

SUPERIOR-GREENSTONE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Report No: 39
Date: June 17, 2013

TO: Chair and Members of the
Superior-Greenstone District School Board

FROM: Aaron MacGregor, Student Trustee

SUBJECT: Student Trustee Final Report

**STRATEGIC
PRIORITY:** Student Achievement and Well Being

A Year in Review

The 2012/2013 school year at Superior-Greenstone District School Board has brought with it a unique set of circumstances, challenges, and triumphs. I have had the pleasure of representing the students of our large and diverse region this past year, which has been a rewarding, educational, and challenging experience. The opportunity to witness educational leaders at work has been an honour and a privilege. Through the decisions, presentations, and information presented at the board table, the students of our board were always the primary concern, as trustees and senior administration worked together to reach the desired outcomes for the benefit of our students. From financial reports to accommodation reviews to excellence in education presentations, the interests of our students and constituents were at the centre of discussion, and our board's desire to fulfill these interests and needs was always apparent.

Student Senate

The Superior-Greenstone District School Board Student Senate has taken great strides toward promoting a unified student voice across the region, and has provided an environment for productive student discussion. Senators from all schools in our board had the opportunity throughout the year to discuss school events, ask questions, and bring forth issues. Senator reports are not only useful for gathering information, but also for sharing ideas among other senators. These ideas may then be brought back to student councils or other organizations. Having this type of forum to discuss events and activities encourages student involvement, a powerful tool in keeping students engaged in their education and their school communities.

The Student Senate has reached new heights this year, beginning with monthly meetings and improved communication among senators. The primary initiative pursued was providing tools and support to establish gay-straight alliances for students and schools throughout the board to promote inclusive and safe learning environments. The Student Senate explored various materials including posters, information packages, and other resources, which were then selected to be distributed to the schools of our board by administration.

In early May, the Student Senate had the opportunity to attend "We Stand Up", an event promoting and emphasizing the importance youth empowerment. The event provided the chance for student senators to meet in person, which had not been possible as all Student Senate meetings are held via video conference. The reaction of the Student Senate was overwhelmingly positive, and ideas inspired by the event were presented at the following meeting, including a "Student Senate Minga Project" through fundraiser Brick by Brick to build a school in a third world country. The idea was well received by the Student Senate, and as one of the Lake Superior High School students that originally presented the idea, incoming student trustee Maria Visintin will be spearheading this initiative and the Student Senate as a whole next year.

I can confidently report that this year the mandate of the Student Senate, to advise the student trustee in matters relating to students and business of the board, has been met. In future, the Student Senate will continue to be instrumental in representing the student voice in a region of this size and geography. Finally, on behalf of the Student Senate, I would like to express sincere gratitude for the support of Director Tamblyn, without whom we would not have had the success we did. From providing information and assistance at meetings to ensuring that attending We Stand Up was a success, he truly has demonstrated his dedication to the students of our board.

Ontario Student Trustees' Association

This year, I have had the privilege of working alongside student trustees from across Ontario to advocate for students at the provincial level. For most of my term, I served as Public Board Council Communications Officer for the Ontario Student Trustees' Association. In this position, I was responsible for communications within and on behalf of the Public Board Council. Throughout my term, I was also involved with OSTA-AECO's Policy Committee and Communications Committee. Policy Committee worked to update OSTA-AECO's position paper on issues in Ontario education, as well as revise and create a new by-law document, which was approved and adopted at the Annual General Meeting in May. Communications Committee facilitated the creation of the latest edition of the Echo, OSTA-AECO's periodical publication.

OSTA-AECO has worked tirelessly to launch new initiatives and projects, including the annual Student, Parent, and Educator Survey, the Ontario Student Voice Awards, the OSTA-AECO Partnership Program, and the Echo. In addition to these projects, OSTA-AECO advocated for students throughout the Bill 115 labour dispute in press releases and communications with the Ministry of Education, OSSTF, and ETFO. Additionally, the highlights of OSTA-AECO's work this year culminated in three conferences: the Fall General Meeting, the Board Council Conferences, and the Annual General Meeting.

I had the privilege of attending all of the OSTA-AECO conferences, including last year's Annual General Meeting as an incoming student trustee. Each was its own unique experience. The Annual General Meeting is an exciting celebration of the year's achievements, with excellent keynote speakers, professional development for incoming student trustees, and the always exciting executive elections. The Fall General Meeting was an opportunity to lay the foundation for the year ahead, and to provide additional advice and experience to new student trustees through keynote speakers and professional development. Board Council Conferences was a highly focused conference in terms of issues and projects specific to each Public Board Council and Catholic Board Council. All of these conferences provided inspiration, knowledge, and confidence that have successfully taken me to the end of my term and will provide guidance and remain with me for years to come.

Being involved with the Ontario Student Trustees' Association was a valuable asset while carrying out my duties. I am proud of the work and accomplishments of the organization, and the exceptional support that OSTA-AECO provides to student trustees is unmatched. I am hopeful that our board continues to recognize the important role this organization plays in effective student representation and education for student trustees.

Next Steps

I am absolutely thrilled to report that for the entire duration of my term, the student voice has evidently been appreciated and valued by our board in discussion and decision making. However, as always, additional steps can be made to ensure that the perspective of the beneficiaries of all of our board's work is well represented at the board table.

The first of these steps will be to continue to build the Student Senate. The discussions this year have been insightful, and great ideas have been brought forward. However, to foster stronger relationships and

promote a sense of community resulting in greater discussion, more opportunities must be provided for teambuilding within the Student Senate early in the school year. A Student Senate budget, established prior to the beginning of each school year, would provide clarity as to what projects and events are possible. Additionally, when schools submit the names of senators, it would be ideal to also gather contact information so that smooth and efficient communications between meetings can be facilitated by the student trustee.

Second, during board meetings, student trustees have the right to participate in discussion, suggest motions, and even request a non-binding recorded vote. Throughout my term, I have always felt comfortable during discussion and welcome to provide input. However, to further build a sense of inclusion and to emphasize the role of the student voice in decision making, the vote of the student trustee can be cast in the same manner and at the same time as other trustees, including during show of hands and recorded votes. Though the vote is ultimately non-binding, the opportunity for a student trustee to express their support or opposition for a motion with such a vote brings greater value and appreciation for the student voice.

Finally, throughout my term I have encountered a wide array of duties and challenges including reporting on behalf of the students of our board, chairing the Student Senate, and being involved with the Ontario Student Trustees' Association. Throughout the execution of my duties and responsibilities, I have found that having only one representative for the entire student population of our large geographical region presents challenges that could be overcome with the addition of an additional student trustee position. An optimal approach could involve two student trustees, each representing a predetermined geographical portion of our board's students. The invaluable benefits of such a configuration include shared responsibilities surrounding the Student Senate, an additional student perspective at the board table, and a helpful second opinion for both student trustees to discuss uncertainties and issues encountered throughout the term. Though the addition of a second student trustee position is a process that will require consideration in multiple areas, I strongly encourage our board to pursue this goal with the intention of improving student representation for the benefit of the students in all of our schools.

Administrative Summary

The report entitled Student Trustee Report has been presented to the Superior-Greenstone DSB for information.

Respectfully submitted by:

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David Tamblyn
Director of Education