

*As the Chairman of the English Montreal School Board, I would like to welcome you to a new feature for our website. On a regular basis one of our commissioners will write a message about an EMSB initiative or project they are involved with. We begin this series with Ward 5 Commissioner Anne Williams and her take on the new EMSB Student Advisory Committee (EMSAC)*

**-Angela Mancini**

### ***Giving Our Students a Voice***



Officially inaugurated this past December, the English Montreal Student Advisory Committee (EMSAC) is a new initiative, one which is poised to become a link between the students and the Council of Commissioners. The idea behind EMSAC is to give students from across the Board an opportunity to meet on a regular basis in a venue where they can discuss issues which they feel are important and, at the same time, allow them develop their own leadership skills.

EMSAC's official mandate is four-fold: to develop student leadership; to communicate the interests and issues that concern students at the EMSB; to respond to Board consultations, as required; and, to explore solutions that will produce an enriched school environment. Through striving to accomplish these goals, our student leaders will acquire the

skills to become future leaders in our community, the business world and beyond.

Composed of 28 students from 14 different high schools, the current EMSAC representatives were chosen for their leadership abilities. To get the committee going, it was the school administrators who picked the students, but the plan is to also have students at each secondary school have a say in who represents them.

To date, EMSAC has had only two meetings, but if the enthusiasm and discussions generated at these initial sessions are any indication, this new committee will most definitely be a strong voice for our student body. At the introductory get-together in December, a number of the representatives were eager to get started immediately. The holidays might have been just days away, but there were ideas to act on!

On the last Saturday in January, the members of EMSAC participated in a Youth as Facilitative Leaders training session. Despite the bitter cold and the early hour, they arrived full of enthusiasm. An animator from The Canadian Institute Of Cultural Affairs led the group through two hands-on workshops where they learned ways to facilitate discussions and build consensus.

Although the school year will soon come to an end, EMSAC's next meeting has a lofty agenda. The group will have an opportunity to participate in a discussion on the EMSB's French programs. Also, as the

EMSAC by-laws still have to be adopted, students will be reviewing a draft version of them. In addition, they will also have to elect an executive for the remainder of their tenure.

Today, these students are not just representatives of their respective schools; they are role models as well. We hope that after graduation, those who are able to, will remain involved with EMSAC and help guide the future generations of student leaders to achieve greater goals for their schools and their peers.

**-Anne Williams, Commissioner, Ward 5**