

Public Schools Branch
Board of Trustees Public Meeting
April 22, 2025

Minutes

The Public Schools Branch Board of Trustees hosted their fifteenth public meeting in person at Three Oaks Senior Highschool on Tuesday, April 22, 2025.

Present: Stephanie Arnold, Board Chair
Wade Czank, Vice-Chair
Beverley Ann Boulter, Trustee
Amanda Blakeney, Trustee
Heather Mullen, Trustee
Jaclyn Massey, Trustee
Rachel McCarthy, Trustee
Dominique Lecours, Assistant Director of Public Schools Branch
Karen Redmond, Manager of Policy and Procedure

Regrets: Tracy Bealieu, Director of Public Schools Branch
Jocelyne Ludgate, Trustee
Jacob Jardis, Trustee
Beckie Keezer, Trustee

Also, in Attendance:
Natasha Monaghan, Executive Administrator to the Director
Dale Sabeau, Consultant
Matt MacLeod, Senior Communications Officer

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 p.m. Chair Arnold welcomed all in attendance.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was moved by Amanda Blakeney and seconded by Beverley Boulter that the agenda be approved as presented.

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

3.1 MINUTES OF THE December 17, 2024 BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

It was moved by Amanda Blakeney and seconded by Jaclyn Massey that the minutes from the December 17, 2024, Board of Trustees meeting be adopted as presented. Motion carried.

4. BOARD CHAIR REPORT

Chair, Stephanie Arnold shared the following report:

It is my honor to serve as the Chair of the Board of Trustees, alongside Wade Czank (Zone 6) as Vice Chair, for the upcoming year. I want to begin the Chair's report by thanking Heather Mullen for her strong leadership and tireless dedication as Chair since the Board's inception. Under her direct leadership, this Board developed positive, productive relationships with the Minister's Office, senior Public Schools Branch (PSB) staff, and stakeholders. As her Vice Chair for the past two years, I saw firsthand the different ways Heather's contributions and guidance helped this newly-formed board fulfill its role in governance and advocacy. The positive impacts of her efforts cannot be overstated. I consider her a mentor and it was a pleasure to work collaborative with her in service of the education system.

The Grand Opening of the Sherwood Elementary School on April 7 was a highlight. The energy and excitement of the students, families, and community members were palpable. Congratulations to the Public Schools Branch and Department of Education and Early Years staff on the successful event and thank you for the hard work leading up to the opening.

As population growth and investments to fund educational spaces continue, the work of the PSB in planning for these changes also continues. In preparation for the new Stratford High School opening in September 2027, which would receive over 600 students from Stratford and Donagh zones, the enrollment of Charlottetown Rural and Colonel Gray High Schools will be impacted. The PSB sought community comments and input regarding zoning adjustments to these schools earlier this month and the recent report presented to the Board of Trustees reflects these comments. We invite you to the public meeting scheduled for Tuesday, May 6 at 7 PM in the Charlottetown Rural cafeteria to discuss the recommendations of the reports, ask questions, and offer further feedback.

Planning work is also taking place in the Three Oaks Family of schools. Over the next five years, 1,000 additional residential units are expected to be completed for occupancy, the majority of which are expected to be in the Athena, Elm Street, and Greenfield catchment areas. These three schools, as well as Summerside Intermediate, are expected to face higher enrollment numbers. The PSB sought community comments and input regarding zoning adjustments and other changes to these schools earlier this month and the recent report presented to the Board of Trustees reflects these comments. We invite you to the public meeting scheduled for Thursday, May 8 at 7 PM in the Three Oaks Senior High cafeteria to discuss the recommendations of the reports, ask questions, and offer further feedback.

As always, the Board encourages local schools to invite your Trustee to events and meetings concerning your school community. Our contact details are available on the PSB website.

Stephanie Arnold
Chair, Board of Trustees
Public Schools Branch
Prince Edward Island

5. DIRECTOR REPORT

(The complete Director's Report will be filed with the official minutes.)

Director, Tracy Beaulieu shared the following report:

Director of Public Schools Branch Update

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to Heather Mullen for her role as the former Board Chair. Her commitment to advocating for educational growth - and building relationships with those who could support this goal - has been greatly appreciated by the Public Schools Branch.

We would also like to thank Stephanie Arnold for accepting the role as Board Chair and Wade Czank for supporting her as the Vice Chair. Together we are confident that we will continue to move education forward to ensure the best for Island students.

With the end of the school year approaching there will be many activities planned to prepare for the end of this current school year and the beginning of the next. While graduation events are happening in high schools we are welcoming our incoming students to kindergarten in others. Please take the time to read the updates below on what has been happening and what is yet to come.

EAL/FAL Update

Spring Re-Assessments, 2025

From April 7- May 28th, the EAL/FAL Division will re-assess 1200 EAL and FAL learners from Kindergarten to Grade 9. Level B language assessments in English and French are consent-based. The team uses formal assessments with informal writing and speaking assessments to determine support recommendations for the 2025-2026 school year.

Staffing

As the EAL/FAL Division continues to support the PSB and CSLF with the continuous influx of new EAL/FAL students, our team has grown to 62 staff members, including 39 EAL/FAL Itinerant Teachers, 13 EAL Youth Services Workers, and 10 office staff. Due to the national and provincial French language teacher shortage, the FAL section of the division has been short-staffed since February 3rd with one of our FAL teachers joining the CSLF in a new position. Fortunately, FAL service has continued, but the staffing for this is not ideal as it has had to include one of our EAL/FAL Specialists teaching in Summerside twice a week during re-assessments.

New Arrivals

Over 600 new EAL/FAL learners have arrived in PEI since, July 1, 2024. New EAL/FAL learners have come from many countries, including the Philippines, Vietnam, China, India, Bangladesh, Morocco, Syria, and Nigeria. New arrivals are anticipated to continue as the province increases its population. The total number of EAL/FAL students receiving EAL or FAL instructional support is also increasing. The high caseload numbers can be attributed to students coming in at lower English or French proficiency levels where they may not have any English or French language skills or are at a very beginner level of language proficiency. Moreover, in 2019-2020, there were 8 EAL students with additional needs. The growing number of new EAL/FAL students arriving each year with exceptionalities continues to rise, with 34 students identified (July 1st-March 31st, 2024-2025). Through our EAL/FAL intake process, we continue to see an increase in needs from our newcomer population. In some cases, they may be arriving without a diagnosis which can also complicate our staffing process as needs are assessed. While not all EAL students with additional needs require full-time EA support, 3 hours of EA support is often required. While this is a small percentage of the new EAL/FAL arrivals, it places additional pressure on the school system.

School Transition EAL Program (STEP)

EAL/FAL students arriving with significantly low levels of English greatly benefit from our School Transition EAL Program (STEP). The STEP focuses on the transitional needs of EAL students with limited language proficiency and/or limited prior schooling. In 2023-2024 three STEP Pilot Programs were expanded to an implementation of seven STEP programs in 2024-2025. In September 2024, STEP was implemented in six schools: Prince Street, Sherwood, Spring Park, Queen Charlotte, West Royalty, and Athena Consolidated. In February 2025, STEP expanded to Glen Stewart and Stratford Elementary for a combined program. STEP programs in schools support new EAL students by giving them a strong and supportive start to school in Canada.

Professional Learning

*The virtual courses: **Level I, The Big Picture; Level II, Building Capacity** in the **Supporting EAL/FAL Learners in PEI Schools through Virtual Learning Program** were updated in the fall of 2024. These online courses continue to be offered during provincial PD days. On April 11th, 42 participants completed one or more courses, receiving certificates of completion.*

Boosting Achievement Workshop with Dr. Carol Salva: On March 27th, 105 various stakeholders across our education system came together to spend a full day with Dr. Carol Salva to gain focused strategies to support EAL students, especially those with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE). On March 28th, Dr. Salva visited Prince Street Elementary in the morning and Stonepark Intermediate in the afternoon, modeling effective teaching and learning strategies for SLIFE students. She also led very rich debriefing sessions for small groups of teachers and administrators. The strategies Dr. Salva highlighted are effective for SLIFE and EAL students but also benefit all learners in the classroom by fostering a more inclusive, engaging, and supportive learning environment. The sessions stressed that while EAL and SLIFE students require support, they must also have access to grade-level content and be held to high expectations. Carol Salva explained that we must challenge assumptions about our students by

recognizing that a student's language barriers or interruptions in education do not reflect their potential or ability to succeed. Instead, we should provide them opportunities to engage meaningfully with grade-level content. A summary of the PD was created so all teachers can access highlights of Dr. Salva's tips and strategies.

Finance Update

As our fiscal year-end date of March 31st, 2025 has now passed, the Financial Services department with the Public Schools Branch is in the midst of its busiest time. Previous months, staff and management had been in the forecasting and final planning stages of the 2024-25 fiscal year end. Now, staff members are busy posting final Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable invoices to ensure a complete 2024-25 fiscal year cutoff. At the same time, management is working hard to reconcile accounts and working with the Department of Education to ensure our connected accounts are reconciled for year-end confirmations and final Government roll-up. The Director and Manager have already had a preliminary planning meeting with the audit Partner and Manager from Doane Grant Thornton and have set beginning dates for field work for our year-end audit (after May long weekend) with a target for final signed audited financial statements for June 30, 2025 submission.

At the same time our staff are working on finishing up work on the 2024-25 fiscal, new year 2025-26 has begun and staff are working on posting invoices for that as well. This can be a complicated juggling act as year-end cut-off is important and the implications for posting in the wrong year can be arduous to fix. Our Finance staff must maintain a high level of attention to detail, of which they are extremely strong.

The Finance team is also working on the 2025-26 School and Office Supply tender. This is a large process that involves a standing offer tender, navigating orders from all fifty-six schools and multiple branch office locations and Purchase Order generation for multiple vendors by multiple delivery locations. This is a massive process for an expense that is one of the largest expense pressures for our schools.

As the Fiscal 2025-26 Budget has recently just been presented in the PEI Legislature and ongoing departmental deliberations are in progress, the Public Schools Branch is anxiously awaiting their 2025-26 budget letter. This notification of funding has implications for both budgets and FTE staffing allotments. The Finance department is in the beginning stages of preparing budget worksheets in order to be ready to expedite the process and have 2025-26 budgets calculated and uploaded as soon as possible.

Finally, our payroll department is also navigating a very busy time. Our Employee Compensation and Benefits Supervisor for the last number of years, Carla Arsenault has retired. Our new Supervisor, Christine Arsenault, has now started and we are very happy to have her on board. Christine comes to us from Health PEI where she was an ESA in their organization and handled both Payroll and Human Resource components for her designated area of staff. Carla and Christine were able to spend a good deal of time together training and onboarding which should be a major benefit for Christine, the payroll team and the Public Schools Branch as a whole. Christine and staff are working to get each other up to speed and navigate the new supervisory relationship. Payroll staff are continuing to work hard to process payroll for our over 2,940 permanent FTE and ever growing substitute and casual staff. Every bi-weekly pay is a combination of change, data entry, review and audit; all of which are becoming more and more hectic as our payroll system grows. Our payroll staff are highly efficient, organized and committed to

ensuring each pay is complete and accurate. As we continue to approach the end of the school year, staff will be increasingly busy as they work to ensure deferred banks and final summer pays are accurate.

Human Resources Update

Staffing meetings for the 2025-2026 school year wrapped up on April 3, 2025, with Human Resources having met with all 56 School Administrators to discuss the upcoming school year, pressure points and staffing requests. Once the budget letter is received, the team will review requests, along with staffing formula from Minister's Directive to fairly and equitably distribute instructional staffing received amongst 56 schools. There are timelines within the PEITF MOA of June 15, 2025 and CUPE 3260 agreements of June 30, 2025 respectively to be met for internal transfers as part of the staffing processes to be completed.

The staffing process has already started for school administrative positions for the 2025-2026 school year with 3 Principal vacancies having been filled: Spring Park Principal - Lynette MacKinnon; West Kent Principal - Emily Wayne; Sherwood School Principal - Colleen Taylor. We are now working through Vice Principal positions to be filled.

We are pleased to announce two new hires in HR over the past few months. Andrea Kelly has joined our team as an HR Admin Assistant and has taken on the administrative tasks for a number of schools and employee groups with the PSB ensuring that postings, contracts and other HR tasks are completed in a timely and efficient manner. Rosanna Reardon has joined the HR team in the HR Generalist position and will be the lead with our LMS and ATS systems as well as looking after the Itinerant Sub Teacher assignments.

Property Update

Maintenance, School Safety & Minor Capital Repairs:

Property Services and School Safety are actively working with the schools, ensuring issues and concerns are addressed in a timely manner across the system. There is great work happening each day at the schools to provide a safe learning environment. Property Services have been piloting a work order system that was developed in-house. We will be working with the remaining schools over the next couple of months to have all schools on the system by the end of the school year. As we get closer to the end of the school year, our Property Services managers are actively working with Principals at each school to prioritize and coordinate small summer projects that our maintenance team will tackle. Property Services is also working with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (DTI) on this year's minor capital repair priorities, which takes into consideration building infrastructure and school revitalization upgrades. There are over 100 projects on this list, with many of these projects already designed and some already tendered in preparation for 2025/2026 summer construction.

School Safety has been working on the final phase of the radon testing, which includes 16 schools. Samples were gathered and sent for testing already, and results will be posted on PSB's website once all are received. The schools that received the mitigation systems were also monitored again to ensure the systems are working as designed. These results will also be posted to the public once available.

Major Capital Projects:

We are excited to announce the opening of the new Sherwood Elementary school. Staff and students moved into the new Sherwood Elementary school when they returned from March break. There will be lots of activity around the site this summer as demolition of the original school and site work takes place.

Property Services and DTI are now working on three major capital projects, Stratford High school, East Royalty school and Queen Charlotte Intermediate addition. Construction at Stratford High is progressing well. Consultants have been hired for both East Royalty and Queen Charlotte addition. The planning committee for both these projects have been meeting with the team of Consultants to work through the designs.

Student Services Update

It is a very busy time in Student Services as staff continue to support schools while collecting information for the annual **Student Needs Assessment Process (SNAP)**. **SNAP** provides the foundation for making decisions on support to schools for the coming school year. It is a challenging process as the needs identified by school based on the SNAP criteria are greater than the allocation of support provided by the Department. To illustrate this challenge, there have been 2131 forms submitted for students. We have 626.53 support positions (educational assistants, Youth Service Workers, etc.) in our schools now. There have been 214 children coming into kindergarten this year who have been identified as requiring a case conference to plan for their support.

The Director and Managers have been looking ahead at the staffing in Student Services as we will see changes, particularly with our Autism Consultants which will have four vacancies – two permanent and two leaves.

Our Autism Consultants, along with their partners from Education and Early Years, took part in two days of professional development led by Dr. Greg Hanley, titled "A Comprehensive and Compassionate Approach for Addressing Problem Behavior."

We are hopeful that the PSB will be allocated three additional Occupational Therapists and an additional physiotherapist to support our schools. This would provide 10.5 OT positions and 2 physiotherapists.

PREPaRE Training was provided on April 9th and 10th to school counsellors, Mental Health Workers and members of the Student Well-Being Teams who did not have the Workshop 2 PREPaRE Training. These would be staff who are new to their positions or missed the training. The training was provided by counselling consultants and psychologists who were "trained as trainers" for our system.

On April 15, Team Representatives from each Student Services team met to discuss many topics. One topic was the new PSB Strategic Plan. The expectation is that the team representative will take this back to their team for input on the goals which will be shared back with management. Laura MacPherson, Policy Analyst with the Department of Education, will share information and gather feedback on the Inclusive Education Action Plan.

Transportation Update

Weather Related Schedule Changes

Historically, PSB schools have averaged between 10 and 15 instructional days lost due to inclement weather annually. In 2024-5 WCHS, TOSH, KISH, KRHS families of schools missed 8 Instructional Days due to weather; Bluefield, C'town, Morell, Souris, and Montague Families missed 7 days.

WCHS experienced 7 days where school proceeded following a 1 hour delay; All other PSB school families experienced either 3 or 4 days where school proceeded following a 1-hour delay.

Funding Applications to Skills PEI

Applications were again submitted to Skills PEI for financial support to assist with school bus driver licensing training. The PSB actively recruits hundreds and hires approximately 50 new school bus drivers each year after screening. Given our present and challenging labour market, we are very appreciative to have access to this support, as this volume would be extremely challenging to maintain without.

Cameras on Buses

In conjunction with the Department of Education, the PSB continues to advocate for the presence of monitoring devices on each bus - to assist with driving safety and conviction of red-light violators (exterior), as well as to help address behavior issues, allegations, etc. (interior). Changes to national standards have recently been announced requiring 360 degree exterior cameras to be installed on all new buses produced after 2027. This will assist with driver safety, but not with red light violations, nor issues inside the bus.

Our sister jurisdictions in NS and NB are exploring pilots to address similar needs via interior and exterior audio and video recording devices on buses. We are working in conjunction with NS and NB to develop a working model, including addressing personal privacy and other related concerns associated with the recording of video and audio inside of school buses.

New Buses

41 buses are scheduled to be purchased this year for PEI schools, 37 of which have been earmarked for the PSB, 4 of these being wheelchair capable. All of these new buses will be diesel powered. These new purchases will offset the same approximate number required to be removed from the provincial fleet due to age limitations, maintenance related issues, etc.

Level 3 Charging Stations

Level 3 charging stations (fast chargers) have recently been installed at or near all PSB High Schools in Queens and Kings County. These will help greatly in supporting PSB extra-curricular travel needs where electric buses are required. Level 3 chargers are scheduled to be installed at our remaining Prince County high schools as well as our Junior High Schools over the next 24 months.

Police Presence on Buses

As part of a continuing community partnership with Island law enforcement, local RCMP are expected to perform ride-alongs on select PSB buses on routes noted for red-light

violations. This has worked well in the past resulting in enhanced probability of red-light-violation convictions, as well as improved repour with students and community via a more visible, positive, pro-active presence.

EAL Cards for Buses

In support of ongoing diversity, thanks to the collective efforts of PSB transportation and EAL staff, visual icon cards have been produced in the 12 most common non-English/French languages supported by PSB bussing. These cards depict, in pictures and in the student's native language, the most common rules to maintain safety aboard PSB buses – an effective tool to support both drivers and students with communication.

6. Terms of Reference

04/22/03 It was moved by Beverley Boulter and seconded by Jaclyn Massey that the following Trustees be appointed to the Policy Committee; Amanda Blakeney, Wade Czank and Jocelyn Ludgate. Motion carried.

04/22/04 It was moved by Amanda Blakeney and seconded by Beverley Boulter that Governance Policy GP 8f, Policy Committee Terms of Reference be approved as presented. Motion carried.

7. School Review re-zoning of Charlottetown Schools

04/22/05 It was moved by Amanda Blakeney and seconded by Jaclyn Massey that a public consultation regarding the Charlottetown Family of Schools Rezoning report will be held for at least 30 days following this meeting in accordance with the School Review policy. Additional information about the consultation will be posted on the PSB website. Motion carried.

8. School Review TOSH family of Schools

04/22/06 It was moved by Beverley Boulter and seconded by Jaclyn Massey that a public consultation regarding the Three Oaks Family of Schools School Review will be held for at least 30 days following this meeting in accordance with the School Review policy. Additional information about the consultation will be posted on the PSB website. Motion carried.

9. Queen Elizabeth Elementary School (error)

04/22/07 It was moved by Rachel McCarthy and seconded by Beverley Boulter that the following motion passed on December 17, 2024 be rescinded due to error *"It was moved by Rachel McCarthy and seconded by Beverley Boulter that the status quo be maintained at Queen Elizabeth School, but that student enrolments and the need for modifications at this school be monitored. Motion carried."*

04/22/08 **It was moved by Rachel McCarthy and seconded by Amanda Blakeney that a more in-depth study at Queen Elizabeth Elementary School be done, and that options for change be explored.**

10. Financial Invoices

04/22/09 **It was moved by Beverley Boulter and seconded by Amanda Blakeney that invoice 359702- November Fleet Charlottetown Garage be approved as presented.**

04/22/10 **It was moved by Beverley Boulter and seconded by Jaclyn Massey that invoice 361149- January Fleet Charlottetown Garage be approved as presented.**

04/22/11 **It was moved by Beverley Boulter and seconded by Amanda Blakeney that invoice 363007- March Charlottetown Garage be approved as presented.**

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sarah", written in black ink on a white background. The signature is positioned above a solid black horizontal line.

Chair Signature of Approval