

NORTH DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 1-2024

To the Chair and Members
Winnipeg Public School Board:

February 8, 2024

The North 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 Committee approved the agenda for February 8, 2024, as distributed.

3. WSD 2024/2025 Budget Consultation

At the previous meeting, the Committee 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, highlighting a wide range of concerns and suggestions from various school communities. The District Advisory Committees and individual schools 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 programs/services, including the nutrition program, school safety measures, and strategies to enhance community support. The Committee raised concerns regarding the allocation of resources and the potential impact of proposed changes for different school communities.

The Committee supported the lunch/nutrition program and school safety. In response to the enquiry regarding School Resource Officers (SROs), the Superintendent clarified that the focus is to reallocate resources to community support workers to assist in addressing mental health needs and neighbourhood-related incidents.

The Committee was informed that families are enrolling their children in schools outside their catchment area, which potentially leads to the abandonment of other schools. The Superintendent and principals have been asked to engage in conversations with families to maintain balanced enrollment and ensure each school remains a desirable option within its catchment area. The Committee was informed that there is a desire to implement International Baccalaureate (IB) programs in schools as part of this effort.

The Committee also discussed the Province's mandate to reduce class sizes, particularly Kindergarten to Grade 3. The Committee was informed that the Province is suggesting the addition of classroom spaces to alleviate overcrowding and enhance teacher collaboration, as well as improve instructional practices.

The Committee discussed the necessity for school supports in academic subjects like reading, writing, and math, as well as the implementation of Jordan's Principle to address various student needs.

The Committee discussed the increase daycare availability and explore potential partnerships with existing healthcare providers to expand daycare services. The Committee was informed that ongoing discussions are being held with the Minister regarding daycare expansion, with a focus on providing comprehensive childcare solutions and convenient daycare locations.

The Committee was informed that various roles such as resource teachers and guidance counselors fall under the umbrella of working support teachers will allow flexibility in meeting the diverse needs of students. The Committee also discussed the allocation of resources to support high-functioning students who may not qualify for certain programs, highlighting the importance of ensuring equitable access to educational support services.

The Committee emphasized the importance of community support for children before and after school, suggesting the utilization of volunteers, such as high school students seeking credits to enhance existing programs and provide additional activities. The Committee also expressed concerns about the reduction in budget for inclusive support workers for children with special needs. The Committee was informed that the Division does not receive provincial funding for nursery program.

The Committee was informed that the goal of R.B. Russell Career Lab is to transform the school into a community college that offer courses and training opportunities for employment. The Committee was informed about the diverse programs available, including culinary and hairstyling, emphasizing the potential for both adults and students to benefit from extended operating hours. The Committee recommended a similar initiative on the North side of the City.

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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.

4. WSD 123: Continuous Improvement 2023/2024

The Committee reviewed the WSD 123 Continuous Improvement Report, which provided 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 pilot project in WSD was underway, aiming to address the financial strain on families by eliminating fees for lunch supervision 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 of WSD 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 also 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 as early as the 2024/2025 school year. 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.

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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.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann Evangelista
Trustee Representative

Attendance:

Voting Representatives

Andrew Mynarski School
Champlain School
École Lansdowne School
Faraday School
Garden Grove School
Lord Nelson School
Ralph Brown School
Robertson School
Shaughnessy Park School
Sisler High School
St. John's High School
Tyndall Park School

Regrets

Inkster School
Isaac Newton School
Luxton School
Meadows West School
Prairie Rose School
Waterford Springs School

Administration

Matt Henderson, Superintendent/CEO
Celia Caetano-Gomes, Assistant Superintendent
Marsha Missyabit, Divisional Kookum
Christina Da Mata, Principal, Andrew Mynarski V.C. School
Paulo Teixeira, Principal, Champlain School
Jessica Mayor-Rodrigues, Principal, École Lansdowne
Melissa Asmundson, Principal, Lord Nelson School
Warren Nickerson, Principal, Luxton School
Trevor MacVicar, Principal, Ralph Brown School
Jude Guzzi, Principal, Robertson School
Tanis Westdal, Principal, Shaughnessy Park School
Pat Graham, Principal, Sisler High School
Gisele Mospanchuk, Principal, Tyndall Park School
Ryan Erichsen, Vice-Principal, Tyndall Park School
Maria Manzano, Vice-Principal, Waterford School
Kim Marcyniuk, Shaughnessy Park School, Case Support Worker
Sue Hoang, Gordon Bell High School, Service Coordinator
Katherine Armstrong, Winnipeg School Division, Case Support Worker
Michelle Lejano, Recording Secretary

Trustees

Ann Evangelista