



**ITEM 8**

To: **Board of Education**

From: Trustee  
Hudson Campbell

Re: **TRUSTEE MOTION: LEGISLATIVE  
FRAMEWORK FOR VOTING STUDENT  
TRUSTEES**

Date: January 17, 2024  
(Public Board Meeting)

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**Decision**

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**BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:**

The BCSTA, recognizing the importance of student input in effective decision-making, have passed two motions since 2014 advocating for the legislative implementation of Student Trustees:

**Motion 18: A201418**

That BCSTA request the provincial government to amend the School Act to enable Boards of Education to include student trustees.

**Motion 11: A201811**

That BCSTA request the provincial government amend the School Act to provide school districts with the discretion to establish Student Trustees and Student Advisory Councils for boards of education.

Since the first BCSTA motion was adopted in 2014, no substantive action has been taken on this matter by the province. Considering the ongoing and heightened threat to children's rights, this proposal aims to strengthen and empower student voices, aligning with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: "the child who is capable of forming his or her own views (shall be given) the right to express those views freely"<sup>1</sup>.

Inspired by the successful model in Ontario dating back to 1977<sup>2</sup>, the introduction of voting student trustees onto BC Boards of Education will provide a platform for gathering student voices and place student trustees on equal footing with "adult" trustees, fostering a more inclusive decision-making process.

In 1995 the Ontario government commissioned a report titled "For the Love of Learning." The report recognizes the invaluable value of "systematically seeking [student] views and taking their opinions seriously."<sup>3</sup> One of several recommendations within the report was that "all [school] boards should have at least one student member, elected by fellow students. Student Trustees should have input into and vote on all board deliberations subject to usual conflict of interest and legal requirements" (pg. 441).

In 1997 the Ontario Legislature amended the Ontario Education Act to reflect these recommendations. Section 55 of the Act established the framework for elected student trustees, delineating their roles, responsibilities, compensation, and election procedures. The

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<sup>1</sup> UN General Assembly , 1989, p. 4

<sup>2</sup> Government of Ontario, O. Reg. 7/07: STUDENT TRUSTEES, 2022

<sup>3</sup> Begin, Caplan, & Ontario. Royal Commission on Learning, 1995, p. 441

subsequent establishment of the Ontario Student Trustees' Association (OSTA) further exemplifies the success of this initiative, where democratically elected student representatives from diverse school systems across the province actively engage in addressing pressing issues and advocating for province-wide changes. While student trustees in BC currently hold a more advisory role, the proposed motion aims to allow for voting members on the board, aligning with the successful aspects of the Ontario model.

Currently, several British Columbian School Boards have implemented non-voting student trustees with success, including SD46 Sunshine Coast<sup>4</sup>, SD08 Kootenay Lake<sup>5</sup>, and SD39 Vancouver<sup>6</sup>. However, the School Act in British Columbia lacks legislative provisions similar to Ontario, leaving a critical gap in student representation and participation in decision-making processes.

The need for this motion is grounded in the recognition that student voice is integral to public education. Enabling a student presence at the decision-making table ensures that boards are well-informed for effective decision-making, with students advocating for necessary resources and programs that directly impact their educational experiences.

Beyond being a representative voice, the concept of student trustees serves to empower students, providing them with a platform to express opinions and ideas regarding their learning experiences. By drawing parallels to the Ontario model, BC stands to benefit from a proactive approach that recognizes the necessity of empowering students in shaping the direction of their education. It is recommended that students serving as trustees be eligible for course credit. This acknowledgment not only values their civic engagement but also promotes increased student participation in educational governance. The motion strives to create a legislative framework that accommodates diverse approaches to incorporating student voices, ensuring a flexible and effective means of engaging students in educational governance.

The introduction of voting student trustees onto the BC Board of Education is a significant step towards a more inclusive and dynamic education system. It is crucial to align our actions with the strategic priorities outlined in the operational plan, fostering an environment where student voices actively contribute to decision-making processes without fear of retributions.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**THAT the Board approve the following motion for submission to the 2024 B.C. School Trustees Association Annual General Meeting:**

***"THAT BCSTA endorse and encourage Boards of Education to integrate non-voting Student Trustees on Boards of Education to enhance district-level decision-making processes;***

***AND FURTHER;***

***THAT BCSTA advocate for the amendment of the School Act by the Province of British Columbia, granting school districts the discretion to establish Student Trustee positions, including an election process and full voting rights."***

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<sup>4</sup> Policy 1290, <https://sd46.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/1290-Student-Leadership.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Student Trustee Guidelines, <https://www.sd8.bc.ca/sites/default/files/documents/2023-09/10B.2%2023-24%20Student%20Trustee%20Guidelines%20updated%20August%2011%202023.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Policy 18, [https://media.vsb.bc.ca/docs/2b68f692-ff18-42fa-bce5-3a3b11bb6117\\_18-Policy18-Student-Trustee.pdf](https://media.vsb.bc.ca/docs/2b68f692-ff18-42fa-bce5-3a3b11bb6117_18-Policy18-Student-Trustee.pdf)

## Legislative Framework for Voting Student Trustees

### 6.

#### Category: Boards of Education

<b>Motion #:</b>	6 : A20246	<b>Sponsor:</b>	Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows <i>and</i> Fraser Valley Branch
<b>Meeting:</b>	AGM 2024	<b>Action:</b>	<i>not specified</i>
<b>Category:</b>		<b>Outcome:</b>	<i>not specified</i>
<b>Disposition:</b>	Defeated		

#### Motion as Adopted:

BE IT RESOLVED:

#### Motion as Presented:

BE IT RESOLVED:

**That the BCSTA advocate for the amendment of the *School Act* by the Province of British Columbia to establish Student Trustee positions with full voting rights.**

#### Rationale:

The BCSTA, recognizing the importance of student input in effective decision-making, has passed two motions since 2014 advocating for the legislative implementation of Student Trustees: Motion 18: A201418 and Motion 11 A201811. Despite these efforts, substantive action by the province has yet to be taken. This proposal seeks to strengthen student voices in alignment with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, emphasizing the need for student representation.

Inspired by Ontario's successful model dating back to 1977, the introduction of voting student trustees onto BC Boards of Education aims to provide a structured platform for gathering student input. Under this proposal, each secondary school within a school district would establish a student council. These councils would serve as forums for student engagement and discussion on educational matters within the school community. From these student councils, representatives would be internally elected to form a district student council, ensuring diverse and broad representation from across the district. This district student council would then internally elect their student trustee, who would serve as the voice of the student body on the Board of Education, ensuring a representative and democratic process.

While some British Columbian School Boards have implemented non-voting student trustees with success, legislative provisions similar to Ontario are lacking, resulting in a critical gap in student representation. The proposed motion seeks to bridge this gap by advocating for an amendment to the *School Act* to grant school districts the discretion to establish student trustee positions with full voting rights. Enabling a student presence at the decision-making table ensures informed decision-making and advocacy for issues directly impacting students' educational experiences. Beyond

representation, student trustees empower students by providing a platform for free expression, fostering civic engagement, while increasing student participation in educational governance.

The introduction of voting student trustees onto BC Boards of Education is a necessary step towards a more inclusive and dynamic education system. By aligning our actions with our words, student voices will actively contribute to decision-making processes, enriching the educational experience for all stakeholders.

**Reference(s):**

Begin , M., Caplan, G. L., & Ontario. Royal Commission on Learning. (1995, January). For the Love of Learning: Report of the Royal Commission on Learning. *For the Love of Learning Report*. Government of Ontario .

Ontario Provincial Parliament . (2022, June). Ontario Regulation 7/07. *Student Trustee* . Toronto , Ontario .

United Nations General Assembly 44/25. (1989, November 20). Convention on the Rights of the Child.