

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

12:00 pm, Wednesday, June 11, 2025

School Board Office

NOTES

Present: Jaclyn Miller, Maureen Mason, Gretchen Conti, Dale Lawson

Also in attendance: Steve Hopkins (Secretary-Treasurer)

Regrets: Paul McKenzie (Superintendent), Kirsten Van't Schip (Trustee)

PRESENTATIONS:

Graduation Project: Drawing as a Social Practice – K. Gordon (Edgehill Elementary)

Kristal Gordon presented her Capilano University graduation project, which explored *drawing as a social practice* through her work in Edgehill's forest classroom. The project combined shelter-building activities with drawing and storytelling to foster collaboration, curiosity, and inquiry among students. Using natural materials like sticks and tools such as plexiglass sheets and felt markers, students created drawings, mazes, and structures while documenting their learning and sharing observations. The project emphasized the role of art in communication, relationship-building, and constructivist learning, encouraging resilience and exploration through nature-based creative expression.

Kindergarten Gradual Entry – Kindergarten Teachers

Wendy Adams and Kristina Crookshank presented on behalf of qathet School District kindergarten teachers, advocating for the continuation of a 10-day gradual entry schedule for incoming students. They emphasized that the transition to kindergarten is significant, and that a longer, child-centred entry period helps establish trust, routines, and foundational relationships. Referencing Early Development Instrument (EDI) data showing rising vulnerability among children in the region, they expressed concern that reducing gradual entry from 10 to 5 days, including deferring hours to the spring, could disrupt continuity and negatively impact student well-being. The presenters shared comparisons with other districts, noting that most of Metro Vancouver and several others continue to offer two-week gradual entry periods. They requested a return to the 10-day model, greater involvement in decision-making processes, and expressed appreciation for the additional classroom supports and the opportunity to share their perspectives.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOVED: D. LAWSON

SECONDED: M. MASON

THAT the Committee of the Whole Meeting Agenda of June 11, 2025, be adopted as amended.

STATUS: CARRIED

2. STANDING COMMITTEES

2.a) Finance and Facilities

2.a.i) 2024 PSO Climate Change Accountability Report

Secretary-Treasurer Hopkins presented the 2024 PSO Climate Change Accountability Report, submitted annually in accordance with provincial requirements. The report outlines emissions data and highlights recent achievements in sustainability. A brief overview was provided, noting that natural gas and utilities remain the largest sources of energy use. Capital projects are selected with a focus on reducing consumption, including upgrades to thermal windows, mechanical systems, and lighting

2.a.ii) 2025/2026 Draft Budget

S. Hopkins presented the draft 2025/2026 budget, noting that some financial elements remain preliminary and are not yet finalized for decision-making. The presentation, prepared for broader staff engagement, included a review of the provincial funding model, special purpose funds, and ongoing financial pressures. The operating fund, which uses a per-pupil formula with supplemental funding based on specific criteria, allocates approximately 80% to instruction, with smaller proportions to administration, operations, and transportation.

Budget pressures include:

- Minimal accumulated operating surplus available for future operations
- Unsustainable model for secondary school remedy
- Under-enrolled secondary programs continuing to operate
- Surplus of continuing teachers beyond current needs
- Transition costs for new leadership, trustee by-election
- Rising staff replacement costs, employee benefits, and general inflation
- Volatility in the economic landscape

Mitigation strategies outlined include:

- Reallocating \$241,000 from capital reserve to operating
- Maintaining business staff reductions (0.6 FTE)
- Reducing elementary staffing by one FTE due to declining enrolment
- Adjusting summer programming to reflect funding and operational needs
- Collapsing under-enrolled programs and redirecting resources
- Implementing a formal program review process

- Continuing to seek operational efficiencies (e.g., roles and project delivery)

Trustees inquired about plans to rebuild the accumulated surplus and the rationale for reallocating reserves. It was clarified that rebuilding the surplus is not a current priority. While final year-end results may provide an opportunity to revisit the reallocation of reserves, such a change is considered unlikely. The draft budget reflects a leaner financial approach, with no major layoffs anticipated, but includes adjustments to staffing processes in response to the district's current financial context.

2.b) Education and Strategic Planning

2.b.i) Program Review Schedule

S. Hopkins presented the proposed Program Review Cycle for 2025–2026 on behalf of Superintendent McKenzie, who was unable to attend due to illness. Updates to the review schedule have been incorporated into the district's work plan for the upcoming school year.

RECOMMENDATION: THAT the Board of Education approve the proposed Program Review Cycle for 2025-2026.

2.c) Audit

2.c.i) N/A

2.d) Policy Development

2.d.i) 2025/2026 Board Meeting Calendar

Trustees reviewed the proposed Board meeting calendar for the 2025–2026 school year. A request was made for school principals to adjust staff meeting schedules to avoid conflicts with scheduled Board meetings.

RECOMMENDATION: TO approve the proposed 2025-2026 Board Meeting Calendar.

2.d.ii) 2025/2026 Board Work Plan

The Board reviewed the updated 2025–2026 Work Plan, which reflects changes to the Program Review schedule and other adjustments made throughout the year.

Discussion took place regarding the timing of Committee of the Whole meetings. Some trustees expressed challenges with the current noon start time and indicated a preference for a 4:00 p.m. start. It was suggested that a final decision be deferred until the Superintendent is able to provide input.

RECOMMENDATION: TO adopt the 2025/2026 Board Work Plan.

3. OTHER INFORMATION

3.a) Letter re: Kindergarten Gradual Entry Changes

Superintendent will address a response to the kindergarten teachers.

3.b) Letter of Support Request – YouthCAT

The Board received a request to submit a letter of support on behalf of YouthCAT. Trustees expressed support for the request, and staff were directed to draft the letter.

3.c) Meeting with BCSTA President re: Priorities

Chair Miller informed the Board of an upcoming meeting with the new BCSTA President, scheduled for June 23, prior to the next Board meeting. Trustees were invited to share priority topics to raise during the meeting. It was suggested that the Chair draw from the recent questions posed to the Minister, including topics such as climate change, staffing challenges, and broader systemic issues. Trustees were encouraged to email any additional suggestions directly to the Chair.

4. ADJOURNMENT

MOVED: M. MASON

THAT the Committee of the Whole meeting be adjourned.

STATUS: CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 2:13 pm.

SH/attachments