

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

**Tuesday, March 10, 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
Jane Boutilier, Associate Director, Human Resources
Ken Millard, NWPVPA, President

REGRETS

Members of the Public
Laura Kwong, DPAC Chair
Karrie Andrews; President CUPE 409
Darryl Schelp, NWTU President

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.

Amendment to the agenda to add a comment and question period at a new number 4 for audience to speak to PPP.

2026-015

Moved and Seconded

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) adopt the agenda for the March 10, 2026, Regular School Board meeting.

2026-016

Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) adopt the agenda, as amended, for the March 10, 2026, Regular School Board meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2. **MINUTES FOR APPROVAL**

a. Minutes from the Open meeting held:

February 24, 2026, Regular School Board Meeting.

2026-017

Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) approve the minutes as distributed for the February 24, 2026, Regular School Board Meeting.

Trustee Carlsen noted there was an error in the remuneration motion in the minutes that was shared and corrected.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2026-018

Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) approve the minutes, as amended for the February 24, 2026, Regular School Board Meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

b. Business Arising from the Minutes.

Nil.

3. BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

a. 2026-2027 Preliminary Budget Partner Presentations.

1. District Parent Advisory Council Chair (L. Kwong)

- Protecting core supports by minimizing cuts to student services.
- Provided focus areas to enhance student experiences, including:
 - systems of care and support
 - district level anti-racism and inclusive activities
 - organizational capacity
 - safe student transportation options
- The need for continual advocacy is not sustainable; families hope to see a future of stable funding.

The Chair indicated that the board will be meeting with partners so they will table comments from Trustees unless clarification is required.

2. New Westminster Teachers' Union President (D. Schelp) (Verbal)

Members are committed to providing high quality education and see firsthand what is needed in the students:

- Class sizes
- Classroom resources - traditional materials and modern technology
- Structured and well-resourced Mentorship program to benefit students with more supported and prepared teachers and increased retention.

- Additional Education Assistants in kindergarten and primary. The EAs provide targeted support for students and allow teachers focus on the students
3. CUPE 409, President (K. Andrews)
- Dedicated support workers who play a vital role in learning
- Increased hours for Child and Youth Care workers, add five hours per week and transition to eleven months to support student health and well being in summer learning.
 - Custodial workloads – increase staffing levels, implementation of more daytime custodians to meet the needs of higher enrollment, facilitation of events and focus on deeper cleaning to reduce absences due to illness for both students and staff
 - Additional minutes for Education Assistants at the elementary level. 20 minutes per day to allow for more preparation at the start of the day and supervision time with the students they support at arrival and departure
 - Educational Assistant lead hand – continuation of the NWSS lead hand and adding to other schools to strengthen communication, support and guidance withing the team.
 - Restoration of Inclusive Education Life Skills Program at NWSS – requires appropriate dedicated physical space with stove, washer dryer, sinks to provide hands on learning to help students learn practical skills for independence.
 - Restoration of critical student supports –
 - Behaviour Interventionist to provide specialized guidance and support expertise to staff who work with students with complex behaviours.
 - Extra clerical support at NWSS as the current staffing levels do not meet the growing demands including 1500 continuing education students.
 - Priority clerical support position
 - TIS department vehicle access request – tool to allow staff to respond to school needs efficiently including technology in the classroom.
 - Protects health and safety, supports recruitment and retention, allows staff to engage and communicate with parents.
4. NWPVPA, President (K. Millard) (Verbal)
- K. Millard, spoke on behalf of the New Westminster Principals and Vice-Principals Association, acknowledged the district's budget constraints and thanked the board for managing the budget under challenging conditions. He identified one key request from the association: that existing supports for students with complex needs be maintained in the upcoming budget. Mr. Millard emphasized the district's diverse student population and noted that inclusive education is both an equity issue and essential to student success. He highlighted the need for adequate resources to support inclusion, including specialized instruction, differentiated materials, targeted interventions, mental health supports and ongoing professional development. He concluded by urging the board to centre inclusivity and diverse learner needs in its budget priorities.

Please refer to the video recording for the Budget Presentation agenda segment.

4. **DELEGATIONS**

- a. Community concerns regarding the proposed Police Partnership Program (M. Gifford)
Mark Gifford, parent/community volunteer/former school trustee.
- Raised concerns about PPP policy and administrative procedures.
 - It is imperative that it is stated clearly that Policy will not routinely enter the schools without formal invitation.
 - The MoU must reflect the finalized policy and administrative procedures.
 - There is an importance of school safety, but police should be used judiciously and carefully. For some students it feels less safe to be in proximity to police.
 - There were children in families who were not coming to school due to fear of interaction with immigration officials and police.
 - We know it is important to have a good relationship with police but there are some fundamental power imbalances that exist. The power dynamics are recognized in the policy document but there needs to be more attention paid in the procedures section.
 - Considerations that could be included:
 - Stronger protocols for entering schools
 - Define timed for officers to be on site in non-emergency
 - Training on cultural safety and trauma informed
 - Definition of privacy sharing
 - Agreement on compliance with Safe Schools
 - Better feedback mechanisms and independent review
 - Request that the policy be presented for discussion and tabled until more engagement can be received around the MoU and administrative procedures.
 -
 - More public feedback

To view the Delegations agenda segment, refer to video recording.

- b. The Chair clarified that what is up for discussion and we moved into question period per amended agenda.

a. **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.

Concerns raised included:

- Violation of Sanctuary School policy and migrant rights
- Police department relationships with CBSA puts families at risk
- Questions:
 - Is the plan to develop a police unit that builds an expertise and dedicated group who are familiar with the schools and builds relationships with the school administrators?
 - If and when this is passed how will the process of consultation work to address concerns from the public?
 - How are human right concerns being addressed

- Prioritization of communities who feel less safe around police.
- Evidence that the plan supports the rights of the child per UN CRC obligations.
- Human Rights Commissioner Report on policing forms in BC from 2021 could help inform considerations around this policy.
- Schools are made safer in a space that is welcoming and inclusive and where bullying is not tolerated by punitive focused presentations from police.

The Superintendent responded that the intent is to share the draft documents and have small focus group conversations to review the Administrative Procedure and MoU. If it does go against our ability to be a Sanctuary School district, then we want to see what we need to change. The MoU does not have police officers as resident in schools. It is a partnership in which they received training in VITRA. In our protocol we have police participate in VITRA and this would envision a unit with training. If we have concerns, we have one call to make to talk to someone about challenges e.g. traffic infractions in school zones. Presentations would be by invitation and there would be training for engaging with students. When we have to engage with 911, we would have our liaison to keep us informed. The next stage is to have consultation to hear the concerns. The goal is not to return to the previous structure but one that is a partnership around a system of supports with a narrow focus.

6. **CORRESPONDENCE**

Nil.

7. **BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS**

No Committee Meeting to Report

8. **REPORTS FROM SENIOR MANAGEMENT**

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

The Superintendent reported that regarding the budget, tomorrow we will receive the grants for the upcoming school year. The cost of collective agreements will be covered but inflationary costs like benefits will not be covered.

He attended the Logan Futures event at NWSS partnership between MOSAIC and SFU that brings together collaborative art projects to create a visual representation of migration stories with a permanent installation on the third floor of NWSS.

BCSSA conference Director Singh did a presentation on Literacy to support improved outcomes for our students.

Recently we have started new work with New West Pride to promote inclusivity in our schools supporting GSAs and alliance clubs to function in schools.

b. Policy 28 Police Partnership Program

- The Superintendent shared that the Board directed that this development nine months ago.
- Focus groups will include people who will be most affected by the implementation of the MoU will allow for revision and refinement.

- The actions need to align with the values in the documents and the truth of it is in the execution.
- We are capable again, like we have done with the Sanctuary Schools policy, of doing great work on this.

The Chair thank all who responded to the survey and provided thoughtful feedback.

Trustees asked if there would be proposed amendment to the motion that we table the discussion. Trustees asked that we separate the motions.

Recommendation:

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

1. Approve Policy 28: Police Partnership Program; and

Recommendation:

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

2. Direct the Superintendent to engage with students, staff, and families of marginalized communities impacted by policing in schools, as referenced by the B.C. Human Rights Commissioner’s November 2022 letter, and present final drafts of the Administrative Procedures and MOU at the April 28 board meeting.

2026-019

Moved and Seconded

***THAT* the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster):
Approve Policy 28: Police Partnership Program.**

DEFEATED

Trustee Russell asked that we strengthen the policy by adding the following amendments:

2.3 The PPP shall be consistent with the requirements of the District’s Sanctuary Schools Policy, noting its protections for students with precarious immigration status.

5.3 The Partnership Advisory Committee shall develop specific evaluation criteria and engage in external evaluation of the program’s impacts and harms after the first year, and again every two years.

7 Review and Termination

7.1 New Westminster Schools reserves the right to review and cancel any Memorandum of agreement and negotiate a new Partnership Protocol between the District and NWPD.

Trustees supported the proposed policy and amendments, noting they complete earlier board direction to establish a clearer, more controlled framework for any police involvement. They emphasized this is not a return to the former liaison model, acknowledged diverse community experiences, and stressed the importance of clear limits, accountability and ongoing evaluation informed by community feedback.

Vote on the suggested amendments PASSED.
Motion to table the approval of the policy to April 28, 2026 meeting.

2026-020
Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) table the approval of Policy 28: Police Partnership Program until the suggested amendments have been added and reviewed at the April 28, 2026, board meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

2026-021
Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster): Direct the Superintendent to engage with students, staff, and families of marginalized communities impacted by policing in schools, as referenced by the B.C. Human Rights Commissioner’s November 2022 letter, and present final drafts of the Administrative Procedures and MoU at the April 28 board meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

c. 2026-2027 Budget Survey Results (B. Ketcham)

Ketcham shared that over 600 responses received. Themes from the feedback include:

- Call for additional staffing by way of non-enrolling staff and EAs
- Infrastructure: call for new middle school, Queensborough secondary school, climate control
- Technology: concern about equity for those with economical hardship, refreshed hardware, standardized equipment
- Queensborough busing
- Alternate programming for Indigenous Education and gifted students

Highlights of responses

- Most were parents or guardians connected to an elementary school
- Learning priorities: ensuring instruction assessment and reporting align with curriculum. Services to students with diverse abilities
- Counselling and mental health supports, art and related programming
- Growth – overwhelming expression of support for innovative facility spaces
- Operational – improvement of facilities like furniture, staffing recruitment and retainment strategies
- Community raises awareness for advocacy of per person funding, increased funding for support of diverse and ELL students

The Chair thanked all those who took part in providing responses.

To view the Presentation agenda segment, refer to video recording.

d. 2026-2027 District Calendar Approval (G. Lawlor)

The Superintendent presented on behalf of the Associate Superintendent

- Cluster non instructional days around holidays
- Avoid fragmented weeks and early dismissal
- Metro districts collaborated to align starts and professional development days
- Review of the value of incomplete days and consideration of the feedback for the next calendar year

Trustees discussed the need to improve how calendar information is communicated to families, and the Superintendent indicated staff would explore more prominent placement on the website.

2026-022

Moved and Seconded

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) approve the 2026-27 District Calendar as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

e. Human Resources Update - Absence Replacement (J. Boutilier)

Boutilier presented some documents:

- Comparison of Jan 2024 – 2025 – 2026 shows increase in absences but the ability to replace is continuing to tic up.
- This time of year, there is significant spikes in attendance, but we are striving to fill absences.

Trustees inquired if this was part of the \$800, 000 deficit mentioned earlier. Ketcham responded that the \$800,000 refers to employee benefits. There is a reflection of a greater ability to provide coverage in the budget.

Trustees asked what the cause of the absences was. Boutilier responded that recruitment is always ongoing. They find that some on the casual list are being selective about taking assignments.

With absences rising what strategies are being considered to improve recruitment and retention. Boutilier replied that we have significant presence at education fairs. We look to see if there are opportunities on the support staff side, but the colleges don't have education fairs.

The Chair asked how these rates compare to other districts. Boutilier replied that the numbers are not shared but anecdotally they are seeing the same trends with replacement being an ongoing concern.

f. Operations Report (B. Ketcham) (For Information)

Trustee inquired about the requirement for the new phone system and how is it operating at the school level. Ketcham responded that we are trying to switch over to a voice over internet system and it is being rolled out incrementally.

Trustees asked about reduced enrollment effects. Ketcham replied that with lower enrollment it allows us to employ some innovative ways to manage capacity issues. We were able take some pressure off the middle schools by offering some grade six to stay in elementary and the relocation of EFI program from Qayqayt to Spencer.

Ketcham replied that HVAC was not a consideration and with climate change causing rising temperatures we were able to apply for capital funding. An application was made for Skwo:wech and we expect a response to that soon. More aged schools will be more challenging to retrofit and will need to be balanced with the end of life of buildings. New builds like Simcoe contemplate HVAC cooling in the building process. The Chair celebrated the completion of the NWSS HVAC cooling retrofit.

To view the Reports from Senior Management agenda segment, refer to video recording.

8. **OLD BUSINESS**

Nil.

9. **NEW BUSINESS**

a. Chair Report (Chair Sluis) (Verbal)

The Chair provided.

- Swim to survive pilot program at Moody Park pool in June
- New West Pride partnership to support schools GSAs
- Continued advocacy for the Queensborough bus program with information provided about numbers and costs.

10. **TRUSTEE REPORTS**

Trustees provided highlights of the events they attended in March 2026

Trustee Slinn is excited to be working with Shannon Isaak Workshops at FRMS and GMS with Shannon Isaak

Trustee Andres school trustee association of BC media engagement draft to help fellow trustees become more proficient online and ask that we follow them on LinkedIn.

Trustee Connelly attended student black history event that was celebrating student origins and was an exciting event. NWSS & QMS PAC meetings. Also attended 'You Wear It Well' event that collects gowns and tuxedos so students can obtain a complete grad outfit and get their makeup done and have pictures taken by Artona and it was wonderful to see Ms. Millan there supporting the students.

Trustee Carlsen will have a report about the ELL consortium at the next meeting.

To view the *Trustee Reports agenda segment*, refer to video recording.

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.

Laura Kwong DPAC presented that clearly defined roles, values and guidelines are in place. They connected with the BC Human Rights office reviewed and provided feedback:

Good

- Planned for pitfalls
- Part of wider support program

Concerns

- Program implementation as a pilot so accessing the success of the impact we don't know what to measure
- No strong evidence that exists that show these programs solve a problem. Knowing that there is harm they don't recommend the program.
- Clearly state what problem is being solved by the Policy, MoU and APs are solving
- If the program is implemented, they would want to see how the needs are not able to be met by civilians
- There is a lot of disinformation and misinformation with parents, and a plain language summary of the previous and proposed program difference would be beneficial

Neurodiversity celebration week is over spring break, and they would love to see Bill M324 presented last week in legislature about School Amendment Act about controlled access to school buildings. Concern and would include a mandate for schools without funding to address it and it doesn't address the root causes of incidents.

13. **NOTICE OF MEETINGS**

Tuesday, April 28, 2026; Regular School Board Meeting

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

Noting record of February 24, 2026, in camera meeting.

15. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Chair

Secretary-Treasurer