

CENTRAL DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 1-2024

To the Chair and Members
Winnipeg Public School Board

February 13, 2024

The Central District Advisory Committee reports as follows:

1. Land Acknowledgement

The Committee stated that the students, staff, and communities of Winnipeg School Division are committed to truth and reconciliation through building relationships with Mother Earth, the original peoples of this land and the stories that bring us together. We acknowledge the place in which we gather is on Treaty 1 territory, the homeland of the Red River Métis and the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe, Ininiwak and Dakota Oyate peoples.

2. Approval of the Agenda

The parent representative from Elmwood High School volunteered to Chair the meeting.

The Committee approved the agenda of February 13, 2024, as distributed.

3. WSD 2024/2025 Budget Consultation

At the previous meeting, the Committee was requested to consult with their school communities to identify priorities for consideration as part of the upcoming budget process. The Committee was informed that the feedback collected from parents/guardians regarding budget priorities, highlighted a wide range of suggestions. The Committee emphasized the importance of initiatives such as smaller class sizes, improved classroom instruction, greater academic engagement, increase attendance and higher graduation rates, better maths and literacy achievement, more learning support teachers in schools, universal nutrition programs, phase-in no-fee lunch supervision, replacement of playgrounds annually, build powerful neighborhood schools, enhance school safety measures, improve settlement services for newcomers and expand adult EAL, as well as develop the R.B. Russell Career Lab. These priorities reflect a shared commitment to fostering student success, creating supportive school environments, and strengthening community engagement.

The Committee received a copy of the 2024/2025 Draft Budget for review. The Committee was informed that the province increased 1% (\$2.6 million) of education funding for WSD which does not cover the rising costs experienced by WSD, which includes salary contract settlements, service agreement inflation, and current programs and resources inflation. Despite identifying almost \$4 million in administrative savings for the 2024/2025 budget, additional revenue is necessary to meet the diverse needs of school communities effectively. The Committee was informed that the proposal of a 3.4% increase to the property education tax aligns with the rate of inflation and would enable WSD to maintain current programs and services, while fully funding nutrition and food programs, as well as allocate \$2.6 million toward budget priorities identified by the community. The Committee was also informed that alternatively, an increase in property tax of 3% would still maintain current programs and services, but reduce allocations toward community-driven budget priorities. The Committee acknowledged the importance of carefully considering these options to ensure the best outcomes for students, families, and staff within WSD.

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The Committee held roundtable discussions on various aspects of the budget consultation, including priorities for schools and the community, program expansions, resource distribution, and feedback from District Advisory Committees. The Committee discussed budget priorities, such as lunch programs, before and after school programs, inclusion programs, mental health and addiction services. The Committee discussed how to allocate funds in a way that would best serve students, parents, and educators.

The Committee raised concerns regarding the impact of class sizes on staffing and school space, as well as the importance of school programs and field trips to improve graduation and attendance rates. The Committee suggested the potential for bursaries to support student learning and community engagement. The Committee discussed the reintroduction of School Resource Officers (SROs) in specific schools to address safety concerns and build positive community relationships with law enforcement.

The Committee expressed challenges faced by some schools, such as the struggle to fill substitute/staffing positions and upgrading playgrounds, the need for more mental health support and Indigenous Education. The Committee also made suggestions including expanding arts and sports programs, implementing practical life skills education and prioritize Indigenous language education as part of the curriculum. The Committee discussed the importance of implementing programs and initiatives that promote inclusivity and address the needs of marginalized or disadvantaged students, including those from low-income families or with special needs.

The Committee discussed the implementation of lunch pilot programs, staffing challenges, the need for community engagement, before and after school programs, and nearby daycare facilities. The Committee also discussed the importance of professional development for Educational Assistants (EAs), the sustainability of the lunch pilot program, and the impact of property tax increases on the community. The Committee was informed that the funding allocation for nutrition programs includes investment in kitchen upgrades and potential establishment of community grocery stores to support the lunch pilot program. The Committee also explored creative solutions such as utilizing community spaces for programs, including opening the libraries and gym outside school hours and engaging volunteers such as high school students.

The Committee emphasized the importance of collaborative decision-making, community involvement, and prioritizing resources to meet the diverse needs of students and families across WSD. The Committee was informed that the specific budget considerations, and long-term financial planning could offer a deeper understanding of the decision-making process of the 2024/2025 budget consultation.

The Committee was informed that the Board of Trustees will hold a public budget consultation on February 26, 2024 at 7 p.m. at Tec Voc High School. The Committee was also informed that feedback on the draft budget can be provided via email to board@wsd1.org, in writing to 1577 Wall Street Winnipeg, MB R2E 2S5, or by registering at 204-775-0231 by February 22, 2024 to attend in person.

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4. WSD 123: Continuous Improvement 2023/2024

The Committee received a copy of the WSD 123 Continuous Improvement Report for review. The Committee was informed that the report provides an overview of the positive impact of WSD programs and services on the lives of 31,000 students during the 2023/24 academic year. The Committee was informed that as part of the educational mandate in Manitoba, WSD diligently addresses high levels of academic achievement in literacy and numeracy through planning with the Kindergarten to Grade 12 Framework for Continuous Improvement. The Committee was also informed that these divisional plans outline clear outcomes, comprehensive monitoring processes, baseline data, and measurable targets for all students across diverse languages of instruction. The Committee was informed that the plan also includes strategic utilization of grants, the emphasis on enhancing instructional leadership, and the essential role of stakeholder involvement in developing school division plans.

5. Lunch Program Pilot

At a previous meeting, the Committee was informed that a new lunch program pilot project was underway in five elementary schools. The initiative targets the reduction of barriers to attendance and aims to ease the burden of an extra monthly expense during a cost-of-living crisis. The Superintendent emphasized the importance of not burdening parents with additional costs related to public education. The Committee was informed that a total of \$200,000 has been allocated to pay support staff, who will replace parent council recruits in monitoring Kindergarten to Grade 6 classrooms for the remainder of the school year. The Committee was informed that the pilot has commenced at École LaVérendrye, École Sacré-Coeur, Shaughnessy Park School, Carpathia School, and Isaac Brock School based on the urgent need for resources and flexibility in changing delivery models.

The Committee was informed that the administration will survey families involved in the pilot project, with a recommendation to the Board of Trustees for a potential permanent end to fees for the lunch program. The Committee was informed that the lunch program pilot will undergo reassessment in May to explore the possibility of project expansion based on its initial outcomes.

6. Staggered Start Times

The Committee was informed that WSD will be implementing either a late start or early dismissal each week for high school students, starting in February. On one day per week, predominantly Wednesdays, classes will either begin an hour later or end an hour earlier. The Committee was informed that the aim of these adjusted class schedules is to remove barriers for approximately 2,500 students who face challenges in attending school while also allowing staff time to address attendance issues and strategize ways to enhance school environments.

The Committee was informed that to compensate for the loss of instructional time due to the altered schedules, June exams will be postponed. This adjustment will enable additional instructional days to be added to the calendar, ensuring that students receive at least the same amount, if not more, instructional time overall. The Committee was informed the decision reflects WSD's commitment to prioritizing student well-being and addressing attendance challenges while maintaining the integrity of the academic calendar and ensuring educational quality.

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The Committee was informed that seven schools have already implemented the amended schedules. The administration will assess the success of the amended schedules to determine if it will be implemented on a division-wide basis.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca Chambers
Trustee Representative

Attendance:

Voting Representatives

Clifton School
DMCI High School
Elmwood High School
George V School
Glenelm School
Isaac Brock School
Kent Road School
Laura Secord School
River Elm School
Sacré-Coeur School
Wolseley School

Regrets

Greenway School
Keewatin Prairie
Community School
Lord Selkirk School
Principal Sparling School
Sargent Park School
Tec Voc High School
Weston School

Administration

Matt Henderson, Superintendent/CEO
Julie Smerchanski, Assistant Superintendent
Susan Drysdale, Principal, Clifton School
Melody Woloschuk, Principal, DMCI High School
Charles Bendu, Vice-Principal, DMCI High School
Cree Crowchild, Principal, Elmwood High School
Ian McLeod, Vice-Principal, Elmwood High school
Scott Olfert, Vice-Principal, Greenway School
Chris Goring, Principal, Isaac Brock School
Amber Pelletier, Vice-Principal, Isaac Brock School
Misty Perrun, Vice-Principal, Keewatin Prairie Community School
Erin Enns, Vice-Principal, Keewatin Prairie Community School
Jenny Bui, Vice-Principal (*Acting*), Keewatin Prairie Community School
Amie Johnston, Principal, Lord Selkirk School
Marla Tran, Principal, River Elm School
Ara Morris, Principal, Sargent Park School
Joyce Wong, Vice-Principal, Sargent Park School
Garth McAlpine, Principal, Tec Voc High School
Lisa Richardson, Principal, Weston School
Brian Rogowsky, Principal, Wolseley
Michelle Lejano, Recording Secretary

Trustees

Rebecca Chambers
Perla Javate
Lois Brothers
Kathy Heppner
Dante Aviso
Tamara Kuly
Ann Evangelista