

NANAIMO LADYSMITH PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC MEETING  
ACTION SHEET

DATE: December 6, 2023  
TO: Education Committee  
FROM: Mark Walsh, Secretary-Treasurer  
SUBJECT: Student Voice Committee

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**Recommendation:**

*The Education Committee recommends that the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) accept the report of the ad hoc Student Voice Committee and further that the Board of Education receive the draft revised Policy 2.5 – Board Committees Representation and Annual Work and circulate as a notice of motion for 30 days, utilizing the consultation process as per Board Governance, Section 1, 2.7 – Policy Development.*

**Background:**

On June 28, 2023, the Board of Education passed the following motion:

That the Board of Education of School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) direct the Board Chair to appoint an ad hoc Student Voice Committee with a mandate to identify and come up with solutions to the challenges as outlined in the report dated June 7, 2023.

The Committee met on October 5, November 6 and November 30, 2023. The Terms of Reference are attached as Appendix A.

The discussions were positive and focused on a way to ensure that student voice was available directly to the Board while balancing the reality of students' time and ensuring the most diverse and effective feedback mechanism.

Ultimately, the Committee agreed that our current structure with a few tweaks would likely serve the purposes of the Board well. Specifically, the District has a "Student Voice" group that meets with the Superintendent, members of senior staff and typically the Board Chair. In organizing the meetings, secondary principals are asked to ensure a diversity of voices are present for the discussions which have focuses associated with Board goals. However, there is significant flexibility for students to raise issues and they regularly do. This mechanism has regularly led to changes in priorities (e.g., infrastructure, clarifications in school policy etc.).

To achieve the goal of increasing student voice, the committee is making the following recommendations:

1. That the Student Voice Circle be added to Policy 2.5 - Board Committees Representation and Annual Workplan.

Rationale – Policy 2.5 is the Policy that adds our partner groups to the Business and Education Committees. The addition of the Student Voice Circle in this Policy is intended to show the Board's commitment to student voices in its seminal policy on Board structures.

2. That the Student Voice Circle include up to three trustees (2 trustees and the Chair).

Rationale – This addition to policy intends to ensure that trustees are hearing directly from the group but also limiting the number of adults in the Student Voice Circle to ensure that the focus is on them and their feedback. By having 2 or 3 trustees attend the 2 – 4 meetings the group would have per year would allow all trustees to have access to the group over the term.

3. That the Student Voice Circle provide at minimum a once-a-year update to the Board.

Rationale – This aspect of the policy intends to provide students direct exposure to the formal Board structure to address a topic and/or topics important to them and to provide a feedback mechanism to ensure the Student Voice Circle is effectively operating. While there could be room for more than one report, the Policy is intended to allow the students to determine the appropriate level of reporting and the associated effort involved in preparation.

4. That the Superintendent update Administrative Procedure 316 - District Student Council (the AP) to align with the changes to Policy.

Rationale – Given that the Policy would be adjusted the AP would need to align and will likely need to explicitly address the commitment to diversity in the Committee.

Note that the amended AP – 316 was also discussed at the Committee and all feedback from student representatives is represented in the updated (and renamed AP). Note that the AP can be further be amended as required to ensure that the Student Voice Circle is functioning to meet the needs of students.

5. That the Board can request feedback on specific topics from the Student Voice Circle.

Rationale – On occasion, issues of large importance (Strategic Plan etc.) arise that the Board requires specific targeted feedback. This would allow the Board to request a topic it is interested in hearing from the Student Voice Circle. The feedback could be a report written by staff supporting the Committee or a direct student report to the Board. However, that decision would be left to the Student Voice Circle.

### Next Steps:

The next steps will be for our Communications Department to target our student community specifically on the consultation for the Policy as well as providing the AP for comment.

The Student Voice Committee will meet upon the conclusion of the consultation period to review the feedback and make a final recommendation to the Board with respect to the Policy as well as suggest appropriate changes to the AP as required. The intent is for the work of the committee to conclude after this final meeting.

**Conclusion:**

While the Committee did not meet often, it stuck to its task of discussing the best way to ensure structured student voice in our District. As previously noted, the current student voice group is well-regarded by participants and has shown itself to be an effective and incisive group. The Committee is supportive of continuing the group but with Policy backing that also increases the level of direct student-to-trustee and Board feedback while respecting the time of our students.

Appendix A: Student Voice Committee Terms of Reference

Appendix B: Draft Revised Policy 2.5

Appendix C: Revised AP 316

Appendix D: Current AP 316