

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

**Tuesday, December 16, 2025, 6:00 PM
In-Person and Via Zoom Link**

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

Mark Davidson, Superintendent
Geraldine Lawlor, Associate Superintendent
Bettina Ketcham, Secretary-Treasurer
Robert Weston, Executive Director, HR
Jen Richter, Director of Instruction
Anne-Marie Martin, Recording Secretary

REGRETS

Members of the Public

Student Voice: Cayleigh Elcheshen,
Sadie Campbell and Ava Purewal

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 6:00 p.m.

2025-093

Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) adopt the agenda for the Regular School Board meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. **MINUTES FOR APPROVAL**

a. Minutes from the Open meeting held:

1. Regular School Board Meeting held November 25, 2025

2025-094

Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) approve the minutes as distributed for the November 25, 2025, Regular School Board meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

b. Business Arising from the Minutes.

Nil.

3. **PRESENTATIONS**

a. **Student Voice** (Cayleigh & Sadie)

Student Voice members Ava, Sadie, and Cayleigh presented their plans for the year, supported by Mr. Patton and Mr. Sanj Johal. They reported strong participation in the Fall student survey (334 responses so far) focused on demographics, inclusivity, mental health, and safety, driven by promotions such as candy incentives, social media, posters, teacher support, and announcements. They outlined a new Spring survey to compare results over time—especially around mental health—and to refine questions based on Fall findings. They also described plans for the Spring student symposium at NWSS, where topics (likely similar to last year’s student success, DEIA, mental health, and safety) will be finalized using survey data, and they emphasized the need to raise awareness and attendance among high school students and better involve middle schools. The students highlighted challenges in the middle-to-high school transition, noting that transitions are often portrayed as scarier than reality and that students need more support with course selection and mentorship (e.g., buddy systems, high school students visiting middle schools). In response to a question from the chair, they committed to returning to the board in January with analyzed Fall survey results and proposed symposium themes.

The presentation can be viewed on the [video](#) at (1:40)

4. **CORRESPONDENCE**

a. **Letter to City of New Westminster: Royal Avenue Roadway Safety and Security Concerns.**

b. **Letter to TransLink for More Buses.**

The Board noted two outgoing letters: one to the City of New Westminster Mayor and Council regarding roadway safety concerns on Royal Avenue, and another to TransLink advocating for increased service on bus routes 102 and 105 during school drop-off and pick-up times.

5. **BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Nil.

6. **REPORTS FROM SENIOR MANAGMENT**

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

Superintendent Davidson reported on a busy “production season,” highlighting strong student and staff engagement in school fine arts events, the successful Discover New

West event, and a well-attended district math night with over 600 students. Planning is underway to refine next year’s secondary five-block schedules, continue data-informed site meetings with principals focused on strategic plan progress and literacy, and organize the elementary track and field meet on May 22 for Grades 4–5, with thanks to staff and volunteers for their efforts.

b. Long Range Facilities Planning (B. Ketcham)

Secretary-Treasurer Ketcham reported that the March 2023 plan is being refreshed in light of ongoing enrollment growth, recent capacity additions, and the new Simcoe Elementary announcement, and noted continued middle school capacity pressures and unsuccessful prior land-acquisition proposals. The board discussed exploring site intensification on existing district properties and examining a possible grade reconfiguration from K–5/6–8/9–12 to K–6, 7–9, 10–12, with trustees highlighting concerns about green space, traffic, childcare, vulnerable learners, French Immersion, electives, and athletics, and emphasizing the need for robust community engagement consistent with the IAP2 framework. Staff committed to bringing a detailed engagement and communications plan in January and to presenting an updated Long-Range Facilities Plan by June, and the board approved both the direction to explore site intensification and to support the proposed grade reconfiguration in principle, with consultation to follow.

**2025-095
Moved and Seconded**

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) permit staff to investigate site intensification strategies of existing owned property to meet capacity needs of the district which includes investigating the construction feasibility of multiple sites across the district for which capacity can be added.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

**2025-096
Moved and Seconded**

THAT the Board of Education support in principle the permanent grade reconfigurations across the District from K - 5, 6 - 8 and 9 - 12 to K-6, 7-9 and 10-12 and direct staff to engage the community on what considerations the district should make as part of any future transitions.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

During the long range facilities planning discussion, trustees asked what site intensification would practically mean in a land-constrained city (including which sites might be affected and impacts on green space, traffic, and childcare), how and when the community would be engaged under the IAP2 framework, how potential grade reconfiguration and new school models might affect students with IEPs, ELL learners, and other vulnerable groups, whether educational models (not just buildings) from other jurisdictions would be considered, and what the overall process, options, trade-offs, and timelines would look like before any preferred options are chosen.

The presentation can be viewed on the [video](#) at (21:38)

c. **Bank Signing Authority (B. Ketcham - Secretary Treasurer)**

2025-097

Moved and Seconded

***THAT* the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster)'s bank signing authorities Trustee Cheryl Sluis and Trustee Danielle Connelly; Mark Davidson, Superintendent; and Bettina Ketcham, Secretary-Treasurer be approved; AND FURTHER that effective immediately, bank signing authority Trustee Maya Russell, former Chair, be removed.**

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

d. **Preliminary Budget Process Timeline (B. Ketcham)**

Secretary-Treasurer Ketcham presented the proposed 2026–27 budget process, noting it largely mirrors the previous year’s timeline and again includes a community budget survey and partner group engagement through the Coordinating Committee. Partner groups will also be invited to the March board meeting to share priorities in advance. The budget is planned for approval by the end of April to support timely staffing processes. In discussion, a concern was raised that the original timing of the Partner Group Budget Consultation (Coordinating Committee) left limited time to incorporate feedback; staff agreed to move this meeting one week earlier, and the board approved the budget process and timeline as amended. Trustees also discussed the importance of clearly communicating the constrained financial context to partner groups so they can frame their recommendations realistically, while still recognizing the value of hearing broader unmet needs to inform district advocacy.

2025-098

AMENDED

***That* the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) approves the 2026-27 budget process and timeline as presented.**

2025-099

Moved and Seconded

***That* the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) approves the 2026-27 budget process and timeline as presented with a change to the coordinating committee date as discussed.**

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

e. E-Scooters (G. Lawlor)

Associate Superintendent Lawlor presented a briefing on e-mobility devices (e-scooters and e-bikes). She clarified that New Westminster is not part of the provincial e-scooter pilot, so e-scooters are illegal on public roads and school property, while e-bikes are permitted with provincial age restrictions (16+ for standard e-bikes; 14+ for light e-bikes, 16+ if carrying passengers). The district has no current policy but will develop an administrative procedure for e-scooters and e-bikes on school property, aligned with provincial and city rules. Waller reported on the E-mobility and Safer Streets community event at Century House, where themes included safety, legal compliance, and the district's role. Key next steps are to: send a district-wide message to families before winter break clarifying the legal status of e-scooters and expectations for e-bikes; not promote or educate in favour of e-scooters while they remain illegal; develop and communicate the new AP; and monitor any changes to provincial pilots or city participation. Trustees expressed appreciation for the educational approach, asked about liability if illegal devices are used on school property, and emphasized the need to support families with clear information, especially ahead of holiday purchases.

The presentation can be viewed on the [video](#) at (48:56)

f. Operations Report (For Information)

Secretary-Treasurer Ketcham highlighted ongoing capital and operational work, noting that the Simcoe Elementary project received positive feedback at the City's design review panel, particularly on how much capacity is being achieved on a small site, with interior design consultations (including trustee participation) still to come. She reported progress on developing a district-wide operational risk register, which is fostering cross-departmental discussion and will incorporate items such as emergency preparedness and environmental incidents (e.g., pipeline or dangerous goods risks) and eventually be shared with the board and used to inform budgeting. The board also heard that additional provincial capital support and project contingencies will allow completion of Memorial Park phase one landscaping (grading, fencing, lighting) at NWSS, though more ambitious park elements remain for a future phase.

g. Administrative Procedure 117 and Policy 17 – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) (J. Richter) (update due to the government policy changes)

Director of Instruction Richter explained that policy language and the related administrative procedure were updated to reflect the Ministry's four gender identity options, modernize terminology to better represent 2SLGBTQIA+ diversity, formalize the use of a student's usual name unless a legal name is required, and explicitly support requests to update names or gender identity in official records. Trustees asked about consistency across schools; staff outlined changes to registration forms, communication to principals and clerical staff, and inclusion in training. The Board unanimously approved the revisions to Policy 17 as presented and received the updated AP 117 for information.

1. Policy 17 – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)

2025-100

Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Page 2 of 79 Westminster) accept the revisions to Policy 17 - Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. AP117 – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)

h. Administrative Procedures (For Information)

The presentation can be viewed on the [video](#) at (1:03:55 pm)

1. AP261 - Multi Day In Province Field Trips (Low and High Risk)

- a. AP261-1 - Multi-Day In Province Field Trip Proposal Form**
- b. AP261-2 - Multi Day In Province Field Trip Teacher Checklist**

2. AP262 - Multi Day Out of Province Field Trips (Within Canada and International)

- a. AP262-1 - Multi Day Out of Province Field Trip Proposal Form**
- b. AP262-2 - Multi-Day Out of Province Field Trip Teacher Checklist**

Associate Superintendent Lawlor presented updated procedures that clarify approval processes, timelines, risk assessment, and supervision requirements for multi-day trips within BC (AP 261) and for out-of-province and international trips (AP 262), including required principal, Superintendent, and Board approvals, with limited exceptions for time-sensitive opportunities such as championship events.

3. AP300 – Extended Absences for Parents/Guardians

4. AP330 – Student Attendance

Associate Superintendent Lawlor outlined updates to clarify expectations around student attendance, extended absences, and residency. AP 300 now more clearly describes responsibilities for monitoring attendance, handling extended absences requested by parents/guardians, and ensuring students are ordinarily resident in the district and have an identified responsible adult for emergencies. AP 330 sets out processes for addressing non-attendance and extended time away, including when a student may be temporarily removed from a specific school's register while maintaining their place in the district. Trustees raised concerns about potential impacts on vulnerable students and chronic absenteeism; staff emphasized that extenuating circumstances will be considered case-by-case and that the intent is to protect student safety and continuity of care, not to exclude students from the system.

The presentation can be viewed on the [video](#) at (1:10:30 pm)

7. **NEW BUSINESS**

a. **Support for English Language Learners (ELL) Data and Funding (K. Carlsen)**

Trustee Carlsen read the motion and trustees expressed support, noting current guidelines expect districts to fund continued support from their operating budgets after five years, but also raised questions about staffing ratios, how additional funding would translate into service, and the need for an effective instructional framework alongside funding.

2025-101

Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster):

- 1. Write a letter to the Ministry of Education and Child Care requesting that English Language Learner (ELL) data be included as a distinct category within the Framework for Enhancing Student Learning (FESL) reporting. and**
- 2. Request that the Ministry of Education and Child Care extend ELL funding beyond the current five-year cap to ensure equitable and sufficient support for all English Language Learner students.**

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The presentation can be viewed on the [video](#) at (1:20:30 pm)

8. **OLD BUSINESS**

Trustee Carlsen asked for any updates regarding the letter about QE busing, and Trustee Russell noted it was a timely opportunity to check in.

9. **TRUSTEE REPORTS**

Trustee Andres reported attending the district math games night with their five-year-old, noting it helped counter the “math is scary” narrative by making math playful and positive, and praised high school volunteers for their patience and skill with young children. The trustee also highlighted the launch of the Climate Action Working Group led by Director Richter, describing the first meeting as energetic and promising, with terms of reference in development and regular reporting planned.

Trustee Russell thanked the Superintendent for increased attention and presence at performing arts events, noting that fine arts teachers had previously felt less seen by senior administration, and emphasized how meaningful it is for staff and students to have senior leaders attend performances and recognize their hard work.

Trustee Carlsen attended the Remembrance Day assembly at Massey Theatre, praising students' talent, respect, and maturity, and reflected on attending the BCSTA Trustee Academy for the first time, emphasizing lessons on good governance and keeping students at the center of decisions. Carlson also acknowledged staff supporting student athletes and parents advocating for school safety, and extended holiday wishes and thanks to the school community.

Chair Sluis reflected on the year with gratitude for students, staff, families, and community partners working to create safe, caring, and inclusive learning environments; shared a story from New West Family Place illustrating how community organizations reduce barriers for families; and emphasized the importance of public participation in board processes to improve decision-making and achieve more inclusive outcomes.

The presentation can be viewed on the [video](#) at (1:29 pm)

10. **QUESTION PERIOD (15 Minutes)**

Before Question Period, Chair Sluis reviewed the board's standard public participation and question period guidelines.

The public was given the opportunity to ask questions on items related to the agenda, with staff responding where appropriate. To view the full comment and question period, please refer to the meeting [video](#) at 1:35.00.

11. **NOTICE OF MEETINGS**

- Tuesday, January 27, 2026: Open Regular Board Meeting - 6:00 p.m. (Hybrid)
- Thursday February 5, 2026: Coordinating Committee In-Person at the SBO - 3:30 p.m.
- Tuesday February 10, 2026: Committee of the Whole Open Board In-Person at the SBO - 5:30 p.m.

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

- a. Record of the November 25, 2025, In-Camera Meeting

14. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

Chair

Secretary-Treasurer