

MINISTER'S STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of May 2009 Reports

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to summarize the findings of the 28 reports submitted by MSAC members. The topics identified in the reports have been organized into themes within four categories: School Culture, Classroom Culture, Curriculum and System Policy.

School Culture pertains to the level of belonging experienced by a student at the school level. Three themes explore the meaning of school culture in terms of Engagement, Inclusiveness and Support. Engagement may be achieved by: creating connections to the community, developing various types of clubs and activities that represent students' interests, and offering opportunities for students to collaborate. Inclusiveness has been described as a student's feeling welcomed and safe in the schools, by experiencing the school's celebration of the diverse student population, and awareness raising of issues that affect students. Support may be demonstrated by dedicated teachers, guidance counsellors, and peer-networks.

Classroom Culture is similar to School Culture but focuses on a student's feeling of belonging in the classroom. The three themes identified in this category are: Flexible Learning Environment, Teacher-Student Relations and Resources. Flexible Learning Environment underlines the need for differentiated learning and alternative assessment methods. Teacher-Student Relations encompasses the call for teachers to be facilitators, fully aware of students' individual learning styles and characteristics. The Resources theme is directly linked to the previous two themes, as teachers as well as students need resources in order to be able to implement the desired changes in a flexible learning environment and in teacher-student relations.

The Curriculum category pertains to the changes and improvements in the curriculum, and in certain courses, to engage students more with the material and their education. The two themes within the Curriculum category are Choice and Course Content.

The System Policy category refers to the need for student driven options and guidelines to be included in school policies. The five themes identified in the reports are: School Break, Focus Schools, Homework Policies, Suspensions, and Teacher Qualifications.

In conclusion, the summary of the reports has helped identify four main categories and various related themes as areas of focus for the schools, school boards and Ministry. It was observed from their reports that students are ready to become



active participants and collaborators in their education. The willingness of students to take action to support each other and to build their community is remarkable.

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Background

In October 2008 the Minister of Education announced the Student Voice initiative within the government's Student Engagement Strategy, which is part of the government's commitment to reach every student and to reach the graduation rate of 85% by 2010-11. The initiative encouraged three ways for Ontario students to participate: 1) applying for the Minister's Student Advisory Council 2) applying for SpeakUp projects and 3) attending regional forums.

Almost 1,000 students had applied to the Minister's Student Advisory Council for only 60 positions. The successful candidates were announced on May 12, 2009, the day of the first MSAC meeting. The purpose of the Minister's Student Advisory Council is for students to share their ideas and advice with the Minister of Education on how to make Ontario's schools the best in the world. The council is about empowering students to 'be the change' they want to see. The council's meetings will give students an opportunity to think big, speak up and take action to motivate students across the province to become more engaged in school and graduate.

Introduction

This report captures the content of 28 different reports generated by MSAC members by identifying various themes derived from their topics. The themes are grouped by categories that reflect the students' ideas in a straightforward manner. The four categories are: School Culture, Classroom Culture, Curriculum and System Policy. Each category will be discussed in further detail, based on students' perspectives, needs, ideas, and report excerpts.

The Council's first meeting was organized through the Open Space Technology format which optimized student participation by allowing them to determine the topics for discussions and direction for the conversation. The process encouraged creativity, leadership, passion, group, individual thinking, and responsibility. Facilitators opened and closed the process, but the focus was on enabling students to initiate and facilitate their own exchanges. Students themselves reported and prioritized highlights of their discussions, and documented key issues, action initiatives, and ideas for use by the Ministry. As a result, the Minister's Student Advisory Council generated 28 reports from their first meeting.

One question allowed the students to set the day's agenda, discuss the topics that they felt were important, and document the results to report back to the Ministry. The question was: *"What would a school look like that supports all students, and honours their diverse voices?"* Although this question is broad and purposefully open-ended, the report topics provide an interesting answer: students' interests and needs should be the focus of the education system.

Methodology

In order to accurately extrapolate students' feedback, a Ministry team of three employed qualitative data analysis methodologies, including preparing a detailed code book, theming, testing, sorting, noticing and thinking about the data.

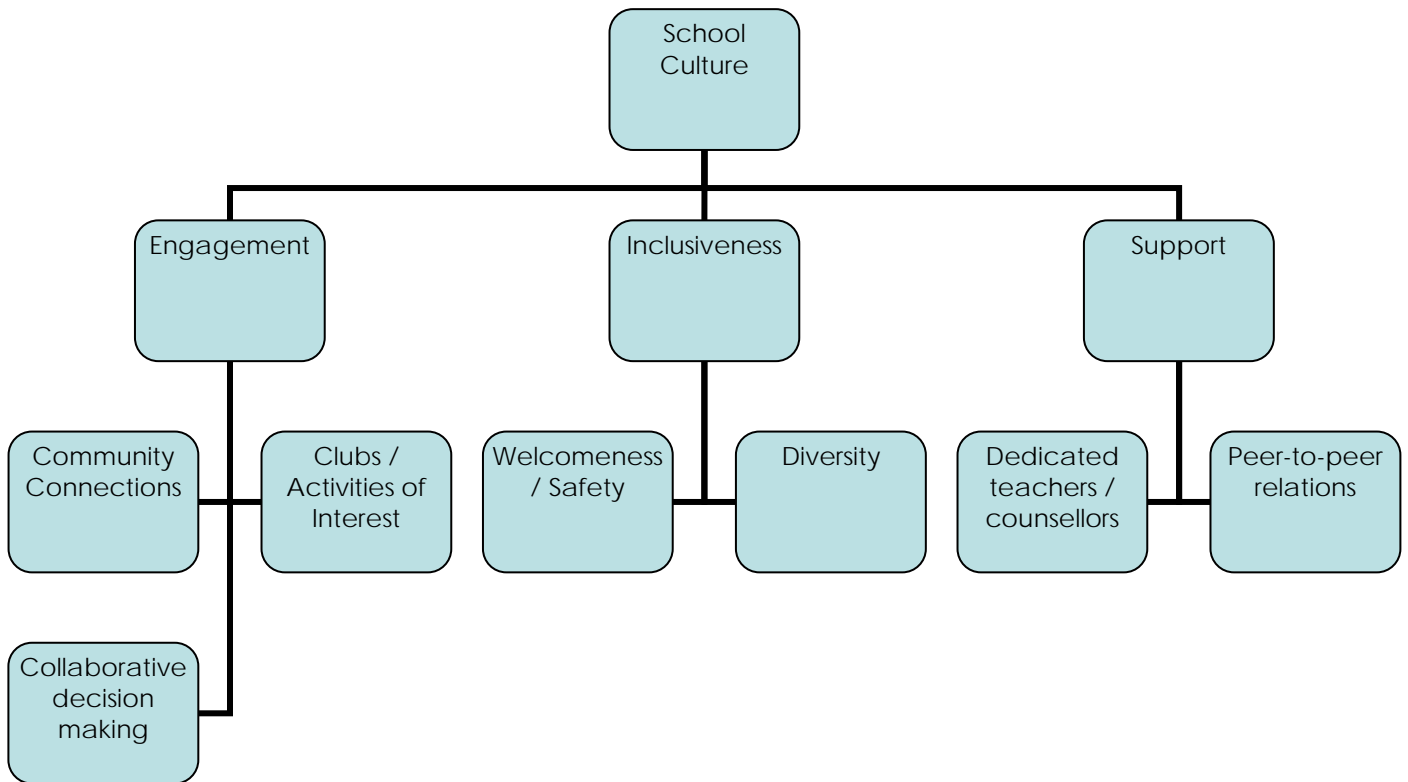
Team members individually reviewed the contents of the 28 reports. Themes generated by the initial review were the beginning stages of developing a codebook. The reports were reviewed again against the codebook; data were coded and tested via a process of inter-rater reliability (i.e., a check to see that all team members were interpreting the data the same and to further refine themes). During the theming process, broader categories were revealed to further sort the data. Themes were explored within each of the categories.

The purpose behind the methodology was to ensure that student responses in compiled reports were examined in a way that allowed for the meaning in ideas and sentiments expressed by students, to be accurately conveyed in a clear and concise manner. A final stage of this process will include sharing the results in this report with MSAC to test for agreement.

Findings

School Culture

It was evident from the students' reports that school culture refers to their sense of belonging in their school. Many students identified various examples of how schools can build on providing welcoming and inclusive environments. The three major themes from the students' reports are: Engagement, Inclusiveness and Support. These groupings describe the students' ideas on how schools can engage all students, what an inclusive environment means to them, and why this is important, and how they envision building relationships with caring adults, and peers.



Engagement

Many students identified various methods to establish engaging school environments. It is important to students that schools build *connections to the community*, develop and create various types of *activities and associations* that represent the students' interests, and offer opportunities for students to collaborate in *decision making* processes that impact the school and their educational experience.

Many students discussed various forms of *connections to the community*. These connections included strengthening relationships with Elders, bringing in former students or role models, and understanding the importance of parent involvement in the learning process.

Some students discussed the importance of culture for the Aboriginal students. According to these students, it is becoming increasingly important to enhance community relationships and to encourage Aboriginal students to make connections on and off reserve. The students believe that by creating more opportunities to link with the Elders, it would foster an enriching experience, and would deepen the students' relationships with their community and their culture.

"We also felt that the connection between our Elders and youth is one of most importance. We need to utilize every moment possible in order to connect and learn from our Elders. They are the true educators traditionally of our Nations."

"[Aboriginal students should be] well versed in their culture through on-reserve and off-reserve exchanges."

The connections to the community also provide an opportunity for schools to tackle barriers to students' success. A few students have suggested inviting older students, or other role models, who have dealt with bullying to speak to the students.

"we should be bringing in older students that have been victims of bullying"

"We should bring in role models that have been victims of bullying. (e.g. hockey players)"

In one report some students also spoke about the significance of parents' engagement in their child's learning. While the students did not discuss how to engage parents, they expressed how important and beneficial it is to engage parents in students' learning.

"Parents also play a big role in the education of their children. Parents have to take an interest in their child's learning in order to help out their child and encourage them. If the parents don't take interest, then their child won't either because they will think that education isn't important."

Many students also felt that schools should inspire students to become more involved beyond the classroom. The students echoed the need to create more *activities and associations* other than what is normally offered, such as sports teams and student councils. Environmental clubs or projects, which are year long, were just some of the examples students provided that could engage a large population of students. The students understood that obtaining a variety of new options would also require the support of teachers.

"Extra-curricular activities are important because they can be great learning experiences, and chances for students to speak up"

"Different activities will also keep some students out of trouble."

"More activities and clubs should be started, because only having sport teams for the athletic [is] unfair."

"Teachers should start taking interest in supervising groups because, lack of teacher supervision is part of why there aren't as many school activities and clubs"

Some students also suggested incorporating student input into the schools' *decision-making* process to ensure that schools are making the right connections to community members. Many students have voiced the desire to become a part of this practice. They would like to be active participants and would like to be given the chance to advocate for a balance of activities, groups, clubs and an education that represents their needs and interests.

"schools should incorporate student input into their decisions more often. This way, students can get involved at school, as well as receive the education that suits everyone in the school."

"Students should be able to have a say about different activities, electives, and clubs."

Inclusiveness

Many of the students expressed that an inclusive environment is a place that makes them feel welcomed and safe, and celebrates the diversity of its student population. Some students were aware that some of their peers do not feel safe in their own home, and this emphasizes the need for schools to be as inclusive as possible. A few students also expressed the belief that this change needs to begin with the administration. Many of the students believe that through *open dialogues* among students and staff about stereotypes, labels, and bullying would engender a more sensitive approach to issues that affect student success. Many students also spoke about the need for more outlets to express themselves and to feel *included and represented*.

"The administration must be conscience and must learn to accept students on an equal basis. This, hopefully will trickle downward through the students"

"Some youth cannot feel safe at home, so there is a need for all public schools to celebrate all sexualities so they can feel safe at school."

Many students felt that greater awareness about individuals' unique needs and circumstances would contribute to building an inclusive environment. Many students expressed the opinion that by *talking openly* and honestly with staff about their struggles, the school would be better informed and more responsive to their needs, and work towards creating positive solutions with students. Some students with special needs indicated that some of the barriers they experienced were due to the lack of understanding of their disabilities and their needs. These limitations led to inappropriate supports and exclusion from the rest of the class that extended to the rest of the school.

"there mustn't be ignorance and to avoid that we must allow for information to be widely spread among students of all grades and learning abilities"

"There are many conflicts which Aboriginal youth face, and it is time that we finally take the time to realize the reality instead of shunning it, so that we may work towards positive change!"

"we found that our teachers would treat us differently than the rest of the kids, and everyone else would pick up on that"

"Things that we could do to prevent suicide are talking about it"

Many students articulated the need to relate to the school and to their peers, in order to feel *represented and included* in their school. Some students suggested that one way in which schools could create positive space is to celebrate the diversity of its student population. A few students proposed that schools could involve students who are not normally included in the planning, creation and participation of events, for example, "school events that make English language learners feel related and included are needed." Students believed this would increase the students' participation, their motivation and their sense of belonging in school. Other examples identified include: a Global Fusion Celebration, an ELL talent show, Wear Pink Day, and school projects such as Equity Clubs, language clubs, and school videos that deal with bullying. Students' comments stress that the more outlets for students to express themselves, the more students will feel that their voices are heard, are represented and included into the school culture.

"there is a need for all public schools to celebrate all sexualities so they can feel safe at school"

"Many students would like more outlets to express themselves within their schools"

"students should meet once a week working on funny videos that says what bullying really does."

Supportive

Many of the students voiced their desire for a school environment which would help them address issues related to their school experience or to external influences affecting their school experience. Many students addressed the need to have a *caring adult* who knows who they are, is sympathetic, and is trained to deal with their specific challenges and needs. However, support was not always referred to in the form of a school staff member; some students also recognized the power of *peer-to-peer support* as another means to reach out and help students.

"we need to make sure that all students have someone to talk to"

The *caring adult* in the students' reports most often implied the guidance counsellor who was seen as the individual knowledgeable about students' backgrounds and unique needs. In each instance where the guidance counsellor was depicted as the caring adult, many students also requested that they have training. Some students felt that the guidance counsellor should be available to support victims of bullying and students contemplating suicide. For some of the students who were discussing the needs of English language learners, the guidance counsellor was seen as an essential key to their success and to their

volunteer and post-secondary experiences. Many students stressed after the need for someone to understand their individual circumstances, is supportive, is accessible, and has the professional development required to deal with their individual needs.

"A guidance counsellor who knows at least a little bit of every country background is needed."

"The guidance counsellor is familiar with every English language learner and he or she can expose the new comers to all the opportunities"

"Each school should have a guidance councillor that always has his/hers door open."

"We should supply better training for guidance councillors"

"Students that struggle should have a place to go... a teacher that is specially trained to help kids with [ADD&ADHD]"

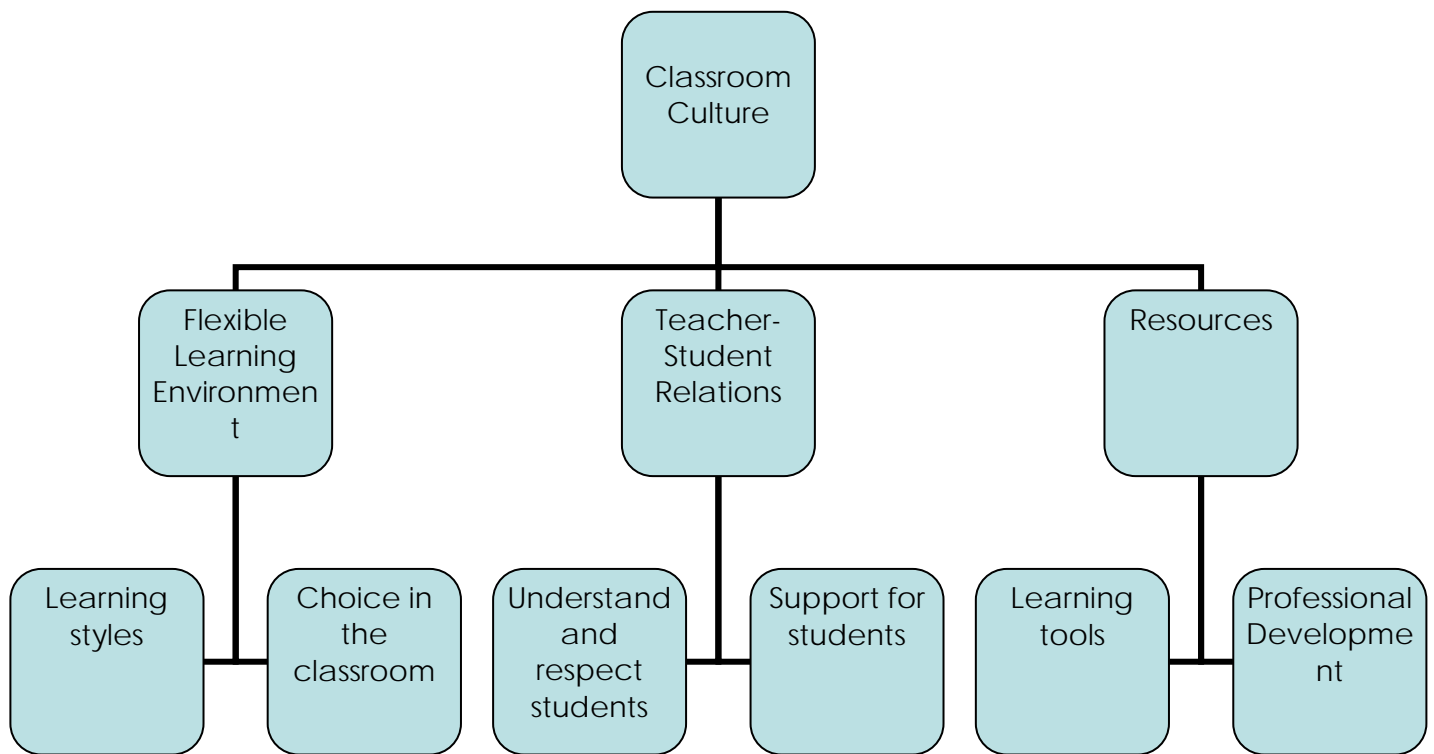
A few students also mentioned working with school staff in addition to the caring adult to assist students who are struggling. These students recognize the power of *peer-to-peer support*, and are looking for additional paths for their peers to find the help they need, e.g. student based support groups within schools.

"Some ways we could get involved in helping to prevent suicide are making student based groups to support and talk to people"

"we could get guidance councillors involved in making a hotline for troubled teens, kids, and adults"

Classroom Culture

The Classroom Culture category captures the ideas and suggestions that students wanted to see incorporated into the classroom. From the reports, it was clear that a successful classroom culture is one that meets the individual needs of all students. Many students felt that classrooms should be flexible learning environments where learning can occur in a variety of ways and in an engaging manner. Students discussed the important role that teacher-student relations play in their education and what this role entails. Students also felt the need for more resources for teachers to use as teaching aids, and for students to use as learning tools.



Flexible Learning Environments

As the classroom is the main setting for learning, many students talked about the importance of having it become a flexible learning environment. Students discussed the value of accommodating diversity in *learning styles*, teaching styles, and *choice*. They also discussed considerations for *specific courses*, such as math and music.

Many students identified the existence of different *learning styles*, including visual, kinesthetic and auditory. Students expressed the need for the curriculum to be presented in a variety of ways that support these different learning styles. Some students also wanted teachers to provide adequate support to those students who have ADHD/ADD and other learning disabilities. For example, students wanted teachers to accommodate them by presenting the content of the course in a way that helps them better understand it. Students' comments strengthen the need for differentiated instruction: they wanted different methods of instruction that address their learning needs, abilities, skills, and strengths so that they could be part of the classroom and succeed in learning.

"...students all have different learning styles, and some students aren't learning in the way they want to learn. Sometimes students want to learn in a hands-on way instead of just sitting in a room and getting a lecture."

"Creative and interesting teaching methods should be introduced to teachers, so that students will find interest in the subject."

Some students also spoke about having more *choice* in the classroom by providing a greater balance between various learning and evaluative tools. For example, a few students want to be given the choice to write a different test due to their learning disability. Some students feel that having choice will provide them with the ability to take hold of their learning. A few students also suggested incorporating creative teaching methods instead of standard lecture time. These students feel that having choice along with a balance of teaching tools and styles will help them engage more in the classroom and meet their needs.

"Students should have a choice also with a different test, if they feel like they can do the normal test then teachers should let them..."

"They want to be able to learn in a creative way such as incorporating a game or experiment into their subject so this way it makes education more exciting."

Some students provided *course specific* examples where diverse teaching styles and choice were desired. Music education was one subject where a few students wanted more choice in the kinds of projects they do and a balance between traditional and contemporary content, as well as more creative ways of teaching. Math was another subject where students felt strongly about changing the teaching approach to better suit their needs. Some students wanted to see the content taught using a variety of supplementary activities so that they could understand the concepts better. For example, some students wanted to see fewer textbooks and worksheets, and more projects and group teamwork. They talked about being able to apply the content to real life situations in an interactive way to engage students more in the material. These students wanted more choice in the classroom to better support their learning styles.

“students should have a variety of choices when it comes to music education”

“more opportunities for students to apply their musical knowledge (productions or concerts)”

“Rather than basing the curriculum on work sheets and text books, more projects and group teamwork should be incorporated as the main idea of math classes.”

Teacher-Student Relations

Many students discussed how a strong teacher-student relationship is a key element in classroom culture. This relationship is one where the teacher knows and respects the individual students, and provides them with individual supports. Students talked about the benefits for teachers to know the students, by *understanding* their needs, *respecting* who they are, and being *available* when students need them.

Many students underlined the fact that they are all different and thus have different learning needs. Some students talked about the need for teachers to have a better *understanding* of ADHD/ADD learning disabilities, different learning styles, and physical disabilities, in order to offer supportive teaching and learning approaches. These students wanted teachers to find effective ways of bridging the learning gaps instead of highlighting them or leaving them unaddressed. For example, some students expressed their strong dislike of differential treatment based on these challenges; they feel that although they face challenges, they want to be treated equally, or as equally as possible, with other students in the classroom.

"...teachers need to fully understand the disabilities of the students in their schools and how to appropriately deal with the situations."

"Teachers need to understand our disabilities, what makes us "Tick" and the early signs of us getting frustrated, and deal with them appropriately."

"Teachers should handle kids with ADHD just the same as others but should also make sure they are looked out for a little more [than] kids that don't need [assistance]"

Many students wanted teachers to *respect* them as individuals along with knowing who they are. Students wanted teachers to respect them and treat them equally regardless of their religion or cultural background, and to include them as equal members in the class. They need to also understand when a student can and cannot complete an assignment or task. Some students spoke about the need for teachers to have greater cultural understanding when teaching Aboriginal issues or when dealing with Aboriginal education in general. Teachers' awareness of important cultural nuances would help students feel more included in the classroom.

"There should be mutual respect between the teachers and students."

"Teachers shouldn't be intimidating, they should be welcoming. Students need to be able to approach their teacher and ask their teacher for help if they are struggling in a subject."

"Teachers should respect the different religions of students and how capable they will be to complete homework on holidays such as Easter."

Many students talked about the importance of teachers being *available* for individual support. For example, providing homework in advance for students who are ill or after they return, and providing additional work or tutoring support in order to help the student catch up and remain an active member of the classroom. Students also talked about teachers being more accessible for individual support, e.g. through email contact. Students' expressed that they wanted teachers to do more than teach, they want teachers to be facilitators in their learning, by providing the supports that students need.

"...kids with ADHD (ADD as well) should have proper education fit for their needs"

"Teachers also need to assist their students and make sure that their students are getting everything they need in order to be successful."

"Students should have their own 'student' email so that they can contact teachers with ease."

Resources

A classroom culture that meets the needs of all students also requires supportive resources. A few students voiced their frustration when their learning is not successful or when it is hindered by a learning disability. They want resources that help overcome those obstacles, readily available in the classroom. They want to be given the tools to deal effectively with the challenges so that they may return to learning.

Along with an understanding and awareness of students' needs, some students felt that teachers needed to know about supportive technological tools that are available to help students remain active participants in the classroom. Students see technology as a tool to aid both the teacher and student. They also feel the knowledge of technology and its uses needs to be complimentary to the learning abilities, skills, and styles, of students. Many students suggested introducing and increasing the use of Smart Boards or computer programs that facilitate speaking, writing, reading and understanding, in the classroom to support their learning. Students want access to this kind of technology to regain control over their learning and to learn in the best way that they can.

"'Dragon Natural Speaking' helps kids with ADD & ADHD... with some of this programming in our school computers students can concentrate better and finish and complete their work with great marks!"

"Students should be allowed and/or encouraged (to) use of technology"

"Technology should be more greatly integrated into education but should not serve as a student's only means of [learning] and working."

Some students discussed the need to provide teachers with better access to professional learning, and to provide them with the resources to address students' needs, to increase their knowledge of the resources available and help them understand how they can facilitate learning. Students' comments indicate they would like teachers to learn about their learning styles and needs, discover

effective ways of helping them succeed, and therefore create a classroom culture where students' needs can be effectively met.

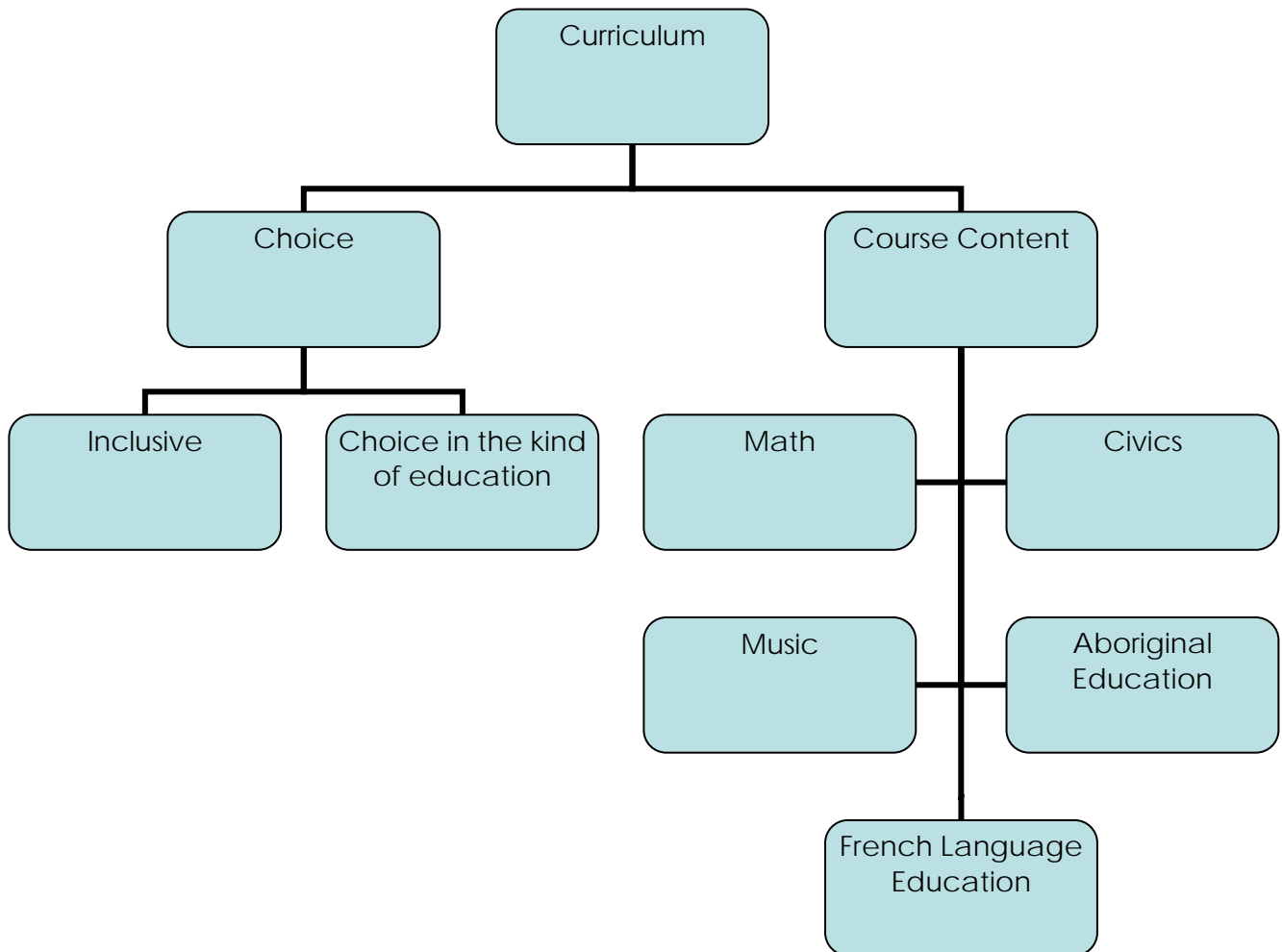
"Teachers need proper training to use their resources properly, (i.e. Smart Boards, Laptop, etc.)"

"Teachers need more instruction on how to use their technological resources properly"

"...good equipment (is necessary), in order for (students) to receive the best education they can."

Curriculum

Many students talked about the curriculum and specific courses. They suggest improvement in this category. Below, the broader category of curriculum has been subdivided into two complimentary themes: more choice and course content.



Choice

Many students expressed a desire for more choice in the curriculum and in the education they obtain. Many students want an inclusive curriculum that represents the diversity of the students and above all, the interests of the students. As students have different interests, skills and ambitions, they want to have more control over the courses they choose, and a greater selection of from which to choose. In turn, students would become more engaged in their learning and would pursue an education that would meet their needs. Some students spoke about the choice to focus on real life skills that they can apply outside the classroom in their everyday lives and that would help them in their future educational or vocational pathways.

"Students shouldn't have to be forced to learn an elective or subject including music, just because there are no other choices for them. We think that schools should have a variety of choices for students..."

"(Students discussed) whether or not certain compulsory courses distract students from their interests, or expose them to what could potentially be their future."

"Acting out real life situations is a possibility for everyone."

"Young people would benefit from having more diverse curriculum..."

Curriculum and Course Content

Many students talked about possible additions to the content of certain courses, such as Math, Civics, French-language, Music and Aboriginal education.

In Math class, they wanted to participate in activities and exercises that relate to real life situations, such as learning about the banking system and money management. Students also wanted a variety of supplementary activities, moving away from work sheets and textbooks, towards more projects and teamwork assignments.

"Students will benefit from classroom systems, such as a bank where you have to either make more money or save what you have."

"If students are faced with interactive challenges, such as creating board games of their skill level that incorporate the theme of their specific math unit, they will have a class that is more engrossing for them."

"We proposed that there could be shorter math periods, but the math could be spread throughout the year."

A few students also talked about the Civics course and feel that this kind of education should be introduced earlier in their schooling, starting in the later elementary years. These students want to see greater attention to the history of the political system and less on the legality and logistics of the system. Students want access to information in order to become knowledgeable voters. In addition, these students feel that there need to be more links with the political community so that they could gain practical experience to engage more with the subject matter.

"[Civic Education] earlier in education, more history on our political system...more preparation to be knowledgeable voter, more information on party stance... political trips in class, more involvement in political community"

French language instruction also received a lot of support. Some students saw a discrepancy between the level of French taught in Anglophone schools, and the level of English taught in Francophone schools. Students wanted to see a balance in the high school language graduation requirements - both English and French as second language requirements taught with the same level of difficulty. Students also believed there was an inconsistency with the presence of French teachers in English schools; they felt there should be French teachers teaching in the English schools, in the similar manner that there are English teachers teaching in the French schools. As French is Canada's second official language, some students felt that the education system in Ontario should better reflect that reality.

"...c'est injuste envers les élèves Anglophones car ils n'ont pas la possibilité d'apprendre un bon français ou un français plus que le minimum de la 9e année. C'est injuste envers les francophones car même si ils ne veulent pas nécessairement prendre l'anglais, ils doivent le prendre pour aller en université."

"Faire que le cours de français dans les écoles soient d'égale qualité"

"Faire en sorte que le français soient obligatoire dans les écoles francophones jusqu'à la 11e année ou même plus"

Music education was also mentioned. Students wanted to see more contemporary content. Although they enjoy the current content, these students wanted to learn and engage with new material and experiment with a larger variety of musical styles. They wanted the music course to be more creative, offer

greater choice for students and incorporate innovative methods of engaging both teacher and students.

"Students should have a variety of choices when it comes to music education."

"there needs to be a variety of learning opportunities and branches of music taught."

"Music education isn't encouraged by many and we think [it] should be, since it gives students opportunities to express themselves through art."

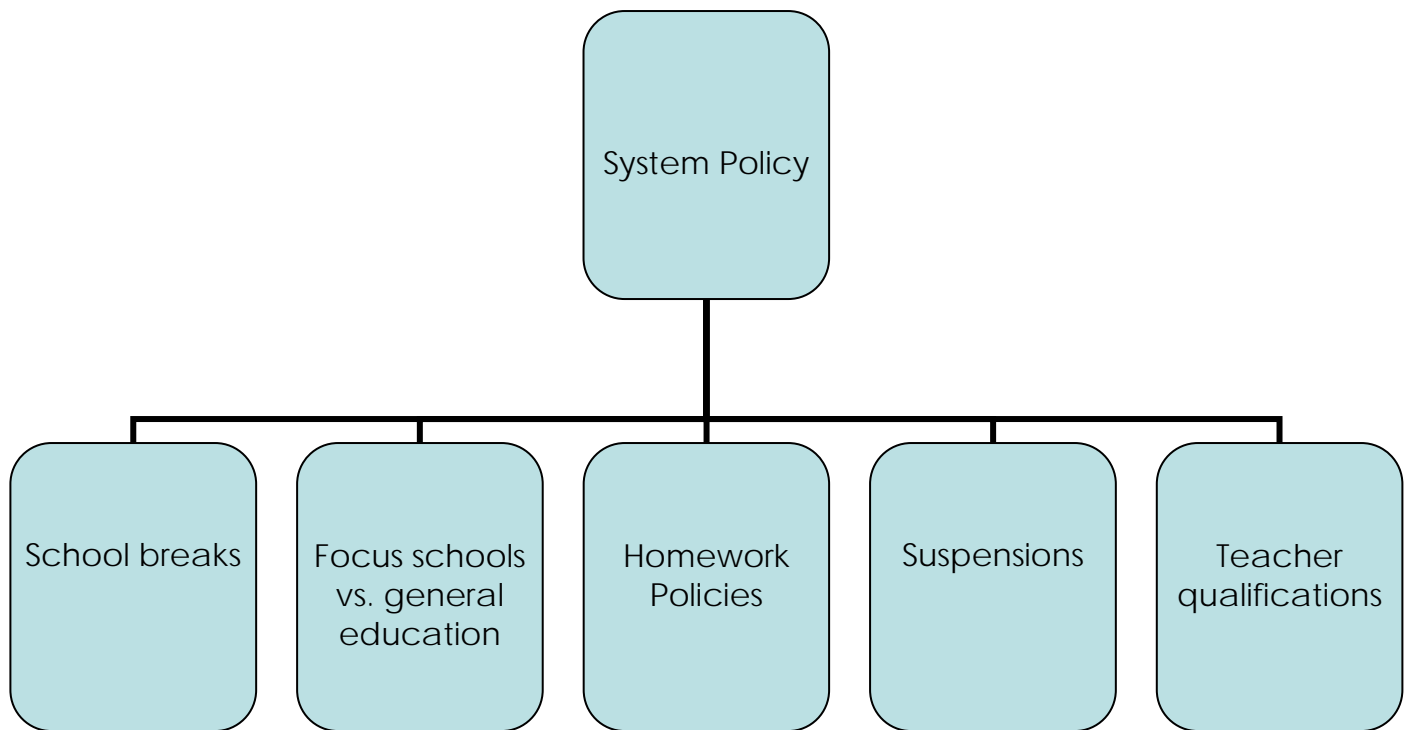
Finally, a few students addressed the issue of Aboriginal education. Students wanted to see Aboriginal issues, history and culture incorporated into the curriculum in a meaningful manner so that all students can learn about Canada's Aboriginal peoples. These students suggested incorporating First Nations languages into the curriculum and linking the curriculum to the larger community. Some students also want to see Aboriginal education in the elementary grades as well as in high school in order to ensure a complete and diverse education and provide an opportunity for community building, both inside and outside the classroom and school.

"Aboriginal education calls for much improvement."

"...native languages are not being taught properly in our schools, (and in many cases) the contexts are misconstrued."

System Policy

The System Policy category refers to the policies mainly pertaining to the school environment. Many of the recommendations and comments from students indicate they are looking for more flexibility within their school policies, including student driven options and guidelines that would reflect their individual circumstances and needs. Some students' reports suggest that flexibility within the school system would increase students' engagement and consider their interests. Some of the examples students provided for flexible policies included school breaks, school program options such as focus schools, homework policies, and suspensions. Many students advocated for more rigorous teacher qualifications, e.g. well-informed about the subjects they teach, representative of students' cultures, and possessing the necessary professional development in order to assist students.



School Breaks

When referring to changes in breaks, a few students indicated that by allocating the time differently, there would be more free time for them during the school day. Students felt this would support their lunch break, provide them with some extra time for themselves and allow them to return to class without having to worry about arriving late.

"Instead of dividing the 90 minutes into smaller portions, there should be one long hour and a half break to do whatever – study, eat, or go out."

Focus schools vs. general education

In a few reports, students discussed the idea of Focus schools, also referred to as Charter schools. Students explored the benefits and disadvantages of providing schools which specialize in particular subjects such as science or French. One of the benefits mentioned was being able to attend a school that caters to their specific interests. A negative attribute was inaccessibility.

"[student] attendance [at focus schools] should be optional, allowing those who need a more general education the ability to receive it."

"Creates long commutes for children who don't live near their desired focus school."

"In this sense a student would choose to go to one school which would specialize in science over a school which specialized in French."

Homework Policies

In one report students discussed three specific homework policies: "Late/Fail", "No-fail", and "Most-recent-most consistent". With the late/fail policy, a few students explained that by not penalizing students who hand in assignments late it is not fair for students who always submit their work on time. With the no-fail policy in elementary schools, students suggested providing "more interventions at an earlier age to help struggling students rather than pushing them through the system". Students saw the "Most-recent-most consistent" policy as a means to increase class averages. While the students felt these policies should not be in place, their comments indicate a desire for a system that supports students at an earlier stage; respects individual circumstances, such as illnesses; and also meets classroom and real-life expectations.

"The consensus around the group was that this [late/fail policy] was unfair and penalized those students who actually completed their work on time and encouraged students not to value time management."

"If this [Most-recent-most-consistent policy] is done in schools it should only be in special circumstances (illness, etc)"

"Our teachers, parents, and older siblings went through the same school system and came out prepared for the real-world."

Suspensions

Some students did not deem suspension as an effective disciplinary method. Instead, they suggested providing students with more community involvement opportunities to occupy the disengaged students. In addition, they suggested that each disciplinary action should be assessed on an individual basis, to better consider each student's case and meet specific needs.

"We feel that by disciplining students by having consistent in-school suspensions, it would be more effective, because by sending students home, you give them exactly what they want. We found that within our schools, community service was an excellent way to keep trouble-makers too busy to engage in the detrimental acts they would resort to otherwise."

"We also believe that individuals and situations have to be judged independently and all students must be given the benefit of the doubt."

Teacher qualifications

Many students talked about the importance of rigorous hiring practices. They desire compassionate as well as passionate teachers. They would like teachers to be capable of teaching the material according to students' learning styles. Students would like to see changes for teacher qualification within specific subjects such as Aboriginal education, French, Math, and Music. Students' comments were constructive, demonstrating that they are taking their education seriously and are looking for the right individuals to engage them in their learning.

"Teachers need to be open thinkers, someone who knows how to care for the students with disabilities, needs to be a good communicator and good speaker... no prejudice, able to make it simpler and easier to understand for every individual"

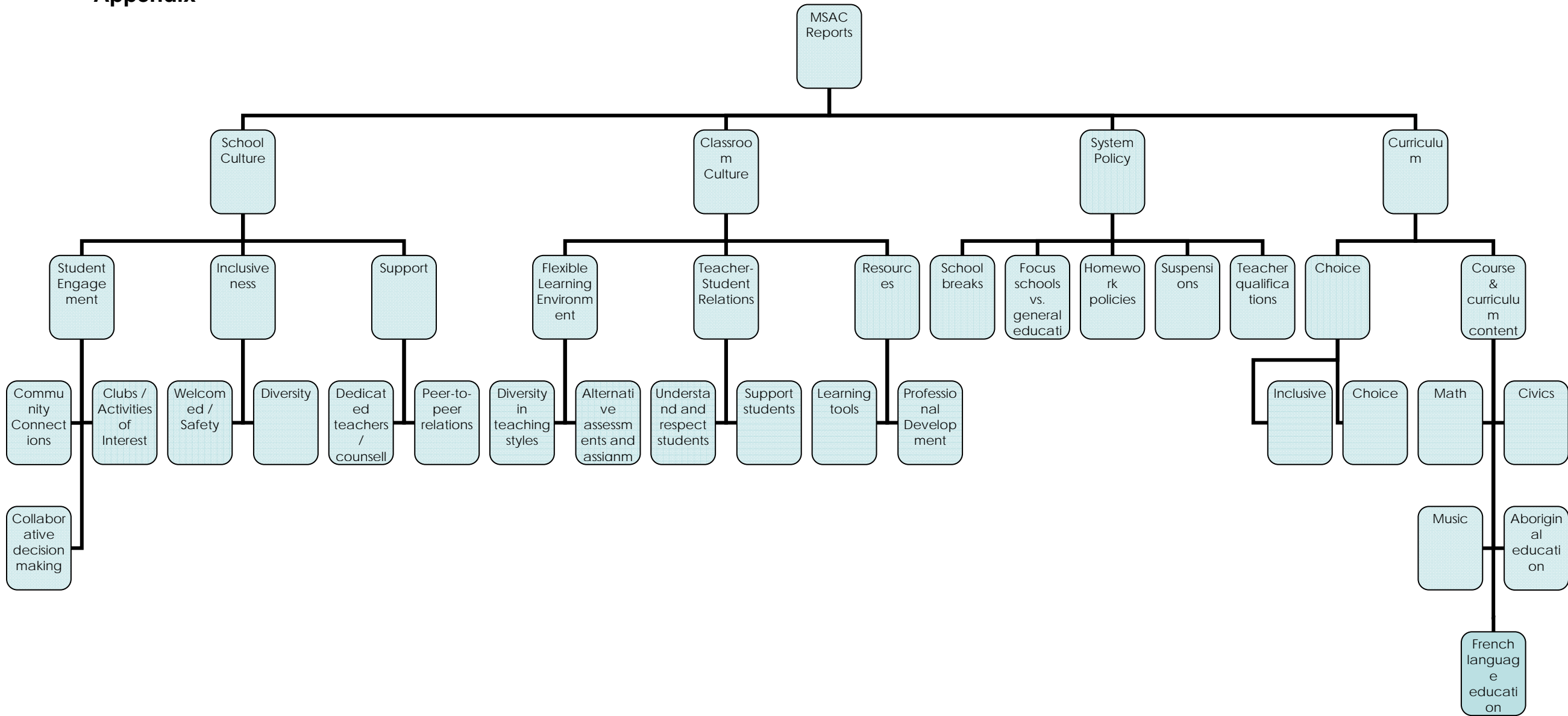
"There is a large need for qualified teachers"

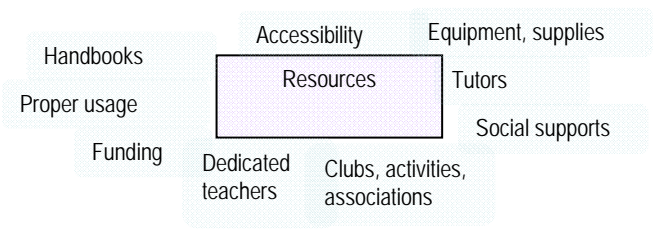
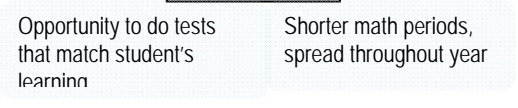
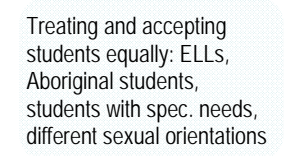
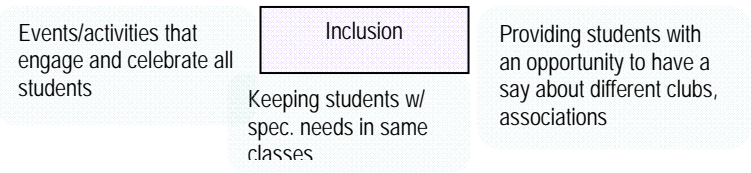
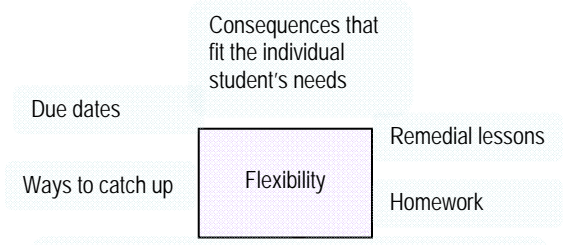
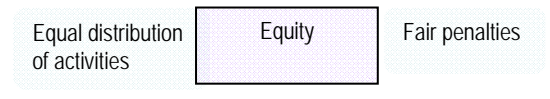
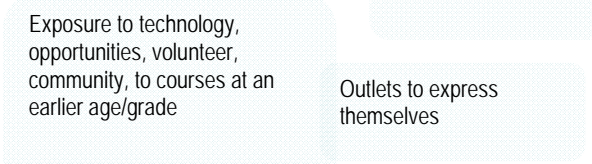
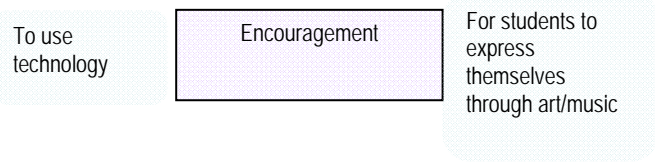
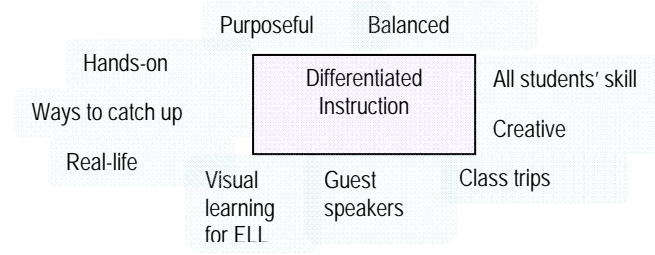
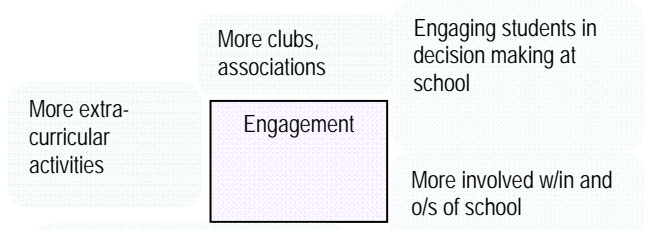
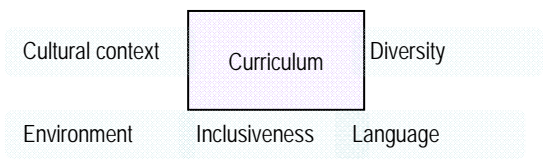
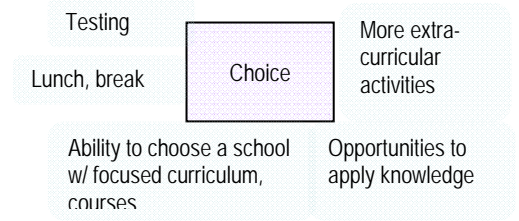
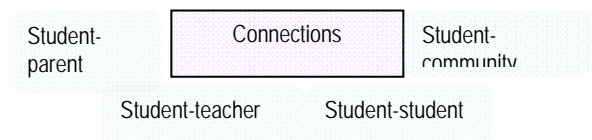
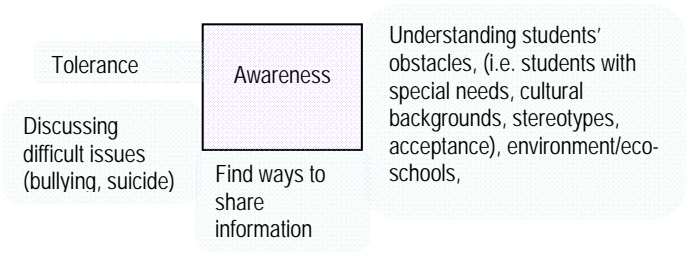
"...qualified teachers and good equipment, in order for them [students] to receive the best education they can."

"Another fact which affects a child's learning is the type of teacher they have. Teachers also need to assist their students and make sure that their students are getting everything they need in order to be successful."

"We found that more often than not, the teachers who teach the already existing courses in schools are not of Aboriginal descent and so our education is faltered because of this. We believe that people of our own culture would be better educators due to personal and cultural experiences"

Appendix





Teachers/ Guidance need to know how to appropriately support students with: special needs, bullying, ELL, Aboriginal

