

Speaking Up

Two WECDSB students appointed to Minister's Student Advisory Council



Kyle Tran, left, a Grade 11 student at F.J. Brennan Catholic High School, and Jada Mallott, a Grade 7 student at St. John Vianney Catholic Elementary School were both appointed to the Ontario Minister of Education's Student Advisory Council.

(Windsor, Ontario, Tuesday, May 16, 2017) – Not many 13-year-olds get an opportunity to bend the ear of some of the most influential people in politics, so when Jada Mallott got her chance she took full advantage of it.

Recently appointed to the 2017-18 Minister's Student Advisory Council, Mallot met Ontario Education Minister Mitzie Hunter in Toronto on May 3 and used the opportunity to advocate on behalf of the John McGivney Children's Centre.

"The centre helps a lot of children and families in Windsor," said Mallott, who hand delivered a letter to the Minister from Unifor Local 444 President Dino Chiodo calling for continued provincial funding support for the west Windsor children's services centre.

Mallott and Tran were in Toronto at a downtown conference centre along with almost 60 other students from around the province who were appointed to the council. That initial meeting was for all council members to discuss with the Minister, and amongst themselves, the issues they would like to see addressed in the coming year.



More than 480 students applied for the council. Students who serve on it meet with the minister twice during their term, with additional opportunities throughout the school year. The council provides the ministry with ongoing student perspectives and recommendations on the ministry's policies, programs, and practices. It can form committees on subjects of interest, and its members may be invited to participate in other student forums, events or conferences to discuss student-related issues.

For Tran, who wants to study nursing and is currently doing a co-op placement at a local physiotherapy clinic, being on the council provides a unique opportunity to improve student engagement at his school.

"It gives us a chance to talk about the student voice," he responded when asked about why he applied for the position. "I really wanted to be able to express my concerns and questions at a higher level."

Chief among those concerns is improved mentorship programs for Grade 9 students to help support them during a critical transition year to high school.

"It's all about adjusting to your new environment and getting comfortable," he said.

Mallot, meanwhile, sees the appointment as an opportunity to advance social justice issues.

"I see things on a daily basis that could be changed," she said, noting that she would like to see improved support for students with special needs.

"A lot of my peers go to school without breakfast in the morning and that affects learning," said Mallot, adding that she hoped to become a WECD SB student



trustee when she's in high school at St. Joseph's. "I know that my voice will be heard."

Tran, who is currently the deputy prime minister on his student council, said he joins the council with a different perspective given that he comes from a Catholic school. He said the last meeting he attended didn't deal with a lot of issues from a Catholic education perspective and he "would like to see more of that."

Being part of the council, he said, will allow him to promote greater participation among his own school's student body.

"Getting involved and learning more about what's happening in your community can really serve you well in your future," he said.