

EDUCATION EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 3-2025

To the Chair and Members
Winnipeg Public School Board:

November 25, 2025

The Education Equity Advisory Committee report 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. Terms of Reference

The Committee received a copy of the revised Terms of Reference for review. The Committee recommended that the Terms of Reference should clarify meeting expectations to ensure consistency and commitment for ongoing engagement with the community. The Committee recommended that the Terms of Reference indicate a minimum of four (4) meetings per year with the additional meetings as required. The Committee also recommended that meetings be held quarterly. It was also recommended that meetings be held from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

The Committee also recommended that membership include parents, caregivers, community members, and students.

Recommendations:

That the revised Terms of Reference be approved.

3. Inclusion Education

At a previous meeting, the Committee requested that the administration provide information on Special Education Program Funding and Assessment Services. Jill Heater, Principal of and Lorelei Bunkowsky, Assistant Superintendent of Student-Centred Services were in attendance to provide an overview on funding and assessment services

The Committee was informed that Student-Centred Services is structured to ensure that students are receiving the support that they need in school. The Committee was informed that Student-Centred Services referenced the Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba 2022 to adapt and develop Student-Centred Services' core principles such as recognizing and celebrating the diversity of all students, regardless of ability or background, be able to participate with same-age peers in common learning environments so they can succeed academically, socially and emotionally, and students and their teachers are provided with the necessary support to succeed.

The Committee was informed that language matters in the interactions that WSD staff have with students and WSD policies. The Committee was informed that policies are being updated and newer policies are using inclusive language. The Committee was informed that repeated phrases shape the belief system and should reflect WSD's evolving goals.

The Committee was provided with an overview of the Student-Centred Services Budget and was notified that \$113,989,382 was allocated for the 2025/26 School Year. The Committee was informed that the continued focus areas include reducing class sizes to address diverse student needs, hiring additional teachers to support classroom reduction goals, and additional Educational Assistants (EAs) in WSD.

The Committee was informed that 50 classroom teachers were added to reduce class sizes, and 100 support teachers were hired to work directly in classrooms and with school teams. The Committee was informed that funding per student is allocated based on need so every student does not received the same level of support.

The Committee was informed that the staffing positions are distributed based on equity, population size, and needs across schools. The Committee was informed that teams are flexible and may shift to support unique needs across WSD.

The Committee was informed that Clinical Related Services from Psychologists, Speech Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists are significantly funded compared to other school divisions. In response to an enquiry, the Committee was informed that any assessments from an external organization is accepted as this contributes to the overall understanding and planning for the student.

The Committee was informed that Classroom teachers are the primary support for the students. The classroom teacher works with in-school supports, Student-Centred Supports, leadership and then Family of Schools. The Committee was informed that clinicians and specialized services offer supports for the student and that the team follows the student across Family of Schools to maintain continuity and accessibility.

4. Hiring Practices

At a previous meeting, Committee members requested that an update on hiring practices. Aaron Benarroch, Director of Recruitment and International Education, who is also leading hiring practices for WSD was in attendance to provide an overview on the hiring practices.

The Committee was informed that the goal is to ensure students see themselves represented, welcomed and supported by the school staff in the school.

The Committee was informed that WSD is being transparent with it's hiring and creating barrier-free onboarding for new staff. The Committee was informed that WSD is reducing technology barriers, by providing assistance directly for those interested in applying. The Committee was informed that there is continued community outreach such as recruitment events for French speakers, and other community centers with the aim of being welcoming, accessible and community connected. The Committee was informed that WSD is developing targeted strategies to assist with shortages in hiring Educational Assistants, Substitute Teachers and French Immersion Teachers and Indigenous Language Speaking teachers.

The Committee was informed of ongoing challenges for internationally trained educators, many of whom currently work as EAs. The Committee was informed that the credential process is lengthy and complex. The Committee was informed that WSD aims to support newcomer families by allowing them to work while completing the requirements.

The Committee was informed that WSD is investing heavily in growing the workforce within the community. The Committee was informed of programs such as Build from Within, Canadian

Aboriginal Teacher Education Program (CATEP), partnerships with RRC Polytech and Winnipeg Adult Education Centre.

The Committee was informed that there are 23 Principals and Vice-Principals in WSD who identify as Indigenous or Métis. In response to an enquiry, Committee members were informed that the WSD has a partnership with the Yellowquill University College Bachelor of Education program.

5. 2024/2025 Demographic Report

The Committee received a copy of the 2024/2025 Demographic Report for review. The Committee discussed demographic reporting limitations due to families not completing census information, which leads to gaps in federal demographic data. The Committee was informed that WSD primarily relies on student registration data that are provided directly by parents/guardians.

The Committee was informed that a significant portion of WSD students (30-40%) population identified as Filipino and that we should be adequately celebrating the community's presence and contributions to deepen the feeling of belonging and cultural visibility.

The Committee discussed the importance of purposeful use of data collection for problem-solving to help identify root causes, guiding solutions and to inform advocacy to government regarding issues affecting families. The Committee was informed that the Demographic Report helps WSD with guiding resourcing decisions when there's been a demographic shift such as increases to cultural population and public housing patterns which has lead to an increase in Administration to improved pressure points and increased connection to students and families.

The Committee discussed the ongoing challenges with fluctuations in housing availability. The Committee was informed that some families are frequently moving due to rental instability and economic pressures. The Committee was informed that some areas of the city has seen an increase in home ownership, which has been altering long-term community patterns and affecting family settlement and school populations.

The Committee discussed the importance of student stability in schools. The Committee was informed that keeping students in the same school is essential for belonging, attachment and as a protective factor. The Committee was informed that WSD is working on strengthening partnerships with external agencies for the vulnerable population.

6. Diversity Institute – Equity Review

The Committee was informed that at a meeting held November 4, 2024, the Board of Trustees approved a motion to enter into an agreement with the Diversity Institute of Toronto Metropolitan University to conduct a Program Equity Audit for the 2025/2026 school year.

Winnipeg School Division (WSD), in partnership with the Diversity Institute (DI) at Toronto Metropolitan University, is conducting an equity review of WSD programs and initiatives to ensure they support students, staff, and communities. The DI team will be engaging with WSD staff to understand perspectives on strengthening equity across key areas:

- Curriculum and Instruction Supports

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- Access and Opportunity to Programs and Services
- Student Support Services and Restorative Justice
- Hiring Practices and Professional Development
- Student/Employee/Family/Community Engagement

The Committee was informed that the review aims to strengthen efforts to embed equity and inclusion within initiatives to support students, staff, and communities. This work and final report complements the Strategic Plan 2025-2030 and builds on existing initiatives.

To do this work, WSD and DI will collaborate to:

- Review existing policies and processes for strengths and opportunities
- Engage with staff to understand perspectives and experiences
- Develop a final report leveraging these insights and including division-wide practices
- Develop a review progress tracker framework

DI is inviting all members of Board Committees to a virtual session on December 2, 2025 from 6:30pm – 8:00pm.

The Committee was informed that their perspectives will help shape the review and report with strengths, gaps, and opportunities. The Committee was informed that if they are unable to join, WSD will provide an opportunity for you to share written perspectives.

The Committee was informed that if they have any questions or need cultural support during the session, to please contact Nancy Mitchell, Director of Research - Special Projects at the Diversity Institute - n.mitchell@torontomu.ca, and they will work with WSD to support you.

The Committee was informed that the in-person consultation with staff, parents, community members and partners has been impactful. The Committee discussed expanding the review beyond staffing and discipline to include program design and waitlists and who is on them, transportation and bus routes, and any structural barriers observed in programming or operations. The Committee was informed that DI has already identified multiple layers of systemic complexity and are forming questions to bring back to Administration based on consultations. The Committee was informed that the goal is to be transparent and have open communication with the community as they are essential throughout the process.

The Committee was informed that DI aims to deliver a full report with recommendations by spring or summer of 2026 as additional consultations, deep analysis, and bringing together both consultations from WSD staff and community together.

Respectfully submitted,

Betty Edel
Committee Chair

In Attendance:

Trustees: B. Edel, A. Evangelista

Administration: A. Benarroch, L. Bunkowsky, J. Heater, M. Henderson, M. Rezai, D. Vo
(Administrative Assistant)

Committee Members: S. Page, D. Dutka

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Regrets: T. Kuly