



## Local Students Serve on State Superintendent's Student Advisory Council to Help Find Solutions to Education Issues

Ponca City Public School senior Jadan Terrazas and Tonkawa High School students Celia Roth and Hannah Hembree have been selected to serve on the State Superintendent's Advisory Council. Selected from thousands of candidates, the three students met with student leaders from across the state and Oklahoma State Superintendent of Public Instruction Joy Hoffmeister to discuss the state's public education system and to share their ideas about how to strengthen it.

Nominated by their superintendents, Student Council members came to their first meeting at the State Capitol prepared to discuss their top concerns. They accepted the big task of finding solutions to education issues by giving a voice not often heard in the debate over the state of Oklahoma schools. The gathering marked the first meeting of the 2017-18 Superintendent's Advisory Council, which consists of 99 high school students from across the state, 31 of whom are returning members who served on last year's inaugural council.

The group gathered in the Blue Room of the State Capitol to discuss three of Oklahoma State Department of Education's top initiatives: redefining the senior year, defining a well-rounded education, and ensuring safe, supported and engaged school communities. Students participated in small-group discussions and provided feedback on all three topics. Members remarked on the value of the council and the unique opportunities it affords students to collaborate with their peers around the state.

"We are excited to be working with this outstanding group of Oklahoma students and grateful for their willingness to serve," said Hofmeister. "It is so important that student voices inform the decisions we make in public education. They are not only its front-line stakeholders but the future leaders of our state and the parents of those we will serve in the coming years. Today's conversations were enlightening and productive. Great young minds were at work today. We left with valuable student perspectives on a number of issues and look forward to collaborating with the group again at the next meeting."

Ponca City Public School Senior Jadan Terrazas said, "I was very honored to be chosen to serve on the State Superintendent's Advisory Council. This council is a direct channel for student's thoughts to be put into actual curriculum and action. That is very important to me personally and to the success of our education system. At our first meeting, we were presented with three main points of discussion: ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) - The State Plan, School Climate, and Reshaping the Senior Year. Students were asked to start at the section of the room with the topic they were most passionate about. We then rotated so that each student had discussed each topic to some degree. The meeting was run by Superintendent Joy Hofmeister and her staff. Legislators who had students

on the council stopped by for a quick photo shoot, although it appears Representative Vaughan and Senator Fields were both absent from the Capitol that day. I was very impressed by the interest that many of the other council members have for the future of education in Oklahoma. Our next meeting is scheduled for March 29, and I hope our outcome is to produce curriculum and school environments that have one main focus: STUDENT SUCCESS! I believe the best way to do that is to talk to the students, hear what they have to say, and lastly but most importantly, put their words to ACTION!"

The Tonkawa Public School district has two students serving on the committee. This is the second year for senior Celia Roth to serve on the Council. Roth stated, "Having the opportunity to be on the Student Advisory Council the past two years has been an amazing experience. I was able to share my views on issues that my school is facing, as well as the overall subjects of bullying, teacher pay, and the End of Instruction (EOI) tests. It is so cool to be able to voice my opinion along with other students from across the state and actually have someone who is willing to listen."

"What I enjoyed most about the Student Advisory Council meeting was that Joy Hofmeister, State Superintendent of Education, made us feel like our opinions mattered," said Tonkawa senior Hannah Hembree. "She helped me realize that students do have the power to make changes in our schools."

Student voices will be important as legislators are being forced once again to make painful cuts in the state budget with an \$869 Million shortfall this year.

Pictured top left: Student group discussions in the Blue Room

Top center: Celia Roth (Tonkawa High School), Christian Coleman (Millwood High School), Hannah Hembree (Tonkawa High School)

Top right: Entire student Advisory Council

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