

JANUARY 2021

# **OCDSB STUDENT TRUSTEE BI-ANNUAL REPORT**

Prepared by Student Trustees Charles Chen and Joy Liu

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## INTRODUCTION

At the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, there are two student trustees each year who both serve a one year term. Student trustees, who are official members of the OCDSB Board of Trustees, are responsible for representing the voices of all students in our District at the school board level. Student trustees advocate for students, and are also elected by students. Our student trustees this year are Charles Chen and Joy Liu. Charles is a Grade 11 student at Earl of March Secondary School and Joy is a Grade 12 student at Colonel By Secondary School. For more information regarding the role of student trustees, please refer to [Policy P.017.GOV: Student Trustees](#).

This report aims to update the OCDSB Board of Trustees, senior staff and any other interested parties on the work being done by the student trustees. The report will also contain information about the Student Senate's vision for this school year and the work being done at the provincial level by the Ontario Student Trustees' Association (OSTA-AECO).

## 2020: A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

2020 has definitely been a difficult year for many people, including the students at the OCDSB. This year has highlighted the many inequities present in the education system as well as the difficulties of teaching and learning virtually. Despite the many challenges, students and staff were able to quickly adapt to their new environment and students were able to continue their learning.

Student Trustees Charles Chen and Joy Liu would like to applaud the efforts of all the staff at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board on behalf of students for being able to continue providing education to students, despite a global pandemic. Thank you to teachers for adapting quickly to the new teaching environment while still being able to provide quality education to students. Thank you to principals for your extensive planning in order to keep schools safe. Thank you to custodians for helping us keep our schools clean and safe. Thank you OCDSB senior staff for your extensive efforts in developing school reopening plans as well as being able to establish and operate a 100% virtual learning environment in such a short period of time. Thank you to all staff at the OCDSB for the essential work that all of you do. Your exemplary work does not go on unnoticed by students.

## SCHOOL REOPENING PLANS

When Student Trustees Charles Chen and Joy Liu entered their term, the school board was very busy with preparing for students to return back to school in September. The student trustees made sure to stay up to date with the latest versions of the return to school plans and would inform students about the latest updates using their social media platforms. They also answered many questions from students over social media about the return to school plans.

Secondary students had the option to choose between two models to best suit their needs. One option was the hybrid model and the other was the virtual model. Recognizing the value of in-person learning, the student trustees voiced their concerns at meetings about the initial hybrid model which contained very little time in class and advocated for the schedule to be adjusted for hybrid learners to be able to spend more time in the classroom for their in-person days. The student trustees were pleased by the decisions of OCDSB senior staff when revisions that were later made to the secondary hybrid model also included an increase to the in-person learning time.

## POLICE INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

One major topic of interest among the OCDSB student population this year is the School Resource Officer (SRO) program. While there was not consensus among the population on what the status and role of the SRO program should be, the consensus among the politically engaged student body was that a review of the program was long overdue. The student trustees composed a letter of support to trustees on behalf of students for Trustee Rob Campbell's motion to review the SRO program; this letter accrued over 1400 signatures. In addition to communicating information to students and continuing to follow this issue, the Student Trustees were consulted on the development of the review's consultation process.

## STUDENT SENATE UPDATE

### *What is Student Senate?*

The Student Senate is the official committee representing secondary students' views to the OCDSB. It is composed of one student senator for each secondary school in the District and is chaired by the student trustees. Student senators, who are either elected by students in their school or are appointed through an application process, are responsible for representing their school at Student Senate. Student trustees are able to gather feedback from student senators and are also able to communicate with all secondary schools through the Student Senate.

The Student Senate meets once a month to discuss key issues concerning students. Oftentimes, staff from the OCDSB attend Student Senate meetings to receive feedback directly from students on a variety of topics. For more information, please refer to [Policy P.113.GOV: Student Senate](#).

## STUDENT SENATE 2020-2021

**AY JACKSON SECONDARY SCHOOL**  
Masoud Karimi

**BELL HIGH SCHOOL**  
Laura Wang

**BROOKFIELD HIGH SCHOOL**  
Emmanuel Edelifo

**CAIRINE WILSON SECONDARY  
SCHOOL**  
Brooke Colman

**CANTERBURY HIGH SCHOOL**  
Tracy Li

**COLONEL BY SECONDARY SCHOOL**  
Kake Jin

**EARL OF MARCH SECONDARY SCHOOL**  
Marwan Bakr

**GLEBE COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE**  
Sarah Brooks

**GLOUCESTER HIGH SCHOOL**  
Nadiya Ariaratnam

**HILLCREST HIGH SCHOOL**  
Ahmed Yasin

**JOHN MCCRAE SECONDARY SCHOOL**  
Alejandro Giggey

**LISGAR COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE**  
Olivia Simms

**LONGFIELDS-DAVIDSON HEIGHTS  
SECONDARY SCHOOL**  
Ishti Hossain

**MERIVALE HIGH SCHOOL**  
Molly DeBat

**NEPEAN HIGH SCHOOL**  
Noiya Katell

**OCV SECONDARY SCHOOL**  
Joshua Gertsolf

**OSGOODE TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL**  
Jenna Baker

**OTTAWA TECHNICAL SECONDARY  
SCHOOL**  
Kieran McMillan

**RIDGEMONT HIGH SCHOOL**  
Nour Kaddoura

**SIR ROBERT BORDEN HIGH SCHOOL**  
Maxwell Forzley

**SIR WILFRID LAURIER SECONDARY  
SCHOOL**  
Samantha Presseault

**SOUTH CARLETON HIGH SCHOOL**  
Amal Abed

**WEST CARLETON SECONDARY  
SCHOOL**  
Hady Ibrahim

**WOODROFFE HIGH SCHOOL**  
Nasra Aden



## STUDENT SENATE UPDATE

### *Communicating with Students*

This year, the student trustees started an Instagram account for the Student Senate (@ocdsbstudentsenate). The student trustees believe that this account will help Student Senate communicate with high school students from all across the District and will also keep students informed about what is happening in the school board. The student trustees appointed two student senators, Ishti Hossain from Longfields-Davidson Heights Secondary School and Kake Jin from Colonel By Secondary School, who are responsible for managing the Instagram account and making posts. Additionally, the student trustees were also able to create a new email account dedicated to Student Senate (studentsenate@ocdsb.ca). The student trustees are going to pass this Instagram account and email down to future Student Senates so that they can continue using these platforms to communicate with high school students in the OCDSB.

## STUDENT SENATE UPDATE

### *Student Senate Working Committees*

Another initiative that the student trustees started this year is the establishment of Student Senate Working Committees. In the past, the Student Senate held monthly 1.5 hour meetings which was not enough time for the Student Senate to pursue initiatives. Not only has the Student Senate meeting time been extended this year to 2 hours to provide more time for discussion at Student Senate meetings, but the student trustees also created a committee structure in order to allow student senators to pursue initiatives. These committees also meet monthly, a week after each Student Senate meeting.

The committees that were created this year are the Mental Health Working Committee and the Student Spirit Working Committee. Each committee is able to plan and implement initiatives that fall within the Student Senate's pillars of focus this year, which are mental health, student spirit, and equity, intersectionality and inclusion. By creating these committees, the student trustees hope that the Student Senate will be able to implement more initiatives and that student senators will have more opportunities to work with student leaders from all across the District.

## STUDENT SENATE UPDATE

### *Peer Tutoring Numeracy Program*

An initiative pursued this year by Student Trustee Charles Chen is to establish a Peer Tutoring Numeracy Program at schools in the District. This program aims to offer a student-led and student-focused approach to supporting students with math by having high school students peer tutor other high school students that need extra support with math.

He recently finished drafting the Peer Tutoring Numeracy Framework, which is an implementation guide that helps student senators implement the peer tutoring program at their high school. He was able to design the plan so that students will be able to peer tutor other students 100% virtually. He was also able to confirm with senior staff that his program meets the OCDSB requirements for staff supervision and that peer tutors will be able to receive volunteer hours for the time that they peer tutor other students. He will soon be meeting with interested student senators in order to receive feedback on the framework so to make any necessary changes and then he will work with student senators to help them implement the plan at their high school.

## STUDENT SENATE UPDATE

### *Consultation and Vote on Menstrual Equity Motion*

Student Trustees Charles Chen and Joy Liu sought feedback from the Student Senate on their motion to fund free period products in OCDSB schools at the December 3, 2020 Student Senate meeting. The entire initiative will be discussed in further detail later in the report and this section focuses on the consultation process with the Student Senate.

When the student trustees showed the Student Senators their motion, they were able to receive a lot of valuable feedback from student senators. A few examples include making sure to also include wording for disposal units to be installed and the importance of educating students on the proper usage of period products. The student trustees are happy to announce that the final wording in the motion reflects the feedback from the Student Senate and that the Student Senate took a successful vote to officially endorse the motion.

## UPCOMING ROUNDTABLE OUTREACH PLANNING

Building off of the work of Ganaabouté Gagné and Prasith Wijeweera, the 2019-2020 Student Trustees, Student Trustees Charles Chen and Joy Liu plan to continue the roundtable initiative that started last year. In this model originally developed by 2019-2020 Student Senator Amina Elsharif, the student trustees facilitate a conversation with students who are not traditionally heard. That is, students who are not actively involved within their school's clubs, Student Council, or the school community.

Students at these roundtable discussions are encouraged to share their experience with the education system and suggestions on how the District can best support all students. The student trustees plan to host roundtables at as many secondary schools as possible as well as a handful of elementary schools through a virtual platform such as Google Meet. By proactively seeking student voice from students who are not always heard, the student trustees are able to better understand how to best represent all students within the District and how to carry out their roles as student trustees more effectively.

## EXPANDING ENGAGEMENT

This year, the student trustees would like to expand their outreach and engagement to elementary students, special education students, students who have disengaged from the OCDSB prior to graduation, and students engaged with the criminal justice system. Currently, they are planning to host roundtables with three elementary schools, and exploring possibilities for an elementary Student Senate and roundtables with the other aforementioned three demographics. They hope to use this expanded outreach to better advocate on behalf of the diversity of the OCDSB student population and understand student needs.

## THE ME PROJECT

2019-20 Student Trustees Ganaabouté Gagné and Prasith Wijeweera first began discussing the issue of menstrual equity with students and followed the pilot started at Featherston Drive Public School with the intention of advocating for the placement of free period products in school washrooms. This year's student trustees built on their advocacy work by creating a draft motion—titled the ME Project—for the OCDSB to fund free period products in school washrooms and circulating the draft among stakeholders in order to receive their input and make revisions.

The Student Senate endorsed the draft motion and provided rich feedback from which entire new clauses were created. The senators also distributed the anonymous feedback form the student trustees created to their school's 2SLGBTQ+ student groups, so that gender diverse students could provide feedback on the level of inclusivity in our motion. Feedback was also sought from Superintendent Carson, the Advisory Committee on Equity, and trustees, while student trustees from other boards provided advice on how they implemented similar motions. The student trustees continued raising awareness about the incoming motion via a social media campaign, including collaboration with the local community organization Period Packs. Finally, the student trustees created a letter of support for the motion on behalf of students, of which over 1400 signed and disclosed their own experiences, opinions and feedback. Students made delegations to the January 12, 2021 Committee of the Whole meeting where the motion was moved by Trustee Lyra Evans and passed unanimously. As a result of student voice and leadership at the heart of the ME Project, the collective vision of students being able to access free period products in school washrooms will be made a reality by 2022.

## OSTA-AECO UPDATE

This year, Student Trustee Chen was appointed Co-Chair of the Communications Working Group and Student Trustee Liu was elected Policy Coordinator on the Executive Council. It should also be happily noted that 2019-20 Student Trustee Prasith Wijeweera was appointed Chief Financial Officer.

In May 2020, the student trustees attended OSTA-AECO's virtual Annual General Meeting, where they were able to receive rich professional development before their term began and connect with student trustees across Ontario. In October 2020, they attended the virtual Fall General Meeting where they received additional training and participated in working sessions with the rest of the General Assembly on OSTA-AECO's advocacy projects.

Currently, OSTA-AECO is preparing the Student Representation Across Canada report as a joint release with the Canadian School Boards' Association and the Canadian Catholic School Trustees' Association. This national report summarizes the status of student representation on Canadian school boards from province-to-province, provides an overview of the student trustee role in Ontario, and makes recommendations for provinces to support student representation on school boards.



## OSTA-AECO UPDATE CONTINUED

Additionally, OSTA-AECO is preparing an advocacy project that features student-submitted stories on their experiences surrounding the topics of school during the COVID-19 pandemic, race/ethnicity/nationality/cultural background, and gender identity and/or sexual orientation. The first stage of this project is set to open in January 2021, with three volumes of the project series published one by one until the end of the academic year. This project will also include data from the Barriers to Education: OSTA-AECO Survey launched in the spring of 2020, which OSTA-AECO finished analyzing.

In order to ensure the rapidly expanding organization's commitment to a culture change centered around accountability, collaboration, and transparency, governance measures such as the Respectful Workplace Policy, Respectful Workplace Procedure, and Code of Conduct and Ethics for Employees, Volunteers, and Directors came into effect within the organization in the summer of 2020. Members of the Executive Council also underwent mandatory equity training in November of 2020, while contributing to the development of Osgoode Hall's equity and human rights professional development seminar offered to school trustees.

## CLOSING REMARKS

*The role of student trustee brings new challenges and successes with each day, and the rewarding nature of this role is able to make up for the many tiring and stressful days it brings. It's definitely a unique experience that is like no other role or Student Council position I've held in the past and I am extremely grateful for this opportunity. I would like to thank Superintendent Hardie, Vice-Principal Unsworth, Principal Gagnier, the entire Board of Trustees, Nicole Guthrie and Myra Wells for supporting us in our role and answering any questions we have. Although the future holds much uncertainty, I am certain that I will continue to carry out my role as a Student Trustee to the best of my ability.*

—CHARLES CHEN

*I am incredibly grateful to have been elected into the student trustee role and to be able to enjoy the challenge of representing 75,000 OCDSB students on the Board of Trustees. I've been able to learn more about the breadth of student experiences, advocacy, public education, equity, political process, legislating, and frankly email organization among other new things in these past six months than I have in my entire life. Thank you to Superintendent Hardie, Vice-Principal Unsworth, Principal Gagnier, the Board of Trustees, Nicole Guthrie, Myra Wells, Student Senate, and OCDSB students for all your assistance and support. I will continue striving to do a better job of advocating on behalf of OCDSB students every day and further dedicating myself to this role.*

—JOY LIU