

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR OPEN BOARD MEETING  
OF THE NEW WESTMINSTER BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**Tuesday, October 28, 2025, 6:00 PM  
In-Person and Via Zoom Link**

**PRESENT** Maya Russell, Chair  
Cheryl Sluis, Vice-Chair  
Danielle Connelly, Trustee  
Elliott Slinn, Trustee  
Gurveen Dhaliwal, Trustee  
Kathleen Carlsen, Trustee  
Mark Andres, Trustee

Mark Davidson, Superintendent  
Geraldine Lawlor, Associate Superintendent  
Bettina Ketcham, Secretary-Treasurer  
Robert Weston, Executive Director, HR  
Sandra Singh, Director of Instruction, Innovation  
and Learning  
Anne-Marie Martin, Recording Secretary  
Ileana Neilson, Manager, Early Learning  
and Child Care  
Jen Richter, Director of Leadership and Learning

**REGRETS**

Members of the Public  
Junior Chuang behalf of French Immersion  
Parents from Qayqayt

***The New Westminster School District recognizes and acknowledges 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 6:04 p.m.

Chair Russell noted an inconsistency in the wording of Trustee Connelly's motions. Trustee Connelly confirmed that items 8b and 8c will be submitted with the correct wording and included under New Business. Advocacy will also be added under item 8d in the Board Committee Reports.

**2025-077**

**Moved and Seconded**

***THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) adopt the agenda as amended for the October 28, 2025, Regular School Board meeting.***

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

2. **MINUTES FOR APPROVAL**

a. Minutes from the Open meeting held:

1. Regular School Board Meeting held September 23, 2025

**2025-078**

**Moved and Seconded**

**THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) approve the minutes as distributed for the September 23, 2025, Regular School Board meeting.**

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

- b. Business Arising from the Minutes.  
Nil.

3. **PRESENTATIONS**

- a. Senior Leaders' Report: Literacy Focus (S. Singh and G. Lawlor)

Director of Instruction Singh and Associate Superintendent Lawlor presented the following information. That the provincial government has invested \$30 million over three years to support early literacy initiatives. In response, the New Westminster School District launched a literacy screening program for kindergarten and grade one students, conducted three times annually. So far, 71 divisions and 104 staff have been trained to use brief, reliable screening tools that help identify student strengths and areas needing support. District literacy facilitators collaborate with school teams to provide targeted interventions, aiming to build student confidence and success in reading. Progress is tracked using Ed Plan Insight, supporting data-informed decisions. The district's approach focuses on early identification, responsive support, and collaboration to improve literacy outcomes across all grade level.

A question about the timeline for involving parents when students are not meeting benchmarks was asked. Director of Instruction Singh confirmed that teachers will communicate with families in a timely manner and emphasized the importance of partnership with families. Clarification was sought on parent communication. Staff reiterated that teachers would reach out when support is needed, and parents are welcome to initiate conversations about their child's learning.

Concerns were voiced regarding potential stigma and lowered expectations for equity-seeking students. Staff responded by encouraging language that focuses on student needs rather than labels.

*The presentation can be viewed on the video at (6:09 pm)*

4. **DELEGATIONS**

- a. **EFI Parents of Qayqayt (Junior Chuang)**

Chuang acknowledged that while the EFI consolidation may overlook some potential benefits, most families support the initiative and appreciate the involvement of Qayqayt Elementary.

Two key challenges were identified:

**Transportation:** Many families rely on walking or public transit, with limited access to personal vehicles. A total of 124 students would require transportation. Current bus capacity is limited and shared with the broader community. Increased frequency and a hybrid coordination model through the Walking School Bus program were suggested.

**Child care:** There is long waitlist for before- and after-school care. An estimated 90 additional spaces are needed to support EFI program students. Staff are in communication with external providers though noted that the district has no control or discretion over these services.

The speaker expressed concern about the short one-year transition timeline, noting that families need more time to find solutions. A request was made to consider delaying the timeline and improving communication.

Chair Russell thanked the speaker for their input.

*The presentation can be viewed on the video at (6:28 pm)*

5. **CORRESPONDENCE**

Nil

6. **BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS**

a. Coordinating Committee, October 9, 2025

1. Comments from the Committee Chair, Trustee Connelly

Trustee Connelly provided a summary of the meeting. She thanked City of New Westminster staff for attending and noted that they delivered a presentation to the committee. The presentation was described as very insightful and useful, offering valuable context and information for committee members.

**2025-079**

**Moved and Seconded**

**THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) approve the minutes for the October 9, 2025, Coordinating Committee meeting.**

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

7. **REPORTS FROM SENIOR MANAGMENT**

a. **Superintendent Update (M. Davidson) (Verbal)**

Superintendent Davidson noted the district hosted middle school volleyball tournaments and is planning a sports day for Grade 4 and 5 students. A second athletic director was

added at the middle school level to broaden perspectives, and a district principal for Indigenous education and equity will assist in the work of helping to remove participation barriers. In fine arts, middle schools are preparing for winter concerts, QMS is rehearsing The Little Mermaid, and high schools are planning Halloween performances. Most operational plans are complete and aligned with the board's strategic plan, with a focus on connecting goals to Indigenous ways of knowing. Remaining plans from Literacy/Numeracy and Communications will be submitted shortly. The update emphasized collaboration, continuous improvement, shared language around education, and a commitment to data-informed decision making.

1. **2025-2026 Operational Plan Presentation**

Superintendent Davidson presented an update noting that most department operational plans are complete and align with the board's strategic plan, with a focus on connecting goals to Indigenous ways of knowing. Trustee concerns included the lack of demographic data for assessing equity in Indigenous education and a potential shift in direction regarding international student enrolment. Superintendent Davidson acknowledged the latter, confirming the goal is to maintain or reduce international student numbers to address capacity issues. Highlights from the plans include improving student survey results, expanding professional learning, and fostering district-wide collaboration. The presentation reflected the district's commitment to strategic planning, continuous improvement, and addressing gaps in current approaches.

The presentation can be viewed on the video at (6:39 pm)

b. **Queen Elizabeth Elementary Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC) (I. Neilson)**

Nielsen presented details of the Neighborhood Learning Center, which aims to establish a community hub within the school offering newcomer support, and other services which may include health and wellness programs, early years programming, before and after school care, senior programming, and after-school activities. The public consultation phase began October 29, 2025, followed by a community-wide survey running from November 3 to 17, available on school and district websites. Survey results will be presented in January 2026. The expansion project remains on track for completion in January 2027, with no delays reported. Trustees expressed enthusiasm about expanding services in Queensborough, discussed the possibility of satellite Welcome Center services, and showed interest in increasing community access to school resources. The update highlighted a collaborative approach to meeting diverse neighborhood needs.

The presentation can be viewed on the video at (6:51 pm)

c. **Short Term Capacity Review (B. Ketcham)**

Secretary Treasurer Ketcham presented key strategies to address district capacity, including grade reconfiguration (K–6, 7–9, 10–12), program of choice review, school lotteries, use of portables, and converting non-enrolling spaces into instructional areas. Specific proposals included balancing enrolment through pushing a grade down to the

elementary level which also serves to and ease pressure on the district's only secondary schools. Implementation will be phased based on infrastructure readiness, with ongoing community engagement. Another action taking place is consolidating the EFI program from Qayqayt Elementary to Herbert Spencer for September 2026, with no reduction in total EFI spaces across the district. Challenges identified included transportation and childcare concerns for affected families and staff discussed what action they had taken to address these areas. Key milestone dates for the EFI transition include a community meeting on November 20, 2025, an expression of intent to move by December 8, and program of choice registration in January 2026.

The presentation can be viewed on the video at (6:58 pm)

**d. Bill 19 Child Care Update (B. Ketcham)**

Secretary Treasurer Ketcham provided a brief overview of Bill 19 – the School Amendment Act, 2025, recently introduced by the provincial government. The legislation aims to expand access to child care by enabling school districts to offer licensed child care programs directly on school property, including care for infants and toddlers. It also allows districts to provide care during non-instructional days and school breaks as well as charge families reasonable fees. The bill had not yet passed, and the district is monitoring its progress. Once specific regulations become available, staff may begin assessing what opportunities there are for child care expansion - whether they are operated by the district or third party operated.

The presentation can be viewed on the video at (7:27 pm)

**e. NWSS 5-Block Model Update (G. Lawlor)**

Associate Superintendent Lawlor reported that most student timetables are now settled; however, several challenges have emerged. Several students are requesting to drop in-person NWSS classes in favour of online options, and there has been a noticeable decline in attendance after lunch, with many students not returning for afternoon classes. Teacher feedback on the five-block model has been mixed, ranging from positive to neutral to negative. The district is actively monitoring the implementation and considering potential revisions to improve student distribution across the schedule.

The presentation can be viewed on the video at (7:28 pm)

**f. Policy 27 Evaluation of Educations (J. Richter)**

Director of Leadership and Learning Richter introduced the Evaluation of Educators Policy, developed in collaboration with the teachers' union to support professional growth. The policy aligns with BC educator standards, the BC School Act, and the collective agreement. It emphasizes professional collaboration, encourages reflective practice, and aims to strengthen quality teaching and learning. The policy was presented for Board approval.

**2025-080**  
**Moved and Seconded**

**THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) approve Policy 27 Evaluation of Educators as presented.**

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

The presentation can be viewed on the video at (7:38 pm)

**g. Administrative Procedures (For Information Only)**

The below Administrative Procedures were listed on the agenda for information only.

- AP411 Evaluation of Educators
- AP104 District Code of Conduct
- AP142 Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)
- AP216 Career Preparation Program
- AP240 Appendix A Counselling Consent Form

**8. NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Road Safety Upgrades on Royal Avenue**

Concerns were raised regarding road safety near Qayqayt Elementary. The urgency of implementing safety upgrades was emphasized, and the importance of ensuring safe access to the school was acknowledged.

**2025-081**  
**Moved and Seconded**

**THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) write a letter to Mayor and Council of the City of New Westminster, asking for urgency to address upgrades to the identified stretch of Royal Avenue above Ecole Qayqayt Elementary School in New Westminster to ensure student and staff safety from the proximity and high volume of vehicles to the school site, particularly the portable classrooms and playing field.**

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**b. Historical Preservation Administrative Procedures or Policy**

Trustee Connelly presented a motion to establish an Administrative Procedure or Policy for historical preservation. The Board discussed the importance of recognizing and preserving the history of New Westminster schools to foster a sense of belonging and educate students about both positive and challenging aspects of the past. Appreciation was expressed for efforts to salvage historical materials during school renovations; with a public thank-you extended to staff involved. The conversation emphasized celebrating the district's legacy while promoting awareness and education.

**2025-082**  
**Moved and Seconded**

**THAT** the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) direct staff to develop a Board Policy establishing vision, principles, and governance for the preservation of educational artifacts and records of enduring value; and a companion Administrative Procedure (AP) detailing definitions, roles, workflows, storage standards, and partnership protocols; and for further consideration, The Board of Education could also assign a trustee liaison(s) to assist with research and community partner outreach.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**c. Literacy Intervention Costs**

Trustee Connelly proposed tabling the motion due to significant changes in the package and the need for more time for the Board to review.

**2025-083**  
**Moved and Seconded**

**THAT** the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) table the motion on literacy intervention costs to the November 25, 2025, open board meeting.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**d. Affordability Fund**

Trustee Connelly introduced a motion to continue the BC Student and Family Affordability Fund, emphasizing the district's current financial shortfall and the fund's importance in supporting students and families. The motion includes a request to seek continuation of the fund and to prepare a letter to the Ministry of Education. The letter will incorporate personal stories, specific data, and evidence of the fund's impact on the school community.

**2025-084**  
**Moved and Seconded**

**THAT** the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) advocate for the continued and sustainable funding of the provincial Student & Family Affordability Fund, minus the Feeding Futures contribution, beyond the current fiscal year, and that the Board direct the Chair to write to the Minister of Education and Child Care, the Minister of Finance, and local MLAs requesting the continuation of the Fund on a multi year, stable basis; and include SD40 data and stories demonstrating local impact (e.g., supplies, activity/transportation supports, fee waivers, emergency assistance). And to work with the BCSTA (British Columbia School Trustees Association) to submit a resolution in support of continued provincial affordability funding for the BCSTA AGM.

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**e. Use of E-Scooters at Schools**

Concerns were raised regarding student safety related to e-scooter and e-bike use near school grounds. It was noted that e-scooters are only legally permitted in five communities, and New Westminster is not among them. Other districts do not allow e-scooters on school property due to their legal status. Safety issues included students riding two to a scooter and navigating steep hills. Suggestions were made to focus on education and awareness, including the possibility of installing dismount signage outside the high school, where no such signs or student crossing indicators currently exist. It was also noted that e-bike use is restricted for individuals under 16. The discussion emphasized the need for clear communication and safety measures to address growing concerns.

The question period can be viewed on the video at (8:02 pm)

**9. OLD BUSINESS**

**a. Board Advocacy**

It was suggested that old business items related to board advocacy be tabled to the next meeting, due to ongoing discussions and the need for further consideration.

**2025-085  
Moved and Seconded**

**THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) table Board Advocacy discussions to the November 25, 2025, open Board meeting.**

***CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY***

**10. TRUSTEE REPORTS (moved to follow item 11. QUESTION PERIOD)**

HR Executive Director Weston publicly acknowledged and thanked Kristie Oxley for her service as President of NWTU and welcomed Darryl Schelp as her successor in the role.

Vice-Chair Sluis participated in several meetings and initiatives throughout September, including working group sessions, PAC meetings, and a SOGI meeting. Highlights included the installation of Pride logos at school entrances, engagement in discussions around gender identity, and involvement in the DEIA Voice of Equity series for teachers, which supports inclusive practices and professional learning.

Trustee Connelly provided a SOGI update, noting strong staff engagement, as well as strong participation with the Accessibility Committee.

Trustee Slinn expressed appreciation to all who spoke, emphasizing that their words were heard and taken seriously. Acknowledged the sincerity of the board's efforts and reaffirmed a commitment to doing their best to respond meaningfully.

Trustee Andres reported on recent PAC meetings and participation in the Anti-Racism Committee. Noted that the upcoming CUPE Pro-D Day will include an anti-racism focus. Gave a shout-out to Clint Morrison for his contributions. As the board's representative to the Provincial Council, shared that the national school food program has been made permanent. Also noted that the Climate Action Group will begin meeting in November.

Trustee Carlsen noted that she attended a BCPSEA communication session focused on improving how we communicate during bargaining, participated in a joint school board and city meeting that is closed to the public but available online, and joined the BCSTA Metro Branch meeting where we confirmed other districts face similar challenges. I provided an update at the DPAC meeting and thanked parents, helped organize the Kindergarten Info Session with strong collaboration from staff and community groups, expressed appreciation to staff who presented at the Dyslexia Symposium, and supported Dry Grad at Me and Ed's. Trustee Carlsen concluded by thanking parents and caregivers and reminding them that their voices matter.

The question period can be viewed on the video at (8:46 pm)

11. **QUESTION PERIOD (15 MINUTES)**

The board received input from several parents and stakeholders regarding the relocation of Early French Immersion programming, child care access, and school capacity. Questions were raised about financial support for facilities, the prioritization of expansion, and the role of external partners. Concerns were expressed about limited notice of the relocation of Early French Immersion, and the impact on families—particularly regarding transportation and child care. Speakers emphasized the need for equity, transparency, and long-term planning. Staff acknowledged the challenges, citing enrolment growth, space constraints, and pending provincial regulations. The board reaffirmed its commitment to supporting families and working with partners to find sustainable solutions.

Chair Russell took a moment to introduce Daryl Schelp the new Teachers' Union President.

The question period can be viewed on the video at (8:08 pm)

12. **NOTICE OF MEETINGS**

Regular Board Meeting – Tuesday, November 25, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.

13. **REPORTING OUT FROM IN-CAMERA BOARD MEETING**

a. Record of the September 23, 2025, In-Camera Meeting

14. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

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*Chair*

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*Secretary-Treasurer*