

Strategic Plan Update

Engagement Summary and Recommendations

Summary of engagement activities providing direction for WRDSB Trustees and Senior Staff.

Prepared for:

Waterloo Region District School Board

Project:

Strategic Plan Update

Date:

April 20, 2026

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Executive Summary

The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) commissioned this engagement and analysis to determine a stakeholder-informed course of action related to the Strategic Plan, in response to a Board of Trustees motion (March 24, 2025) directing broad community consultation on the educational needs of WRDSB students using multiple communication channels. [OBJ]

Engagement scope and confidence in findings

This work combined a large-scale survey (used as the primary analytical anchor) with dialogue-based engagement including community consultations, focus groups, and Speaker's Corner submissions. Engagement included 1,949 survey responses, 4 community consultations (3 in-person, 1 virtual), 108 Speaker's Corner submissions, and 7 focus groups. In total, the report notes input from 2,231 individuals, providing strong breadth across stakeholder groups and engagement modalities. [OBJ]

What we heard most consistently

Across methods and stakeholder groups, a consistent pattern emerged: stakeholders are generally aligned with the intent of the Strategic Directions, but confidence depends on clearer language, prioritization, accountability, and visible implementation. Key insights include: (1) aspirations are high but confidence hinges on execution; (2) clarity is a bottleneck (breadth/overlap and abstract language); (3) legitimacy is strengthened through measurable outcomes and public reporting; (4) language is interpreted differently and requires precision and definitions; (5) the Learner Profile is seen as having value but needs a clearer role and potentially different placement; (6) trust is shaped by process (fairness, transparency, representation of dissent); and (7) communication must "close the loop" (what was heard, what was decided, what changes next). [OBJ]

Survey results reinforce this direction: Strategic Directions are generally rated as important (e.g., Well-being: 4.28/5; Student learning through engagement: 4.15/5), while confidence in implementation is lower (2.88/5 overall), indicating a plan-to-practice gap. [OBJ]

Recommendation

The report recommends **creating a new strategic plan, building upon the existing engagement data, and refining and strengthening the connection with the Board Improvement and Equity Plan (BIEP).**

This means:

- Sharpening focus and reducing repetition; clarifying the accountability layer (indicators, milestones, reporting cadence);
- Strengthening the link between directions and implementation by emphasizing the relationship with the BIEP;
- Elevating communications as core implementation work;
- Improving clarity of key terms (e.g., equity, inclusion/belonging, systemic barriers, centring students/student voice, well-being).

For the Learner Profile, it recommends reassessing the role and placement of the Learner Profile within the Strategic Plan.

Introduction

The Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) commissioned this engagement and subsequent analysis to determine a stakeholder-informed course of action related to the Strategic Plan. By understanding how the current Strategic Directions and Learner Profile are experienced, interpreted, and prioritized by students, families, staff, and community members, WRDSB Leadership will be able to make informed decisions about next steps. This work was initiated in response to a Board of Trustees motion approved at the March 24, 2025, Board Meeting, directing the Board to consult with the broader community on the educational needs of WRDSB students and to use multiple forms of communication to reach students, families, parents, caregivers, staff, educators, and community organizations.

Engagement activities were designed to balance breadth and depth, combining a community consultation survey with dialogue-based touchpoints (community consultations and focus groups). These formats were intentionally structured to gather both high-level sentiment and concrete examples of what is working, what is unclear, and what participants believe would strengthen implementation and trust. The intent of the work was not only to summarize what was heard, but to translate input into clear, defensible takeaways that can inform decision-making.

This report provides:

1. A concise set of Key Insights that summarize the strongest patterns across methods and stakeholder groups.
2. Direct themes organized under Strategic Directions and the Learner Profile.
3. Recommendations that outline a logical decision and practical next steps.

Throughout, the emphasis is on transparency, showing how themes connect back to data sources and where differences emerge by stakeholder groups. The intent is to offer conclusions that are clear, credible, and usable in subsequent planning, implementation, and communications.

WRDSB's Strategic Plan does not operate in isolation. Strategic priorities are supported through related planning, implementation, and reporting mechanisms, including the Board Improvement and Equity Plan (BIEP). The findings and recommendations in this report should therefore be read in the context of that broader system, with particular attention to how the Strategic Plan can more clearly connect to existing implementation and reporting structures.

Summary of Engagement Activities

Engagement input was gathered through multiple touchpoints designed to capture both broad perspectives and deeper discussion. Each engagement modality was designed to create multiple accessible opportunities for input.

Survey

The survey was designed as the primary anchor for the analysis because it enabled broad participation across stakeholder groups and supports transparent, comparable reporting. It was distributed widely (including direct outreach to students) to capture a diversity of perspectives and establish a clear baseline for priorities, perceptions, and confidence in implementation. [OOB]

Community Consultations

These events were designed to support constructive dialogue and allow participants to engage directly with WRDSB staff and trustees, while also offering low-barrier and anonymous ways to contribute. Sessions used a multi-station format and “Speaker’s Corner” options (written and audio) to increase participation modes and reduce pressure to speak publicly. [OOB]

Focus Groups

Focus groups were structured as open-ended, facilitated discussions to understand not only what participants think, but why. Using tools like [Mentimeter](#) to enable anonymous and multimodal input. Sessions also intentionally leveraged established advisory committees and dedicated student engagement opportunities to strengthen representation and ensure key perspectives were included.

A full list of engagement activities is listed here:

- **Community Consultation Survey ¹ (online):**
 - WRDSB Students: 536
 - WRDSB Staff Member: 327
 - Parent/Caregiver of WRDSB Student: 723
 - Family Member of WRDSB Student: 142
 - Waterloo Region Community Member: 192
 - Other: 29
 - Total Responses: 1949
- **Community Consultations (3 In-person, 1 Virtual)**
 - Dec 3 - 16 community member attendees
 - Dec 4 - 19 community member attendees
 - Dec 9 - 6 community member attendees
 - Jan 22 - Virtual - 39 community member attendees
- **Speaker’s Corner (108 written, audio and video responses)**

¹ Fully complete or partially complete survey responses where some or all data can be interpreted

- **Focus Groups**

- Staff Advisory Council (Dec 9) - 15 attendees
- Indigenous Education Advisory Circle (IEAC) (Dec 8) - 8 attendees
- Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) (Dec 10) - 9 attendees
- Parent School Councils (WRAPSC) (Jan 6) - 13 attendees
- Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) (Jan 27) - 17 attendees
- Equity & Inclusion Advisory Group (EIAG) (Jan 28) - 15 attendees
- Student Roundtable (Feb 12) - 17 attendees

Altogether, we heard from a total of 2231 individuals, which gives us confidence in the conclusions as they are based on a breadth of stakeholder opinions.

Analysis Methods

Analysis followed a structured, transparent workflow to support validity. By looking at stakeholder input separately and in combination, we surfaced a variety of compelling observations and conclusions.

Qualitative analysis was completed using [Grounded Theory](#) and inclusive, design-research facilitation principles. In practice, this meant we used an inductive coding approach; starting with open coding to capture what participants were saying in their own terms, then grouping codes into broader categories and themes through iterative comparison across engagement methods and stakeholder groups. Themes were refined through constant comparison (checking whether patterns held across multiple sources, where they diverged, and what contextual factors might explain differences), and by prioritizing feedback that was consistent, specific, and actionable.

In practice, this involved an AI-supported workflow used to assist with synthesis tasks, including organizing and summarizing long transcripts. Human review was applied throughout to confirm accuracy, ensure fair representation of perspectives, and guide the development of this report. Analysis was conducted using a custom GPT within a project-specific ChatGPT workspace, meaning the engagement materials remained limited to that project context, were not used to train the model, and were not used outside this engagement. No personally identifying information was entered into the GPT.

The first step was data sorting and cleaning; all inputs were inventoried in an Engagement Data Source Catalogue, organized by method, date, and stakeholder group. Where sessions included both Mentimeter exports and transcripts, Mentimeter was treated as the primary record of raw participant input, while transcripts were used to capture discussion and illustrative quotations.

Second, survey results were used as the anchoring dataset, given the breadth of participation and the ability to compare patterns across stakeholder groups. Survey findings established the primary “signal” across strategic directions, the learner profile, and implementation-related questions, while qualitative inputs were used to add nuance and context. Our survey analysis involved converting the five point response scales into a 1 to 5 ranking, then generating an average score out of five for each of the survey questions. A list of the response scales and the corresponding rank scores, as well as the full survey questionnaire are included in the report appendices.

Third, qualitative inputs (community consultations, focus groups, Speaker’s Corner) were reviewed to identify recurring themes, areas of alignment, and points of tension. Themes were prioritized based on consistency across sources, clarity/specificity of feedback, and relevance to implementation.

Finally, to build the report, we surfaced Key Insights by comparing themes across the data. These themes are presented alongside stakeholder-specific differences and patterns. We also conducted a more rigorous analysis of the survey’s quantitative results to validate and contextualize the qualitative data. Based on the logic and sentiment across all elements, we formulated a recommendation, and the themes and stakeholder comments informed the actionable steps that can be taken.

Key Insights

These insights synthesize the detailed themes across all engagement methods into a small set of takeaways that clarify what matters most to the community and provide the logic for the recommendations that follow.

Aspirations Are High, Confidence Depends on Execution

Stakeholders generally support the intent of the plan, but their confidence hinges on whether it translates into visible, resourced action in schools and for their children. Across engagement methods, the most consistent gap is not about what the plan values, but whether the system has the capacity, clarity, and follow-through to deliver. Survey responses had an average implementation rating of 2.88 out of 5, which points to implementation planning, resourcing, and progress visibility as central to sustaining legitimacy.

Clarity Is the Bottleneck

The plan’s breadth and language make it hard for many audiences to understand what the priorities are and what change to expect. When priorities feel expansive or repetitive, stakeholders struggle to identify what matters most and how resources will be allocated. This suggests the plan will benefit from sharper prioritization and clearer, plain-language explanations of what will change and why.

Visible Implementation and Reporting Build Confidence

Across perspectives, people want clear measures, timelines, and public reporting to distinguish meaningful progress from performative statements. Without clear indicators and a cadence of reporting, stakeholders cannot tell whether commitments are being realized or simply restated. This perceived gap indicates a lack of awareness and misunderstanding of the connection between the Strategic Plan and the Board Improvement and Equity Plan (BIEP). Without a clear connection between the Strategic Plan and existing reporting structures, the visibility of implementation and ability to build confidence will be limited.

Language Requires Precision

Some of the language in the Strategic Plan is broad or vague, which can reduce clarity and leave room for different interpretations of what the plan is intended to mean or prioritize. The discussion around equity-related language is one clear example of this dynamic: while many participants

expressed support for the intent, others responded to what they believed the language implied, rather than to a shared understanding of its meaning or scope. Clear definitions, concrete examples, and consistent linkage to student learning, well-being, and belonging would help reduce misinterpretation and keep attention on shared goals.

The Learner Profile would benefit from a clearer role and possibly a different placement.

While many participants saw value in the ideas reflected in the Learner Profile, feedback suggests uncertainty about how it functions within the Strategic Plan and whether it supports implementation in a meaningful way. A next step for WRDSB may be to determine whether the Learner Profile should remain part of the Strategic Plan, be more selectively integrated into strategic directions, or sit elsewhere in the board's planning architecture.

Trust Is Shaped by Process, Not Just Content

Perceived fairness, transparency, and how dissent is represented are as important as the plan's wording itself. Stakeholders pay close attention to whether engagement feels authentic and whether differing perspectives are reflected responsibly in what follows. This underscores the importance of transparent decision-making, clear documentation of "what we heard," and careful treatment of tensions in reporting.

Communication Must Close the Loop

Stakeholders want consistent, audience-friendly updates that show what was heard, what was decided, and what is changing next. When communication is sporadic or overly technical, people fill gaps with assumptions and lose confidence in follow-through. A clear communication approach can reinforce understanding, accountability, and trust.

Stakeholder Specific Insights

These insights highlight the most notable differences by stakeholder group and are intended to be directional rather than exhaustive.

Sources: Appendix 2.0—Survey Data Tables (Page 20), Description of Scales (page 19)

WRDSB students

Students report the highest satisfaction with the plan content (3.40 average). This suggests the plan's framing and priorities resonate strongly with students.

Students are the most optimistic about implementation (3.10 average). This points to an opportunity to amplify student voices and examples of progress as credibility-building signals for adult stakeholders who are less confident.

WRDSB staff members

Staff place the strongest emphasis on the "Support for student and staff well-being" strategic direction (4.47 average, the highest single rating across groups/directions). This indicates that staff experience and working conditions are tightly linked to perceptions of plan success.

Staff confidence in implementation is comparatively low (2.63 average). This suggests the “how” (resources, capacity, clarity, accountability) will be as important as the “what,” and implementation planning needs to be visible and practical to earn staff confidence.

Parents/caregivers of WRDSB student

Parents/caregivers rate “student learning through engagement” highly (4.30 average). This implies that demonstrating how engagement translates into improved learning experiences and outcomes will be central to maintaining parent/caregiver support.

Parents/caregivers report moderate satisfaction and implementation confidence (3.16 and 2.84). This suggests they are generally aligned with the direction, but will be looking for clearer evidence of progress, impact, and what’s changing in schools.

Family members of WRDSB student

Family members show particularly strong support for including the Learner Profile (3.69 average). This indicates the Learner Profile can function as a shared language for families and schools, especially if made visible through examples of learning and development.

Family members are moderate-low on implementation confidence (2.81 average). This suggests families may need clearer “proof points” over time to feel assured the plan is translating into action , such as simple progress updates and tangible examples.

Waterloo Region Community Members

Community members are among the least confident in implementation (2.63 average). This implies a need for clearer public reporting on progress and outcomes to strengthen trust and reduce perceived distance between the plan and visible results.

Community members are moderately satisfied with the plan content (3.07 average). This suggests the strategic intent is broadly acceptable, but that credibility will be built through evidence of follow-through rather than further refinement of the plan language.

Themes Related to Strategic Directions and Learner Profile

What we heard most consistently in participants' own terms, organized by the major topic areas explored during engagement. It provides a transparent record of the range of viewpoints expressed and serves as the evidence base that underpins the Key Insights and Recommendations sections.

Note: Themes are referred to throughout the document by their number using a code. For example, SD-1 = Strategic Direction Theme 1, LP-3 = Learner Profile Theme 3.

Strategic Direction Themes

1. Too broad / too many priorities; needs sharper focus

Participants struggle to hold onto “what matters most” when directions feel expansive and repetitive. The plan reads abstract, and people want fewer, clearer priorities. Several participants suggested that without sharper prioritization, it becomes difficult to translate the plan into practical decisions about where to focus time, effort, and resources.

2. “How will we know?”: measurement, outcomes, accountability

A common push is for measurable indicators, timelines, and reporting so families, staff, and community members can see what will actually change and whether progress is real. Participants emphasized that clearer measures would help distinguish aspirational intent from demonstrable impact, and support accountability over time. Students reinforced that goals should be time-bound and measurable, and suggested breaking the plan into shorter planning intervals to better track progress. This also points to the importance of more clearly connecting the Strategic Plan to the Board Improvement and Equity Plan (BIEP), where implementation measures and progress reporting can be more concretely reflected.

3. Vague linkage between the plan and its implementation

Participants highlight the need for a clearer connection between the plan and the action being taken on the ground. The plan is seen as an aspirational, high-level framework, but lacks operational depth when read on its own. Many want to better understand what will concretely change in schools and how the system will move from priorities to coordinated action. This suggests a need to more explicitly show how the Strategic Plan is operationalized through implementation tools such as the BIEP and related school-level planning.

4. Communications and transparency are a theme, not a footnote

People want clear, consistent communication: what's happening, what's changing, why, and what challenges remain. Participants also signalled that communication needs to be accessible and two-way, with opportunities to provide meaningful feedback that can inform future decisions. Students emphasized that student voice needs defined mechanisms, including how students participate and where input influences decisions. This also suggests a need to communicate more

clearly how progress is being tracked and shared through existing structures, including the BIEP, so that reporting on the Strategic Plan is easier for stakeholders to see and understand.

5. Equity language is both supported and contested

Some see equity framing as essential and overdue; others see language as ideological, unclear, or misaligned with educational purpose. Across perspectives, the recurring signal is that clearer definitions and concrete examples would help keep focus on shared goals, including student learning, well-being, and belonging.

Notable Stakeholder Differences

- Students are more optimistic about implementation than adult stakeholders (SD-3/SD-2). Students report the highest implementation rating (3.10), while staff and community members are notably lower (both 2.63). This suggests the “implementation gap” theme is felt most strongly among adults, and progress reporting/operational clarity will matter most for these groups.
- Students place comparatively less importance on family/community engagement than other groups (SD-04 adjacent). Students rate “Strengthen connections through family and community engagement” lowest among stakeholder groups (3.59), while adults cluster closer to ~3.93–4.02. This suggests that when communicating SD-4, messaging and channels may need to be tailored because what “connection” looks like (and who it’s for) may differ by audience.

Learner Profile Themes

1. Learner profile is valued as aspirational, but unclear operationally

Participants can appreciate the intent (“what we want learners to become”) while also asking: who uses this, how, and what decisions it changes. In some cases, it is perceived as an underutilized tool. Several participants noted that the learner profile feels most credible when it is clearly linked to how learning is designed, supported, and recognized in schools..

2. Risk of being unrealistic / anxiety-inducing for learners if framed as “necessary”

Some object to the implication that all attributes are required for success and worry it becomes judgmental or harmful. When attributes are framed as “must-haves,” participants cautioned it can unintentionally create pressure or a sense that learners are being measured against an idealized checklist.

3. Perceived imbalance: missing foundational academics / practical life skills

A recurring critique is that the profile may over-emphasize social traits at the expense of achievement. Participants emphasized that “whole child” development is important, but want to see foundational academic and practical skills explicitly reflected so the profile feels complete and balanced.

Notable Stakeholder Differences

- Adults are more supportive of including the Learner Profile than students (LP-1). Students show the lowest agreement that it should be included (3.30) compared with

parents/caregivers (3.51), staff (3.60), and family members (3.69). This suggests the “Who uses this and how?” question may be most salient for students unless the profile is made concrete and visible in day-to-day learning.

- Students are least confident that the Learner Profile will be implemented consistently (LP-1). Students again rate implementation lowest (3.03) relative to staff (3.43), community members (3.46), and family members (3.52). This reinforces the “performative” risk: credibility depends on showing how the profile is embedded in practice, not just stated.

Recommendations

Engagement feedback suggests that while stakeholders generally support the current Strategic Directions and Learner Profile, there is less confidence in how these priorities are communicated, implemented, measured, and reflected in action. The recommended path forward is to renew the strategic plan in a way that sharpens focus, strengthens accountability, and more clearly connects priorities to implementation, communication, and progress over the next 3–5 years.

Based on the engagement findings, **the recommended path is to create a new strategic plan, building upon the existing engagement data, and strengthening the connection to the Board Improvement and Equity Plan (BIEP)**. Stakeholders are broadly aligned with the intent of the Strategic Directions and Learner Profile; the most consistent gaps relate to clarity, prioritization, measurable accountability, and visible implementation. These gaps create confusion both externally and internally. A new strategic plan and reimagined reporting mechanisms will bring a refreshed vision for the next 3 – 5 years and communication habits about progress.

Context around the recommendation:

Creating a new strategic plan with the input already provided by stakeholders will avoid the need to reengage the community. Using the input already gathered to create a draft plan, then conducting further engagement as validation will show stakeholders that we have heard them and are taking action. The current strategic plan was created in 2023 and will therefore be reaching its 3-year minimum timespan. Additionally, the election of new Trustee members in September would allow for the new board to align around the strategic plan and vision for the next 3–5 years.

Specific Actions for the Strategic Directions and Learner Profile

Strategic Directions

- **Sharpen focus and reduce repetition:** Identify the most pressing or time-sensitive priorities that will drive decisions and resource allocation and clarify where work is “in scope” vs. “out of scope.”
- **Strengthen plan-to-implementation reporting:** Make the relationship to the BIEP explicit. This could look like:
 - Redesigning the WRDSB website to better connect and explain the relationship between the Strategic Plan and the BIEP.
 - Improving the design and format of the BIEP to make it more readable and more closely connected to the Strategic Plan.
 - Record a video or produce other media/artifacts that can be used to explain the relationship.
- **Elevate communication as core implementation work:** Create a consistent “close-the-loop” communications approach (what we heard, what we decided, what’s changing next, and what challenges remain). Engagement participants identified strategic plan progress and implementation as a desired topic of communication from the WRDSB (Appendix 2.0).

- **Improve clarity of key terms:** Use plain-language definitions and concrete examples (especially where terms are interpreted differently) to keep focus on student outcomes and reduce misinterpretation.
 - Examples of terms/concepts that could use definition: “Centring Students”, “Equity”, “Inclusion/Belonging”, “Student Voice”, “Systemic Barriers”, “Well-being”, etc

Learner Profile

Reassess the role and placement of the Learner Profile within the Strategic Plan.

- Engagement findings suggest that many participants responded positively to the values and aspirations reflected in the Learner Profile, but there was less clarity about its practical role in the Strategic Plan and how it connects to implementation.
- As WRDSB considers its next strategic planning cycle, it may be helpful to determine whether the Learner Profile should remain a central component of the Strategic Plan, be more explicitly connected to strategic directions and board work, or be situated elsewhere within the board’s broader planning and communication framework.
- Where elements are retained, they should be framed in ways that are clear, meaningful, and connected to implementation rather than presented as a standalone or universal checklist.

Appendices

Appendix 1.0—Sentiment Summary from each Engagement Method

Equity & Inclusion Advisory Group (EIAG)

- Strategic Directions: Generally supportive of equity/belonging intent; emphasis on ensuring commitments are concrete and not symbolic.
- Equity and Inclusion (SD-4): Stronger alignment with equity framing; less tolerance for vague language that can dilute accountability.
- Accountability/implementation: High interest in measurable progress and follow-through.

Indigenous Education Advisory Circle (IEAC)

- Strategic Directions: Generally supportive of commitments that recognize Indigenous realities and responsibilities; sensitivity to “checkbox” treatment.
- Equity and Inclusion (SD-4): Emphasis on legitimacy through concrete action, relationship, and accountability rather than surface-level wording.
- Implementation: Focus on credibility: resources, sustained work, and consistency.

Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)

- Strategic Directions: Support for inclusion and well-being goals when they translate into tangible supports.
- Learner Profile: Heightened concern about unintended harm, unrealistic expectations, and how language could be experienced by diverse learners.
- Implementation: Strong attention to capacity, staffing, and practical supports.

Parent Involvement Committee

- Strategic Directions: Mixed—support for the idea of direction-setting, but concern about broadness and the need for clarity/measurability (SD-1/SD-2).
- Equity and Inclusion (SD-4): Clear evidence of contested interpretations; some language perceived as ideological or out of scope.
- Learner Profile: Mixed—seen as aspirational by some, but also criticized as unclear in use, potentially anxiety-inducing, and imbalanced (LP-1 to LP-3).

Parent School Councils (WRAPSC)

- Strategic Directions: Often pragmatic—what will change for students/families, and how will schools communicate it?
- Learner Profile: Judged by practicality (“how is this used?”) and clarity for parents/students.
- Communication: Higher emphasis on understandable, accessible communication and visible proof of progress (SD-5).

Staff Advisory Council

- Strategic Directions: Often filtered through feasibility—alignment with actual conditions in schools, workload, and “initiative fatigue” (SD-3).

- **Accountability:** Interest in clarity and evidence, but concern about measurement becoming performative or burdensome.
- **Implementation:** Strong emphasis on resourcing and operational pathway from plan → practice.

Student Roundtable

- **Strategic Directions:** Generally supportive of the intent (“well-meaning”), with repeated feedback that directions feel vague/repetitive and need clearer priorities. Strong desire to see what will actually change for students in a shorter time horizon (e.g., a school year).
- **Accountability/implementation:** Very strong emphasis on measurable goals (students explicitly referenced SMART goals), timelines, and visible progress; especially for issues like mental health, which students framed as urgent.
- **Learner Profile:** Mixed—seen as positive in intent, but students questioned practicality and balance, including concern that it over-emphasizes “soft skills” without clearly reflecting foundational academics/competitive readiness, and asked how the profile will be embedded in the real student experience (not just stated).

Community Consultations

- **Strategic Directions:** Broad spread—some supportive of the overall direction; others focus on skepticism, clarity, and “plan vs reality.”
- **Equity and Inclusion (SD-4):** The widest polarization and the strongest emotional tone; competing views about values, language and scope.
- **Communication/trust:** High salience—people want to see how decisions are made and whether voices matter.
- **Speaker’s Corner**
 - **Strategic Directions:** Looking for sharper, more candid, and more values-forward.
 - **Equity fault line (SD-4):** Often concentrated expressions—either strong endorsement of equity commitments or strong critique of perceived ideology.
 - **Trust:** High—more often surfaced feelings of exclusion, frustration, or urgency.

Survey

- **Strategic Directions:** Typically shows the broadest distribution: many moderate responses plus pockets of strong alignment/disagreement.
- **Learner Profile:** A mix of “nice aspiration” and “unclear/too idealized.”
- **Communication/accountability:** Common cross-cutting demand—clearer reporting and easier-to-understand summaries.
- **Different Stakeholder Groups**
 - **Parents/Caregivers:** Tend to emphasize practical clarity (“what will change for my child”), communication needs, and confidence in implementation.
 - **Students:** Tend to emphasize lived experience (belonging, well-being, safety, supports) and whether the plan feels real at school level.
 - **Staff:** Tend to emphasize feasibility and conditions for implementation (capacity, workload, consistency, resourcing), and caution about performative accountability.
 - **Community members:** Tend to emphasize governance/trust, scope of the board, and values framing—often with stronger variance/polarization.

Appendix 2.0—Strategic Plan Review Survey



Strategic Plan

Community Consultations

2025 WRDSB Strategic Plan Review Survey

Thank you for your interest in the Community Consultation Survey about the WRDSB Strategic Plan! The goal of this survey is to gather feedback from students, staff, parents, caregivers, families, and the broader community about the WRDSB Strategic Plan that we have had in place since 2022. The findings of this survey will be used to determine how we can continue to improve our efforts to support the educational needs of students in the WRDSB. For more information about our Strategic Plan consultations, please visit the WRDSB Strategic Plan Community Consultation website.

We welcome feedback from all members of our community and we are eager to hear from a wide range of perspectives. Prior to responding to this survey, we encourage you to view our current Strategic Plan on the WRDSB website. The survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

To support WRDSB staff and trustees with the community consultation process and reporting the WRDSB has hired Overlap Associates, a local strategy firm.

This survey is anonymous and confidential. All feedback in this survey is being collected anonymously. Only members of the WRDSB Research Department and members of the team at Overlap Associates will have access to your individual responses. This survey does not collect any personally identifying information (e.g., names, contact information, and IP addresses are NOT collected in this survey). In our analysis, WRDSB staff and Overlap Associates will combine your responses with those of all the other survey participants, so that no individual responses will be shared in any of our reports or documents. All of the questions on the survey are optional, meaning you can choose to skip any question you do not want to answer.

For more details on how we are ensuring anonymity and protecting privacy, please feel welcome to review our privacy and data security processes: WRDSB's Commitment to Privacy and Data Security Information.

The survey has four main sections. The first section asks for your input on each of the Strategic Directions of the current WRDSB Strategic Plan. The second section asks you to reflect on the Learner Profile that is included in the current WRDSB Strategic Plan, as well as general questions about how you feel about the direction of the WRDSB as a whole. The third section focuses on your preferences related to WRDSB communications. The final section asks questions about who you are. These questions will help us understand the overall profile of who completed the survey. You will also have an opportunity to add comments or questions at the end of the survey.

If after reading the above information you would like to complete the survey, please click below.

- I would like to start the survey

SECTION 1: CURRENT WRDSB STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The first section asks you to give your opinion about the existing Strategic Directions. The current WRDSB Strategic Plan (first developed in 2022) includes six Strategic Directions. For a better

understanding about what is meant by each Strategic Direction, you can find additional details at the following link: WRDSB Strategic Directions.

What level of importance would you give to each Strategic Direction in the current WRDSB Strategic Plan?

[Centring students](#)

Very important Important Fairly important Slightly important Not important

[Collaboration and compassion for transformation](#)

Very important Important Fairly important Slightly important Not important

[Equitable opportunities and outcomes](#)

Very important Important Fairly important Slightly important Not important

[Increase student learning through engagement](#)

Very important Important Fairly important Slightly important Not important

[Strengthen connections through family and community engagement](#)

Very important Important Fairly important Slightly important Not important

[Support for student and staff well-being](#)

Very important Important Fairly important Slightly important Not important

[Please share what you like the best about the current Strategic Directions.](#)

[Please share what you like the least about the current Strategic Directions.](#)

[What suggestions do you have for Strategic Directions that the WRDSB could consider in the future?](#)

SECTION 2: THE LEARNER PROFILE AND GENERAL FEEDBACK

The current WRDSB Strategic Plan also includes a Learner Profile. It was designed to ensure students have the ability to succeed academically in the classroom and have the skills to excel in their future careers. According to the WRDSB Learner Profile, “When they graduate, WRDSB students will be: Confident; Creative and Curious; Inclusive; Change Makers; Attentive to relationships; Empathetic; and Community-oriented.” For a better understanding of the Learner Profile, you can find additional details at the following link: WRDSB Learner Profile.

How important do feel it is to include the Learner Profile in the WRDSB Strategic Plan?

Very important Important Fairly important Slightly important Not important

[Please share what you like the best about the Learner Profile.](#)

[Please share what you like the least about the Learner Profile.](#)

Now that you have had a chance to reflect on the WRDSB Strategic Plan, we'd like to ask you for some overall feedback about how well you feel the WRDSB is doing to support the educational needs of students through the Strategic Plan.

How satisfied are you with the content of the current Strategic Plan?

Very satisfied Satisfied Slightly satisfied Not very satisfied Not at all satisfied

How well would you say the WRDSB is doing at implementing its current Strategic Plan?

Extremely well Quite well Fairly well Not very well Not well at all

SECTION 3: COMMUNICATING WITH AND ACCESSING INFORMATION ABOUT THE WRDSB

The WRDSB is committed to accessible and transparent two-way communication with students, staff, parents, caregivers, families, and community members.

Which of the following communication strategies do you feel are the best ways for you to receive and access information? Select all that apply.

- Board website
- Email
- Facebook
- In-person meetings
- Instagram
- LinkedIn
- Local media (e.g., online newspapers, radio, and television)
- Phone calls
- Phone notifications (e.g., voicemail, text messages, app notifications)
- School Day
- School website
- Virtual meetings
- YouTube
- Other (please specify) _____

What information are you most interested in accessing or receiving from the WRDSB? You may select up to three choices.

- Board policies and procedures
- How to communicate with WRDSB staff and Trustees
- How to navigate WRDSB systems and processes.

- Information on WRDSB events and opportunities
- Student achievement and outcome information
- Student and staff success stories
- Other (please specify) _____

SECTION 4: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

The questions in this section ask about who you are. These questions will help us to understand the characteristics of the students, staff, parents, caregivers, family members, and community members who participated in this survey. Please remember that you can choose to skip any question you do not want to answer by leaving it blank.

Which of the following best describes you? You may select more than one.

- WRDSB student
- WRDSB staff member
- Parent/caregiver of a WRDSB student
- Family member of a WRDSB student
- Community member from the Waterloo Region
- Other (please specify) _____

In which city or township do you live?

- Cambridge
- Kitchener
- North Dumfries Township
- Waterloo
- Wellesley Township
- Wilmot Township
- Woolwich Township
- Outside Waterloo Region (please specify) _____

Are you a member of a local organization that works in partnership with the WRDSB? If yes, you can choose to specify your organization in the space provided.

- No
- Yes _____

Do you identify as First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit? If yes, select all that apply.

- Yes, First Nations
- Yes, Métis
- Yes, Inuit
- No
- I'm not sure

Which racial identity best describes you? Select all that apply.

- Arab/Middle Eastern/North African/West Asian
- Black
- East Asian
- First Nations
- Inuk/Inuit
- Latina/Latino/Latinx
- Métis
- Multiracial
- South Asian
- Southeast Asian
- White
- A racial identity not listed above (please specify) _____
- I'm not sure

Do you identify as a newcomer to Canada within the last 5 years?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

What language do you speak most often at home?

- English
- Both English and another language (please specify) _____
- A language other than English (please specify) _____

Do you identify as a member of a faith community?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

Do you identify as a member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

Do you identify as a person with a disability?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

Do you identify as a member of a low-income household?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

Thank you for taking the time to complete the Community Consultation Survey for the current WRDSB Strategic Plan! A full report summarizing the results of the Community Consultation on the Strategic Plan will be shared publicly in the Spring of 2026. If you have any further comments or questions, please feel welcome to share them in the text box below.

Appendix 3.0—Survey Data Tables

The Survey used Likert Scale questions with the following scale. We have converted the results to this scale to make the outcomes more easily interpreted:

Questions asking about "Importance"	Questions asking about "Satisfaction"	Questions asking about "How well"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very Important = 5 • Fairly Important = 4 • Important = 3 • Slightly Important = 2 • Not Important = 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very satisfied = 5 • Satisfied = 4 • Slightly satisfied = 3 • Not very satisfied = 2 • Not at all satisfied = 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely well = 5 • Quite well = 4 • Fairly well = 3 • Not very well = 2 • Not well at all = 1

Table 1—How important do you feel each of the 6 Strategic Directions are?

Strategic Direction	Avg Score	N
Centring students	3.83	2074
Collaboration and compassion for transformation	3.56	2079
Equitable opportunities and outcomes	3.81	2082
Increase student learning through engagement	4.15	2089
Strengthen connections through family and community engagement	3.71	2087
Support for student and staff well-being	4.28	2091

Table 2—How important do you feel each of the 6 Strategic Directions are? (Comparison by Stakeholder Groups)

Stakeholder Group	Question	N	Avg score	Very Important	Fairly Important	Important	Slightly important	Not important
WRDSB student	Centring students	531	3.69	31%	23%	36%	6%	4%
	Collaboration and compassion for transformation	536	3.55	24%	23%	41%	7%	4%
	Equitable opportunities and outcomes	533	3.9	41%	18%	34%	4%	3%
	Increase student learning through engagement	533	3.98	47%	12%	35%	3%	3%
	Strengthen connections through family and community engagement	533	3.49	21%	27%	38%	9%	6%
	Support for student and staff well-being	535	4.11	53%	13%	27%	4%	3%

Stakeholder Group	Question	N	Avg score	Very Important	Fairly Important	Important	Slightly important	Not important
WRDSB staff member	Centring students	327	3.89	43%	16%	31%	6%	4%
	Collaboration and compassion for transformation	325	3.57	26%	26%	33%	10%	6%
	Equitable opportunities and outcomes	326	3.84	42%	18%	28%	6%	6%
	Increase student learning through engagement	326	4.1	54%	8%	34%	2%	2%
	Strengthen connections through family and community engagement	327	3.79	35%	20%	37%	6%	2%
	Support for student and staff well-being	326	4.47	73%	4%	19%	2%	1%

Stakeholder Group	Question	N	Avg score	Very Important	Fairly Important	Important	Slightly important	Not important
Parent/caregiver of WRDSB student	Centring students	717	3.89	45%	15%	29%	5%	5%
	Collaboration and compassion for transformation	719	3.5	27%	22%	32%	10%	9%
	Equitable opportunities and outcomes	721	3.71	40%	16%	27%	8%	9%
	Increase student learning through engagement	721	4.3	64%	8%	25%	2%	2%
	Strengthen connections through family and community engagement	723	3.85	40%	17%	34%	7%	2%
	Support for student and staff well-being	725	4.32	65%	7%	24%	2%	2%

Stakeholder Group	Question	N	Avg score	Very Important	Fairly Important	Important	Slightly important	Not important
Family member of WRDSB student	Centring students	142	3.92	44%	18%	29%	4%	5%
	Collaboration and compassion for transformation	142	3.56	27%	22%	35%	11%	5%
	Equitable opportunities and outcomes	142	3.87	44%	17%	27%	5%	7%
	Increase student learning through engagement	142	4.05	56%	4%	34%	4%	3%
	Strengthen connections through family and community engagement	142	3.76	38%	15%	35%	9%	3%
	Support for student and staff well-being	141	4.26	64%	6%	24%	4%	2%

Stakeholder Group	Question	N	Avg score	Very Important	Fairly Important	Important	Slightly important	Not important
Waterloo Region community member	Centring students	192	3.86	44%	15%	29%	5%	6%
	Collaboration and compassion for transformation	192	3.52	28%	24%	29%	13%	7%
	Equitable opportunities and outcomes	193	3.77	44%	14%	27%	6%	9%
	Increase student learning through engagement	192	4.03	54%	7%	31%	5%	3%
	Strengthen connections through family and community engagement	193	3.84	39%	21%	29%	9%	3%
	Support for student and staff well-being	193	4.28	64%	8%	24%	1%	3%

Table 3

Question	N	Avg Score
How important do you feel it is to include the Learner Profile in the WRDSB Strategic Plan?	1922	3.55

Stakeholder Group	N	Avg Score	Very Important	Fairly Important	Important	Slightly Important	Not Important
WRDSB student	525	3.51	26%	21%	38%	6%	8%
WRDSB staff member	322	3.48	27%	18%	38%	8%	8%
Parent/caregiver of WRDSB student	716	3.63	35%	17%	32%	9%	8%
Family member of WRDSB student	140	3.69	34%	22%	29%	8%	7%
Waterloo Region community member	190	3.59	31%	23%	31%	8%	8%
Other	29	3.31	28%	21%	24%	10%	17%

Table 4

Question	N	Avg Score
How satisfied are you with the content of the current Strategic Plan?	1924	3.24

Stakeholder Group	N	Avg Score	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Slightly Satisfied	Not Very Satisfied	Not At All Satisfied
WRDSB student	528	3.4	7%	47%	32%	8%	6%
WRDSB staff member	322	3.2	8%	38%	30%	16%	9%
Parent/caregiver of WRDSB student	712	3.16	6%	38%	32%	13%	11%
Family member of WRDSB student	142	3.17	8%	37%	31%	12%	12%
Waterloo Region community member	192	3.07	9%	30%	34%	15%	13%
Other	28	2.68	4%	21%	39%	11%	25%

Table 5

Question	N	Avg Score
How well would you say the WRDSB is doing at implementing its current Strategic Plan?	1906	2.88

Stakeholder Group	N	Avg Score	Extremely Well	Quite Well	Fairly Well	Not Very Well	Not Well At All
WRDSB student	527	3.1	3%	35%	39%	15%	8%
WRDSB staff member	321	2.63	2%	14%	42%	27%	15%
Parent/caregiver of WRDSB student	700	2.84	3%	21%	43%	21%	11%
Family member of WRDSB student	142	2.81	4%	24%	34%	27%	11%
Waterloo Region community member	188	2.63	3%	15%	38%	29%	14%
Other	28	2.21	4%	7%	29%	29%	32%

Table 6

Stakeholder Group	How important do you feel it is to include the Learner Profile in the WRDSB Strategic Plan?		How satisfied are you with the content of the current Strategic Plan?		How well would you say the WRDSB is doing at implementing its current Strategic Plan?	
	Avg Score	N	Avg Score	N	Avg Score	N
WRDSB student	3.51	525	3.4	528	3.1	527
WRDSB staff member	3.48	322	3.2	322	2.63	321
Parent/caregiver of WRDSB student	3.63	716	3.16	712	2.84	700
Family member of WRDSB student	3.69	140	3.17	142	2.81	142
Waterloo Region community member	3.59	190	3.07	192	2.63	188
Other	3.31	29	2.68	28	2.21	28

Table 7

Question	N
Which of the following communication channels do you feel are the best ways for you to receive and find information? Select all that apply.	2091

Channel	N	Percentage
Board website	574	27.44%
Email	1311	62.67%
Facebook	121	5.78%
In-Person Meetings	479	22.90%
Instagram	251	12.00%
LinkedIn	37	1.77%
Local Media (e.g., online newspapers, radio, and television)	246	11.76%
Phone Calls	304	14.53%
Phone Notifications (e.g., voicemail, text messages, app notifications)	307	14.67%
School Day	875	41.83%
School Website	586	28.01%
Virtual Meetings	238	11.38%
YouTube	143	6.84%
Other (please specify)	89	4.25%

Highlights of Other (please specify)

- Through teachers and conversations, sending paper / printed content home with students

Table 8

Question	N
What information are you most interested in finding about or receiving from the WRDSB? You may select up to three choices.	2091

Type of Information	N	Percentage
Board policies and procedures.	456	21.06%
How to communicate with WRDSB staff and Trustees	479	22.12%
How to navigate WRDSB systems and processes	504	23.28%
Information on WRDSB events and opportunities	732	33.81%
Student achievement and outcome information	831	38.38%
Student and staff success stories	438	20.23%
Other (please specify)	128	5.91%

Highlights of Other (please specify)

- Strategic Plan progress, tracking and reporting, data and reasoning behind decisions, information about the environment in schools (the student experience, staff experience, improvement initiatives, etc)

Table 9

Question	N
In which city or township do you live?	1487

City or Township	N	Percentage
Cambridge	204	13.72%
Kitchener	674	45.33%
North Dumfries Township	21	1.41%
Waterloo	392	26.36%
Wellesley Township	29	1.95%
Wilmot Township	46	3.09%
Woolwich Township	68	4.57%
Outside Waterloo Region (please specify)	53	3.56%

Outside Waterloo Region (Please specify) text responses:

- Alexandria, Ontario, Amsterdam, Barrie, Bellheart, Brampton, Brantford, Centre Wellington District, Different province, GTA, Guelph/Wellington, Hamilton, India, Mapleton Township, New Hamburg, Neyaashiinigmiing First Nation, Saugeen Peninsula, Oakville, Oxford County, Paris, Perth County, Stratford, Toronto, Wismer, Woodstock, Oxford

Table 10

Question	N	
Are you a member of a local organization that works in partnership with the WRDSB? If yes, you can choose to specify your organization in the space provided.	1412	

Response	N	Percentage
Yes	167	11.83%
No	1245	88.17%

Yes, response text input option. Unique responses:

- Cambridge Public Library, Camino Wellbeing + Mental Health, Daycare, EAA, ELLA, ETFO, Greeway-Chaplin Community Centre, Home and School Association, Interfaith Grand River, Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum, LHSS School Council, Muslim Social Services Waterloo Region, Nutrition for Learning, volunteer, OK2BME, OSSTF, Parent Council, Project READ Literacy Network, Public Health, Region of Waterloo, Starling, Strong Start, STSWR, Student support, University of Waterloo, Waterloo Public Library, Waterloo Public Library, Waterloo Regional Police, Waterloo Wellington Down Syndrome Society (SEAC), Westvale School Council, WRAPSC, WRDSB PIC

Table 11

Question	N	
Do you identify as First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit? If yes, select all that apply.	1503	

Response	N	Percentage
Yes, First Nations	32	2.13%
Yes, Métis	19	1.26%
Yes, Inuit	8	0.53%
No	1361	90.55%
I'm not sure	83	5.52%

Table 12

Question	N
Which racial identity best describes you? Select all that apply.	1621

Racial Identity	N	Percentage
Arab/Middle Eastern/North African/West Asian	76	4.69%
Black	75	4.63%
East Asian	69	4.26%
First Nations	31	1.91%
Inuk/Inuit	7	0.43%
Latina/Latino/Latinx	40	2.47%
Métis	17	1.05%
Multiracial	47	2.90%
South Asian	120	7.40%
Southeast Asian	44	2.71%
White	902	55.64%
A racial identity not listed above (please specify)	92	5.68%
I'm not sure	101	6.23%

Table 13

Question	N
Do you identify as a newcomer to Canada within the last 5 years?	1504

Response	N	Percentage
Yes	116	7.71%
No	1343	89.30%
I'm not sure	45	2.99%

Table 14

Question	N	
Do you identify as a member of a low income household?	1492	

Response	N	Percentage
Yes	163	10.92%
No	1117	74.87%
I'm not sure	212	14.21%

Table 15

Question	N	
Do you identify as a member of a faith community ?	1499	

Response	N	Percentage
Yes	473	31.55%
No	863	57.57%
I'm not sure	163	10.87%

Table 16

Question	N	
Do you identify as a person with a disability ?	1499	

Response	N	Percentage
Yes	166	11.07%
No	1232	82.19%
I'm not sure	101	6.74%

Table 17

Question	N	
Do you identify as a member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community ?	1490	

Response	N	Percentage
Yes	176	11.81%
No	1225	82.21%
I'm not sure	89	5.97%