

COMMITTEE REPORT
EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
PUBLIC MEETING
April 29, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.

TRUSTEES: Amanda Dowhy, Board Chair
Cendra Beaton
Ebony Logins
Allison Watson

Christine Lervold, Vice Chair
Russ Chipps (online via MS Teams)
Trudy Spiller

STAFF: Paul Block, Superintendent
Brian Jonker, Secretary-Treasurer
Monica Braniff, Deputy Superintendent
D'Arcy Deacon, Associate Superintendent
Fred Hibbs, Executive Director, Human Resources
David Lee Bonar, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer
Steve Tonnesen, Manager, Digital Solutions Operations

RECORDING: Jenny Seal

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by the Board Chair. Amanda Dowhy acknowledged the traditional territories of the First Nations. The Board Chair acknowledged stakeholders and members of the public participating in the meeting and reminded media to direct their questions to the Manager of Communications.

The Board Chair provided a broad overview of the purpose of the Education Committee of the Whole (ECOW) meeting and turned to the Superintendent for opening remarks. This proposed budget is an intentional alignment of resources with the goals and objectives in the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan.

2. COMMITTEE REPORT

No Committee Report.

3. PRESENTATIONS

Standing Delegations (SPEAC, SPVP, CUPE 459, STA)

Member groups were given an opportunity to speak to the proposed budget.

CUPE 459 -Trudy Court

The CUPE 459 2nd Vice President spoke about the strain on CUPE members due to workload and high turnover. Over time, worker morale has been eroding. CUPE members request clear direction and direct communication. Trudy Court acknowledged The National Day of Mourning that took place yesterday, April 28th and in closing posed the question, how can this budget support workers' sense of value and their ability to pay for day-to-day basic expenses?

Sooke Principals and Vice Principals (SPVP)-Jen Nixon & Ruchi McArthur

Representatives from SPVP acknowledged the traditional territories of the First Nations. They spoke to the work being done to support students by Trustees and Executives, Teachers & CUPE members and the fact that it is a collaborative effort across all parties, that requires ongoing change and adaptation. The SPVP representative advocated for continued and increased literacy and numeracy supports by increasing positions that provide focussed support for grades K through 8.

STA-Rita Zeni

President Rita Zeni referenced their presentation from the partner group meeting held February 25th, 2025 in which the STA advocated for increased teacher-counsellor time. Based on the enrolment numbers provided in the meeting documentation next year should see an increase of 4.3 FTE in teacher-counsellor time. Evidence shows that early intervention is vital for better mental health incomes for students. In the February budget presentations, the STA also stressed the impact that behaviours in the classroom are having on staff and students. There needs to be targeted funding to address this. Referencing page 11 of the meeting materials that shows support staff in a reduced position. The STA emphasized the need for the whole team of support staff.

SPEAC-Tom Davis

The SPEAC President acknowledged the territories of the First Nations. Tom Davis acknowledged the value of ongoing relationships with other partner groups, trustees, PACS, teachers, executives, and others. SPEAC is happy to hear base funding by the Province has increased and is happy there are no reductions in the proposed budget. It is disappointing the capital funding request was not supported and in closing, SPEAC echoed the STA's call for increased teacher-counsellor positions.

Delegations (Members of the Public)

Members of the Public were given an opportunity to speak, and the Board of Education received multiple questions via MS Teams. The comments have been summarized in the following groups:

Tim Hamblin Vice president of CUPE 459

Respectful, effective, and meaningful communication is needed at Facilities. The CUPE 459 Vice President articulated needs of the Facilities Department from CUPE's perspective, including looking at restoring positions and including staff in discussions and planning of projects.

4. BUSINESS

25/26 Budget Plan – Brian Jonker

The Secretary Treasurer presented the factors and processes that led to the development of the proposed budget for 2025/26, as outlined in detail in the meeting materials.

Following the presentation, the Board Chair opened the floor to questions and clarifications.

A question was asked about planning for expenses relating to Bill 40. There is \$12,000 increase allocated to the Indigenous Education Council. The Council will make recommendations on how these funds are to be spent and present to the Board in May.

The Superintendent provided details about the program being offered at the Westshore Post-Secondary program. The program is about increasing opportunities for adult education for those aged 19-65. Adults attend classes during the day to work towards their Adult Dogwood and it is fully funded. SD62 online programs will also be offered at Westshore Post-Secondary. Within the current Westshore building is the Newcomer welcome

centre. English Language Learning levels 1-7 will be offered at this location. If all levels are completed, adults can then enrol in the Adult Dogwood program. In future, a global citizenship program will be offered to grade 12 students as a dual credit course, allowing students to transfer directly into the Global Citizenship 4-year program at Royal Roads University.

Clarity was requested about the expected counsellor-teacher to student ration expected for next year. Deputy Superintendent Monica Braniff explained that the district ratio is 7.29 which is above the provincial standard of 1-693. Next year the ratio will be 7.29 which is also above the collective agreement ratio.

Associate Superintendent Dave Strange articulated what is coming next year in curriculum supports for literacy and numeracy: tremendous work in the district and schools is being done. The last number of years have focussed on the primary levels and is now expanding to middle school years. Building upon the good work done this year, we need to look at the current model with literacy and apply it to numeracy with increased release time to develop strategies and engage in collaborative professional conversations to support their focus on numeracy.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The chair asked for final concerns regarding the budget bylaw and reminded everyone about the budget survey being open until May 6th. Hearing no concerns, the meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.