

TRUSTEE CONFERENCE REPORT

Please attach to your Professional Development/Conference Expense Reimbursement Form. Thank you.

Name: Vaishnave Raina

Date Submitted: July 6th, 2022

Name of Conference: Ontario Student Trustee Association Annual General Meeting

Sponsoring Organization: OSTA AECO

Theme (if any): Professional Development

Conference Dates: May 26th, 2022 - May 29th, 2022

Location: Sheraton Hotel, 123 Queen Street W, Toronto

Workshops/Seminars/Presentations/Keynote Speeches Attended:

1. OSTA AECO Year in Review

- Student Trustee Governance Motion
 - As of now, Section 55 (4) of the Education Act states the following: “a student trustee is not entitled to move a motion, but is entitled to suggest a motion on any matter at a meeting of the board or of one of its committees on which the student trustee sits, and if no member of the board or committee, as the case may be, moves the suggested motion, the record shall show the suggested motion.”
 - With the Student trustee governance motion, student trustee voice will be amplified, lets them second motions and vote in board matters
 - Important that elected youth have the opportunity to effectively advocate for change in benefit of their constituents
 - allows standardization in student trustee rights across the province and showing students that Ontario values student voice in a tangible way
- 2SLGBTQ+ Initiatives
 - Open letter written to the trustees, directors of education, and staff of the Ontario Catholic School Boards, addressing homophobia
 - Propose that Catholic School Boards adapt the *Accepting Schools Act* (2012) into their curriculum, which calls on educators to prevent homophobia and transphobia in classrooms; currently, the Catholic School

Boards in Ontario are following a curriculum that undermines the *Accepting Schools Act*

- The Student Blueprint
 - Recommends changes to education to the Provincial government, changes that students want to see; student platform
 - calling on the provincial government and school boards to implement these recommendations, and to continue to seek students' perspectives in decision-making.
 - 5 key points:
 - Equity
 - Governance
 - Student Well-being
 - System Modernization
 - Funding
 - Boards can reach out to local candidates in their ridings, send student blueprint to school board staff, and reach out to local Members of Provincial Parliament
- Public Board Council Year in Review
 - Strengthen partnership with OPSBA (Ontario Public School Boards' Association)
 - Working on redefining student success, releasing document
- Catholic Board Council Year in Review
 - Addressing homophobia in Catholic School Boards
 - Amplifying Indigenous student voice
 - Focusing on the art of giving back to the community and to those in need

2. Guest Speaker: People for Education

- People for education is an independent, non-partisan organization that has been a powerful voice for publicly funded education for over 20 years; been doing research regarding student education by sending out a survey every year (Annual Ontario School Survey)
- Need to have a conversation about education across Canada
- Public education is a human right
- Focusing on amplifying Canadian youth's voices; the students know what their education system needs, as they have to live through it every day
- Listening to students provides a fresh perspective to ongoing problems in our education system, breaking historical repetition
- The problem is that the government and school boards are asking students just to act like they care, not to actually make a difference/listen to the concerns of students and youth

3. PBC Breakout Meeting

- PBC President and Vice President positions
 - Time commitment varies (0 - 20 hours a week)
 - Work together to fulfill the needs of the Public Boards in Ontario

- Elected by student trustees at Annual General Meetings
- Redefining Student Success
 - Students are not just statistics, their stories deserve to be heard
 - Discuss stigma around student success
 - “One size fits all” definition of student success is very damaging, makes students feel like failures if they do not meet the success criteria society has set for them
 - Success is individual accomplishments that make the individual happy
 - Breaking down barriers
 - Mental and Physical Well-being
 - Equity, Inclusion, and Representation
 - Transportation
 - Accessibility to Academic Resources and Opportunities

4. Breakout Discussions

- Issues in our boards:
 - Lack of addressing racism and discrimination
 - Ignoring student voice (because youth are presumed to be too young)
 - Immigrant parents not knowing how to help their children (lack of knowledge about the Ontario education system)
 - Not having enough POC guidance counsellors and teachers/education staff
 - Need to focus on mental well-being and helping students; making mental health resources more accessible
 - Not doing enough for the environment (could have environmental initiatives)

5. Guest Speaker: Migration and Allyship as Student Leaders - Presented by Justice for Children and Youth

- Immigration status can be stressful for families and youth, especially when it comes to education; it creates a barrier in education
- Youth with no status are scared to come forward
- How student trustees can help:
 - Familial support
 - Feel safe and understood
 - Sense of Agency
 - Have resources available
 - POC guidance counsellors

6. Implementing Student Voice Handbook

- Handbook created by student trustees, focusing on fostering a safe school community, the destigmatization of mental health, and more
- Student trustees should promote the handbook to their boards and educators
- Creates a safe space for students

7. Boardroom Etiquette

- Types of Board Meetings:
 - Regular
 - Usually every 2 weeks
 - 3-6 hours long
 - Share news and/or improvements
 - Special
 - Has a deadline
 - Very specific agenda
 - Policy
 - Reviewing the policies in place
 - Specific trustees may be asked to attend
 - Committee
 - Evidence-gathering meetings
 - Presentations made by others
- Formalities:
 - Play by ear, depends on the board
 - Dress code is business casual
 - Know where your meeting will be taking place
 - Be there on time or early, be punctual
 - Say the right things at the right time
- Steps to Speak at Meeting:
 - Raise your hand
 - When acknowledged, say “thank you and through you chair”
 - Address people by stating their role and last name (i.e. Trustee Raina)
- Robert’s Rules of Order
 - Specified terminology
 - Make sure your voice is heard
 - Stay close with your co trustee and communicate
 - Point of Information
 - Used to clarify something
 - Point of Order
 - Used to point out someone who is not saying/doing something right
 - Point of Personal Privilege
 - Something affecting you personally
 - Subsidiary Motion
 - Affects the original motion in place
 - Assembly deals directly with a main motion prior to (or instead of) voting on the main motion itself
 - Amendment
 - Suggesting another solution/revision to a motion
 - Tabling
 - Motioning to stop discussion and carry on later
 - Adjournment

- Saying the meeting has ended

8. Connecting With Your Constituents

- Importance of voice
 - Tone makes a big difference
 - Informal vs. formal
- Utilize your resources
 - Section 55 (Ontario Education Act), specifically Section 55.7
 - “A student trustee has the same status as a board member”; what a board member gets, a student trustee gets
 - Know your rights
 - Can get a highschool credit for trustee work
 - Places with resources:
 - Your school board
 - Your school
 - OSTA AECO
- Explore what works best for your board
 - Social media/school announcements/emails boardwide
 - School visits
 - Student leadership groups and meeting with them
 - Senate
 - Councils
 - Co-prez/Co-primes
- Connecting
 - Meet students halfway
 - Hold panels for students to speak at, voice their concerns, and ask questions regarding ongoing educational issues

9. Improving the Land Acknowledgement

- Explain why the land acknowledgement is important
- Make it personal, let people express their experiences
- Use appropriate terms

10. Mental Health Care in Secondary Schools

- 48% of high school students are in psychological distress
- 45.8% were unable to access mental health resources
- Modern day stress “causers”:
 - Pandemic
 - Financial barriers
 - Body image
 - Social media
 - Academic pressure and burnout
 - Issues in the world today
- School board policies for mental health are underfunded and not catered for the needs of students

- If you aren't "depressed enough", board therapists can turn you away from mental health programs
- Limited awareness of resource availability
- Policies developed:
 - Full section of mental health in elementary schools
 - One annual mental health check-in, which are mandatory
 - 26 sessions for board therapists (given to everyone)
 - Erase stigma and discuss mental health
- How trustees can help:
 - Connect with high schools
 - Student senate
 - Mental Health Committees in each secondary school
 - Co-prez meetings
 - Destigmatize topics, instead educate and inform

11. Consent and Sexual Assault

- Bill 132 (Sexual Violence and Harrassment Action Plan) extended to high schools
- End dress code standards
 - Make gender neutral
 - Review and update in the best interest of students
- Police should not be called first in cases of sexual violence (they are not as comforting and understanding); instead, have a local response group
- Establish a consent awareness week Nationally
- Join #HighSchoolToo and share National survey