

October Student Trustee Reports

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STUDENT TRUSTEE REPORT

At this time, Student Trustee S. Soltaninia made the following remarks.

“Good evening, Mr. Chair, Mr. Director, Trustees, Staff, Ladies and Gentlemen.

This October, I found myself thinking frequently of the future with regard to future academic pursuits and my position at the Board. Although still in its beginning months, my time as student trustee is short. Thus, I feel that with this Board meeting I want to discuss information relevant to student life, that is tangible and a means by which we can learn more about our school environments.

Before becoming student trustee, I held the position of external affairs officer on the student council. As one of my responsibilities, I interacted frequently with various student councils regarding school events. I was surprised by the disparity between the types of events allowed by different administrations. Occasionally, an idea that had become tradition at one school was rejected by another. I began wondering about the student-administrator relationship in each school. How do they differ? How are they similar? What makes them successful? How can they be improved?

Thus I decided to conduct a survey. Although not scientific in nature, I believe that it can still be used as a learning tool in understanding this relationship.

Thirteen delegates, representing different secondary school student councils, were first asked to give a numerical rating of their relationship. On a scale from one to ten (one being a poorly developed, non-cooperative relationship and ten being a healthy, cooperative and supportive relationship, with their school's administration), the results show an average rating of 7.6 with two school's relationships receiving a perfect score.

The students were then asked “Do you ever feel that your administration is dismissive or hostile towards your ideas?” The most frequent answer was “sometimes” with seven out of the 13 schools selecting that option. When asked how the student-administrator relationship could be improved, many students had concrete and attainable ideas. The most frequent comment was a greater need for administration presence at student council meetings so that students can become more comfortable with administrators. Everyone understands that administrators are busy people; however, taking the time to visit their school's student government is vital in establishing a relationship. Furthermore, as one student wrote, “students need to feel like they are understood and not dismissed.” Another notable comment was a need for more openness to ideas. Some student councils felt that their administration was reluctant to make changes to existing events or to allow the introduction of new ones. Also, an important comment made by one school, was to reduce the frequency of principal and vice-principal changes so that a relationship could be established and maintained.

The next question asked was, "What aspects of your relationship with your school's administration do you enjoy?" Most students made a comment regarding the supportiveness, friendliness, helpfulness, and positive attitude of their school's administration.

When asked if they ever felt intimidated by their administration, five of the schools replied sometimes, four said rarely, and four answered never. The five schools who replied sometimes were then asked to explain what aspects of their administration were intimidating. Comments included a lack of communication and negativity towards some ideas.

Students generally felt a lack of understanding from their administrations regarding what it is like to be a student. A possible solution to this complex problem would be to enhance communication and have a greater amount of administrator presence at meetings.

Finally, the students were asked "What advice would you give other student councils regarding an effective student-administrator relationship?" Once again, good communication was the most frequent comment. Some students also noted that asking for the administration's input and keeping them updated on the student council's plans is also an effective way to improve this relationship.

Overall, from the answers to my questions and from the largely high rating of the student-administrator relationship, it is clear, that from a student perspective this relationship is healthy in York Region schools. However, like any relationship, they can be improved. The hard work and dedication of our administrators is well known and appreciated by the student governments.

Thank you."