

## **Mountain View Views: The Importance of Student Voice**

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The formation of Mountain View School Division's Student Voice Group was a major step in promoting student advocacy and allowing for the sharing of ideas among students and schools. It is a way for students to voice their opinions on specific divisional issues and to share student-generated ideas with schools.

Student Voice was created in the fall of 2016 by the MVSD School Board as a way for high school students from across the division to share ideas about improving their educational experience in Mountain View. There are six high schools in the division and students from our communities who are a part of Student Voice meet throughout the year through face-to-face meetings and video conference.

The group has discussed major issues in its first two years of existence. One of Student Voice's main conversations was about student mental health and well-being. Mental health is a significant challenge for many young people today. Student Voice wanted to create an effective change within the school division to help with students' mental health. This is very important to hear the student side of the battle against mental health issues as they are the ones fighting it.

Mental health was not the only topic which the group has discussed. We have also discussed school suspensions and how student discipline might change to positively affect school environments and to prevent recurring incidents. An idea raised was how 'alternative consequences' could prevent students from following a pattern of suspensions and being out of school, which negatively affects their education. This idea sparked the plan to create a survey given to school administrators regarding suspensions. This survey gauged opinions on if suspensions worked or not. Student Voice received the survey data which the committee discussed at a meeting and a number of recommendations are being put forward to the division.

Another important note is, in its second year, Student Voice members attended a board meeting for a short presentation and a pre-budget consultation, which was open to the public.

The creation of Student Voice was a fundamental step in creating a better school division. Student Voice is extremely important when it comes to a student's education. Not only are students able to voice their opinions, but they are able to suggest to administration how schools and the division can be improved. Student Voice members are able to give the student perspective on specific issues. With students providing their views on specific issues, the decisions that schools make are more likely going to have a positive impact on students.

Student Voice is very important when it comes to creating a better environment for all. It allows students to voice their opinions. This group may only be in its third year, but in this short time it has created a place for student-led conversation that leads to a positive change.