

MINUTES

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

**PSS LEARNING COMMONS
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2025, 6:00PM**

Success for ALL Learners Today and Tomorrow

Present:	Chairperson	G. Swan (Virtual)
	Vice-Chair	L. Ward
	Trustees	J. Jepsen J. Kent-Laidlaw E. Hoisington J. Chenoweth (Absent) D. Rainer
	Student Trustees	Matthew Williams Sophia Pioquid (Absent)
	Superintendent	C. Lawrance
	Assistant Superintendent	J. Kempston
	Interim Secretary Treasurer	H. Cull
	Assistant Secretary Treasurer	L. Rusnjak
	Executive Assistant	K. Buckland
	Manager of IT	E. Park

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES AND METIS COMMUNITY

AGENDA

25/054 It was moved by Vice-Chair Rainer and seconded By Trustee Ward

THAT the agenda be approved as presented.

MOTION CARRIED

MINUTES

25/055 It was moved by Trustee Everett and seconded by Trustee Rainer

THAT the minutes of the Open Meeting held February 12, 2025, be adopted as presented.

MOTION CARRIED

Business Arising from the Minutes

None.

Report of the Closed Meeting held February 15, 2025.

EDUCATION

Indigenous Education Report:

Superintendent Lawrance shared a written report from the District Principal of Indigenous Education, Angela McIvor. The report featured a picture that Angela being hugged by a group of girls at the Nooaitch Band's Token Economy Dinner, an event held to honor students with regular attendance or outstanding academic performance.

Early Learning and Child Care Report:

Daniella Bennie, District Vice-Principal of Early Learning and Child Care, updated the Board on various Early Learning and Child Care initiatives across the School District. She highlighted the StrongStart program and introduced Jamie, who is learning to use scissors to practice his cutting skills. Mrs. Bennie also mentioned that Jamie enjoys giving and receiving mail, so the StrongStart Educator had Jamie cut out his letter "J" and mail it to Mrs. Bennie. In return, Mrs. Bennie sent back letter stamps and some books for use in StrongStart.

Daniella Bennie updated the Board about Ready Set Learn Events which has seen increased attendance and community partner involvement, with a focus on kindergarten registration. The After School Program has been successful, with full enrollment and engaging activities such as skating, Taekwondo, and bowling. Mrs. Bennie also highlighted the success of the Loose Parts program, which has been well-received by both teachers and students. The Seamless Day program at Diamond Vale has been well-received by families, and the Ready Set Learn program at Diamond Vale has been successful in connecting with daycare centers. Mrs. Bennie also introduced the Strengthening the Early Years to Kindergarten Transitions (SEY2KT) program with an upcoming event called Once Upon a Book Tasting. During this event, participants will read three books: "Give a Mouse a Cookie," "Dragon's Love Tacos," and "The Very Hungry Caterpillar," followed by crafts and games related to each book. The event will also include tacos and cookies as a meal.

Daniella Bennie informed the board that the District will complete the numeracy assessment in the spring for grades 1-5 as part of the District's numeracy assessment initiative. The assessment data will be used to guide teaching practices. Mrs. Bennie also discussed the importance of understanding the stories behind the data, rather than just looking at numbers.

Superintendent Lawrance informed the Board that Daniella Bennie will be presenting at the BCSTA AGM in April 2025.

Inclusive Education Report:

Superintendent Lawrance discussed the report by Director of Instruction – Inclusive Education, Misty Sheldon, highlighting that the Director of Human Resources, Barb Mclean, along with Mrs. Sheld and the union's representatives, co-hosted a Pro-D Day.

Superintendent's Report:

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

OPERATIONS

Riverside Learning Centre Update

Interim Secretary Treasurer Harold Cull discussed the Riverside Update, highlighting the progress of the construction project and the financial situation. He mentioned that the overall budget of the project is \$10.272 million which is broken out between construction cost and soft cost which include items such as: Design fees, Civil work, Demolition, Permits, Equipment and Project management. Although the budget is tight, staff believe there are adequate resources to complete the project. The target operational date for the project is set for May.

Trustee Kent-Laidlaw asked whether the District is planning an opening event?

Superintendent Lawrance replied that they are waiting for the completion date, and that the ministry would like to be invited to the District's opening event.

AUDIT AND FINANCE

2024 - 2025 Amended Budget Bylaw Process

Interim Secretary Treasurer Harold Cull presented the 2024-2025 Amended Annual Budget. An opportunity for discussion was provided.

25/056 It was moved by Trustee Rainer and seconded by Trustee Hoisington

THAT the Board approve the \$43,059,880 Amended Annual Budget By-Law for 2024-2025 first reading.

MOTION CARRIED

25/057 It was moved by Trustee Rainer and seconded by Trustee Hoisington

THAT the Board approve the \$43,059,880 Amended Annual Budget By-Law for second reading.

MOTION CARRIED

25/058 It was moved by Trustee Rainer and seconded by Trustee Hoisington

THAT the Board move the 2024-2025 \$43,059,880 Amended Annual Budget By-Law for third reading.

MOTION CARRIED

25/059 It was moved by Trustee Rainer and seconded by Trustee Hoisington

THAT the Board approve the 2024-2025 \$43,059,880 Amended Annual Budget By-Law for third reading.

MOTION CARRIED

2025 – 2026 Preliminary Annual Budget Process

Interim Secretary Treasurer Harold Cull provided the Board with an update on ongoing conversations from March, continuing into April and leading up to May. He discussed the consultation process focusing on strategic priorities and mentioned upcoming meetings with the teacher's union representatives and the CUPE union president to talk about priorities and potential mitigation strategies. He also provided updates on the pressure target, which is currently around \$2,000,000. There was an improvement in the Q2 forecast after receiving February enrolment data, reducing the initial target from two and a half million to two million in March.

Trustee Kent-Laidlaw inquired if there is a timeline for when the Board will be presented with the mitigation strategies?

Interim Secretary Treasurer Harold Cull responded that they would compile all the mitigation strategies after conversations with District partner groups over the next couple of days. Additionally, there is a Budget Working Group consisting of staff and the finance committee. They will fine-tune the mitigation strategies before presenting them to the Board at the April Board Meeting

Superintendent Lawrance informed the Board that a public meeting will be held on April 16 in Merritt and another on April 17 in Princeton, both available for in-person and online attendance.

POLICY

Superintendent Lawrance brought forward recommendations from the policy committee to: Approve By-Law 5-23 for second reading and sent for consultation; send Policy 3.80, 5.10, 5.20, 5.30, 5.40, 5.50, and 5.60 out for consultation.

First Reading

- a) 4.10 Respectful Working Environments
- b) 4.20 Employee Recognition
- c) 4.30 Protection of Employee from Violence
- d) 4.40 Employment of Relatives
- e) 4.50 Teacher Professional Development

Second Reading

- a) 3.80 Animals in Schools
- b) 5.10 Bullying and Harassment of Students
- c) 5.20 Controlled and Regulated Substances
- d) 5.30 Weapons
- e) 5.40 Severe Allergic Reaction
- f) 5.50 Use of Physical Restraint & Seclusion
- g) 5.60 Provision of Menstrual Products

Third Reading

None.

BYLAW

Second Reading

a) Appeal Bylaw 5-23

25/060

It was moved by Vice-Chair Ward and seconded by Trustee Hoisington

THAT the Board approve Bylaw 5-23, as presented for second reading as amended.

MOTION CARRIED

Policies Recommended for Repeal

None.

Trustee Reports:

Student Trustee Reports

Assistant Superintendent Jane Kempston updated the Trustees that McCreary Centre visited Princeton Secondary School (PSS) and Merritt Secondary School (MSS) complete BC's Adolescent Health Survey with their students. Student Trustee Matthew Williams was one of the students to participate in this survey. Assistant Superintendent Kempston asked if Matthew could share how his experience was.

Student Trustee Williams shared his experience participating in BC's Adolescent Health Survey at Princeton Secondary School (PSS) and Merritt Secondary School (MSS). He was surprised to learn that most teenagers get over 8 hours of sleep, contrary to his experience with classmates who usually don't sleep much. During the survey, students were given envelopes with various items like art pictures and had to organize them into categories such as things the school needs to work on or things important to them. Items included vapes, phones, drugs, family, pets, and schoolwork. Students then ranked these items from most important to least important. The top three items chosen by all groups were displayed on the board, and discussions were held about them.

Assistant Superintendent Jane Kempston mention to the Trustees that the staff from the McCreary Centre spend one day at PSS and one day at MSS. She noted that while the McCreary staff found some similarities between the high schools, there were also significant differences. Additionally, she mentioned that seventy-seven students from PSS participated in the survey.

P.A.C. Reports

Trustee Hoisington reported on Nicola Canford, highlighting that their PAC created a newsletter to distribute for recruiting new members.

Trustee Kent-Laidlaw reported on Princeton Secondary School noting that there was no PAC Meeting this month, with the next meeting scheduled for April. She also mentioned that the school recently held a successful student-led conference.

Vice-Chair Ward reported on Vermilion Forks Elementary, noting that the PAC will meet on April 10, which is after the next Board Meeting. She mentioned that the PAC inquired about the possibility of a new playground for the school, and Operations Manager Darrell Finnigan informed her that the new playground is in the queue for a grant from the Ministry of Education. They will learn in the next couple of months whether it will be this year or the 2026 school year. The PAC had reached out to ask for exemption from

custodian fees for when they host a garage sale in the school gym, which was discussed but no decision was made.

Superintendent Lawrance mentioned that although the District did not qualify for a grant from the Ministry of Education this year, the new playground for Vermilion Forks remains part of the ongoing plan to continually request funding from the Ministry.

Trustee Rainer reported that John Allison Elementary PAC didn't have a meeting, but he mentioned that he loves the SEY2KT program.

Trustee Jepsen reported that Diamond Vale Elementary and Central Elementary PAC didn't have a meeting this month but Central Elementary used the time slot to have a meeting with the Grade 7 parent for fundraising for the Eagle Bay Trip.

Chair Swan reported on the DPAC Meeting, noting that they discussed the cost of a bus if students paid for bus services. According to Operations Manager Darrell Finnigian via Assistant Superintendent Jane Kempston, the cost would be \$210,000 per year, plus \$100,000 per year for maintenance.

Chair Swan reported on the Partners Learning Conference, highlighting the SST Report which revealed that gangs are using vape products to recruit kids.

Trustee Chenoweth was not present to report on SCIDES and Collettsville Elementary.

Other Reports:

Motion updates

Trustee Kent-Laidlaw updated the Board of the motions that were moved at the February 12, 2025, Open Board Meeting and brought forward to the BCSTA AGM meeting on February 28, 2025.

A) Fully Funded Exempt Compensation

Trustee Kent-Laidlaw spoke with the BCSTA Resolution Representative, who mentioned that the motion had already been submitted in 2023 and was passed. She informed the Trustees that she withdrew the motion since letters were sent to the Ministry in 2023, and all details can be seen on the portal.

B) Technology Security

Trustee Kent-Laidlaw mentioned that four motions were submitted by different Districts, which were quite similar. As a result, three of them were collapsed into the fourth. Although the final motion being presented is not theirs, it is essentially the same. Trustee Kent-Laidlaw requested that the term "new funding" be specified instead of just "funding" to ensure that the funds are not taken from other sources. She agreed to collapse their motion into the existing one, provided this modification is made.

C) Feeding Futures

Trustee Kent-Laidlaw spoke about the motion that was put forward, noting that the federal government has announced a National School Food Program. This program will allocate millions of dollars to schools, aiming to feed about 90,000 kids and reduce grocery fees by \$100 for families. Due to this announcement, the Trustees were asked to withdraw their motion, as it essentially makes their current motion redundant. However, they still see this as a win because the additional funds for the school food program are still being provided.

CORRESPONDENCE:

a) VEF Gym Rental Email

Chair Swan informed the Board that Vermilion Forks Elementary PAC parents had sent an email requesting an exemption from fees to rent the school gym for a garage sale fundraiser.

Trustee Rainer asked if the PAC could go to the town or counsel for grants to use the spaces.

ACTION ITEM

Vice-Chair Ward will send an email to Vermilion Fork PAC informing them that the Board discussed their email. She will include two links for grants that the PAC can apply for and will also send these links to Superintendent Lawrance for other school PACs.

PUBLIC QUESTION PERIOD


None.

ADJOURNMENT

25/061

Motion to adjourn was made by Vice-Chair Ward and seconded by Trustee Jepsen

THAT the Open Board meeting adjourned at 7:50pm


Chairperson


Interim Secretary Treasurer

