

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

**Tuesday, November 25, 2025, 6:00 PM
In-Person and Via Zoom Link**

PRESENT	Maya Russell, Chair Cheryl Sluis, Vice-Chair Danielle Connelly, Trustee Gurveen Dhaliwal, Trustee Kathleen Carlsen, Trustee Marc Andres, Trustee	Mark Davidson, Superintendent Geraldine Lawlor, Associate Superintendent Bettina Ketcham, Secretary-Treasurer Robert Weston, Executive Director, HR Sanj Johal, District Principal of Indigenous Education and Equity Anne-Marie Martin, Recording Secretary Amy Grey, Assistant Secretary Treasurer
REGRETS	Elliott Slinn, Trustee	Members of the Public

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 6:03 p.m.

Trustee Carlsen indicated that her Trustee reports were not on the meeting minutes from the October 25th, meeting. These were added by the Recording Secretary.

2025-086

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 October 28, 2025

2025-087

Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) approve the minutes as distributed for the October 28, 2025, Regular School Board meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

- b. Business Arising from the Minutes.
Nil.

3. **PRESENTATIONS**

- a. **Senior Leaders' Report: Indigenous Focus** (S. Johal – District Principal of Indigenous Education and Equity and Amy Laidlaw – Indigenous Curriculum Coordinator)

Johal and Laidlaw provided an update on Indigenous Education and Equity initiatives, outlining the team's collaborative structure and focus on cultural safety and belonging. They highlighted strategic plans that include student forums, family gatherings, Indigenous student voice, partnerships with the Indigenous Education Council and local nations, and monthly monitoring of attendance and academic progress to address chronic absenteeism. The update also covered targeted literacy and numeracy interventions, expanded community partnerships with organizations such as Douglas College, UBC, Black History Matters, and Junior Achievement BC, and student programming like the JBC entrepreneurship project integrating Indigenous and local knowledge. Amy emphasized the role of cultural teachings, ceremonies, and restorative practices in schools. Professional development for staff continues Indigenous ways of knowing and equity, using tools such as discussion circles and the district's equity framework rooted in Indigenous principles. The team also noted efforts to expand reconciliation committees and track student transitions across school levels.

The board and trustees expressed appreciation for the depth and impact of this work, as well as the positive influence on student belonging, voice, opportunity, and cultural responsiveness.

The presentation can be viewed on the video at (2:00)

4. **DELEGATIONS**

Nil.

5. **CORRESPONDENCE**

- a. Queensborough School Bus Service to New Westminster

The board discussed ongoing advocacy efforts to maintain the Queensborough school bus service to New Westminster Secondary School. A letter was sent to the province emphasizing the importance and urgency of continuing bus service for families. Chair Russell reported meetings with two local MLAs and follow-up with written briefing materials to reinforce the request. Trustees discussed the need to send regular follow-up requests and to expand the list of government officials addressed to keep the issue a priority for decision-makers.

6. **BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS**

There were no Board committee reports at this meeting. The last Coordinating Committee

meeting was cancelled, and the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 5, 2026.

7. **REPORTS FROM SENIOR MANAGMENT**

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

Superintendent Mark Davidson reported on several key areas, noting the positive atmosphere in schools as staff and students prepare for concerts and highlighting a successful support staff professional development day that fostered a strong sense of community. He expressed appreciation for the planning teams and shared an update on the new elementary school project, acknowledging the advocacy and efforts of the board, staff, and community partners in moving the initiative forward.

1. **School Learning Plans**

Superintendent Mark Davidson reported that all schools have submitted their updated school learning plans, which are directly connected to the district's new five-year strategic plan. These plans are developed and reviewed with the support of the district leadership team, and school administrators engage in site visits and DLT meetings to discuss their goals and share strategies.

A key expectation is that all school plans address literacy and numeracy, reflecting district priorities. The superintendent highlighted the collaborative nature of the process, with administrators and staff sharing ideas and best practices aimed at supporting student learning. He emphasized that school learning plans are "living documents," intended to be updated over time in response to evolving student needs and ongoing professional learning within schools.

Trustees were assured that these plans will continue to be posted and updated on the district website, reinforcing transparency and the dynamic nature of ongoing educational improvement.

The presentation can be viewed on the video at (33:45)

b. **Statements of Financial Information (SOFI) Report (A. Grey)**

Secretary-Treasurer Amy Gray presented the annual Statement of Financial Information (SOFI) report, as required under the Financial Information Act. The report ensures transparency and accountability in the use of public funds.

The SOFI report will be submitted to the Ministry by the December 31 deadline, and the board was asked to acknowledge its receipt for information.

Trustee inquired about the lease for RCAP and Power, noting it set to expire in June 2026.

Secretary-Treasurer Ketcham confirmed that while the current lease for RCAP and Power expires in June 2026, recent delays in the Columbia Square development mean the district can likely remain in that space for now. Negotiations to renew the lease will begin in the new year. Ketcham also noted the district continues to advocate for

permanent, purpose-built facilities for these programs through its capital plan requests to the Ministry of Education.

2025-088
Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) acknowledge receipt of the Statement of Financial Information (SOFI) Report for Information for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2025.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The presentation can be viewed on the video at (39:04)

c. 2025-26 Estimated Operating Grant Recalculation (Amy Grey - Assistant Secretary Treasurer)

Assistant Secretary Treasurer Gray provided an update on the 2025-26 estimated operating grant recalculation. The recalculation is based on the September enrollment count, comparing actual numbers to earlier projections. While overall enrollment increased by 38 FTE over the past year, it was 114 students below initial projections, resulting in an approximate \$1.05 million decrease in projected funding. However, this was offset by an estimated \$1.08 million increase in funding for unique student needs (level 2 learners), leaving the district's overall grant neutral compared to the original budget planning.

Additional adjustments may occur once the Ministry confirms the salary differential funding and as subsequent enrollment counts are completed in February and May. The final recalculated grant is expected mid-December, and the district's amended budget will be updated accordingly.

Concerns were raised about disparities in student designations and access to assessments, emphasizing equity for students without private testing resources. District staff reported increased efforts to secure designations through internal processes and external partnerships, while noting ongoing challenges with assessment wait times, particularly for students transferring from other jurisdictions.

Discussion clarified the distinction between service and designation, noting that some students without formal designations still receive support through Individual Education Plans.

The presentation can be viewed on the video at (45:10)

d. Enrollment and Staffing Update (R. Weston and G. Lawlor)

Executive Director Weston and Associate Superintendent Lawlor reported that district enrollment continues to grow, though at a slower rate than in previous years. Increases were noted at Fraser Middle, Skwo:wech Elementary, and Connaught Heights, while some schools experienced declines. Alternative programs had a slight decrease but

anticipate more students with ongoing intake. Inclusive education, English language learning (ELL), and international student enrollments all increased, while home learning numbers decreased.

District staffing ratios for teacher librarians, resource/learning support, and counselors meet or exceed provincial requirements, with overall teaching FTE rising compared to last year. Support staff numbers are stable or increased across most roles. Custodial staffing remains unchanged, and the board briefly discussed allocation formulas and potential needs for future adjustments.

The presentation can be viewed on the video at (53:50 pm)

e. Board Authorized Courses (G. Lawlor)

Associate Superintendent Lawler presented two new Board Authority Authorized (BAA) courses for approval:

- Forensic Sciences 11: A Grade 11 elective course designed to provide practical applications of biology, chemistry, and physics through forensic investigation. The course emphasizes scientific inquiry, hands-on activities such as simulated crime scene analysis, and integrates Indigenous perspectives.
- Musique à Culture Francophone 11: An elective for Grade 11 French Immersion students combining music performance, composition, and cultural exploration of Francophone music, with a focus on language development and cultural literacy.

Both courses align with BC curriculum requirements and incorporate first people's principles of learning and Indigenous perspectives. Trustees supported these new course proposals, discussed enrollment criteria and catalog review.

2025-089

Moved and Seconded

That the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) approve the Board Authority/Authorized Course for the 2026/2027 school year - Forensic Sciences (Grade 11) and Musique et culture francophone (Grade 11).

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The presentation can be viewed on the video at (1:02:25)

f. New Administrative Procedure: 168 Unexpected Health Emergencies (B. Ketcham)

Secretary-Treasurer Ketcham presented Administrative Procedure 168, created in response to a ministerial order requiring school districts to address unexpected health emergencies. The procedure mandates the availability of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) and Naloxone kits in all district schools—first at the high school level by December 31, 2025, and subsequently at elementary and middle schools by September 2026. Site administrators will oversee implementation, supported by school safety committees, and a companion guide will assist response teams with their roles and responsibilities.

Trustees were informed that the initiative involves minimal additional cost since AEDs are already in place; Naloxone kits are low-cost and require periodic renewal. It was also clarified that EpiPens were not included as their provision was not specified in the ministerial directive.

g. **For Information: Updated Administrative Procedure: 158A - District Logo Guidelines**

Superintendent Davidson introduced a revised administrative procedure clarifying guidelines for the use of the district logo. The updated procedure provides detailed standards for logo quality, placement, and appropriate usage across all schools and administrative offices. The goal is to ensure consistent, professional branding district wide. The procedure was reviewed with input from communications staff and will support both clarity and uniformity in the district's visual identity.

Trustees expressed appreciation for these innovative course options and their alignment with student interests and curricular goals.

The presentation can be viewed on the video at (1:08:30 pm)

8. **NEW BUSINESS**

a. **Chair Report (M. Russell)**

Outgoing chair Maya Russell presented a year-in-review report highlighting key board accomplishments, challenges, and priorities. Major achievements included the development and implementation of the district's strategic plan, collaborative advocacy with parents and district partners for increased school capacity, funding for public education, improved child care, and continuity of school bus service. The report underscored the value of strong working relationships with district staff and union partners, progress on major capital projects (including a new elementary school), and effective response to challenges such as a district cyber incident and tragedy within the school community.

The chair emphasized the importance of transparency, community engagement, high educational standards, and ongoing efforts to address student and staff needs. Russell concluded by expressing gratitude for the opportunity to serve, and encouraged the board to remain focused, transparent, and engaged with the community in the year ahead.

The presentation can be viewed on the video at (1:14:00 pm)

b. **Election of Chair**

In accordance with board policy, Secretary-Treasurer Ketcham commenced the annual election of Trustee roles, first explaining the ballot submission process. Trustee Sluis was nominated (by Trustee Russell) and acclaimed as the new Chair of the Board for the upcoming term.

Upon election as Chair, Chair Sluis conducted the remainder of the elections and presided over the remaining agenda items.

c. Election of Vice-Chair

Trustee Connelly was nominated (by Trustee Carlsen) and acclaimed as Vice Chair of the Board for the upcoming term.

d. Election of BCSTA Provincial Council Delegate and Alternate

The board conducted elections for BCSTA Provincial Council positions. Trustee Connelly nominated Trustee Carlsen, Trustee Russell nominated Trustee Andres, Trustee Andres was elected as the BCSTA Provincial Council Delegate following a vote. Trustee Carlson nominated herself and was voted in as the Alternate for Provincial Council.

e. Election of BCPSEA Representative and Alternate

Trustee Slinn sent an email advising he was interested and was acclaimed as the BCPSEA Representative. Trustee Connelly was nominated and acclaimed as the BCPSEA Alternate for the upcoming term.

2025-090

Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) direct the Secretary-Treasurer to destroy all ballots.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

f. District School Naming Committee

The board discussed the formation of a committee to oversee the process of naming a new district facility. Trustee Carlsen expressed interest in serving on the committee for the new Elementary School announced earlier this month and shall be the Trustee rep on the committee formed by the Superintendent in accordance with AP 541.

g. Literacy Intervention Costs

The board discussed a recommendation introduced by Vice Chair Connelly to track and monitor literacy interventions costs by school and program. The aim is to better assess the effectiveness of interventions and inform future resource allocation.

2025-091

Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) will direct staff to:

- 1. Track, by school and district-wide, all costs associated with K–3 literacy***

screening and targeted interventions from September 1, 2024, through August 31, 2027.

- 2. Determine whether provincial literacy funds received in each fiscal year adequately cover the costs of identified interventions for students flagged through screening and progress monitoring; and**
- 3. Report publicly in June of each year on costs, service levels, outcomes, and any funding gaps, with recommendations for advocacy as required.**

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

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

9. **OLD BUSINESS**

a. **Board Advocacy**

The board discussed the importance of maintaining a proactive advocacy approach on key issues, including school capacity, operational funding, transportation services, and child care. Trustees agreed on the need to review and refresh the existing advocacy plan to ensure continued alignment with district and community priorities. It was decided that a workshop would be organized to validate current advocacy objectives and confirm next steps.

10. **TRUSTEE REPORTS**

Trustee Andres reported attending district and parent advisory council (PAC) events, acknowledged the dedication of PAC members, and noted upcoming community activities.

Trustee Connelly highlighted the hard work and enthusiasm of local PACs, shared the community's excitement for the new school project, and expressed appreciation to parents for their ongoing engagement.

Trustee Carlsen reflected on participation in parent-teacher conferences and school fundraising initiatives, and conveyed thanks to district staff and families for their ongoing commitment.

Trustee Sluis provided updates on attending district meetings and community events and offered thanks to outgoing chair Maya Russell for leadership and service.

The question period can be viewed on the video at (1:45:45)

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

Allison (parent): Raised concerns and disappointment regarding the lack of support and insufficient notice about the Early French Immersion (EFI) consolidation. James (community member): Questioned the communication, timeline, and planning surrounding the move of the French immersion program.

Chair Sluis and Superintendent Davidson acknowledged the challenges and disappointment experienced by families regarding the EFI consolidation and French immersion program move. They explained that decisions were based on school capacity and anticipated enrollment growth and committed to improving communication and engagement with families in future processes.

Liz: Asked how school learning plans and best practices are shared between schools within the district to facilitate learning and improvement.

The Superintendent confirmed that collaborative review and best practice sharing takes place through district leadership meetings and ongoing dialogue among school administrators, with the goal of promoting continuous improvement across all schools.

The question period can be viewed on the video at (1:54:36)

12. **NOTICE OF MEETINGS**

Regular Board Meeting – Tuesday, December 16, 2025 – 6:00 p.m. (Hybrid)

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

a. Record of the October 28, 2025, In-Camera Meeting

14. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

Chair

Secretary-Treasurer