

MINUTES

**OPEN MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE
NICOLA-SIMILKAMEEN SCHOOL DISTRICT (NO. 58)**

**PSS LEARNING COMMONS
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2025, 6:00 P.M.**

Success for ALL Learners Today and Tomorrow

PRESENT:	Chairperson	G. Swan (Virtually)
	Vice-Chair	L. Ward
	Trustees	J. Jepsen J. Kent-Laidlaw E. Hoisington J. Chenoweth (Virtually) D. Rainer
	Student Trustees	Matthew Williams Sophia Pioquid
	Superintendent	C. Lawrance
	Assistant Superintendent	J. Kempston
	Secretary Treasurer	D. Richardson
	Assistant Secretary Treasurer	L. Rusnjak
	Executive Assistant	K. Buckland

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES AND METIS COMMUNITY

AGENDA

25/004 It was moved by Trustee Ward and seconded by Trustee Jepsen

THAT the agenda be approved as presented.

MOTION CARRIED

MINUTES

25/005 It was moved by Trustee Rainer and seconded by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw

THAT the minutes of the Open Meeting held December 11, 2024, be adopted as circulated.

MOTION CARRIED

Business Arising from the Minutes

None.

Report of the Closed Meeting held December 11, 2024.**EDUCATION****Indigenous Education Update:**

Superintendent Lawrance presented a written report provided by Director of Instruction - Indigenous Education Shelley Oppenheim-Lacerte, highlighting significant efforts with the girl's group and land-based learning initiatives. These activities are fostering connections with community Elder's, nurturing pride and respect for cultural traditions.

Vice-Chair Ward inquired whether the Indigenous Education report is shared with the band Chiefs, partners, teachers or posted to the District website. Superintendent Lawrance confirmed that the report is distributed through the ISA newsletter and agreed that posting it on the District website would be a great idea.

Early Learning and Child Care Report:

Superintendent Lawrance presented the written report submitted by District Vice Principal of Early Learning and Childcare Daniella Bennie, highlighting that Family Literacy Week will take place from January 27-31, 2025. Additionally, Bobs & Lolo will be performing a free concert at the Civic Center in Merritt on Friday, January 31, 2025, at 5:45pm.

Inclusive Education Update:

The Superintendent presented the written report submitted by Director of Instruction - Inclusive Education Misty Sheldon, highlighting that Phase 1 of the Student Cooperation Training (SCT) program developed with the Provincial Outreach Program for Autism and Related Disorders (POPARD), is now complete. Phase 1 of the course was completed at Central Elementary School and Phase 2 will take place at Diamond Vale Elementary School.

Vice-Chair Ward suggested preparing a thank you message to acknowledge the outstanding work of the teachers and faculty that lead this program.

Chair Swan agreed to draft something on behalf of the Board of Education to acknowledge those successes.

Anti-Racism and Equity Report Update:

Assistant Superintendent Kempston discussed that the District is beginning to collect reports of racist incidents and concerns. They are collecting very specific data around what is occurring, who it is occurring between, what schools' responses are, and what is being done proactively to make sure it doesn't happen again. As they gather the reports, Assistant Superintendent Kempston will put together the data that will paint a picture for the District.

The District will be working with the McCreary Report, BC's Adolescent Health Survey. The Survey has very direct questions around student experiences with racism and what it looks and feels like in our schools, as well as what the students say they want and need in their schools. Assistant Superintendent Kempston will be working with the McCreary centre to amplify student voice. The District is collaborating with all school principals on setting school goals. Each school within the School District has incorporated an anti-racism goal as part of their school plan. The District will also review the Codes of Conduct to ensure they establish clear expectations regarding anti-racism.

The District has launched its new logo, which incorporates student input and reflects an Indigenous perspective.

Trustee Rainer inquired about the impact of social media on students' ability to learn. Assistant Superintendent Kempston responded that social media remains a multifaceted issue for students.

2025/2026 School Calendar:

The 2025/2026 District Calendar was brought forward for consideration by the Superintendent. The calendar includes 192 days in session and 185 days of instruction, meeting the Ministry of Education and Child Care requirements.

25/006 It was moved by Trustee Rainer and seconded by Trustee Hoisington

THAT the Board approve the 2025/2026 District Calendar and it be brought forward for public review prior to submission for Ministry approval.

MOTION CARRIED

Superintendent's Report:

The Superintendent circulated and spoke to her report, reflecting on the District events that have taken place over the past month.

AUDIT AND FINANCE

2024-25 Ministry of Education Funding Announcements / Budget Update:

Secretary Treasurer Richardson updated Trustees that the funding announcement, typically released by the Ministry in December, has been postponed to January 27, 2025, due to change in government process. The Secretary Treasurer advised Trustees that once the funding announcement is received from the Ministry on January 27, 2025, staff will prepare the Amended Annual Budget that is due to the Ministry by March 28, 2025.

Trustee Kent-Laidlaw asked Secretary Treasurer Richardson if there was any information on why Ministry of Education's funding announcement is a month later than in previous years. Secretary Treasurer Richardson explained that during a call with the Ministry and other Secretary Treasurers, they were informed that the delay was due to a change in government process with no additional information.

Chair Swan informed the Board of Education that they still have not received the Minister's Mandate Letter for both Education and Child Care as well as Infrastructure.

2023-2024 Statement of Financial Information Report:

The Secretary Treasurer informed Trustees that the Statement of Financial Information (SOFI report) has been filed, as per the Financial Information Act. Chair Swan inquired whether the Ministry of Finance has considered increasing the threshold for reporting individual salaries? Secretary Treasurer Richardson responded that he has not received any indication of that threshold changing. The Assistant Secretary-Treasurer reported that the threshold has remained the same since 2002.

RFP External Auditor:

Secretary Treasurer Richardson informed the Trustees that the Request for Proposal for an External Auditor was posted on January 9, with a closing date of Friday, February 7th, 2025. After this date applications will be reviewed, and recommendations will be presented to the Board for consideration.

POLICY

Policies For First Reading:

3.80 Animals in Schools:

25/007

It was moved by Trustee Ward and seconded by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw

THAT the Board move Policy 3.80: Animals in Schools, forward for first reading.

MOTION CARRIED

5.10 Bullying and Harassment of Students

25/008 It was moved by Trustee Ward and seconded by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw

THAT the Board move Policy 5.10: Bullying and Harassment of Students, forward for first reading.

MOTION CARRIED

5.20 Controlled and Regulated Substances

25/009 It was moved by Trustee Ward and seconded by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw

THAT the Board move Policy 5.20: Controlled and Regulated Substances, forward for first reading.

MOTION CARRIED

5.30 Weapons

25/010 It was moved by Trustee Ward and seconded by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw

THAT the Board move Policy 5.30: Weapons, forward for first reading.

MOTION CARRIED

5.40 Severe Allergic Reaction

25/011 It was moved by Trustee Ward and seconded by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw

THAT the Board move Policy 5.40: Severe Allergic Reaction, forward for first reading.

MOTION CARRIED

5.50 Use of Physical Restraint & Seclusion

25/012 It was moved by Trustee Ward and seconded by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw

THAT the Board move Policy 5.50: Use of Physical Restraint & Seclusion, forward for first reading.

MOTION CARRIED

5.60 Provision of Menstrual Products

25/013 It was moved by Trustee Ward and seconded by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw

THAT the Board move Policy 5.60: Provision of Menstrual Products, forward for first reading.

MOTION CARRIED

Policies For Second Reading:**3.40 Board Authority Courses**

25/014 It was moved by Trustee Jepsen and seconded by Trustee Rainer

THAT the Board move Policy 3.40: Board Authority Courses, forward for second reading as amended.

MOTION CARRIED

Policies to be Repealed

503.0 Student Suspensions

Chair Swan asked Superintendent Lawrance if parents will still have access to this policy if the Board decides repeal it. Superintendent Lawrance responded that it will be published within the Administrative Procedure on the district's website when policy 503.0 Student Suspensions is removed.

25/015 It was moved by Trustee Ward and seconded by Trustee Rainer

THAT the Board approved Policy 503.0, Student Suspensions, be repealed and moved to the Administrative Procedures Guide.

MOTION CARRIED

Administrative Procedures (Information)

- a) Student Behaviour and Discipline
- b) Flag Protocols

Student Trustee Reports:

Assistant Superintendent Kempston asked Student Trustees to reflect on the following: When you think of your lives or your friend's lives, what are the major health or wellness concerns for kids your age? What resources do kids need or want more of? What is working well for kids in Princeton?

The Student Trustees expressed concerns about the normalization of vaping and smoking, as well as the constant need for social media on phones, which they see as major health and wellness issues. They also highlighted the benefits of having more time with guidance counselors at school, better technology, and more bussing for field trips would be beneficial. Additionally, they mentioned that events and presentations at school help improve the school's atmosphere, and they really enjoy participating in the sports program.

P.A.C Reports:

- Trustee Rainer received a letter from the John Allison Elementary P.A.C concerning the YMCA Daycare, extra cost coming to the parents, and a strict 5:00pm student pickup.
- Trustee Chenoweth reported on SCIDES and Collettsville Elementary. One question that Trustee Chenoweth would like to address the following: When P.A.C organizes a fundraiser, is there a policy that restricts the funds for trips and how do classes fundraise? They also asked if Public Health attend MSS anymore. The Collettsville P.A.C thinks that a letter from the Board of Education to Interior Health might help get Public Health back into MSS.
- Chair Swan reports on Merritt Secondary School.
- Trustee Kent-Laidlaw reported on Princeton Secondary School.
- Trustee Jepsen reported on Merritt Central Elementary and Diamond Vale Elementary.
- Trustee Ward reported on Vermilion Forks Elementary.
- Trustee Hoisington reported on Nicola Canford.

Other Reports:

Trustee Rainer informed the Board that he, along with Secretary Treasurer Richardson and Operations Manager Darrell Finnigan, attended the Town of Princeton Committee of the Whole to present to the Council about the challenges of transporting students within town. Trustee Rainer reported that the Town of Princeton is in the process of acquiring a city bus. The town of Princeton also requested that Operations Manager Darrell Finnigan stay in contact with Lyle Thomas to coordinate using the data they have collected.

CORRESPONDENCE:

None.

PUBLIC QUESTION PERIOD

None

ADJOURNMENT:

25/016

Motion to adjourn was made by Trustee Ward and seconded by Trustee Hoisington. The Open meeting adjourned at 7:17 pm.



Chairperson



Secretary Treasurer