

MINUTES

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

**MERRITT SCHOOL BOARD OFFICE
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2025, 6:00PM**

Success for ALL Learners Today and Tomorrow

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES AND METIS COMMUNITY

Assistant Secretary Treasurer to Acting Secretary Treasurer

25/066 It was moved by Trustee Jepsen and seconded by Trustee Chenoweth

THAT Assistant Secretary Treasurer Laura Rusnjak be appointed to Acting Secretary Treasurer for the April 9, 2025, Board of Education Meeting.

MOTION CARRIED

AGENDA

25/067 It was moved by Trustee Rainer and seconded by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw

THAT the agenda be approved as presented.

MOTION CARRIED

MINUTES

25/068

It was moved by Trustee Hoisington and seconded by Trustee Jepsen

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

MOTION CARRIED

Business Arising from the Minutes

None.

Report of the Closed Meeting held March 12, 2025.

Presentations to the Board

CUPE President

Superintendent Lawrance introduced the CUPE President, Kristen Lupton, for her presentation.

CUPE President, Kristen Lupton expressed concern about the proposed budget cuts, which would impact frontline staff, and questioned the alternatives considered before cutting frontline staff. She emphasized the importance of maintaining student safety and inclusion.

NVPDTU Presidents

Vince Kanigan, President of the Merritt District Teachers' Union, presented a slide showing the District's allocation to instruction, which has declined over the last 6 years. He suggested finding a more balanced approach to cutting costs.

Trina Moulin, President of the Princeton District Teachers' Union, shared feedback from Princeton teachers, emphasizing the importance of personal stories in the budget process.

EDUCATION

Indigenous Education Report:

Superintendent Lawrance presented the written report submitted by District Principal of Indigenous Education, Angela McIvor, highlighting Angela was that the Inspire Empowerment Gathering with four of the District's Indigenous Student Advocate and approximately 16 students.

Early Learning and Child Care Report:

Superintendent Lawrance presented the written report submitted by District Vice Principal of Early Learning and Childcare, Daniella Bennie. Daniella is actively involved with various literacy associations within the District. One notable event she organized was at John Allison Elementary is "Once Upon a Book Tasting," where participants will read three books: "Give a Mouse a Cookie," "Dragon's Love Tacos," and "The Very Hungry Caterpillar." The event will feature crafts and games related to each book, along with tacos and cookies as a meal.

Inclusive Education Report:

Director of Instruction – Inclusive Education, Misty Sheldon, presented an update on Inclusive Education initiatives in the District. She highlights a new progress report template for competency-based Individual

Education Plans (IEP) that aligns with regular learning updates and can be easily accessed by parents. Misty also discusses a new online course for Education Assistants on Inclusive Education, which is now part of the onboarding process for new hires. Additionally, she mentions the implementation of an updated achievement test (WIAT-4) and an ongoing internal file review to ensure quality and compliance of student support documents. Lastly, Misty announces the appointment of Tracy Dunsmore as the new Indigenous Student Engagement Facilitator.

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

Superintendent Courtney Lawrance provided the Trustees with an update that the Riverside Learning Center project is nearing completion, with a projected finish on budget and within the timeline. The project will make the District a landlord, with the Y.M.C.A. being responsible for staffing and operation.

Trustee Rainer mentioned that he would like to schedule a meeting with the Trustees and the YMCA.

School Calendar and PD Days

Chair Swan informed the Board about the formation of a committee tasked with reviewing the District calendar and PD Days. Chair Swan noted that Vice-Chair Ward, Trustee Chenoweth, and senior staff are part of this committee. They plan to meet in the coming months to discuss the terms of reference and aim to report back to the Board by October this year.

AUDIT AND FINANCE

2024 - 2025 Annual Facilities Grant Program Approval

Superintendent Lawrance provided the Trustees with that the District has been approved \$794, 000 from the ministry for upgrades. She mentioned that a few of these projects are a continuation or another part to projects that already existed. The next step is to require a motion from the Board to approve the list of Annual Facilities Grant (AFG) project as presented.

25/069

It was moved by Trustee Chenoweth and seconded by Trustee Rainer

THAT the list of Annual Facilities Grant projects be approved as presented.

MOTION CARRIED

2025 – 2026 Capital Plan Bylaw

Superintendent Lawrance provide the Trustee with the memo that Interim Secretary Treasurer Harold Cull provided. Ms. Lawrance requested that the Board of allow all three readings of the Capital Plan Bylaw be read.

25/070

It was moved by Trustee Rainer and seconded by Trustee Jepsen

THAT 2025-2026 Capital Plan Bylaw No.2025/26-CPSD58-01 be moved for first and second reading.

MOTION CARRIED

25/071 It was moved by Trustee Hoisington and seconded by Trustee Rainer
THAT 2025-2026 Capital Plan Bylaw No.2025/26-CPSD58-01 be moved third reading.

MOTION CARRIED

25/072 It was moved by Trustee Hoisington and seconded by Trustee Rainer
THAT 2025-2026 Capital Plan Bylaw No.2025/26-CPSD58-01 be approved for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

2025-2026 Preliminary Annual Budget Update

Superintendent Lawrance presented a memo from Interim Secretary Treasurer Harold Cull, which highlighted the initial projection of approximately \$2.5 million in cuts within the District by the budget working group (BWG) and Mr. Cull. At the last board meeting, the BWG managed to reduce this figure to approximately \$2 million. With the cuts already made this year, the District now needs to make additional cuts of approximately \$1.5 million, or 4.7%. Public budget meetings were announced for April 16th and 17th, to be held via YouTube and Facebook.

POLICY

First Reading

None

Second 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

Third Reading

a) 3.80 Animals in Schools

25/073 It was moved by Trustee Jepsen and seconded by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw
THAT the Board move Policy, 3.80, Animals in Schools, forward for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

b) 5.10 Bullying and Harassment of Students

25/074 It was moved by Trustee Jepsen and seconded by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw
THAT the Board move Policy, 5.10, Bullying and Harassment of Students, forward for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

c) 5.20 Controlled and Regulated Substances

25/075

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

THAT the Board move Policy, 5.20, Controlled and Regulated Substances, forward for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

d) 5.30 Weapons

25/076

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

THAT the Board move Policy, 5.30, Weapons, forward for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

e) 5.40 Severe Allergic Reaction

25/077

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

THAT the Board move Policy, 5.40, Severe Allergic Reaction, forward for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

f) 5.50 Use of Physical Restraint & Seclusion

25/078

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

THAT the Board move Policy, 5.50, Use of Physical Restraint & Seclusion, forward for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

g) 5.60 Provision of Menstrual Products

25/079

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

THAT the Board move Policy, 5.60, Provision of Menstrual Products, forward for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

BYLAW

Third Reading

a) Appeal Bylaw 5-23

25/080

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

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

MOTION CARRIED

Policies Recommended for Repeal

None.

Administrative Procedures

- a) School Administration: Accessibility
- b) School Administration: Collection of Personal Information
- c) School Administration: Employee Criminal Record Check
- d) School Administration: Parent/Guardian Concerns & Complaints
- e) School Administration: School Volunteers

Superintendent Lawrance provided the School Administrative Procedures to the Trustees for review.

Trustee Reports:

Student Trustee Reports

Assistant Superintendent Kempston requested Student Trustees to reflect on the current budget considerations and speak on behalf of students how extracurricular activities impact students.

Student Trustee Haidyn Clarke, who was not able to attend, submitted a power point presentation to the Board about her recent trip to Costa Rica.

Student Trustee Jacob Davis highlighted a couple of opportunities that MSS should consider revisiting. One opportunity was a University trip to Vancouver and Victoria, which Indigenous students had the chance to participate in before Christmas. Jacob mentioned that he asked the students who went on the trip, and they replied that it was a great opportunity for them to explore their post-secondary education options. He also mentions that he was able to attend a Band trip last year to Vancouver, which he got to work with professional orchestra directors at VSO. He stated that the directors showed the students a different way to look at music and how they connect with each other. They also got to show their talent to other schools in the lower mainland and inspire younger students.

P.A.C. Reports

Trustee Hoisington mention that there is no PAC report for Nicola Canford Elementary.

Trustee Rainer reported on John Allison Elementary.

Trustee Chenoweth reported on SCIDES, Collettville Elementary and attended MSS on behalf of Chair Swan.

Trustee Kent-Laidlaw reported on Princeton Secondary School.

Trustee Jepsen reported on Merritt Central Elementary and Diamond Vale Elementary has no PAC report.

Trustee Ward was not present.

Chair Swan reported on Bench Elementary.

Other Reports:

Trustee Rainer requested that the Board draft a letter to the town of Princeton concerning the homeless camp located below the daycare center.

CORRESPONDENCE:

NONE

PUBLIC QUESTION PERIOD

None.

ADJOURNMENT

25/081

Motion to adjourn was made by Trustee Chenoweth and seconded by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw

THAT the Open Board meeting be adjourned at 8:20pm



Chairperson



Interim Secretary Treasurer