



ITEM 9

To: **Board of Education**

From: Trustee
Gabriel Liosis

Re: **TRUSTEE MOTION: NON-VOTING
STUDENT DELEGATES AT BCSTA
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS**

Date: January 17, 2024
(Public Board Meeting)

Decision

RATIONALE:

The proposed motion to implement a framework for the inclusion of non-voting student delegates at BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA) General Meetings with full speaking privileges aligns with this District's broader goal of enhancing student representation in the governance of public education. Recognizing the unique insights and perspectives students bring to the table, this motion seeks to amplify student voice within the BCSTA, ensuring that the decision-making processes of the Association benefit from the direct input of the individuals most affected by educational policies.

By providing students with a platform to articulate their views and concerns on the motions that BCSTA Members vote on to inform the Association's provincial advocacy, BCSTA stands to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse needs of the student population. This approach not only strengthens decision-making processes but also acknowledges the role students play in shaping the present and future of education in British Columbia.

The Maple Ridge—Pitt Meadows Board of Education's Operational Plan supports the principles behind the proposed motion. The Operational Plan¹ emphasizes the commitment to "[e]nsure increased meaningful engagement with students through district-wide student forum (2023 and 2025), Indigenous student forum, trustee meetings with secondary school students (three secondary schools per year), trustee meetings with Indigenous students, and further engagement on governance matters as needed." Further, while more internally focused, the Operational Plan also commits to "review[ing] the student governance model [in SD42] and ensure that the model implemented meets student needs and enables student voice engagement on governance matters."

While this proposed motion seeks to ensure increased and meaningful engagement with students at the provincial level rather than the local level, the inclusion of non-voting student delegates at BCSTA General Meetings, with full speaking privileges, corresponds with the board's dedication to Student Voice.

¹<https://www.sd42.ca/assets/media/Operational-Plans-2022-2026.pdf#page=3>

BACKGROUND:

According to the BCSTA Motion Database, the Association has never entertained a motion to implement a framework for student delegates, of any kind, at AGMs. However, BCSTA does harbour general values regarding Student Voice in its foundational statements²:

4.7 FS STUDENT VOICE

BCSTA believes that student voice and input are important to inform and influence Boards of Education in effective decision-making for student learning and success.

4.7.1 P PRINCIPLES OF STUDENT VOICE

BCSTA believes that Boards of Education should:

- a. Provide opportunities for students to be informed of and comment on board policies, initiatives and directives.
- b. Develop a framework to support initiatives such as District Student Leadership Teams, Student Trustees, Student Forums and Student Advisory Councils for the purpose of advising Boards of Education on concerns and issues affecting students.

This Foundational Statement focuses on the role Boards of Education play in fostering effective Student Voice but does not describe any principles to apply to the Association's own governance structures.

Historical Context: BCSTA Advocacy on Student Voice

The discourse surrounding student engagement and representation in public education governance has been an ongoing conversation within the BCSTA for nearly a full decade. Notably, the Association has actively pursued avenues to amplify Student Voice, as evidenced by previous motions approved by BCSTA membership in 2014 and 2018, respectively:

- *That BCSTA request the provincial government to amend the School Act to enable Boards of Education to include student trustees.*³
- *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.*⁴

While distinct from the current motion proposed in this memo, these historical examples underscore the BCSTA's ongoing commitment to fostering meaningful student participation in educational governance.

Distinction Between Current Proposal and Student Trustee Proposals: Logistical Implications

It is crucial to observe the key differences between the current proposal for non-voting student delegates at BCSTA Annual General Meetings and proposals advocating for the establishment of student trustee positions. While both initiatives share a common goal of amplifying student representation, their logistical implications diverge significantly.

The proposed motion for non-voting student delegates operates entirely within the BCSTA's own governance structures. Implementation of this framework likely would not necessitate amendments to existing Bylaws. The Association has the capacity to enact this change

²<https://bcsta.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/BCSTA-Policy-Book-2023.pdf#page=12>

³Motion A201418, BCSTA AGM 2014, retrieved from <https://bcstamotions.org>

⁴Motion A201811, BCSTA AGM 2018, retrieved from <https://bcstamotions.org>

independently, demonstrating a relatively streamlined and expedient process. A conservative estimate places the establishment of such a framework within a reasonable timeframe of six months to a year, making it a prompt and internally controllable initiative.

In contrast, the establishment of student trustee positions requires a more intricate process. It necessitates an amendment to the School Act, a legislative undertaking that falls beyond the control of the BCSTA.

The proposal for non-voting student delegates reflects a proactive and internally manageable strategy, aligning with the BCSTA's commitment to inclusivity and responsiveness in educational governance.

Analysis of Other Provincial School Boards' Associations on Student Delegates at AGMs

Research into other provincial school boards' associations across Canada illustrates the absence of any framework for non-voting student delegates at Annual General Meetings or its equivalent:

- *Alberta*: The business portion of Alberta School Boards Association General Meetings are closed meetings to members (and board administration); non-members or students are not in attendance.⁵
- *Saskatchewan*: The Saskatchewan School Boards Association does not incorporate non-voting or voting student delegates into AGMs—Student Voice is most often brought in through youth panels that occur from time to time at events.⁶
- *Manitoba*: The Manitoba School Boards Association does not incorporate non-voting or voting student delegates into convention and AGM.⁷
- *Ontario*: The Ontario Public School Boards' Association does not have students as part of the voting process at the Annual General Meetings. However, in Ontario, school boards have dedicated student trustee positions established in legislation⁸. Because of the existence of these positions, Ontario student trustees have their own advocacy association called the Ontario Student Trustees' Association (OSTA)⁹. The Ontario Public School Boards' Association works in partnership with the OSTA through an OPSBA/OSTA Liaison committee, where they regularly meet. Student trustees are also regularly invited to attend OPSBA Core Issue Work Group meetings where matters of public and program policy are discussed to inform OPSBA's advocacy. They also welcome (and provide) opportunities for student trustee engagement at OPSBA conferences and events.¹⁰
- *Quebec*: The Quebec English School Boards' Association does not maintain any Bylaws, Policies, Operating Guidelines, or Foundational Statements—available publicly online—that suggests it has a framework for non-voting student delegates at AGMs. The QESBA was unreachable via email for comment.
- *Newfoundland and Labrador*: The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador do not have a provincial school boards association because the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District oversees all public schools across the province. It was created in 2013

⁵Email communication, Jennifer Elsinga, Executive Administrator, January 3, 2024

⁶Email communication, Ted Amendt, Director of Board Development & Indigenous Reconciliation, Saskatchewan School Boards Association, December 21, 2023

⁷Email communication, Josh Watt, Executive Director, Manitoba School Boards Association, December 19, 2023

⁸<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/070007>

⁹<https://osta-aeco.org/>

¹⁰Email communication, Lisa Reinhardt, Managing Director of Corporate Affairs, Ontario Public School Boards' Association, December 19, 2023

as part of the amalgamation of all provincial school boards into an English-language and a French-language board.¹¹

- *New Brunswick*: The New Brunswick Federation of Home and School Associations Inc. does not include non-voting student delegates at AGMs.¹²
- *PEI*: The P.E.I. Home and School Federation (PEIHSF) invites intermediate and senior high students to participate in their Annual Meeting round table discussions as non-voting delegates.¹³
- *Nova Scotia*: The Province of Nova Scotia dissolved Nova Scotia's seven English language School Boards and replaced them with Regional Centres for Education in 2018¹⁴—this shifted responsibility for educational services in Nova Scotia from locally elected boards to a council of administrators appointed directly by the Minister of Education. No provincial school boards association exists.

Other Relevant Case Studies:

Beyond provincial school boards associations, there are other notable organizations in British Columbia that can shed light on the practice of including student voice at Annual General Meetings:

- *Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM)*: At its annual conventions, UBCM collaborates with post-secondary institutions to offer university students the chance to participate as non-voting delegates and enjoy speaking privileges.
- *BC School Superintendents Association (BCSSA)*: Currently, BCSSA as an association does not formally have any structures to engage with students to capture their voices, perspectives or opinions—what occurs is that district representatives informally share what they are hearing through the structures within their district.¹⁵ However, it is worth drawing attention to a few key features of BCSSA's existing governance frameworks. The BCSSA 2020-24 Strategic Plan places emphasis on a student-centered approach to policy development and decision making, committing to "[the inclusion] of opportunities for student voice and input within BCSSA policies, communications, activities and events" by "establish[ing] a formal mechanism for student voice to be heard."¹⁶ Additionally, the BCSSA Bylaws provide that "the Board [of BCSSA] may also invite any other Person or Persons to attend a General Meeting as observers and guests. All observers and guests may only address the General Meeting assembly at the invitation of the Person presiding as chairperson, or by Ordinary Resolution."¹⁷ This provision allows flexibility for BCSSA to consider the inclusion of non-voting student delegates in AGM discussions and debates.

Discussion:

The notable absence of a framework for student delegates at Annual General Meetings (AGMs) across Canada's provincial school boards' associations raises concerns regarding the comprehensive representation of those most directly impacted by educational policies. As outlined in the findings related to other provinces, it is evident that the inclusion of non-voting student delegates in AGMs is not a widespread practice in advocacy/professional associations

¹¹<https://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2016/edu/0816n03.aspx>

¹²Email communication, Cynthia Richards, President, New Brunswick Federation of Home and School Associations Inc., December 30, 2023

¹³Email communication, Shirley Smedley Jay, Executive Director, PEI Home and School Federation, January 3, 2024

¹⁴<https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20180301001>

¹⁵Email communication, Teresa Downs, Former President, B.C. School Superintendents Association, December 30, 2023

¹⁶<https://bcssa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BCSSA-Strategic-Plan-2020-24-1-1.pdf#page=9>

¹⁷<https://bcssa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/BCSSA-2023-Bylaws-registry-certified.pdf#page=16>

within the public education sector. This gap underscores an opportunity for the BCSTA to assume a national leadership role in fostering student engagement and representation within the educational governance landscape.

While BCSTA emphasizes the importance of student voice in their foundational statements, the lack of a concrete framework leaves implementation of these principles ambiguous. BCSTA, by establishing a formalized framework, can set a precedent for other provinces to follow, demonstrating our commitment to meaningful student engagement.

The proposed framework extends beyond a symbolic gesture; it serves as a practical, sustainable, and reliable model for collaboration between educational stakeholders. By providing students with a platform to express their views directly to the BCSTA, the Association can foster a culture of open dialogue and collaboration. This collaborative model can influence not only the decision-making processes of the BCSTA but also inspire cooperation between students, trustees, and educators at the local level, setting the stage for more inclusive and participatory governance structures throughout the province.

The inclusion of student delegates at AGMs reflects a commitment to Student Voice, acknowledging that students are not just recipients of education but active contributors to the ongoing evolution of the educational system. BCSTA, by embracing this forward-thinking approach, positions itself as an advocate for dynamic, student-centered educational practices.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

"That BCSTA develop a process for the inclusion of non-voting student delegates at BCSTA Annual General Meetings, and that a report on progress be provided by the 2025 Annual General Meeting."

9. Non-Voting Student Delegates at BCSTA Annual General Meetings

9.

Category: Students

Motion #:	9 : A20249	Sponsor:	Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows <i>and</i> Fraser Valley Branch
Meeting:	AGM 2024	Action:	<i>not specified</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May 2024: Board discussed motion and asked for additional discussion time at the June 2024 board meeting.• June 2024: Board discussed the various considerations of this motion, passed motion for CEO to enlist contractor to further work, deadline - report to membership at 2025 BCSTA AGM
Category:		Outcome:	
Disposition:	Carried		

Motion as Adopted:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the BCSTA develop a process for the inclusion of non-voting student delegates at BCSTA Annual General Meetings, and that a report on progress be provided by the 2025 Annual General Meeting.

Motion as Presented:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the BCSTA develop a process for the inclusion of non-voting student delegates at BCSTA Annual General Meetings, and that a report on progress be provided by the 2025 Annual General Meeting.

Rationale:

The inclusion of non-voting student delegates at BCSTA AGMs represents a significant step forward in acknowledging and integrating the perspectives of those most affected by our education policies—students themselves. Student Voice is a core pillar that guides the Association in its work, evidenced by Foundational Statement 4.7. By providing students with full speaking privileges at AGMs, we not only enrich the decision-making processes of the Association with diverse insights but also demonstrate a commitment to fostering a more inclusive, student-centered approach to governance. Not only do we enhance our own decision-making processes, but we provide a platform for youth to witness the democratic process first-hand and inspire a new generation of youth leaders to consider running as School Board Trustees in their own districts.

If adopted, a process could be designed to support school districts in possibly sending 1-2 students to the business portion of the BCSTA AGM. School districts could be responsible for determining their own process for selecting students they would like to see represented at an AGM. This initiative aligns with BCSTA's broader goals of enhancing

Student Voice and ensuring that our educational policies benefit from the invaluable contributions of student voices, ultimately leading to more effective and responsive educational outcomes. Other notable provincial advocacy organizations across Canada, such as the PEI Home and School Federation (PEIHSF) and Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) invite students to their AGMs as non-voting student delegates and are proud of the contributions their voices bring to the decision-making process.

The inclusion of student delegates at AGMs reflects a commitment to Student Voice, acknowledging that students are not just recipients of education but active contributors to the ongoing evolution of the educational system. BCSTA, by embracing this forward-thinking approach, positions itself as an advocate for dynamic, student-centered educational practices.

Reference(s):

[BCSTA-Policy-Book-Student Voice](#)