



New
Westminster
Schools

**MINUTES OF THE NEW WESTMINSTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING**

**Tuesday, May 13th, 2025, 5:30 PM
School Board Office**

PRESENT

Maya Russell, Chair
Cheryl Sluis, Vice-Chair
Maya Russell, Trustee
Danielle Connelly, Trustee
Gurveen Dhaliwal, Trustee
Kathleen Carlsen, Trustee

Mark Davidson, Superintendent
Bettina Ketcham, Secretary Treasurer
Robert Weston, Executive Director, Human Resources
Anne-Marie Martin, Recording Secretary
Trevor Gee, Manager of International Education

Regrets:

Gurveen Dhaliwal, Trustee
Geraldine Lawlor, Associate
Superintendent

Members of the Public:

Kristie Oxley, NWTU President

Committee Chair Andres recognized and acknowledged the Qayqayt First Nation, as well as all Coast Salish peoples, on whose traditional and unceded territories we live, we learn, we play, and we do our work.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

Moved and Seconded

THAT the agenda for the May 13th, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting be adopted as distributed.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. District Presentations

Nil.

3. Delegations

Nil.

4. Correspondence

Nil.

5. Reports from Senior Management

a. Annual Facilities Grant Plan

Ketcham presented the plan, noting that the Annual Facilities Grant (AFG) for this year totals \$1.6 million. Key highlights include significant work at Queen Elizabeth Elementary, such as painting and lighting upgrades, as well as interior touch-ups. Over \$250,000 has been allocated for portable site preparation. Additionally, accessibility improvements are planned, including replacing knob-style locks with lever-style ones and enhancing accessibility across various sites.

During the discussion of the annual facilities grant, several questions were raised:

The Superintendent and Ketcham provided responses addressing these questions, explaining the strategic use of funds, potential future planning, and the flexibility of the facilities grant allocation.

Questions and comments can be viewed at [5:36pm] on the [video](#)

b. International Program Report

The international program currently has an enrollment of 142.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) students, with a goal of reaching 180.

Recent successes include the addition of new representatives in the Czech Republic, Taipei, Spain, and Thailand, a band trip to Japan by NWSS students, and the launch of the first domestic student exchange with a school in Sendai, Japan. Student engagement remains high, particularly in volunteering and community activities.

Financially, the program is self-sustaining and generates nearly \$1 million in net revenue after expenses, contributing significantly to district operations. Looking ahead, the program aims to maintain strong relationships in established markets, support emerging ones, increase student involvement in local activities, and continue fostering cultural exchange opportunities.

Questions and comments can be viewed at [5:58 pm] on the [video](#)

c. Sanctuary Schools Report

The Superintendent provided the following report. That since 2021, the program has seen significant growth, expanding from 6 to 75 individual students and from 5 to 58 families. It offers rapid student placement—typically within 2 to 5 days—and provides confidential mental health support, assistance through immigration status changes, and a sense of stability for families facing major life disruptions. Unique features include bilingual postcards and a compassionate, flexible approach to enrollment, accommodating students who arrive throughout the year. New Westminster was the first district in the province to adopt a sanctuary schools' policy, reinforcing its commitment to inclusive education. The program is praised for its collaborative support model, involving both district staff and partner organizations, and for its success in quickly identifying and integrating students while maintaining educational continuity for vulnerable populations.

Questions and comments were made that can be viewed on the [video](#) at [6:12 pm]

Highlighted was the importance of the program in providing normalcy for displaced families. Noting that New Westminster was the first district to introduce sanctuary schools' policy in the province.

6. Question Period

The Superintendent and Ketcham provided detailed responses addressing questions, and explaining the strategic approach to facilities management, international student program revenue, and potential space utilization.

Questions and comments can be view on the viewed on the [video](#) at [6:15 pm}

7. Notice of Meetings

- Tuesday, June 10, 2025: Committee of the Whole 5:30 p.m. (SBO & Via Zoom).

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:26 p.m.

Chair

Secretary-Treasurer