



REPORT TO

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND WELL BEING, CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

VOICES THAT CHALLENGE INSPIRING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION

The Ontario Catholic Graduate is called to be a Responsible Citizen and “to promote equality, democracy, solidarity, for a just, peaceful and compassionate society”.

Created, Draft

September 26, 2016

First Tabling

October 6, 2016

Review

[Click here to enter a date.](#)

M. Consul, Student Leadership Resource Teacher, CSLIT (Catholic Student Leadership Impact Team)

N. D’Avella, Superintendent of Student Success

L. DiMarco, Superintendent of Curriculum, Leadership & Innovation; ICT

INFORMATION REPORT

Vision:

At Toronto Catholic we transform the world through witness, faith, innovation and action.

Mission:

The Toronto Catholic District School Board is an inclusive learning community rooted in the love of Christ. We educate students to grow in grace and knowledge and to lead lives of faith, hope and charity



R. McGuckin

Associate Director of Academic Affairs

A. Sangiorgio

Associate Director of Planning and Facilities

C. Jackson

Executive Superintendent of Business Services and Chief Financial Officer

Angela Gauthier

Director of Education

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On March 22, 2016 Student Trustees Allison Gacad and Karina Dubrovskaya held the annual TCDSB Catholic Student Leadership Conference “Voices That Challenge”. The 2015-2016 Catholic Student Leadership Impact Team (CSLIT), under the direction of Student Trustees Allison Gacad and Karina Dubrovskaya, reviewed those recommendations. These recommendations were presented to the then in-coming student trustee Rhea Carlisle. After consultation with the CSLIT Executive (which were appointed in June 2016) and the CSLIT General Assembly who had a meeting at Olympia Sports Camp (September 4-5, 2016), student leaders prioritized their recommendations and developed a plan of action for 2016-2017. CSLIT wishes to further explore and address these recommendations in order to better serve the students of the TCDSB.

B. PURPOSE

1. This report includes practical activities that schools can perform to support social justice initiatives that would address the recommendations made by outgoing CSLIT Executive and student trustee Allison Gacad. This report also includes valuable student input pertaining to the implementation of social justice initiatives and the development of a justice-oriented attitude in our schools.
2. Current Student Trustees, Karina Dubrovskaya and Rhea Carlisle decided to seek out further clarification of the recommendations by engaging the entire CSLIT committee. This strategy allowed them to prioritize and clarify specific recommendations in order to select what specific issues to focus on during their term. The issues raised represent the voice of the students. The opportunity to present these concerns at Board allows for direct involvement and needed dialogue regarding relevant issues that impact TCDSB students.

C. BACKGROUND

1. This report complies with the requirement of an annual report to the Board of Trustees based on the CSLIT conference “Voices that Challenge”.
2. The 2016-2017 CSLIT decided that the group would like to explore, clarify, specify and prioritize all of the recommendations from the Voices That

Challenge Conference held on March 22, 2016 before having staff take action in response to the recommendations. Some of the original issues raised in the 2016 conference and subsequent CSLIT meetings are no longer issues of priority for this year's CSLIT. Relevant issues for the 2016-2017 CSLIT have been assigned to the appropriate Executive Members and subcommittees. The practice of recommending initiatives from the Voices That Challenge Conference by the outgoing student trustee and CSLIT executive to the incoming CSLIT executive by having the incoming CSLIT select and prioritize from these recommended initiatives has become the adopted procedure. This procedure allows for the current student trustees and CSLIT to adopt and work on the priorities they feel are most relevant.

3. The subsequent recommendations put forth by the current CSLIT can be dealt with administratively with the support of the appropriate program departments.

D. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS

1. Students should be stimulated to effect positive change in our world around injustices. Students feel a calling to live out their faith, thus involvement in social justice actions allow them to make their faith visible. The current Student Trustees will testify wish to engage the CSLIT standing committees so that they can work with staff to address their specific recommendations. Students feel that at the board level, policies must be in line with addressing current global social justice issues relevant and important to students.

E. METRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The following is an action plan regarding the Report to Board - "CSLIT: Inspiring Active Citizenship in Catholic Education". The Student Leadership Department and student leaders attending the CSLIT meetings on September 4-5, 2016 agreed to develop specific action plans related to the recommendations. Note: The issues listed are not necessarily in order of importance although all selected as priorities for this year's CSLIT. The CSLIT recognized that the different issues listed below become a priority at different points in the school year.

CSLIT 2016-2017 Recommended Actions

1. Inclusion and Belonging for All Students

For the last 2 years a retreat was held for TCDSB students who participated in clubs that promote equity and respect for all students. The speakers and discussions were excellent. They aligned with Catholic values and the Catholic Graduate expectations, particularly to be a *Caring Family Member*. The students that participated in event left the retreat with a much stronger feeling of inclusion, belonging, safety and support. In the OCSTA document “Respecting Differences” it states that “the entire aim of a Catholic School is to create a loving and positive learning environment consistent with Catholic teaching.”

In this spirit, **CSLIT would like to continue its support** for individuals who are dealing with sensitive and complex issues so that all are to be treated with sensitivity, respect and compassion. CSLIT will investigate ways to share best practices to enhance the inclusion of all students.

This year, CSLIT would like to continue to create a positive and inclusive environment for all of the students in the TCDSB. Inclusion and belonging are both integral parts to the continued wellbeing of our students. In order for students to feel safe in their schools, they must also feel loved and accepted.

Our equity subcommittee also gave an informative presentation to the students of Madonna Secondary School about the issues associated with homophobia and ways to assist in combating homophobia.

This year, CSLIT plans to expand the *Inclusion and Belonging* retreat by encouraging a higher participation from our schools. As *Discerning Believers* formed in Catholic faith, CSLIT hopes to reach out to more students and create a more inclusive environment. CSLIT also plans to take the presentation given at Madonna and introduce it to other schools in the TCDSB.

2. First Nations Metis Inuit Education

CSLIT would like to transform Canadian society and become more inclusive by abandoning FNMI stereotypes and seeking justice for all those of Aboriginal descent. As Catholic students, we need to become more aware and knowledgeable of FNMI issues. Therefore, CSLIT would like to continue their dialogue with theologians, government representatives, teachers and those of aboriginal descent. Catholic students are particularly concerned about the various social justice issues affecting First Nations people. Some of these issues include, but are not limited to: education, death by suicide, and environmental issues.

As Collaborative Contributors, 15 TCDSB students travelled to Thunder Bay, Ontario in last May in partnership with the Superior North Catholic District School board. They learned about First Nations culture and were educated on the many struggles FNMI students face. In addition, our students offered leadership workshops to the elementary students on the *7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* and the Catholic graduate expectations.

This year, CSLIT is passionate about continuing to strengthen and expand this partnership. CSLIT suggests the board create a Grade 12 University level course about First Nations Metis Inuit Culture, that will educate students on FNMI history, the challenges FNMI people are facing today and the importance of healing and reconciliation. Additionally, CSLIT would like to encourage more students to travel to Superior North and experience first-hand a culture that is rooted deep in Canada's history.

3. Mental Health

The mental wellness of students should continue to be a priority in our school board. CSLIT would like to raise their voice in regards to the Mental Health Strategy and Policy. CSLIT is interested in establishing a strategic partnership with the board's Mental Health Committee to ensure student collaboration on board-created resources. CSLIT would also like to efficiently share these resources with youth.

Learning about mental health and coping mechanisms is very valuable. As *Effective Communicators*, it is important for students to establish a support group, where they feel comfortable having conversations about mental health and mental well-being. For this reason, CSLIT would like to continue to increase participation in their *De-stress Week* of relaxing activities. *De-Stress Week* allows students to release their anxiety prior to

final exams, and also serves as educational training on how to cope with stress. Additionally, CSLIT would like to broaden the scope of this week by including discussions regarding other mental health issues. *De-stress Week* is important because it establishes support groups amongst students in various participating high schools.

4. Environmental Issues

In following Pope Francis's "Laudato Si" encyclical on the environment, CSLIT is committed to answering this call to serve our earth. Last year, CSLIT helped run a successful conference called "Our Poles Our Planet". This conference discussed environmental issues and helped bring awareness to global warming.

As *Responsible (global) Citizens*, the students of the TCDSB are expected to care for their environment. This year, CSLIT would like to continue becoming more eco-friendly by getting composting bins in every school in the TCDSB. This is something desperately needed in every cafeteria. Additionally, CSLIT would like to heavily reinforce our board's *plastic water bottle free policy*. Each year, 100 million plastic bottles are tossed, which is one of the reasons the TCDSB originally banned plastic water bottles. In working towards becoming environmentally aware, CSLIT will create a positive relationship with our earth and answer our Catholic call to serve our planet.

5. Support for Newcomers and International Students

Every year, the TCDSB welcomes new international students. As a Catholic school board, the TCDSB is committed to creating a welcoming environment for all of its students. Many international students find it difficult to adjust to life in Toronto and face many challenges in daily life, as well as in school. As *Caring Family Members*, CSLIT is devoted in creating a positive, nurturing environment for all of our new students.

CSLIT would like to recommend that all student councils consider adding an international student to their council to encourage diversity and proper representation. Additionally, CSLIT suggests that the board strengthens and better publicize their support system to aid these students in their transition to our schools, while keeping their cultural identities.

F. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This report is provided for the consideration of the Board.