

Open Committee of the Whole Meeting

Report to the Board

February 11, 2025

In Attendance at Meeting:

Committee Members:

Michelle Waite, Board Chairperson
Susan Leslie, Trustee
Cristi May Sacht, Trustee
Shannon Aldinger, Trustee
Sarah Jane Howe, Vice Chair
Janice Caton, Meeting Chairperson
Chelsea McCannel-Keene, Trustee

Staff:

Dr. Jeremy Morrow, Superintendent
Carrie McVeigh, Secretary Treasurer
Joe Heslip, Associate Superintendent
Karma Taiji, Secondary Principal and District Principal of Diversity, Equity, and Non-Discrimination
Chantal Stefan, Teacher, Ecole Puntledge
Candice Hilton, Director of Finance

Regrets: n/a

Recording Secretary: Candace Jesson, Executive Assistant

Partner Groups – 2 members from each group:

Comox District Teachers Association (CDTA) - Michael Aldridge
Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE 439) - n/a
Indigenous Education Council (IEC) - n/a
Comox Valley Principals and Vice-Principals Association (DVPVPA) - n/a
District Parents Advisory Council (DPAC) - Jennifer Fisher and Megan Cowling

A. WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

The Board of Education acknowledges that we are on the traditional territories of the K'ómoks First Nation. We would like to thank them for the privilege of living on their land and the gift of working with their children.

Trustee Caton acted as meeting Chair, welcomed attendees, and called the meeting to order at 6:59 pm.

Due to the new meeting location all those in attendance were informed of the emergency exits and location of washrooms. Introductions by all those at the table.

B. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion: (COWO-2025-02-11-01)

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 71 (Comox Valley) approve the February 11, 2025, Open Committee of the Whole agenda as presented.

[Waite/Leslie]
CARRIED

C. EDUCATION

1. PRESENTATION: Everybody Deserves A Smile (EDAS)

Pages 1-34

Ecole Puntledge – PowerPoint

Chantal Stefan, Teacher, and Grade 7 EDAS Club Team

Chantal Stefan, Teacher, played a video showing the club and their work. Participants shared their learning experiences, the skills they developed, and how they connected with others throughout the process. They also reflected on the personal impact of these experiences. Thanks, and appreciation were extended to those who provided support and guidance.

Chantal introduced the impact and history of EDAS, providing an overview of key data. Club members shared personal stories from graduating students, recipients, members, and volunteers about their involvement in EDAS and the programs significance. The presentation highlighted how EDAS aligns with the district's Strategic Plan, reinforcing its value within the broader educational framework.

Creating a space for transformative learning opportunities. The Committee expressed appreciation and gratitude for the contributions made by EDAS and all involved. EDAS presented the Committee with a Carnelian stone as a symbolic gift. On behalf of the Board, Trustee Caton gifted the students with a sweet treat in recognition of their efforts and contributions.

2. PRESENTATION: Anti Racism, SOGI Framework – PowerPoint

Pages 35-47

Karma Taiji, Secondary Principal and District Principal of Diversity, Equity, and Non-Discrimination

Karma Taiji, Secondary Principal and District Principal of Diversity, Equity, and Non-Discrimination introduced herself and articulated the importance of being grounded and present. An exercise was led to highlight the lens through which individuals perceived the world, focusing on unconscious bias. The presentation explored the 'Intersectionality Wheel of Privilege' and its interconnectedness with social identity and how these factors influence individual's experiences within the education system. A video was shown, reinforcing the value and importance of recognizing individual identities. An overview was provided on the role of District Principal of Diversity, Equity, and Non-Discrimination, which includes mental health, sexual orientation and gender identify (SOGI), and anti-racism. The committee received an update on the anti-racism support available to schools, collaborative work with DPAC, and responses to racist incidents. Past and upcoming events and training sessions was shared.

Questions were raised regarding the appointment of SOGI representatives and how to direct those interested in supporting this work. Plans to establish a SOGI Advisory Committee was mentioned. The process has been shared with Principals and Vice-principals with flexibility for modifications. Clarification was provided on ERASE reports which are directed to the Safer Schools Together Coordinator and disseminated appropriately. Efforts are ongoing to build capacity. The DPAC representative expressed gratitude for the aspiration work being done. There was an acknowledgement that not every child shares the same experiences. It was recommended that resources be shared with Communications to ensure a broader dissemination.

D. FINANCE

1. Budget Process Overview – PowerPoint Presentation Jennifer Nelson, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer

Pages 48-64

Jennifer Nelson, Assistant Secretary-Treasurer provided an overview of the budget process overview for 2025-2026 fiscal year, reviewing the timeline and initiating work on projected enrollments. The Ministry will release the funding announcement, at which point the process of building the annual budget will begin. It was noted that actual enrollment is reported in September, at which time the grant funding will be confirmed. For example, budget amendments for the 2024-2025 fiscal year are currently underway. Emphasis was placed on the need for accurate enrollment projections, given that salaries and benefits represent the largest expense in the budget. A review of the 'District Operating Contingency Reserve' requirement (Policy 18) and notice of a new Ministry requirement for multi-year financial planning (3 years) was provided.

Positive feedback from parents who appreciated the clarity of the timelines and expressed interest in getting involved. It was noted that communicating the use of the new meeting space will be important, ensuring that stakeholders can attend.

The importance of conducting a thorough review of budget allocations was emphasized. Confirmation was provided that allocations reviews are aligned with the Strategic Plan as support, ensuring they support key initiatives and measures of success while maintaining accountability.

A recommendation was made to modify the parent survey to allow for more generative dialogue, providing deeper insights. A discussion on distinguishing between discretionary and prescribed budget allocations would offer a clearer understanding of financial flexibility. The requirement for multi-year budgeting was confirmed as valuable for long-term financial planning and stability. A question was raised about whether the district has needed to draw on the contingency reserve. It was confirmed that this has not been necessary in the past.

E. POLICY

1. **Draft Policy 1 – Foundational Statements** – Briefing Note
Carrie McVeigh, Secretary-Treasurer

Pages 65-73

Item was tabled and will be brought forward for discussion at the next meeting.

F. OTHER - None

G. ADJOURNMENT – 9:03 pm

Motion: (COWO-2025-02-11-02)

THAT the Board of Education of School District No. 71 (Comox Valley) adjourn the February 11, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting at 9:03 pm.

[Howe/ McCannel-Keene]

CARRIED