

## Position Papers – October 2014

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## The Student Trustee Vote

**Rationale: Student trustees across Ontario champion unique, innovative and refreshing perspectives on educational issues that are sometimes overlooked on the policy-formation level.**

Whereas denying student trustees the right to a binding vote thwarts the advancement of a student voice and a united vision, and;

Whereas per section 55(5) of the Ontario Education Act student trustees have the right to partake in certain in-camera sessions closed to the public, demonstrating the high standing and trustworthiness of student trustees, and;

Whereas the student voice is most effectively communicated by granting student trustees equal opportunities to participate in Board functions as other Board trustees, and;

Whereas per section 55(7) of the Ontario Education Act student trustees receive equal opportunities to Board trustees, including access to professional development, resources and training, and;

Whereas student trustees are elected representatives, and are to be held accountable to the student body, and;

Whereas the student voice must be articulated fairly and expressively for the benefit of the school board, and;

Whereas the student voice must be represented fairly and articulated expressively for the benefit of the school board and to accurately reflect the students' in decision-making, and;

Whereas student trustees shall have the right to abstain from voting and be counted as equals within the quorum of the entire board, and;

Whereas student trustees further desire the right to move motions, to incite discussion:

*The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario furthers the dynamic and effectiveness of student representation across Ontario by supporting a recorded, binding vote for student trustees at the Board table on a policy-formation and decision making level.*



## Utilization of Student Representation

**Rationale:** Student trustees across Ontario strive to provide fair and effective student representation. Behind every student trustee, a strong representative and supportive body must be found, representing students of all demographics within respective Board jurisdictions.

Whereas per Board policy, such as Policy A:1 Responsibilities 4, 5 of the District School Board of Niagara, the student trustee shall serve as a direct liaison between the student senate and the school Board, and;

Whereas under Board policy, such that of Policy T:01 Appendix A section 2(1) of the Windsor-Essex Catholic School Board, the student senate shall be deemed a representative body of all students within respective Board jurisdictions, and;

Whereas per section 55(12) of the Ontario Education Act the individual boards shall have the discretion to draft policies concerning student representation:

*Ontario Student Trustees' Association - l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario encourages school Boards across Ontario to sustain and recognize student leaders and student trustees as representative bodies to which student trustees shall be held accountable. It supports a student voice and a united vision constructed through student surveys and mass student consultation.*



## Technology and Multimedia in the Classroom

**Rationale:** The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario lobbies for student success and academic achievement through equitable representation. Consistent technologic advancements have helped foster a greater quality of education for students across Ontario. However, technology must be utilized to further student achievement, and must not disturb or interfere with academic instruction.

Whereas the appropriate and respectful use of electronic and multimedia devices does not interfere with the administration of academic instruction, and;

Whereas the use of personal music devices can help students to concentrate and can further an appreciation of music, and;

Whereas per Board Policy, such as policy 222 Section B 1.8 of the York Catholic District School Board, all incidents involving electronic misuse, including but not limited to bullying, mischievous actions or the disruption of academic instruction, and harassment are met with disciplinary action, and;

Whereas students may require electronic devices such as cell phones, personal data management systems or laptops in case of emergency and to further their education, and;

Whereas the discretion of teachers, administration and staff support shall deem whether or not the use of technology in the classroom is appropriate at specific times, and;

Whereas teachers have the potential to instruct and model healthy usage of technology to prevent problems such as cyber bullying and the misuse of social media, which as demonstrated in the 2011 Student Survey, are areas of concern for the student body, and;

Whereas per Ontario's E-learning Strategy, E-Learning provides students who would otherwise not have access to and to those completing credits in order to graduate the opportunity to complete one or more Ontario Secondary School courses, and;

Whereas per the E-learning Ontario policy document, students participating in E-Learning courses are provided with the information and ability to voice opinions and suggestions to the School board and E-Learning Ontario, and;

Whereas per OSIE; Re-envisioning Learning Online, it is established that student - educator communication remains vital and necessary for the success of the students;

Whereas technology can be used as a tool to facilitate differentiated learning for the benefit of the students:

*The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario deems the use of electronic devices in the classroom appropriate providing that teachers, administrators and support staff deem its usage appropriate. There needs to be successful adaptation of e-learning Ontario, awareness and communication of the student voice, and the furthering of new and successful educational strategies. Staff must have the appropriate training to be equipped with the skills to properly use the technology aids available to them. The misuse of electronic devices shall be met with in-school disciplinary actions and the removal of these privileges.*



## Environmental Education and Green Schools

**Rationale: Students across Ontario's publicly funded education system are among the leaders of today and tomorrow. As such, students across the province must be actively involved in exercising effective practices to help deal with the increasingly urgent concerns and potential problems surrounding climate change and the wellbeing of our environment.**

Whereas resources pertaining to environmental education are available and accessible to students across Ontario's publicly funded education system, and;

Whereas by accessing these resources, students acquire the knowledge, skills, perspectives and practices necessary to champion environmentally responsible practices, and;

Whereas Ontario curriculum policy reflects the ongoing changes taking place in the world, and incorporate the importance of environment friendly practices in accordance with ISO14001 and ISO14004 from the International Organization of Standardization, and;

Whereas schools are the property of the government and should be reflective of the government's current efforts to combat climate change, and; '

Whereas students should learn in environments that are ecofriendly and be encouraged to partake in programs that promote and protect the environment:

*The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario supports the incorporation of environmental education within Ontario's educational curriculum policies and encourages students within Ontario's publicly funded education system to model environmentally friendly practices in the effort to champion green schools across the province as the government moves to ensure eco-friendly school construction and repair. School boards should encourage students to engage in policy-making that mandate appropriate environmental responsibilities for students in their board.*



## Safe Schools and Cyber-bullying Prevention

**Rationale:** Dignity and respect of the person must be upheld and exemplified among students enrolled across Ontario's publicly funded education system. Safe and nurturing communities must be fostered in order to nurture academic achievement and student success. Both in and outside of the classroom, students must exemplify respect and common courtesy towards one another.

Whereas students vibrantly demonstrate respect and responsibility both inside and outside of the classroom, and;

Whereas students receive instructional education detailing social justice, responsibility and communal interconnectivity, equipping students with the necessary interpersonal skills to repel injustices within schools, and;

Whereas per section 307 and 309 in the Safe Schools Act incidents involving bullying and injustice warrant disciplinary measures, including in-school disciplinary measures, suspensions, and expulsions, and;

Whereas student based programs and resources are accessible, actively engaging students, parents, teachers, administrators and support staff, and;

Whereas school Boards implement preventative strategies and programs, such as those outlined in Policy 11-40 of the Halton Catholic School Board, and;

Whereas school Boards establish Safe Schools Advisory Committees mandated to thoroughly examine and implement safe school practices across the Board, and;

Whereas the 2011 Student Survey reveals that 69.5% of students feel that schools should take action if cyber-bullying occurs outside of school:

*The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-L'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario condemns all forms of bullying and injustice in Ontario's schools. Students must embody and exemplify respect, responsibility and virtue both inside and outside of the classroom, encouraging self growth and academic achievement. School staff should also take an active role in protecting their students and taking action against cyber bullying outside of the school.*



## Healthy Schools

**Rationale: Students across Ontario's publicly funded education system require a healthy learning environment in order to reach the fullest of their potential. Healthy lifestyles must be promoted and encouraged through education, social networking and access to essential resources.**

Whereas best practices concerning physical activity, bullying prevention, personal safety, substance abuse, growth and development, mental health and healthy living are exemplified in Ontario schools, and;

Whereas students receive quality, curriculum approved instruction and programs pertaining to healthy living, and;

Whereas the government has moved to ban unhealthy food through the School Food and Beverage Policy as a means of promoting healthy eating habits, and;

Whereas Canada's Healthy Food Guide should be incorporated into the school's food service to promote healthy eating habits, and;

Whereas students who have dietary restrictions and needs will be accommodated for, and; >

Whereas students should receive quality physical activity daily, as outlined in Policy/Program Memorandum No. 138;

Whereas the student voice on mental health issues have been articulated in the 2011 Charter of Rights for the Mental Health and Well-Being for Children and Youth, and;

Whereas the 2011 Ontario Student Survey indicates that 1 in 3 students do not know where to go for help if they are experiencing a mental health issues:

*The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-L'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario encourages students to partake in student based programs and curriculum approved instructional education and activities promoting healthy and conscience lifestyles.*



## Fair Labour Practices

**Rationale:** Students across Ontario recognize the rights that belong to their fellow human being and wish to see those values honoured in the actions of their school board. They wish that the products manufactured for and supplied to their board be made in humane working conditions complying with both international and local laws and standards.

Whereas suppliers of products are not involved in forced labour, whether that be involuntary prison labour, indentured labour or bonded labour, and;

Whereas no child labour is used by suppliers; child defined as a person under the age of fifteen unless local minimum age law stipulates a higher age for work or mandatory schooling, or less than 14 if the minimum age law is set at that age in accordance with developing country exceptions under ILO Convention 138, and;

Whereas workers do not suffer harassment and abuse and do not face discrimination, with women having the ability to take maternity leave without penalty and do not undergo forced contraception and pregnancy testing, and;

Whereas hours of work among suppliers are consistent with the Ontario Employment Standards Act of 2000, and;

Whereas wages either match national legal standards or industry benchmark standards, whichever is higher in the circumstance, and;

Whereas employers provide workers with safe and healthy workplaces in compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act in its latest incarnation, last amended in 2011:

*The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario recognises that unions are vital for promoting social and economic empowerment, equitable economic growth, and the democratic reforms needed to ensure a fair and equitable trading partnership and the most powerful force is when consumers demand social responsibilities from labels and as such urges the school boards of Ontario to take a stand to support Fair Labour Practices in the production of their apparel.*



## French-English Representation

Rationale: Ontario's students represent both English and French schools; therefore, a united student vision must encompass the beliefs and challenges that are specific to both linguistic communities.

Whereas all students in Ontario are required to study French up until grade 9, as per the Ontario Education Act, and;

Whereas Ontario schools host programs such as French immersion, FSL Plus and Core French, and;

Whereas there are 12 French-language school boards in Ontario, with over 425 French-language schools, and;

Whereas French-language education serves students of French-language rights-holders, as per Section 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and;

Whereas Ontario's student trustees represent both a French and English student body and thereby vocalize concerns specific to their linguistic community as well as to the entire Ontario student population:

*The Ontario Student Trustees' Association - l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario supports a unified voice and representation from English and French students of Ontario and encourages bilingual delivery of its official policies.*



## Curriculum

**Rationale:** The Ontario curriculum is taught to all students of Ontario and must address the cultural and religious sensitivities of its beneficiaries-the students, while being relevant to current issues.

Whereas students are the beneficiaries of the education system and must be equipped with the proper tools and education to become informed leaders, and;

Whereas there is an increasing need for curricula to be respectful and reflective of Ontario's multicultural and multi-faith society, and;

Whereas there is an opportunity for curricula to facilitate differentiated learning by being structured and presented in a way that is accessible and engaging to all students:

*The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario supports student involvement and consultation in the periodic review of curricula to ensure relevant and accessible education.*



## Extracurriculars in Schools

**Rationale:** In November of 2012, extracurriculars ceased to be supervised in all publically funded high schools in Ontario, effectively ending participation requiring school facilities and resources. In December of 2012, students saw the return of extracurriculars in only Catholic high schools while non-Catholic schools continued without them. It is the opinion of students and student leaders that their extracurriculars should not be used in collective bargaining processes.

Whereas extracurriculars in schools have been proven to improve student success in their normal curriculum, social skills, and many other aspects of education, and;

Whereas the 2011 Student Survey reveals that 97% of students believe that teachers should be recognized for their contributions to extracurriculars, and;

Whereas over 10,000 students signed a 2012 online OSTA-AECO petition asking the provincial government and teacher's unions to resume negotiations to bring back extracurriculars,

Whereas extracurriculars are currently not guaranteed in every school, and can often require high fees for participation, and;

Whereas the availability of extracurriculars have been used by unions, school boards, and the provincial government in the past as bargaining chips in labour negotiations.

*The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario recognizes extracurriculars as an essential component of Ontario education. The skills that students acquire from out-of-class activities are as vital to student development as the educational curriculum itself. All Ontario schools should have systems in place to offer extracurriculars to students who cannot afford to pay fees for participation. Extracurriculars should never be negotiated with or be used as a bargaining chip by any organization in the educational domain of Ontario. To truly put students first, all parties of Ontario education should pursue any reforms or policies to further the protection of Ontario extracurriculars and strengthen the holistic classroom experience.*



## Credential Inflation

Rationale: In accordance with the statistics analyzed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Canada is ranked highest among other countries in two categories:

- i. the country with the greatest university and college enrolments as fifty-one percent of Canadian adults achieve tertiary qualification
- ii. the country with the largest share of graduates making less than the national median income

Whereas university and college acceptance and graduation rates within Ontario have continuously increased every year (Statistics Canada, 2013) and;

Whereas underemployment - the underutilisation of the productive capacity of the employed population – is evident within society as 57% of American workers reported that they do not need a college degree to do their jobs, and;

Whereas rates of unemployment for graduates with master's degrees are higher than those for holder's of undergraduate degrees (National House Survey, 2011), and;  
Whereas in 2012 the job site CareerBuilder.ca surveyed 415 private-sector hiring managers and discovered that 36% of them had begun hiring university graduates for jobs that once required merely a high school degree, and;

Whereas "Credentialing, not educating, has become the primary business of North American universities" (Jacobs, 2004), and;

*Whereas the Ministry of Education and other educational stakeholders must work with post-secondary institutions to ensure that students are truly being educated for the future in career fields that offer employment opportunities that will support the current economic lifestyle within society:*

*The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario deems credential inflation as a major concern for current and future students. Action must be taken to value the effort put forward by post-secondary students to obtain such recognition.*



## Financial Literacy

**Rationale:** The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario supports students across Ontario's publicly funded education systems. Students in these education systems often have little knowledge about the financial responsibilities that arise when graduating from high school and leaving home for the first time.

Whereas financial literacy is not adequately taught in the Ontario Education curriculums, and;

Whereas students should be aware of the difficulties, challenges, and realities of financial burden, situation, and potential options, and;

Whereas students have little to no information regarding excessive credit card use, the functionality of credit, or the precautions to take when dealing with credit, and;

Whereas students are unaware of the effects of financial insecurity, and;

Whereas the financial literacy of young people is crucial and instrumental to their future decisions, and;

Whereas the average student debt upon completion of post-secondary education is estimated to be \$27 000 according to The Canadian Federation of Students.

*The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario deems financial literacy as a key component of Ministry of Education Curriculum. Schools and educators are encouraged to promote the learning of financial literacy to students.*



## Inconsistency of Teaching

Rationale: Students across Ontario are expected to fulfill Ministry requirements and complete curriculum material each year. Due to the variety of educators' teaching styles and educational backgrounds, inconsistencies exist in the teaching of course material. Inconsistencies in teaching allow for a learning gap/divide in students' learning of course content, resulting in inequity and putting certain students at a disadvantage in comparison to their fellow peers.

Whereas educators who are teaching the same courses should have regular meetings to ensure a consistent pace is kept, and;

Whereas tests and assignments should be formulated collaboratively by course teachers to ensure that the same content is being effectively covered in all classes, and;

Whereas Ontario school boards are currently promoting an active dialogue between administration, teachers, and students, as exemplified in Rainbow District School Board's *Student Success Initiative*, with such dialogue including discussions regarding effective teaching practices, and;

Whereas inconsistent teaching can result in an inflated or deflated distribution of grades to students, consequently not reflecting the students' true academic abilities in comparison to their peers, and;

Where consistent teaching would provide a reliable gauge for post-secondary institutions to compare Ontario student applicants based on their secondary grades, and;

Whereas promoting consistent teaching in the classroom would also promote equality, transparency, and collaboration amongst students and within school environments, and;

Whereas educators are still encouraged to use an array of creative and engaging methods to communicate course material to students.

*The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-L'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario promotes consistent teaching within all schools. Schools are encouraged to promote an active dialogue between administration, teachers and students regarding effective teaching practices. The success of students should not be compromised due to the inconsistent communication of course material.*



## Technology in the Classroom

Rationale: The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario lobbies for student success and academic achievement through equitable representation. Consistent technologic advancements have helped foster a greater quality of education for students across Ontario. However, technology must be utilized to further student achievement, and must not disturb or interfere with academic instruction.

Whereas the appropriate and respectful use of electronic and multimedia devices does not interfere with the administration of academic instruction, and;

Whereas the use of personal music devices can help students concentrate, "Listening to music can help you study, reduce stress and depression and give you a general feeling of well-being" and;

Whereas per Board Policy, such as policy 222 Section B 1.8 of the York Catholic District School Board, all incidents involving electronic misuse, including but not limited to bullying, mischievous actions or the disruption of academic instruction, and harassment are met with disciplinary action, and;

Whereas students may require electronic devices such as cell phones, personal data management systems, or laptops in case of emergency and may utilize these tools to further their education, and;

Whereas the discretion of teachers, administration and staff support shall deem whether or not the use of technology in the classroom is appropriate at specific times, and;

Whereas teachers have the potential to instruct and model appropriate and beneficial usage of technology to prevent problems such as cyber bullying and the misuse of social media, which, as demonstrated in the 2011 Ontario Student, Parent and Educator Survey, are areas of concern for the student body, and;

Whereas per Ontario's E-learning Strategy, E-Learning provides the opportunity to complete one or more Ontario Secondary School courses for students who would otherwise not have access to the course as well as to those completing credits in order to graduate, and;

Whereas per the E-learning Ontario policy document, students participating in E-Learning courses are provided with the information and ability to voice opinions and suggestions to the School board and E-Learning Ontario, and;

Whereas per OSIE; Re-envisioning Learning Online, it is proven that student-educator communication remains vital and necessary for the success of students;

Whereas teachers have the potential to enhance the quality of instruction in the classroom



directly through the use of electronic devices and the resources associated with them, and;

Whereas technology can be used as a tool to facilitate differentiated learning for the benefit of the students:

*The Ontario Student Trustees' Association-l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario deems the use of electronic devices in the classroom appropriate providing that teachers, administrators and support staff deem its usage appropriate.*

*There needs to be successful adaptation of e-learning Ontario, awareness and communication of the student voice, and the furthering of new and successful educational strategies. Staff must have the appropriate training to be equipped with the skills to properly use the technology aids available to them. The misuse of electronic devices shall be met with in-school disciplinary actions and the removal of these privileges.*

