

REPORT of the  
**STUDENT  
ADVISORY  
COUNCIL**

August 2022

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**Presented to:**

Honourable Wayne Ewasko,  
Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning

**Presented by:**

Student Advisory Council



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# Letter to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning

Dear Honourable Minister Wayne Ewasko:

As co-chairs of the Student Advisory Council, it is with great pleasure we present the 2021/22 Student Advisory Council annual report to the Minister. We could not have been more delighted to work with such a determined and passionate group of diverse Manitoba students who share the vision of ensuring that all Manitoba students succeed—no matter where they live, their backgrounds, or their individual circumstances. We want to thank our fellow members for their commitment and willingness to serve on the council, representing the voices of Manitoba students and sharing their wisdom, experiences, and insights with their peers, government, and department staff.

The establishment of this historic council has demonstrated the need to ensure every voice is heard in decision making—in particular, the voices of Indigenous, LGBTQA2S+, and other often marginalized communities. This council, composed of 30 students from across Manitoba, provides students with an outlet to voice their feedback and perspectives on issues that affect them the most. We believe this is truly integral to a strong and supportive education system, as students have desired an efficient and transparent way to share their thoughts on their experiences in school.

These student-centred and culturally appropriate engagements also allowed us to develop our leadership skills and to experience what it is like to sit on a council, have the opportunity to meet and work with diverse youth and other education stakeholders, contribute to Kindergarten to Grade 12 education's continuous improvement, and draft this report for the Minister.

In 2021/22, the council was faced with the unpredictable circumstances of COVID-19, and, despite not being able to meet in person until our final meeting in August, we were still able to form a strong bond and provide our best input collectively and individually to help students thrive and reach their full potential. The steps taken towards ensuring equity across the education system would not have been possible without the tireless work of stakeholders, family, department staff, and, of course, council members. We would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to everyone involved in the establishment and success of the inaugural Student Advisory Council.

The council has fulfilled its functions as set out in the 2021/22 terms of reference and, as we reflect on our achievements, we believe that this is only the beginning and that future council members will continue the important work of advocating on behalf of Manitoba students. It has been an absolute honour to serve as co-chairs of the council, and we truly believe that the path to advancing Truth and Reconciliation, achieving equity, ensuring inclusion, striving for excellence, prioritizing well-being, and enhancing accountability in Manitoba's K to 12 education system is well underway.

Respectfully,

**Suroor Ajani**, Co-Chair,  
**Bijan Salimi**, Co-Chair

# Introduction

The council was launched in March 2021 in response to recommendations from the Manitoba Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education. The 2021/22 council is composed of 30 Manitoba youth, aged 14 to 18, from across the province, who served a 12-month term starting in August 2021 and ending in August 2022.

The role of the council is to provide insights and advice on issues and topics that are current and emerging for Manitoba Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K–12) students. Council members share their experiences and valuable insights to ensure a vibrant future for Manitoba’s K–12 education system.

After receiving close to 200 applications, the Manitoba government announced the names of the council members on July 7, 2021. The council selection focused on inclusion, diversity, grade selection, and, as much as possible, different school communities. Students on the council represent diverse interests, identities, backgrounds, and perspectives from across Manitoba.



As members of the council, we are pleased and proud to present the inaugural council annual report for the 2021/22 term to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning. This has been a busy and exciting year for the council.

During the 2021/22 year, we

- attended nine meetings (as of August 31, 2022)
- participated in discussions and consultations to provide input on various aspects of the education system and how they affect the children and young people who use them
- brought our insights to the department to help inform their work
- provided feedback to requests on department products and worked collaboratively with fellow council members to provide input into education-related projects and initiatives

# Highlights and Contributions

During our term, we participated in eight meetings and engagements, leading up to our final session in August 2022. We had the opportunity to meet with the Minister and Deputy Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, as well as department staff from various areas, such as the Inclusion Support Branch, the Learning and Outcomes Branch, Continuous Improvement, Corporate Services, the Indigenous Inclusion Directorate, as well as individuals from the Poverty and Education Task Force and the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation.

Some of our members also sit on other Education and Early Childhood Learning advisory groups, such as the Curriculum Advisory Panel (Ashton Kaleta, Kaydon Laurin, and Namirembe Afatsawo) and the Poverty and Education Task Force (Bunny Davis-Holstein and Kamryn Brown), lending their voices to support student success and well-being. Council member Kaydon Laurin had the opportunity to attend the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) Symposium on Indigenizing Education held in Regina, Saskatchewan in July 2022. The purpose of the symposium was to provide educators and administrators an opportunity to learn from Indigenous leaders, with a focus on decolonizing education. Kaydon said that it was great opportunity to meet with others and to share his own ideas on this important topic. On the last day, he was gifted a beaded medallion (seen in the photo on the right), a gift to welcome him to the land on Treaty 4. Elder Dr. Myra Laramée said that happens when they see something in the person.



We have learned a lot and contributed our perspectives to issues that affect students. Below, we have outlined the topics discussed and highlighted some of our contributions.

## Inaugural Student Advisory Council Meeting 2021/22

Aug. 17, 2021 (online)

We

- met with the Minister and introduced ourselves
- discussed the role of the council
- received a briefing on the education strategy
- had an overview of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning and the education system
- engaged on the topic of mental health and well-being
- discussed next steps

We provided

- insights into existing mental health supports, barriers, and issues in our respective schools and across the province:
  - We voiced that mental health is a large part of our school lives but simply not talked about enough.
  - We expressed that students may have issues and experiences that guidance counsellors may not be able to relate to, thus making it difficult for students to connect with them.
  - We noted that although resources may be available to students, there is a stigma with mental health and some students feel that they will be judged if they seek help.
- advice on which mental health initiatives are to be prioritized:
  - We asked that improving student mental health supports be prioritized in Manitoba.
  - We requested that adults in our schools and places that influence our education understand the impacts our mental health has on our ability to learn and grow.

## Student Advisory Council Meeting 2: Informal Fireside Chat

Sept. 23, 2021 (online)

In a roundtable, we

- became better acquainted
- discussed current school experiences and topics of interest in education
- concluded the meeting with a co-chair candidate question-and-answer session to help us select suitable co-chairs

## Student Advisory Council Meeting 3: Manitoba's K to 12 Education Action Plan Development

Oct. 28, 2021 (online)

We

- discussed Manitoba's K-12 Framework for Continuous Improvement
- understood the "why" of Manitoba embarking on this work
- identified priorities within each pillar for student success
- contributed to thoughts on the role students can play in advancing the strategy
- promoted the shared responsibility of improving learning outcomes for all children

We contributed to

- the development of Manitoba's K to 12 Education Action Plan, which was launched in April 2022 (The Action Plan outlines a vision for student success, key accomplishments over the past year, and upcoming and future actions.)

## Student Advisory Council Meeting 4: Consultation on Curriculum, Assessment, and Supporting Student Presence in Schools

Nov. 15, 2021 (online)

We

- heard updates from the student representatives on the Curriculum Advisory Panel and the Provincial Task Force on Poverty and Education
- engaged in discussions on curriculum and assessment, as well as student presence and attendance

We contributed to

- the development of the Framework for Learning and the attendance campaign by providing insights on
  - the collective purpose of education in Manitoba
  - successes and areas of improvement related to Manitoba education
  - changes to the curriculum in Manitoba to help ensure that no student is left behind because of their personal or social background
  - ideas about assessments from the perspective of students
  - suggestions on learning pathways and courses that engage all learners
  - advice on key messages for students when it comes to attendance in school
  - important considerations in designing a campaign for students on presence in school

The following are some of the insights we provided to the engagements.

*What should be the collective purpose of education in Manitoba?*

"To prepare us for the next steps in our life and help us to become contributing members of society."

"To learn how to navigate the world, helping us get a job, manage our money, buy a house and pay bills, and how to solve conflicts with others respectfully."



"A prepared student would mean that the student is prepared for a variety of job opportunities. They may very well choose a specific trade after high school, but in terms of secondary education (what we can influence), it should prepare them for a good variety of jobs, to heighten the probability that the job they choose will be something they are prepared for."

*Students who entered Kindergarten in fall of 2021 will graduate in spring of 2034. When you think of 2034, what are you most hopeful about? What are you most concerned about?*

"[I am] Most concerned for the digital literacy of students. In an increasingly digital world, I'm concerned that future students will not have the computer and online know-how to compete in the job market. And because the advancement of technology changes so quickly, it's more difficult to modify curriculum, since it would have to change very rapidly and frequently."

"I am most concerned about mental health challenges and challenges children are going to face in general. For example, in my community, we have high crime rates, illegal drug problems, and high rates of suicide. So I think there needs to be some supports for children to reach out to, to combat these challenges and keep children safe."

## Student Advisory Council Meeting 5: Task Force on Poverty and Education

March 3, 2022 (online)

We discussed

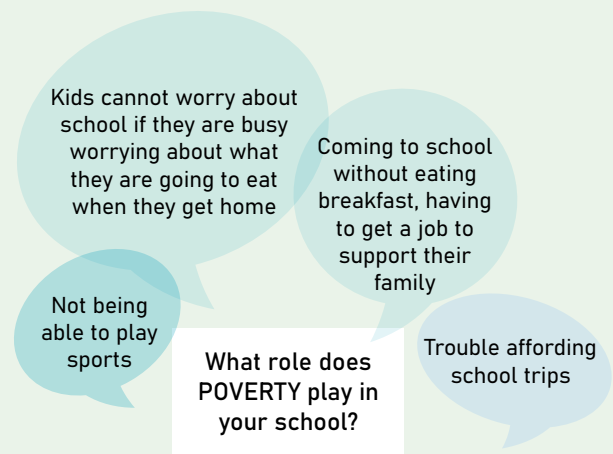
- the issue of poverty and education
- the sustainable development goals—in particular, Goal 1: No Poverty

We contributed

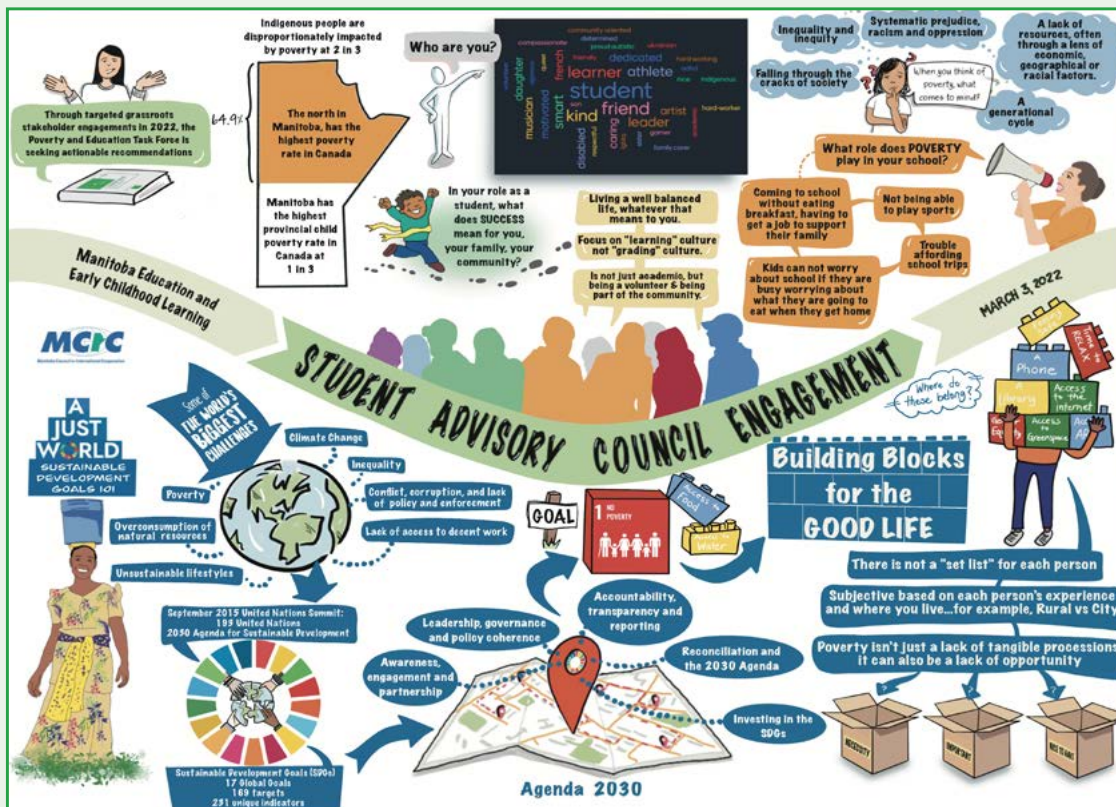
- our insights and personal experiences regarding the effects of poverty in Manitoba
  - We expressed that many of us have seen poverty firsthand in our school communities and feel urgency that support be provided to students who need it.
- student perspectives on how poverty affects students at school



- We discussed how poverty heavily impacts a student's quality of education.
- When students experience adversity at home, they are more likely to struggle at school, affecting other issues aside from educational outcomes.
- our discussions related to the impacts of poverty on an individual
  - When discussing the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal 1: No Poverty, we noticed that within our diverse group, members all felt there are different items that are necessary for a person to thrive and live the Good Life, leading to the discussion on the complexity of human development and student needs.



These discussions and insights were graphically captured and can be seen below:



## Student Advisory Council Meeting 6: Fireside Chat and Supporting Student Presence in Schools

April 28, 2022

We discussed

- questions for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning
- Manitoba's K to 12 Education Action Plan
- student presence and attendance public education campaign

We contributed

- our thoughts on a draft of the student presence and attendance campaign, including
  - its relevance to students in our respective age groups and schools
  - suggested enhancements and modifications to reach more students
- insights on Manitoba's K to 12 Education Action Plan, including whether it is
  - balanced
  - relevant to our current needs
  - inclusive
  - responsive to society's needs



### 2021/2022 Student Advisory Council Members

Back Row (left to right): Celena Atchison, Allison Beaumont, Tairan He, Janik Grenier, Joshua Nienhuis, Ryan Malabanan, Aidan Tully, Brooklynne Grieger, Clark Kernaghan, Kaydon Laurin, Vuk Roca, Aadvika Mukherjee, Rebecca Cheasley

Front Row (left to right): Minister Wayne Ewasko, Suroor Ajani, Lily Rich, Bijan Salimi, Breanna Bacala, Deputy Minister Dana Rudy  
Missing: Ashton Kaleta, Breanna Roussin, Bunny Davis-Holstein, Christyna Caldwell, Eric Wang, Heavendeeep Kaur Nandwal, Kamryn Brown, Katherine Dueck, Lenea Perrin, Namirembe Afatsawo, Pearl Janman, Rania Ibrahim, Skylar MacLean

## Student Advisory Council Meeting 7: Safe and Caring Schools: Policy Directive: Use of Suspension and Expulsion in Manitoba Schools Engagement

May 5, 2022

We discussed

- the provincial attendance policy and an action plan to support student engagement and presence

We contributed

- our thoughts on safe and inclusive learning environments
  - We mentioned that students should feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and asking questions without being made fun of or the fear of being judged.
- our thoughts on the effectiveness of suspensions and alternatives to exclusionary practices
  - We noted that suspension should be a last resort because of the negative and often unintended impacts of exclusionary practice to students' school experience.
  - We suggested that suspension be rarely used and the root cause of a students' outbursts be investigated, as it could be a result of confounding variables.
- how common suspension and exclusionary practices are in our respective schools
  - We identified that suspensions happen quite rarely and, when they do, it is usually due to a serious violation of rules, such as verbal or physical abuse.
  - We noted that these practices seem to be more common in Early and Middle Years.
- advice on supportive measures for students
  - We shared that supports must be emphasized to mitigate the need for suspension and exclusion measures, and that students typically acting out of the norm are the ones that need support the most.
  - We brought up the restorative approach as an alternative, allowing all involved parties to have a civil conversation with an apology and explaining the effects of the misconduct.
  - We concluded that a better alternative is school service, as it allows students to stay in school to learn but also holds them accountable for their actions.

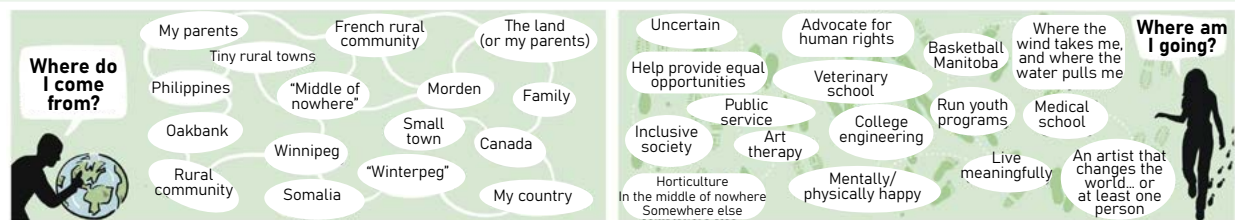
## Student Advisory Council Meeting 8: Final Report Writing Meeting

June 17, 2022

During this meeting, we reflected on our 2021/22 Student Advisory Council term, and we

- discussed the bigger picture: who we are and where we see ourselves going after our time on the council
- explored our insights gathered from each of our meetings
- shared our takeaways from the 2021/22 council term and ideas of improvement for the 2022/23 council

These discussions and insights were graphically captured and can be seen below:



It is imperative that we ensure marginalized voices are heard equally all throughout the decision-making process.

School is NOT the same everywhere in Manitoba. Problems/lack of opportunities can often be tied geographically.

Really speaking out when I want to make a difference for one kid who could have a much more validating, accepting, accessible, and equal school experience. Hopefully, speaking up can make school more accessible and valid for neurodivergent/queer (etc.) kids, little by little.

There is no change without change, and we get to be a group of people who get to voice what things need to be changed, which is very important and amazing!

We don't just represent ourselves; we are the face of all students across Manitoba.

Being able to work with such a diverse group of people has been very fulfilling. All the conversions we have had certainly resonate with me one way to another.

I have learned what the other schools are like around the province and how different everyone's perspectives are, while all still wanting to improve the education system.

Many students face the same issues—whether it be poverty, lack of mental health resources, etc.—however, the degree of the problem depends on where you live.

Sometimes listening is more powerful than what we have to say.

By stating your opinion and talking, you can shape the way everyone learns.

I enjoyed being part of these important discussions. Also, being surrounded with people who have the same passions and interests as me.

It is important that we keep having these conversations surrounding education and how to make education more equal and accessible for all.

Being able to connect to so many students across the province and sharing all our opinions and suggestions with the same goal in mind: strengthening the education system.

The question is more important than the answer!

I've gained a better understanding of the council and how school communities are completely different that you can't really compare one to another. The importance of our voices as young students going in the future really shows how strong we feel change is needed in Canada and our world.

Getting to see and hear all these diverse viewpoints and how we all have the same goal in the end.

I feel like we're a step closer to making education more inclusive. Getting comfortable speaking up and being a part of a group where I feel like we really are making a difference sharing, discussing, sharing experiences and making change.

## Final Student Advisory Council Meeting

August 30–31, 2022

The final Student Advisory Council meeting will cover the following topics:

- a consultation on Manitoba's Education and Early Childhood Learning funding model review

- two youth speakers covering topics such as opportunities for young people, future path inspiration, and leadership
- a speaker on Indigenous teachings for youth
- reflection and discussion on the 2021/22 council term with department staff

All of these discussions fed into the work of Manitoba's K to 12 Action Plan, the Poverty and Education Task Force, the Framework for Learning, a public education campaign to support student presence in schools, a provincial attendance policy, an action plan to support student engagement and presence, and enhancements to mental health supports in Manitoba schools, now and into the future. Other initiatives include discussions in August that will feed into the work of Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning's funding model review.

## Conclusion

Over the past year, the Student Advisory Council has offered meaningful input and advice on a variety of educational programs, policies, and initiatives that will positively have an impact on students for years to come. The insights outlined in this report are the result of tireless efforts by our council members to support continuous improvement and to ensure an education system that is inclusive of all students in the province.

As we wrap up our term as members of the 2021/22 council, we take pride in our contributions and feel honoured to have represented our schools, school divisions, and communities in each meeting we attended. Through bold, representative insights, we have been able to provide government staff and the Minister with a student voice in their work. Participating on the council has also opened the doors to new friendships, networks, and youth from across the province.

We, the Student Advisory Council, are appreciative of the staff at Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning for valuing our input, learning together, seeking further discussion, and, most importantly, providing much-needed support. We also thank the Minister and the Manitoba government for providing us with a platform to discuss issues affecting the lives and well-being of our peers.

It is now time to pass the torch to Manitoba's 2022/23 Student Advisory Council. Some of us have taken the opportunity to serve a second term, which will ensure transfer of knowledge and lessons learned. For those of us who are outgoing members, we are excited to continue supporting the council as alumni. To the incoming members, we wish you all the best and hope you gain as much as you give to the council in 2022/23.

Sincerely,

2021/22 Student Advisory Council

# Appendix A: 2021/22 Student Advisory Council Members

2021/22 Student Advisory Council Members	
Aadvika Mukherjee	Grade 9 student at Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute in Winnipeg
Aidan Tully	Grade 11 student at Institut Collégial St. Paul's Collegiate in Prairie Rose School Division
Allison Beaumont	Grade 9 student at Neepawa Area Collegiate Institute in Beautiful Plains School Division
Ashton Kaleta	Grade 12 student at Dauphin Regional Comprehensive Secondary School in Mountain View School Division
Bijan Salimi	Grade 11 student at Morden Collegiate Institute in Western School Division
Breanna Bacala	Grade 12 student at Institut Collégial Vincent Massey Collegiate in Pembina Trails School Division
Breanna Roussin	Grade 12 student at Balmoral Hall School in Winnipeg
Brooklynne Grieger	Grade 10 student at Collège Miles Macdonell Collegiate in River East Transcona School Division
Bunny Davis-Holstein	Grade 12 student at Technical Vocational High School in Winnipeg School Division
Celena Atchison	Grade 11 student at Seven Oaks Met School in Seven Oaks School Division
Christyna Caldwell	Grade 12 student at Hamiota Collegiate Institute in Park West School Division
Clark Kernaghan	Grade 12 student at École Secondaire Kelvin High School in Winnipeg School Division
Eric Wang	Grade 10 student at St. John's-Ravenscourt School in Winnipeg
Heavendeep Kaur Nandwal	Grade 12 student at Glenlawn Collegiate Institute in Louis Riel School Division
Janik Grenier	Grade 12 student at École Régionale Notre-Dame in Division Scolaire Franco-Manitobaine
Joshua Nienhuis	Grade 11 student at Springfield Collegiate Institute in Sunrise School Division
Kamryn Brown	Grade 12 student at R.D. Parker Collegiate in the School District of Mystery Lake
Katherine Dueck	Grade 12 student at Green Valley School in Hanover School Division
Kaydon Laurin	Graduate of the Class of 2021 at Murdoch MacKay Collegiate in River East Transcona School Division

### 2021/22 Student Advisory Council Members

Lenea Perrin	Grade 9 student at Steinbach Regional Secondary School in Hanover School Division
Lily Rich	Grade 11 student at Balmoral Hall School in Winnipeg
Namirembe Afatsawo	Grade 10 student at Margaret Barbour Collegiate Institute in Kelsey School Division
Pearl Janman	Grade 9 student at Dakota Collegiate in Louis Riel School Division
Rania Ibrahim	Grade 11 student at The University of Winnipeg Collegiate in Winnipeg
Rebecca Cheasley	Grade 11 student at Birtle Collegiate Institute in Park West School Division
Ryan Malabanan	Grade 11 student at École Secondaire Sisler High School in Winnipeg School Division
Skylar MacLean	Grade 10 student at Westwood Collegiate in St. James-Assiniboia School Division
Suroor Ajani	Grade 11 student at Erickson Collegiate Institute in Rolling River School Division
Tairan He	Grade 11 student at Vincent Massey High School in Brandon School Division
Vuk Roca	Grade 11 student at Collège Garden City Collegiate in Seven Oaks School Division



# Appendix B: Terms of Reference

## STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL TERMS OF REFERENCE

### PURPOSE

Manitoba students are at the heart of our education system and their opinions should play an important role in the decisions that affect them. The establishment of the Student Advisory Council will enable youth to contribute their voice in shaping our education system in Manitoba.

### ELIGIBILITY

Council members

- are Manitoba residents
- are between 14 to 18 years of age as of September 1 in the school year in which they serve
- represent the diversity of Manitoba students
- are knowledgeable about issues related to education
- have the ability to work with other people and on a team
- are approachable and effective communicators
- engage in respectful, open discussions, and are accepting of differing viewpoints
- may not be employed by the Manitoba government
- are willing to serve for a one-year term

### RESPONSIBILITIES

The Student Advisory Council members are responsible for

- attending meetings
- participating in discussions/consultations to provide input to the Minister on aspects of the education system and how they affect the children and young people who use them
- bringing youth insights to the department and the education sector to help inform our work
- providing other students with ways to share their perspectives and advice



- providing feedback to requests on department products (for example, surveys/discussion papers)
- working collaboratively

## **TIME COMMITMENT**

The Student Advisory Council is expected to meet three to four times within its year-long mandate; however, there may be additional sub-meetings to attend.

## **REMUNERATION**

There is no remuneration. Council members from outside Winnipeg will be reimbursed reasonable travel expenses as per the Province of Manitoba's travel and accommodation policies.



