Vancouver School Board

Board Meeting Report by Mia Liu

May 1st, 2023

In this report, I will be providing an update on VDSC’s initiatives that took place Spring, 2023.

Early this March, VDSC wrapped up the second major initiative of the year – Sister School Switch (SSS), where students across the district are paired to spend a day at each-other’s schools. At the concluding forum, participants provided feedback on their SSS experiences, which has been documented and taken into account in preparation for future projects. VDSC’s next initiative is the annual Arts Gala, which will be held in June. There, students across the district will submit art works for display and have the opportunity to earn scholarships to support their artistic endeavors.

As seniors anxiously refresh their mailboxes for college decisions this Spring, VDSC connected with past council alumni to answer current VSB students’ burning questions on postsecondary admissions. The team has put together a video encompassing the much-anticipated Q&A, which was published on VDSC’s social media platforms. Such initiatives are summarized and advertised through the second issue of the VDSC Newsletter, which was published in April. Aside from the aforementioned projects, the Newsletter also provides answers to student issues submissions and an update on the SLO program’s student consultation process to the broader student population.

Following the February GM, VDSC members engaged in the SLO focus group to provide the student perspective on this program to VPD staff. This consultation shed light on students’ needs, including but not limited to formal introductions for students to meet their SLO constables and weaponless uniforms that facilitate comfortable interactions between students and officers. Such suggestions have been directly communicated with the VPD through the focus group in February.

In addition to the council’s discussion with VPD staff, VDSC also created a word cloud, where members submitted live, anonymous answers to the prompt: “elements you see as integral to a safety-promotion program”. The most common responses collected include education and awareness on the program itself, student representation in the construction of the SLO program, as well as training. Specifically, the council sees professional training related to mental health, unconscious bias, and bullying for officers involved as integral to a SLO program that strives to enhance student wellbeing.

At the March General Meeting, the council voted on a 26-0 decision to push for student perspectives outside VDSC to be considered in the SLO program’s redesigning process. Specifically, the council aims to obtain and share updates from the VPD to clarify what this program will look like in September to improve student-awareness. Further, VDSC hopes to host a Q&A session with the VPD for all VSB students to express related questions and concerns to help construct a program designed with the very intent of protecting their safety.

In April, VDSC conducted a vote on budget priorities, obtaining input from 15 out of the 18 secondary schools. Similar to previous years, the top-voted priority is the quality of bathroom equipment and sanitation products, followed by mental health resources, funding for student projects (tied for second), enhanced wi-fi & electronics, and staffing, which obtained seconds, fourth, and fifth, respectively. The summary of the vote has been shared with all trustees, and the senior executive team has provided a more comprehensive description of the vote, the results, and their implications at the livestreamed Budget-delegation meeting on April 24th.

Finally, VDSC has been connected with district staff responsible for the supply of menstrual products to express student concerns on this issue. Specifically, the council notes that students reported feeling uncomfortable using the menstrual products provided due to poor quality and the fear that they may “fail” and that products are often not adequately refilled. In addition, VDSC also sees the need for accessible menstrual products to be integrated into universal bathrooms and curriculum-based education that destigmatizes menstruation as a natural bodily process.

After the follow-up, VDSC was happy to learn that the feedback was passed down and taken to account in Focus Ed’s RFP to improve the quality of menstrual products supplied. We appreciate VSB’s effort in listening to the student voice, which VDSC will continue to seek, pinpoint, and amplify.