

MARCH 25, 2024
BOARD MEETING

The Waterloo Region District School Board held a Board Meeting this evening at 7:00 p.m. in the Education Centre Boardroom, with the following members in attendance: J. Weston (Chairperson), B. Cody, S. Estoesta, C. Johnson, J. Meissner, S. Piatkowski, M. Radlein, M. Ramsay, C. Watson and K. Woodcock.

Trustee M. Waseem was unable to attend this evening's meeting.

Student Trustees A. Awan and C. Dong were in attendance.

The following senior administration members were in attendance: j. chanicka (Director of Education and Secretary), D. Ahluwalia, J. Albrecht, M. Armellini, V. Collis, E. Dougan-McKenzie, E. Giannopoulos, C. Hill, H. Hughes, P. Kaur, B. Lemon, D. Liebermann, S. Miller, M. Newlands, G. Shantz.

Other staff in attendance: B. Cathcart, M. Mayer, D. Pope, S. Reidel and B. Zettl.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson J. Weston called the meeting to order at 7:19 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

1. Moved by M. Radlein, seconded by J. Meissner:

That the agenda of the March 25, 2024, Board Meeting be approved.

-Carried-

ANNOUNCEMENTS/CELEBRATING BOARD ACTIVITIES

Chairperson J. Weston shared regrets from Trustee M. Waseem.

Chairperson J. Weston wished Ramadan Mubarak to the community and noted that the meeting will take a recess so staff, trustees and members of the public can break their fast.

2024-2025 STUDENT TRUSTEE INTRODUCTIONS

Trustee C. Johnson shared that Feiyang Luo and Devansh Lakhanpal were elected as WRDSB's Student Trustees for the 2024-25 school year. Feiyang is currently in Grade 11 at Cameron Heights Collegiate Institute and was elected as Student Trustee in the north area, while Devansh, a Grade 10 student at Jacob Hespeler High School, was elected in the south area. Trustee C. Johnson advised that she and Chairperson J. Weston will be the Student Trustee mentors for their term starting in August.

Chairperson J. Weston welcomed Feiyang Luo and Devansh Lakhanpal.

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENT

Trustee K. Woodcock attended the Awards Night for the Youth Ed Poster and Literary Contest at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 530.

Trustee M. Radlein visited Margaret Avenue Senior Public School and W T Townshend Public School.

Trustee C. Johnson visited Centennial Public School in Cambridge.

COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT GOOD NEWS UPDATE

Senior Manager H. Hughes introduced the Communications Good News Update video sharing highlights from the month and items of traditional media and social media interest.

A recess was called at 7:39 p.m. and the meeting resumed at 7:56 p.m.

CONSENT AGENDA

2. Moved by C. Watson, seconded by K. Woodcock:

That the consent agenda of the Board Meeting of March 25, 2024, and the actions contained therein, be approved with the exception of Folios #31, 33 and 35.

-Carried-

Folio 31 & 33 - Student Suspension/Expulsion Report January 2024 and February 2024

Trustees inquired into the reasons behind the increase in violent incidents. Superintendent B. Lemon reported that staff have been reflecting on the increase as well, noting that there have been some new precisions gained in the reporting process which may account for the increase. Staff are pursuing answers. He indicated it would be difficult to pin an increase on one factor but that staff are equally concerned and continuing to support students and schools.

Trustees M. Ramsay and B. Cody joined the meeting from recess at 8:01 p.m.

Folio 35 - Student Incident Behaviour Quarterly Report

Trustees inquired into the reasons behind the increase in classroom incidents and the plan to reduce incidents. Associate Director G. Shantz noted that the charts include data from the pandemic. He also reminded trustees of the Report to Board at the end of February where strategies were shared with trustees.

3. Moved by C. Watson, seconded by M. Ramsay:

That Folios 31, 33 and 35, from the consent agenda of the March 25, 2024, Board Meeting, and the actions contained therein, be approved.

-Carried-

MOTIONS FROM IN CAMERA MEETING

Note: The following motions were approved in the In Camera session held earlier this evening.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by C. Johnson:

That the agenda of the March 25, 2024, In Camera Board Meeting be deemed to meet the legislative requirements for discussion in camera with the addition of a Property Matter Update.

-Carried-

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

B. Moved by J. Meissner, seconded by M. Radlein:

That the consent agenda of the March 25, 2024, In Camera Board Meeting and the actions contained therein, be approved.

-Carried-

TENTATIVE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT - BETWEEN THE WRDSB AND THE SUPERVISION MONITOR AND CAFETERIA ASSISTANTS (SMACA) ADDRESSING LOCAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

C. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by S. Piatkowski:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve the Local Agreement, summarized in the report dated March 25, 2024, with the Supervision Monitor and Cafeteria Assistants of Ontario for the period September 1, 2022, to August 31, 2026.

-Carried-

RISE AND REPORT

D. Moved by M. Radlein, seconded by C. Johnson:

That we rise and report in public session.

-Carried-

Note: This concludes the reporting of In Camera motions.

DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

Trustee C. Watson declared a conflict of interest at the previous in camera meeting.

REPORTS

BOARD IMPROVEMENT AND EQUITY PLAN UPDATE: PATHWAYS AND TRANSITIONS

Associate Director S. Miller introduced the Board Improvement and Equity Plan Update and Superintendent C. Hill introduced the staff presenters.

System Administrator B. Cathcart shared that Pathways allow students to learn about the different pathways available to earn their diploma and to learn about post-secondary options including: apprenticeship, college, community living, university, and work. She also noted that it is part of the Board Improvement and Equity Plan and the Ministry of Education (Ministry) priority for Skilled Trades. She shared what services and supports are provided and the impact it has had on five-year graduations rates which are above the provincial average.

System Administrator B. Cathcart shared some statistics on the Co-operative Education program including that 1700 students participate annually.

Consultant B. Zettl provided information on the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program which supports students in the apprenticeship, college, university and workplace pathways to work toward a specialized Ontario Secondary School designation. It was noted that in 2024-25, WRDSB will be operating 72 individual programs across the 16 secondary schools and that every SHSM program is connected to a labour market need in Waterloo Region. Additional information about the reporting process was provided and details regarding the impact on student success. Consultant B. Zettl shared that in the past three years, there has been significant growth in new SHSM Program approvals from the Ministry and that SHSM participation has a positive impact on the credit completion rate of all students who participate. When students combine SHSM and OYAP, graduation rates improve again, with a 95% graduation rate for students who participate in both OYAP and SHSM.

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Consultant D. Pope provided information on the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) which allows a Co-op student in grade 10 summer school, grade 11 and 12 to begin to learn a skilled trade while completing the requirements for a secondary school diploma. He shared that students have an opportunity to become registered apprentices and work towards becoming certified journeypersons in a skilled trade while still in secondary school. He provided some statistics about the program, the benefits to students and additional information about apprenticeships and pathways into skilled trades.

System Administrator B. Cathcart provided information on the Dual Credit programs which allow students who are still in secondary school to take college or apprenticeship courses that count toward both the Ontario Secondary School Diploma and a postsecondary certificate, diploma, degree or apprenticeship certification.

The presentation concluded with a note that all these programs are interconnected and allow a student to pursue a pathway of their choice.

Trustees were provided information regarding engaging students prior to grade 10 and that opportunities are available at all secondary schools. Questions regarding measuring success and the connection to the alternative education site were responded to. Trustees also asked questions regarding selecting sections, changing fields of study and the build-a-credit program.

REPORTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

AD HOC BYLAW REVIEW COMMITTEE UPDATE

Trustee M. Radlein indicated that there was no update as the committee has not met since the last update was provided. The next meeting is scheduled for tomorrow.

BOARD COMMUNICATIONS

The Board received the following communications:

- Renfrew County District School Board to Minister of Education
- Waterloo Region District School Board to Prime Minister of Canada
- Peterborough Victoria Northumberland & Clarington CDSB SEAC to Minister of Education
- Waterloo Region District School Board SEAC to Minister of Education
- Rainy River District School Board to Minister of Education

When asked about the funding value in the Waterloo Region District School Board SEAC letter to the Minister of Education, staff indicated that they would look into the amounts stated and follow up with trustees at a future meeting. Chairperson J. Weston noted that the letter was sent from SEAC and not the Chairperson.

QUESTION PERIOD

Trustee C. Watson questioned if the letter from the WRDSB SEAC followed normal practice. Chairperson J. Weston indicated that she will be asking for alignment to our normal practice in the future.

Trustee C. Johnson asked what measures will be in place on April 8, 2024, for the solar eclipse. Director j. chanicka shared that staff have been putting a lot of time into supporting schools for this unique learning opportunity. He provided trustees with a number of safety precautions including a live stream of the eclipse provided through NASA, eclipse viewers for students in kindergarten through Grade 2, traditional outdoor activities such as Nutrition Breaks will be held indoors, at dismissal students will remain indoors until it is time to load into buses, extended day classes will remain indoors with the blinds closed and staff will continue to remind students of the safety measures and not looking up at the sky while they are outside. He noted that families have the option to keep their children home from school or pick them up early from school following normal absence protocols.

Trustee K. Woodcock asked about a message trustees received regarding the proposed closing of 5 nature centres operated by Grand River Conservation Authority and what impact this would have on Outdoor Education programming. Associate Director S. Miller indicated that staff have not received this message, and upon receipt of the message from trustees, can follow up with a response.

Trustee C. Watson inquired further into the eclipse safety measures asking if it is doable. Director j. chanicka reiterated the measures in place to minimize student time outside, indicating that as always, staff will do their best to ensure student safety.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

There were no future agenda items.

ADJOURNMENT

4. Moved by C. Johnson, seconded by S. Piatkowski:

That the Board Meeting of March 25, 2024, be adjourned.

-Carried-

The meeting adjourned at 9:04 p.m.