

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 2-2026

To the Chair and Members
Winnipeg Public School Board:

May 20, 2026

The Environmental 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. Transportation Audit

At a previous meeting, Trustee Evangelista requested that the topic of a Transportation Audit be added to the next Agenda for discussion.

The Committee discussed the concept of a Transportation Audit and how it could support decision-making related to planning, sustainability, accessibility, and active transportation within WSD. The Committee discussed the possibility of a Transportation Audit to establish sustainability benchmarks.

The Committee discussed the importance of ensuring that transportation planning considers equity, accessibility, and environmental sustainability. The Committee emphasized that transportation decisions should account for students with disabilities, low-income families, and the transition toward net-zero practices, while ensuring that access to education is not compromised. The Committee was informed that the impact of encouraging students to attend catchment schools has reduced transportation routes, improved efficiency, and lowered environmental impacts. The Committee was informed about existing initiatives such as “Learn to Bike” programs in schools, and there are efforts to expand bike fleets to support active transportation opportunities for students.

The Committee discussed the community partnerships and initiatives currently supporting active and safe transportation. The Committee shared that organizations such as the Green Action Centre work with schools on bike safety, infrastructure, and active transportation planning. The Committee raised concerns regarding bike theft and the need for secure bike storage facilities. The Committee was informed that Earl Grey School and Robert H. Smith School have a “bike bus” initiative which has positive impact on student attendance. The Committee discussed the importance of transportation surveys and questionnaires to gather data on how students travel to school and identify opportunities for improvement.

The Committee discussed broad transportation and safety concerns within the community, including speed zones, safe routes to schools, bike paths, and snow clearing. The Committee explored opportunities to engage with municipal election candidates and encouraged public discussion around active transportation, safety, and environmental sustainability. The Committee suggested preparing guiding questions for families and community members to ask candidates and councilors, as well as developing motions or recommendations to formally bring these issues forward through the school board process. The Committee agreed that collaboration between WSD, city officials, and community organizations is essential to improving transportation systems and reducing barriers for students and families.

The Committee recommended that the Board of Trustees advocate for safe school zones, reduced speed limits, active transportation infrastructure, and accessibility supports. The Committee also suggested conducting preliminary scans and data analysis regarding catchment attendance and transportation impacts. The Committee also recommended exploring the transition to electric school buses, including reviewing research and potential partnerships related to cost savings and environmental benefits. The Committee emphasized the importance of identifying sustainable transportation priorities and continuing to involve students and community voices in the development of future transportation action plans.

Recommendation:

That the Board of Trustees encourages families to raise questions with potential candidates registered for the upcoming Municipal School Board Election on safe school zones, reduced speed limits, active transportation infrastructures and accessible supports.

3. Negative Environmental Impact via Artificial Intelligence (A.I)

At a meeting held on February 25, 2026, Committee Members requested that the impacts of Artificial Intelligence (A.I) usage be added to the Agenda for discussion.

The Committee was informed about the growing concerns surrounding the environmental impacts of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) and the importance of intentionally considering these impacts within the development of WSD's A.I. Framework. The Committee discussed significant energy consumption, water usage, and broader environmental footprint associated with generative A.I. technologies. The Committee suggested that students, staff, and the broader community should develop a stronger awareness and understanding of how A.I. systems affect the environment and society. The Committee acknowledged that these conversations are an important part of ongoing work related to WSD's A.I. Framework and future educational planning.

The Committee discussed current uncertainty surrounding A.I. policy and regulation in education, including recent shifts in provincial direction regarding the use of A.I. in schools. The Committee noted that some school divisions are investing funding into generative A.I. programs and questioned whether WSD currently has budget allocations supporting A.I. usage or partnerships with A.I. companies. The Committee was informed that further information will be provided at a future finance meeting to understand the WSD's current involvement, expenditures, and future considerations related to A.I. implementation.

The Committee also discussed the importance of digital literacy and educational opportunities related to A.I. The Committee reflected on the existing A.I. Framework presented previously and questioned whether a more formal policy may be required. The Committee noted that digital literacy and discussions around environmental impact could be embedded across curriculum areas, including science and technology education. The Committee highlighted the need for professional development opportunities for staff and students to help them engage responsibly with A.I. technologies while understanding their environmental and social impacts.

The Committee recognized that conversations about A.I. extend beyond technology alone and should be approached through an equity lens. The Committee discussed the importance of considering which communities are most impacted by A.I. systems and ensuring that students are actively involved in these conversations and learning opportunities. The Committee highlighted examples of student leadership and engagement on A.I. topics at Gordon Bell High School as a positive step forward.

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4. Invite Students to Environmental Advisory Committee

At a previous meeting, the Environmental Advisory Committee members agreed to review the composition of the Committee and the possibility of inviting students to serve as members..

The Committee expressed the importance of having student voices at the meetings. The Committee suggested inviting students who are Eco Champions to their schools and having broader student participation opportunities. The Committee emphasized that student engagement should extend beyond formal meetings by connecting with students in their natural settings, including schools, events, field trips, and community activities, in order to better capture authentic student perspectives on environmental priorities. The Committee also discussed promoting awareness of participation opportunities without requiring changes to the Terms of Reference, while continuing to celebrate and amplify student achievements through school invitations, annual reports, agenda updates, and possible Board recognition initiatives. The Committee recommended that to ensure accessibility for students during the school day. It was recommended that students be invited to provide feedback to assist in guiding future discussions and environmental action planning.

5. Future Agenda Items

The Committee requested the following future agenda items be added to the next agenda for discussion:

- Update on Transportation Audit (Preliminary Information)
- Update on WSD Budget Allocation for Artificial Intelligence for School Use and it's Impacts
- Feedback on "Taking Care of the Planet, and Taking Care of Each Other" Symposium for Information

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Evangelista
Committee Chair

In Attendance:

Trustees: A. Evangelista, T. Kuly
Administration: M. Burke, W. Crooks, M. Rezai, D. Vo (Administrative Assistant)
Members: W. Burton, J. Engbrecht, L. Robinson, R. Sales