Gagnier expresses, on a genuine level, the OCDSB's deep commitment to amplifying student voice. Thirdly, a profound thank-you to Trustee Erica Braunovan who, at the beginning of the year, "showed us the ropes" of being a trustee and attended many of our student senate meetings. Fourthly, a ginormous thank-you to Myra Wells, for organizing our transport to and from OSTA-AECO events, professional development sessions, and government consultations. Lastly, a general thank-you to all other Board Staff, Superintendents, Trustees, and students that helped us along our journey.

Although we might be concluding our terms as Student Trustee, our devotion and thanks to the OCDSB will remain with us forever. Who knows—maybe we will re-join the board as adults trustee in a few years...

Samantha Lin and Isaac Glassman
2018-2019 Student Trustees