



## **REGIONAL REPORT**

*A summary of Student Trustees' outstanding leadership in public school boards across Ontario*

## **THE PUBLIC BOARD COUNCIL REGIONS**



### **GOLDEN HORSESHOE**

- Halton District School Board
- Peel District School Board
- Toronto District School Board
- Durham District School Board
- Niagara District School Board
- York Region District School Board



### **SOUTHWESTERN**

- Waterloo District School Board
- Thames Valley District School Board
- Bluewater District School Board
- Lambton-Kent District School Board
- Grand Erie District School Board
- Simcoe County District School Board
- Greater Essex District School Board



### **EASTERN**

- Upper Canada District School Board
- Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
- Renfrew County District School Board
- Limestone District School Board
- Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board
- Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board



### **NORTHERN**

- Superior Greenstone District School Board
- Ontario North East District School Board
- Algoma District School Board
- Rainbow District School Board
- Rainy River District School Board
- Lakehead District School Board

## AN INTRODUCTION

By Dasha Metropolitanaky, *PBC President*, and Kevin Zheng, *PBC Vice-President*

At the beginning of each school year, OSTA-AECO's Executive sets its goals. As we sat down to plan the Public Board Council's vision, we were faced with a challenge. We realized that the PBC represents a huge number of students - approximately 1.4 million. This means that it is impossible to choose just one issue that affects every single student in an equally impactful way. Even if an issue like this existed, we strongly believed that individual Student Trustees are the best actors to identify and address the local challenges in their boards. Given this, our vision for the Public Board Council is for it to serve as a critical pillar of OSTA-AECO. The Ontario Student Trustees' Association exists to unite the voices of Student Trustees across the province with the aim of achieving broader level reforms that benefit all students. By unifying Public Board Student Trustees and working with partners in public education, we wanted to help fulfill this purpose.

We've focused on three key issues this year: partnerships, publicity and policy. One of our most successful initiatives was our *By Any Measure* video launch in partnership with the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA). On November 17, 2016, we hosted a release for a student-led video that showcases what students and staff across the province are doing to prioritize accessibility in their schools. The project followed former Student Trustee and OSTA-AECO French Relations Officer Yasmina Male as well as former Lieutenant Governor David Onley. The Honourable Tracy MacCharles, the Minister Responsible for Accessibility, spoke at the video launch. We're incredibly proud that in the days after the event, the Premier committed to creating an action plan for accessibility in Ontario's schools.

Since the video launch event, we've reached out to other stakeholders. For example, along with other OSTA-AECO executive, we've met with the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Advanced Education to discuss increasing student voice beyond just elementary and secondary education. We've worked with the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) to distribute a survey for student feedback and hosted a speaker at the Board Council Conference to equip Student Trustees with information about the program so they can answer students' questions. We attended and hosted a booth at the Public Education Symposium run by OPSBA. Throughout these opportunities, we've showcased the initiatives of Public Board Student Trustees to the educational community.

We're really proud of the initiatives of Ontario's Public Board Student Trustees. The Public Board Council exists because of these Student Trustees' efforts. This report showcases some of their achievements and ongoing projects. We hope you'll be as inspired by this incredible display of student leadership as we are!



## **GOLDEN HORSESHOE REGION REPORT**

By: Claire Zhou, *Golden Horseshoe Regional Representative*

Student Trustees have the unique opportunity to improve the education system for their peers. The Ontario Student Trustees' Association, (OSTA-AECO), has given me the chance to see students' power to create change across the province. Every interaction has been absolutely inspiring: OSTA-AECO's Student Trustees are taking active leadership roles in order to make a meaningful difference in students' lives. In the Golden Horseshoe Area, also known as the Greater Toronto Area, the Student Trustees of some of Ontario's biggest public boards are tackling the needs of their student communities.

Halton District School Board Student Trustees Dasha Metropolitansky and Zaid Haj Ali are currently in the process of planning the Halton Youth Leadership Symposium, a conference where Halton students learn essential skills in order to be successful in school. This year, elementary students will learn how to successfully make the transition from elementary school to high school. This will be done through workshops, panels and keynote speakers. Moreover, Student Trustees Metropolitansky and Haj Ali and their Student Senate's communications team have created a survey about issues Halton students would like the board to address. The Student Senators have distributed this survey to over 300 students, and the Student Trustees are relaying the results - issues ranging from transportation delays to homophobia - to the Board.

The Peel District School Board Student Trustees have three areas of focus this year: religious accommodation, mental health, and modifications to the civics and careers curriculum. Omar Baboolal and Ranbir Singh are advocating for communal prayer rooms in schools as well as the standardization of religious accommodation practices. Peel's attempt to be more equitable and accommodating is also seen in the Student Trustees' push to create a Mental Health committee. This committee will involve community groups, the Peel Regional Police, Social workers, student stakeholders, etc. Finally, Student Trustees Baboolal and Singh have taken the initiative to write to the Ministry of Education to change the civics and careers curriculum to include education about Schools Boards, Trustees, and Student Trustees.

Inspired by the equity training the Board has received, Toronto District School Board Student Trustees Shams Mehdi and Saad Wazir have decided to spread their newfound knowledge to their Supercouncil. They have hosted a two-hour session, which incorporated group activities run by the Board's Student Equity advisor. During this session, they discussed running an equitable event and abiding by the TDSB's Integrated Equity Framework. Furthermore, Student Trustees Mehdi and Wazir are planning, along with their Supercouncil, a Leadership Summit and a grade 9-10 retreat. The Leadership Summit is intended to connect each school's Student Council presidents and vice presidents, and the Grade 9-10 retreat is a leadership workshop for students in those grades.



The Durham District School Board is focusing on their Student Senate this year. Student Trustees Kofi Richter, Kevin Zheng, and Avery Jackman, have polished up their Student Senate via training sessions, involved Board staff to provide guidance to students, and restructured the Senate to improve attendance. DDSB's Mental Health Lead came in to present to the Senators about creating mental health initiatives within their own schools. Furthermore, the Student Trustees have created a "Sharing Best Practices" session where schools can present their best events at Student Senate meetings to inspire other schools to learn from and replicate other students' initiatives.

Each year, Student Trustees at the District School Board of Niagara are responsible for hosting an event that engages all students. Student Trustees Karling Luciani and Samir Alazzam, however, are tackling two. Their first event is a walk called "Show Your Colours", where students will show that diversity is the strength of students and it ought be celebrated. It will take place at the Board office where students will promote positivity through spiritwear. There will also be guest speakers and food trucks! Their second initiative is called STEP (Student Entrepreneurs with a Passion). Student Trustees Luciani and Alazzam partnered with local businesses to offer mentorship opportunities for students, so they can learn how to create business plans and kickstart their ideas.

Tackling discrimination has become the mission of the York Region District School Board Student Trustees Mustafa Ismail and Claire Zhou. They have encouraged transparency in discussing these issues by urging students to come forward with their stories and suggestions. Zhou and Ismail's other goals include implementing a two-term Student Trustee transitional program and an elementary Student Senate. Both initiatives were developed through their Student Senate. The Student Trustees and the Student Senate are also planning a mental health initiative for all the students in the Board; it's called "Breaking the Stigma". On a popsicle stick, students write one negative word describing mental health, and when signalled, everyone breaks it at the same time to "break the stigma".

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board Student Trustees Elizabeth Wong and Tory Dockree have set their sights on two main goals: Student Trustee promotion and an elementary Student Senate. To achieve the former, the Student Trustees have toured the schools in their Board and met with principals and vice-principals. The purpose of these meetings is to promote their Student Senate and to encourage schools to send student representatives. When the Student Trustees visit the high schools, they inform students about their role. Student Trustees Wong and Dockree have also successfully established an elementary senate this year. With an attendance of 70-90 students at every meeting, the senate has already discussed many significant issues ranging from transportation to the creation of a grade 9 survival guide to guidance on establishing student councils in their schools.



## **SOUTHWESTERN REGION REPORT**

By Shannon Edwards, *Southwestern Regional Representative*

I have always been amazed and will continue to be amazed by the work that Student Trustees in Southwestern Ontario are accomplishing. It's quite humbling to see what passionate, dedicated young people can achieve. The region's boards are all unique - we have small, close knit communities as well as larger, diverse boards - yet there are always ideas being exchanged between board offices. The Student Trustees in Southwestern Ontario are dedicated to making a positive impact on student voice and education as a whole. Every board is at a different stage and is committed to reaching their personal goals.

In the Waterloo Region District School Board, Student Trustees Ryan Barnes and Husayn Jamal have been apart of the transition of two new superintendents, one for well-being and one for student achievement. Currently, they are discussing issues including recycling, wifi, student well-being, and the differences between IB, applied, locally developed and academic. They are receiving feedback from their student senators who collect other students' opinions.

In the Thames Valley District School Board, Student Trustees Aoife Pucchio and Stefan Suvajac are working to enact policy which adds an FNMI Student Trustee (the student must be a self-identified member of the FNMI community) to the Board. Also, they are working on a pilot project which creates eight joint school club and student government regional councils across the Board and mandates student councils in all schools providing programming to pupils in grades seven or higher. Student Trustees Pucchio and Suvajac hope to mandate a multi-year strategic action plan for student voice, begin the process of organizing conferences for student council members across the Board (to be hosted next academic year) and establish various student lead research committees which cooperate with Board administration to develop reports and recommendations. Their ultimate goal is to restructure and unify student voice in their Board.

In the Bluewater District School Board, Student Trustees Holly Melsom, Luke Burrows, and Branden Wheeler are looking to formalize their senate, as it is still at an early stage of development. They have also been working with the Special Education Advisory Committee to try to improve the integration of special needs students into regular school programs.

Ayla Jacobs and Keaton Jennings are Student Trustees in the Lambton-Kent District School Board. Jacobs is working on research to get a totem pole removed from Tecumseh Public School in Chatham. Tecumseh's tribe did not make totem poles, so although they are a stereotypical native symbol, the students feel strongly that there should not be one at the school. As well, Jacobs and Jennings are working with their student senate to plan a mental health seminar for 30 students from each high school



in the board, focusing on stress and anxiety. This seminar is planned for mental health week in May.

In the Simcoe County District School Board, Student Trustees Zakari Mattila, Matt Thorhauge and Grace Leyshon have been bringing in presenters for their Student Senate meetings. So far, board staff have been informing students about different issues within the school board. The Student Senate is brainstorming their big initiative for the year.

In the Greater Essex County District School Board, Student Trustees Elisa Quaggiotto and Colton Allen are working on re-establishing eco-teams in all of their board's high schools board-wide. They are also working on events for students such as a computer science competition called Massey Hacks and Walkerville's Mini We day. Quaggiotto and Allen are currently planning a board-wide arts night to encourage students to show their creative qualities.

In the Upper Grand District School Board, Student Trustees Hajra Hazzard and Julia Gagnon plan to run a high school Wellness event in April or May. The main focus will be on mental health, stress relief and school support. Hazzard and Gagnon are also conscientious of the environment and are working to get their board to stop selling bottled water in schools. Finally, these Student Trustees are promoting Specialist High Skills Major events on social media to inform schools about the program.

In the Avon Maitland District School Board, Student Trustee Jesse Russell and Shannon Edwards have just completed a board-wide survey about the use of technology in the classroom. They are in the process of reviewing the data they have collected and will be sharing the information with their board soon. Also, they are helping to create more inclusive classrooms, as they work alongside Community Living and inclusion organizations. Finally, Student Trustees Edwards and Russell have been working alongside the Ontario Provincial Police in their area to provide them with feedback regarding a student advisory committee. The OPP have been working with their senate to seek information on youth issues, hoping to become a better ally and to listen to the student voices within the Avon Maitland District School Board.



## **EASTERN REGIONAL REPORT**

By Tenzin Shomar, *Eastern Regional Representative*

I'm incredibly proud of the work of Student Trustees in Eastern Ontario. In compiling this report, I've been able to hear about all of the amazing events and initiatives that students are implementing every single day. The dynamic environment in Eastern Ontario is quite unique: stretching from Durham Region in the west to Ottawa in the east, we have Student Trustees who represent both urban and rural regions over large geographical areas. As such, it's important to recognize the importance of offering the best quality education to all students, regardless of where they live.

In the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board, Student Trustees Delanie Austin and Saud Hasseb have begun to reform their board's Student Senate. Currently, it is run by board staff, but Student Trustees Austin and Hasseb are currently deciding upon the parameters of a new leadership structure which will best serve all of the students in the board.

In the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, Student Trustee Tenzin Shomar is currently implementing a comprehensive plan to increase awareness of the Student Trustee position across the board. To accomplish this, Student Trustee Shomar has been visiting elementary and secondary schools to speak directly with students about student voice and any concerns that they may have with their learning environment. Finally, Student Trustee Shomar is working on adding an additional Student Trustee position to the board, bringing the total to two.

In the Limestone District School Board, Student Trustees Josiah Ascough and Will Sanderson organized an "Interschool Coffee House" where students from across the board were able to showcase their talents, ranging from singing and poetry to juggling and film production. The event raised \$213.35 for United Way to help support initiatives to end youth homelessness in the Kingston area. Student Trustees Ascough and Sanderson have also led many important discussions with their Interschool Council like the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test and the Limestone District School Board's Five Year Plan.

In the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, Student Trustees Alex MacDonald and Kayvon Mihan are currently in the process of reforming the Student Trustee election process as well as extending the position of Student Trustee. Student Trustees MacDonald and Mihan are also in the middle of a five phase initiative which began in December 2016 with a Student Senate discussion on issues significant to students. The initiative will conclude this school year with a student engagement symposium where education stakeholders will gather to create action items for the upcoming school year.



In the Renfrew County District School Board, Student Trustees Nic Edge and Connor Webster are beginning to create Renfrew County's first Student Senate. Due to the board's large geographical area, it has been difficult to collectivize student voice across the region. In September 2016, the Board of Trustees approved a motion to support, in principle, the creation of a Student Senate for the 2017-18 school year. As well, on December 7, 2016, Student Trustees Edge and Webster welcomed Student Trustee Kayvon Mihan, President of the Ontario Student Trustees' Association, at the board's annual Student Council Summit.

In the Trillium Lakelands District School Board, Student Trustee Carmen Galea and her Student Senate have organized a board wide competition where all secondary schools are competing to collect the most amount of pasta for a local food bank. Student Trustee Galea is also working with the board on a report about student opportunity and student attitude in all of Trillium Lakelands' secondary schools.

In the Upper Canada District School Board, Student Trustee Grace Maher has led a campaign to better promote the role of Student Trustee and the board's Student Senate. She has created a number of videos that showcase student leaders from across the board and emphasize the importance of student voice and Student Trustees, not just in the Upper Canada District School Board, but across Ontario.



## **NORTHERN REGIONAL REPORT**

By Ty Meighan, *Northern Regional Representative*

Student Trustees in the Northern Region are working to address the needs of students in their respective boards. Although their initiatives are different, all of the North's Student Trustees are united by an unwavering dedication to their constituents and to the promotion of student voice.

The Algoma District School Board Student Trustees, Benn Fisher and Karlee Reece, are working with their senate to create actions plans for positive social change within their individual schools. Ultimately, their goal is make the Algoma District School Board a more inclusive learning environment. Their three areas of focus are equity/diversity, the environment, and mental health/well-being

At the Rainbow District School Board, Student Trustee Katie Yao leads her board's Student Senate Committee, made up of student representatives from district secondary schools. They are discussing and providing feedback on board issues, including Rainbow DSB's current Accommodation Review. Senate is also working on a Board-wide talent show, a student-led conference, Stand Up and Speak Out initiatives, and a project called "The Big Bike". This initiative raises money for the heart and stroke foundation.

The Near North District School Board is embarking on an ARC (Accommodation Review Committee) process. Three student leaders, including the Student Trustee Ty Meighan, represent student voice on the ARC and are voting members. The Student Senate at the NNDSB is actively working to increase student voice and engagement within schools. The Senate's main initiative is the creation and implementation of a "Life Literacy" initiative. Life Literacy is a workshop series each secondary school will facilitate. The school teams develop and implement the workshop based on the needs of the school. Each Senator will reach out to a presenter to speak to students about topics which are not necessarily a part of the curriculum. For example, a Senator might call upon a banker to talk to students about financial literacy, or a health nurse to talk about mental or physical health.

In the District School Board Ontario North East, Student Trustees Aviana Ruel and Gillian Gobba have supported the KAIROS Blanket Exercise as a teaching tool to share the historic and contemporary relationship between Indigenous and non- Indigenous peoples in Canada. They have also successfully advocated for a mandatory Hour of Code in their board's classrooms to improve students' programming skills.

Robyn Sulkko, the Student Trustee for the Lakehead District School Board, has successfully advocated for increased FNMI programming. This year her board has hired graduation coaches who will



work closely with current and incoming grade 9 self-identifying students and their families to ensure that they are receiving the resources they need to be successful. Sulkko is also changing the structure of her board's Secondary Student Senate to improve accessibility for students. For example, she is working to integrate an online platform for communication. For the second consecutive year, Sulkko has also run an Elementary Student Senate which meets once a month to discuss leadership as well as the issues students experience within their school communities. Recently, the students attended a two-day event with an organization called Harmony Movement where they learned about diversity, equity, discrimination and prejudice. The students are working on projects within their schools to help improve the issues they have collectively identified in Senate.





PBC at OPSBA's 2017 Public Education Symposium (PES) 2017



PBC President and Vice-President with Jon Higgins, *By Any Measure* filmmaker, and OPSBA partners



PBC at OSTA-AECO's Fall General Meeting (FGM) in Toronto

