



February 2, 2026

Waterloo Region District School Board

Minutes

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: M. Radlein (Chair of the Board), B. Cody, S. Estoesta, C. Johnson, J. Meissner, S. Piatkowski, M. Ramsay, M. Waseem, C. Watson, J. Weston and K. Woodcock.

Student Trustees K. Kaur and K. Trivedi were in attendance.

The following senior administration members were in attendance: S. Miller (Director of Education and Secretary), D. Ahluwalia, J. Albrecht, M. Armellini, P. Bender, B. Chatha, J. Fedosoff, A. Gaymes-San Vicente, C. Hill, H. Hughes, R. Hume, N. Landry, D. Lane, B. Lemon, J. Maliha, N. Muhammad and K. Pividor.

Other staff in attendance: M. Mayer, S. Reidel and S. Watters.

Call to Order

Chair M. Radlein called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Approval of Agenda

1. Moved by S. Estoesta, seconded by J. Weston:

That the agenda of the February 2, 2026, Board Meeting be approved.

-Carried-

Announcements/Celebrating Board Activities

Chair M. Radlein introduced and welcomed new Superintendent Paula Bender.

Chair M. Radlein extended sympathies to the family and loved ones of the late Patti Haskell. Patti Haskell was the first female Superintendent in the Waterloo Region District School Board and later became the first female Director, retiring in 1999.

Trustee S. Piatkowski and Chair Radlein attended Sandowne's Winter Welcome.

Trustee S. Piatkowski attended ETFO's Trustee Summit in Toronto.

Trustees Johnson, Meissner, Piatkowski, Radlein, Waseem, Weston and Woodcock attended OPSBA's Public Education Symposium.

Trustee S. Piatkowski attended the Black History Month kickoff event at the Waterloo Region Museum.

Trustee M. Waseem spoke at Kitchener-Waterloo Collegiate & Vocational School's civic classes.

Chair M. Radlein visited Waterloo Oxford District Secondary School, Galt Collegiate Institute, Bridgeport Public School, Driftwood Park Public School, Janet Metcalfe Public School, and John Darling Public School.

Declarations of Pecuniary Interest

Trustee S. Piatkowski declared pecuniary interest for the previous in camera.

Trustee C. Watson declared pecuniary interest for the BSSC Recommendations - Branchton Abridged Boundary Study.

Communications 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.

Delegations

There were no delegations scheduled.

Consent Agenda

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

That the consent agenda of the Board Meeting of February 2, 2026, and the actions contained therein, be approved with the exception of Folio 22.

-Carried-

Folio 22 - Minutes - Student Achievement and Well-Being Standing Committee of January 19, 2026 - Collaboration Sub Committee

Trustee C. Watson moved the motion, as it was not seconded at the standing committee meeting. She spoke to the motion and referenced a meet and greet she attended where individuals expressed concerns regarding student behaviour incidents.

A recorded vote was requested.

Trustees discussed the motion, and when asked, staff shared other channels to provide feedback such as the Joint Health and Safety Committee, Special Education Advisory Committee, school-based Safe Caring and Inclusive School Committees and Multi-Disciplinary Support Teams.

Trustees continued discussion on the motion, including possible timelines and the terms of reference. A friendly amendment was added to have the committee report back in one year. Trustee K. Woodcock called a Point of Order and Trustee C. Watson was asked not to continue speaking when a Point of Order is called.

Trustees discussed a motion to postpone the decision on the sub committee until the classroom evacuation report has been received so as not to dilute staff resources.

3. Moved by S. Estoesta, seconded by M. Ramsay:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board postpone decision making on the establishment of a “Collaboration” Sub Committee until the classroom evacuations reports have been received.

-Postponement Carried-

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

That the Student Achievement & Well-Being Standing Committee recommend approval to establish a “Collaboration” Sub Committee to review research, statistical information, trends, best practices within our board and abroad, including relevant legislation, funding information, budget timelines and constraints, information about the role and responsibilities of ECEs, EAs, and CYWs and any other information related to the increase of violent incidences and lack of funding for educational supports within the learning environments within WRDSB schools.

And that this Collaboration Sub Committee have at a minimum, 1 Student Trustee, 2 Parents, 1 Special Education Advisory Committee member, 1 Early Childhood Educator , 1 Educational Assistant , 1 Child and Youth Worker , 1 Elementary Teacher , 1 Secondary Teacher, 1 Vice Principal (Elementary), 1 Principal (Elementary/Secondary,) 1 Superintendent, 2 Trustees chosen by the Chair and any other staff member and/or board staff as designated by the Director.

And that the Sub Committee structure remains flexible to include designates for each member and that experts and guest speakers be included as needed.

And that this new Collaboration Sub Committee makes recommendations to the Board of Trustees that would help address violent incidents, the lack of

funding for educational support, and any other related challenges within the learning environments in WRDSB schools; and

That the Sub Committee would report back with final recommendations in one year.

-Postponed-

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

That Folio 22, from the consent agenda of the February 2, 2026, Board Meeting, and the actions contained therein, be approved.

-Carried-

Motions From In Camera Meeting

The following motions were approved at the In Camera session held earlier this evening.

Approval of Agenda

A. Moved by J. Weston, seconded by M. Waseem:

That the agenda of the February 2, 2026, In Camera Board Meeting be approved and be deemed to meet the legislative requirements for discussion in camera with additions.

-Carried-

Consent Agenda

B. Moved by B. Cody, seconded by K. Woodcock:

That the consent agenda of the In Camera Board Meeting of February 2, 2026, and the actions contained therein, be approved with the exception of Folio 5-6.

-Carried-

C. Moved by K. Woodcock, seconded by J. Meissner:

That Folio 5-6, from the consent agenda of the February 2, 2026, Board Meeting, and the actions contained therein, be approved.

-Carried-

Rise & Report

D. Moved by J. Weston, seconded by C. Johnson:

That the In Camera Board Committee Meeting of February 2, 2026, rise and report in public.

-Carried-

This concludes the reporting of In Camera motions.

Recommendations from Standing Committees

Business Services Standing Committee

5. Moved by J. Weston, seconded by C. Johnson:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve the recommendations from the Business Services Standing Committee meeting of January 12, 2026.

-Carried-

Policy and Governance Standing Committee

When asked about Policy 5008 - Staff Dress, committee members clarified that where section 3.3 references not wearing clothing that is “discriminatory, harassing, promotes hate or encourage activities incompatible with the educational setting”, it refers to hate and discrimination as outlined in the Ontario Human Rights Code and WRDSB policies. This policy was available for public consultation.

6. Moved by J. Weston, seconded by S. Estoesta:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve the recommendations from the Policy and Governance Standing Committee meeting of January 14, 2026.

-Carried-

Opposed: C. Watson

Student Achievement and Well-Being Standing Committee

7. Moved by C. Johnson, seconded by M. Waseem:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve the recommendations from the Student Achievement and Well-Being Standing Committee meeting of January 19, 2026.

-Carried-

Staff Follow Up

There was no Staff Follow Up.

Reports

Generative Artificial Intelligence Presentation

This presentation was provided for information.

During the February 2026 Board of Trustees meeting, Co-chairs Nasir Muhammad and Siobhan Watters presented an update on the WRDSB strategic implementation of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI). The presentation outlined a metered and ethical approach to integrating these technologies, grounded in four core commitments: prioritizing humane and ethical use, empowering learning and innovation, ensuring fair and inclusive practice, and promoting transparency and accountability.

Key highlights from the update included:

- **Strategic Oversight:** The board is utilizing existing safety protocols and a "secure environment" to manage data, with a non-negotiable rule prohibiting the entry of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) into AI tools.
- **Staff Guidelines:** Educators are being directed to remain critical of AI outputs, understand the technology's limitations, and prioritize human-centred learning over simple efficiency.
- **Student Expectations:** To support digital citizenship and academic integrity, students will be introduced to the "BE S.M.A.R.T." framework, which encourages critical thinking, privacy protection, and the proper acknowledgement of AI use.

The WRDSB continues to follow a phased implementation timeline, ensuring that the integration of AI remains responsive to the evolving technological landscape while centering people, equity, and trust.

Trustees asked questions of clarification following the presentation regarding communication with families, the “walled garden” concept, staff and student training, progressive discipline, use in the classroom, plagiarism and AI detection, and fair and equitable practices.

Naming of 615 Wesley Boulevard in Cambridge

The Naming Committee for 615 Wesley Boulevard reviewed suggestions received through two rounds of public consultation and has shortlisted the following names:

- Giinawind Public School
- Pine Grove Public School
- Riverstone Public School

These recommendations were unanimously approved by the naming committee. This school will become a hub in service to the entire community and believe that the connections to the region's Indigenous history would be accurately and respectfully represented by the name Giinawind Public School. Administrative Procedure 4865 makes clear that any new school name “should be representative of our commitment to Indigenous sovereignty, equity and human rights.” As part of the school naming process, prior to communicating the name to the WRDSB community, the name will be shared with the Ministry of Education for their support.

Trustees provided comments and asked questions regarding the feedback received regarding the top three names, the Ministry’s new process for approving school names, the local Indigenous population and pronunciation of the recommended name.

Trustee S. Estoesta called a Point of Order asking trustees not to assume the motivations of others.

Trustees continue to discuss the motion and the committee's decision to recommend Giinawind Public School though Pine Grove Public School was most popular by the community vote. It was noted that the community vote was meant to inform but not make any decisions. Trustee discussion also included the occasional need to learn pronunciation of other languages in the community such as German.

A recorded vote was requested.

8. Moved by K. Woodcock:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board call the question.

-Carried-

9. Moved by J. Weston, seconded by C. Johnson:

That the Waterloo Region District School Board approve the name, Giinawind Public School, from the following shortlisted names for the naming of the elementary school at 615 Wesley Boulevard in Cambridge, Ontario.

- **Giinawind Public School**
- **Pine Grove Public School**
- **Riverstone Public School**

-Carried-

In Favour:

S. Estoesta
C. Johnson
J. Meissner
S. Piatkowski
M. Radlein
M. Waseem
J. Weston
K. Woodcock
*K. Kaur
*K. Trivedi

Opposed:

B. Cody
M. Ramsay
C. Watson

Director's Quarterly Update

This presentation was provided for information.

Director S. Miller presented the quarterly update highlighting some of the many ways the WRDSB is keeping students at the centre of our work, and building strong communities through partnerships with families, community members and local leaders.

Trustees asked questions about the winter break and Christmas.

Board Reports

Ontario Public School Boards' Association Update

Trustee S. Piatkowski shared that in December Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) postponed their vote on Bylaw Amendments until such time as further consultation can occur. The vote is rescheduled for a special meeting in March. The work of OPSBA will continue with the current structure until such time as the bylaws are amended.

Board Communications

The Waterloo Region District School Board received the following communications:

- Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board to Board Chairs

Other Business

There was no other business.

Question Period

Trustee J. Weston asked why the decision to close schools on January 26 was made the night before rather than waiting until the morning to assess the weather and road conditions, and whether Regional snow clearing resources played a role in the early decision. Director S. Miller shared that ultimately student, staff and community safety was the priority in the decision making. On Sunday evening it was clear that regardless of the conditions overnight, the buses would not be able to run and that the municipalities would not have plowed sub divisions. Walking in subdivisions would be difficult with the layer of ice under the snow. It was also noted that much of southwestern Ontario institutions made the same decision in the evening including the University of Waterloo, Wilfred Laurier University and local colleges. The hardship for families was recognized as was the need to not put people at risk in unsafe conditions.

Future Agenda Items

Trustee C. Watson served the following Notice of Motion with support from Trustee B. Cody:

Whereas the Minister of Education has been given the authority to remove English Public Trustees without consulting students, parents, staff and community members,

Whereas the English Public Trustees serve the largest group of students, parents, staff and community members in the province,

Whereas public meetings that promote government transparency and accountability will also be eliminated,

Whereas students, parents, staff and community members will not have a trustee advocate at the local level.

Whereas students, parents, staff, community members and school boards will have no recourse or push back when the Ministry of Education directives are issued to local school boards,

Therefore be it resolved that the Waterloo Region District School Board write a letter to the Minister of Education requesting a referendum be held or a formal province wide consultation process be developed and implemented before making a decision that would eliminate English Public Board Trustees,

And that this consultation process include province wide Town Hall meetings, surveys, virtual and in person focus groups and round table discussions that would seek input from students, parents, staff and community and also discuss research concerning the pros and cons of eliminating local English Public Trustee representation while also promoting open dialogue and two-way conversations,

And that this motion be sent to every English Public Board in the province of Ontario.

And that this motion be considered time sensitive.

Trustee J. Weston served the following Notice of Motion with support from Trustee J. Meissner:

Whereas the [role of the Ontario Ombudsman](#) is to examine the transparency, fairness and accountability of policies and government;

Whereas the Minister of Education has stated the intention to remove the role of democratically elected English Public Trustees and has [stated](#) that French and Catholic Trustees will not be removed;

Whereas the removal of English Public Boards of Trustees would result in the loss of Indigenous representation where it currently exists;

Whereas the removal of English Public Boards of Trustees would also result in the loss of Student Trustees in those boards, which is the sole legislated role giving voice to Ontario students in English Public Schools;

Whereas there has been no formal public consultation on the proposal to remove the role of English Public Trustees and polls have shown [support for the role of Trustees](#) and [are skeptical that the proposed governance changes will improve public education](#);

Whereas the removal of democratically elected Trustees at supervised Boards has resulted in [less open public meetings](#) which can result in less accountability.

That the WRDSB write to the Ontario Ombudsman to ask the office to review the potential impacts of removing English Public Trustees with respect to fairness, openness, transparency and accountability;

And that a copy of the letter be sent to all Waterloo Region MPPs, MPs, OPSBA, OPSBA member Boards, Minister Calandra and the Ontario Premier.

Notices of motion will be scheduled for consideration at a future meeting.

Adjournment

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

That the Board Meeting of February 2, 2026, be adjourned.

-Carried-

The meeting adjourned at 9:19 p.m.