

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

**Tuesday, February 24, 2026, 6:00 PM
In-Person and Via Zoom Link**

PRESENT	Cheryl Sluis, Chair Danielle Connelly, Vice-Chair Elliott Slinn, Trustee (Online) 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 Kylie Walsh, Recording Secretary Jenny Richter, Director of Instruction, Leadership and Learning Sanj Johal, District Principal of Indigenous Education and Equity Miriam Schellenberg, District Principal – Inclusive Education Rick Bloudell, Manager of Community Projects and Partnerships
REGRETS	Darryl Schelp, NWTU President Karrie Andrews; President CUPE 409	<i>Members of the Public</i> Laura Kwong, DPAC Chair

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 6:02 p.m.

The Chair called for a moment of silence to acknowledge the Tumbler Ridger tragedy.

Amendment the agenda to remove item 7. Reports from Senior Management d. 2026-27 District Calendar Approval. Associate Superintendent Lawlor is conducting community responses, this will be brought forward to the March 10, 2026, Regular Board meeting for approval.

2026-008

Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) adopt the agenda as amended for the February 24, 2026, Regular School Board meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. **MINUTES FOR APPROVAL**

a. Minutes from the Open meeting held:

January 27, 2026, Regular School Board Meeting.

2026-009

Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) approve the minutes as distributed for the December 16, 2025, Regular School Board Meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

- b. Business Arising from the Minutes.
Nil.

3. DISTRICT PRESENTATIONS

- a. Grad and Transition Rates (J. Richter & S. Johal).

Richter, Director of Instruction – Leadership and Learning and Johal, District Principal – Indigenous Education and Equity outlined how district strategic priorities, ministry data, and findings from the Enhanced Student Learning Report are being used to guide district-wide collaboration to improve graduation outcomes and student transitions. The data shows strong transitions from grades 10 to 11 and 11 to 12, and steady completion rates with recent improvement while also indicating ongoing equity gaps for Indigenous learners, students in care, and diverse learners. Work underway includes early literacy interventions, increased student-voice opportunities, attendance and graduation monitoring, and expanded transition supports such as school visits, community events, and post-secondary planning sessions. The presentation concluded with an emphasis on ensuring equitable access to meaningful graduation outcomes for all students.

Trustees asked with regards to equity gaps and student belonging which age groups were of greatest concern, and it was explained that different priority populations have varying needs, with some requiring literacy support and others social-emotional supports, and that strengthening early interventions is intended to support students through to Grade 12.

Trustees suggested a plan for robust tracking of the students who may remain in Grade 6 at the elementary level, noting interest in understanding how this option may affect their transitions over time and how the information could inform future decisions.

Trustees expressed appreciation for alignment of early literacy and numeracy work, enhanced teaching resources and early intervention that connect student success to the Strategic Plan.

Trustees expressed concern about the ongoing equity gap compared with provincial results and the more academic focus. It was explained that the examples provided reflect only part of the broader work underway, which includes academic, social-emotional, mental health, and community-based supports, all of which are interconnected and part of ongoing district efforts highlighted in other reports.

To view the Presentation agenda segment, refer to video recording at 6:04 p.m.

4. **DELEGATIONS**

a. BASES Donation (R. Bloudell)

Bloudell introduced Peggy Woodruff, President of BASES who provided an overview of BASES' work noting that the organization's primary goal is to support youth development through after-school activities and that proceeds from its thrift store fund these initiatives. BASES now operates in New Westminster. BASES asked the district to help spread the word within the school community by encouraging a steady supply of donated goods, additional volunteers, and continued support for the thrift store.

Trustees expressed appreciation for BASES' substantial past contributions and for the store now operating locally, noting the value of allowing the district and schools to set their own priorities. Trustees also commented on the volunteer opportunities available for students from Columbia Square and NWSS and reiterated the request to help advertise the need for donations

To view the Delegations agenda segment, refer to video recording at 6:20 p.m.

5. **CORRESPONDENCE**

a. Queensborough School Bus Funding Letter to Minister Beare

b. Funding and Bill-19 Regulations Letter to Minister Beare

It was stated that one trustee had contacted the local MLA earlier in the day but had not yet received a reply, while Secretary-Treasurer reported receiving a confirmation that a letter to the Board is currently being drafted and can be expected shortly. Trustees indicated that next steps will be discussed once the anticipated letter is received, and the Superintendent noted that partners at the city have been supporting the district in Victoria.

6. **BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS**

a. Coordinating Committee – February 5, 2026

1. Comments for the Committee Chair, M. Davidson

2. Approval of the February 5, 2026, Coordinating Committee Minutes

2026-010

Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) approve the minutes as distributed for the February 5, 2026, Coordinating Committee Meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

7. **REPORTS FROM SENIOR MANAGEMENT**

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

The Superintendent reported that following the recent tragic events in Tumbler Ridge, the district is re-examining its emergency preparedness work and has entered into an agreement with Hour Zero to audit all district buildings and review both school-level and district-level emergency plans. The review will include physical site assessments and recommendations for improvements. He noted confidence in the current plans and in the implementation of safety drills observed in schools, while acknowledging that the audit will strengthen existing practices. The audit process will begin in the coming weeks, continue through the summer, and be followed by training in the fall on expected modest adjustments to the plans, along with consideration of any needed physical changes to support their execution.

The Superintendent reported that seven candidates were interviewed for the principal pool, with four being selected to move forward, and thanked representatives from CUPE, the NWTU, and PAC for their valuable participation and feedback in the process.

The Superintendent reported on Black History Month activities across the district, noting that schools have shared examples compiled by the District Principal of Indigenous Education and Equity.

The Superintendent reported participating in a Chamber of Commerce business breakfast focused on current and future workforce trends.

The Superintendent noted that Pink Shirt Day would be recognized the following day, Wednesday, February 25, and mentioned that numerous school activities were planned, including a basketball event he would be participating in, while highlighting that many related events were taking place throughout the city.

b. Inclusive Education Update (M. Schellenberg)

Schellenberg, District Principal - Inclusive Education reported this year's priorities focused on meaningful learning experiences, equitable access, and supported transitions. Highlighting robust learning opportunities at the CUPE Professional Development Day held on November 21 at NWSS, which included 34 sessions, over 40 presenters, and student volunteers.

Updates were provided on the emerging Secondary Literacy Network, newcomer ELL numeracy programming that has improved attendance, engagement, and confidence. She also provided updates on Accessibility Advisory Committee a partnership with the NWTU has provided temporary funding to allow a School Psychologist to offer supervised autism assessments,

ARC continues to offer accessibility-focused sessions for staff, and a partnership with Kinsight is supporting a Welcome to Kindergarten event for Tigrinya-speaking families.

Trustees asked how ASD assessments are being managed, and it was explained that school-based teams prioritize requests and the district team reviews all referrals. Schellenberg noted that while staff noted that 30 referrals were received, with an initial goal of ten assessments and hopes to complete at least five this year, and the Superintendent further acknowledged regional challenges in accessing qualified professionals. Trustees raised concerns about long provincial wait times and asked how financial pressures are affecting Inclusive Education's ability to grow; the Superintendent reported that the district spends significantly beyond allocated grants to support students without designations and

noted that grant increases have not kept pace with inflationary costs such as rising benefit expenses, and the Secretary-Treasurer added that budget flexibility is increasingly constrained further handcuffing districts from addressing more local priorities.

To view the Presentation agenda segment, refer to video recording at 6:45 p.m.

c. Community Schools and NLC Programs and School Nourishment Update (R. Bloudell)

Bloudell, Manager of Community Projects and Partnerships provided an update on the Fuel Up! He reported that updates have been made to the Lunch Lady online ordering platform, including new meal options and selections with reduced packaging, and that meals continue to be regularly tested with feedback shared to adjust offerings. A survey to families and staff will be issued in April, and the district remains in regular contact with other districts to monitor how their lunch programs are progressing under Feeding Futures funding.

Trustees asked how the additional \$136,000 in Federal funding was being used, and it was explained these funds help to increase distribution of gift cards to families in need and additional support for school breakfast programs

Bloudell reported that Out of School Time School Programming is on pace to reach 129 programs this year with extended services, extended hours and extended relationships. He acknowledged the support of school administrators in facilitating this growth and highlighted efforts to ensure programs reach students who may not otherwise participate in community activities.

Trustees asked how the out-of-school-time programs align with the middle school youth drop-in offerings, and it was explained that drop-in programs run on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at all three middle schools, so additional programming is scheduled on Tuesdays and Thursdays to avoid overlap.

Bloudell reported on neighborhood learning initiatives in the Welcome Centre. Welcome Centre programming has included conversation circles, leadership groups, life-skills and peer-support programs facilitated by MOSAIC, which has served 749 unique clients from April of last year to January of this year.

Trustees asked to see, at a later time, information on the community impact of this support, and inquired about SWIS program funding reductions; Bloudell clarified that MOSAIC has not experienced a reduction in funding because it relies on a different grant source.

The Wellness Center update from Bloudell outlined that the wellness team, comprising district staff and Fraser Health partners, continues to deliver district-wide health and education services. A New Westminster Youth Health Organizations and Resources guide was created for students, and the Wellness Center has expanded its on-site services to include Dan's Legacy and Child and Youth Mental Health.

Trustees asked if we can get an update on a nurse practitioner for the Wellness Centre and if the Board could do anything to support advocacy work for the nurse practitioner. Bloudell indicated that as of June we no longer have the support of Fraser Health in supplying nurse practitioner hours. The Superintendent reported that Fraser Health is facing resourcing

challenges and has emphasized concerns about establishing ongoing patient–nurse practitioner relationships within a school setting. While no agreement has been finalized, discussions are progressing and potential options continue to be explored. The Board’s role could be advocating for legislative changes that would allow greater flexibility in how nurse practitioners can work.

To view the Presentation agenda segment, refer to video recording at 7:07 p.m.

d. Approval of the 2025-26 Amended Budget (B. Ketcham)

Amy Grey, Assistant Secretary Treasurer presented the amended budget, highlighting a \$575,000 transfer to local capital for technology and maintenance.

The Secretary- Treasurer acknowledges the impact of inflationary costs on the operating budget and the ongoing advocacy by the district to address this funding gap. Slower enrollment growth next year will limit the district’s ability to absorb unfunded inflationary costs, as the per-pupil rate does not keep pace with rising expenses such as benefits, and exempt-staff wage pressures. Districts across the province are increasingly relying on one-time reserves to balance budgets, which is becoming unsustainable and will require difficult decisions as those reserves are depleted.

To view the Presentation agenda segment, refer to video recording at 7:42 p.m.

**2026-011
Moved and Seconded**

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) adopt the three readings of the amended budget bylaw for fiscal year 2025/2026.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

**2026-012
Moved and Seconded**

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) approve FIRST and SECOND reading of the amended budget bylaw for fiscal year 2025/2026.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

**2026-013
Moved and Seconded**

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) approve the THIRD reading, reconsideration and FINAL adoption of the amended budget bylaw for fiscal year 2025/2026.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

e. Review Police Partnership Program (M. Davidson)

The Superintendent summarized the process, to date, of negotiating the Police Partnership Program focusing on building a system of care and support for students and taking into

account the recommendation of the human rights commission. It was determined that Board policy and accompanying procedures should first establish the values, expectations, and parameters that would guide any Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). On Friday February 20, 2026, draft documents were released for community feedback, with responses continuing to be gathered. The feedback has been thoughtful. The Superintendent noted that administration will bring revised drafts to the Board on March 10th and emphasized that the MOU must reflect the finalized policy and procedures. He added that discussions with the Police Department are ongoing, grounded in shared goals of relationship-building, trauma-informed practice, emergency response collaboration, and non-enforcement-based roles reiterating that disciplinary responsibility remains solely with school staff. Trustees asked for clarification on Section 9 with regards to how improvements to the proposed structure would be identified and incorporated and the involvement of the Indigenous Education Council in the building of the document.

The Chair noted concern about managing community expectations regarding the scope of responsibilities outlined in section 4.1; particularly in areas such as prevention, education, relationship-building, supporting victims of crime, and referral pathways and questioned how limits to what can realistically be provided will be addressed if demand exceeds capacity.

The Superintendent replied that the documents are still evolving, with feedback continuing to be incorporated before and after March 10th and emphasized that the intent and measures of success will be refined through ongoing work with the advisory committee. He noted that twice-yearly reporting and regular advisory committee reviews will guide any future adjustments.

The Chair indicated that this was brought forward for information and will return with revisions as the process continues.

8. **OLD BUSINESS**

- a. Annual Trustee Remuneration Review (B. Ketcham)
- This was tabled at the last meeting. There is a motion on the table.

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) apply an increase of 3.68% to existing trustee remuneration effective July 1, 2026, as per board policy 7.3.

Trustees proposed amending the increase from 3.68% to 3%, noting that after further reflection and discussion, the adjustment would help ensure the role of trustee remains accessible to a broad range of community members.

A trustee expressed hesitation due to the timing and broader context, noting that families are being asked to accept losses such as reduced Seamless Day childcare because of provincial funding decisions, and raised concern about approving governance-level increases.

Amendment
2026-014
Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) apply an increase of 3% to existing trustee remuneration effective July 1, 2026, as per board policy 7.3.

Trustees Carlson and Andres opposed

PASSED

9. **NEW BUSINESS**

a. Chair Report (Chair Sluis) (Verbal)

The Chair provided an update on the Queensborough bus rally alongside parents, students, and several elected officials, and that the event received media coverage. A follow-up letter to the Minister was also sent.

An update was given on the province-wide policy review process for Boards of Education, developed in collaboration with various partner groups and the Ministry. The work outlines a three-phase approach: reviewing and updating foundational policies, updating remaining policies, and establishing an ongoing review plan. With Board support, the Chair intends to reconnect with Dr. Jordan Tinney to discuss next steps in policy review and alignment with the new provincial direction.

The Chair called on the Secretary-Treasurer who participated in a Ministry of Education and Child Care technical briefing following the provincial budget which was parallel to a Trustee call to provide an update.

10. **TRUSTEE REPORTS**

Trustees provided highlights of the events they attended in February 2026

Trustee Russell reported attending PAC meetings at F.W. Howay and Connaught Spencer PAC meetings. At DPAC, she noted the number of consultations currently open and a shared resource to support teachers during Ramadan. She also reminded the Board that the Dry Grad pub night fundraiser will take place on Thursday, February 26.

Trustee Andres reported attending the Simcoe consultation and the February 20 Provincial Council meeting, noting that the BC School Trustees Association continued to advocate for increased funding to support districts.

Trustee Carlson attended the Simcoe consultation and shared that she has been cheering on the senior girls' and boys' basketball teams, congratulating the senior boys for advancing. She emphasized the importance of continued feedback and advocacy to ensure students receive the supports they need.

Trustee Connelly noted that she will attend the upcoming Black History Month event on Friday. She also reported that the NWSS PAC expressed gratitude for the communication sent out following the Tumbler Ridge tragedy.

Chair Sluis reminded the Board that the Budget Survey remains open until February 27th, the Police Partnership Policy survey closes March 3rd, and the Long-Range Facilities Survey closes March 13th. She extended thanks to staff for their work and response following the

Tumbler Ridge tragedy and expressed appreciation to the City of New Westminster for facilitating a community vigil.

To view the Trustee Reports agenda segment, refer to video recording at 8:47 p.m.

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

The public was given the opportunity to ask questions on matters that arose during the meeting with staff responding where appropriate. To view the full comment and question period, please refer to the meeting video at 8:56 p.m.

Laura Kwong DPAC Chair reported that membership has elected to form an Inclusive Education Committee to support neurodiverse students and expressed enthusiasm for the ASD assessment work and the upcoming Tigrinya-language Welcome to Kindergarten session. DPAC noted that Tweedsmuir families are seeking more information on Grade 6 retention, with clarification provided that FRMS and GMS will share video and online presentations before the April 1st deadline. Regarding the PPP review, DPAC will submit written feedback and asked whether groups such as the IEC, MOSAIC, and Spirit of the Children were involved. The Superintendent responded that they were not part of policy development to date but will have critical roles on the MOU advisory committee and in data collection. DPAC also expressed concern about the short engagement timeline and requested an extension, along with additional context about how the previous program operated and how the proposed approach differs. Finally, it was noted that the Tumbler Ridge PAC has launched an e-transfer option to support volunteer programs in their new spaces.

12. **NOTICE OF MEETINGS**

Tuesday, March 10, 2026; Regular School Board Meeting

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

Noting record of January 27th in camera meeting.

14. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

Chair

Secretary-Treasurer