

Public Schools Branch
Fifty-Ninth Board of Trustees Public Meeting
Tuesday, October 29, 2024

Minutes

The Public Schools Branch Board of Trustees hosted their thirteenth public meeting on Tuesday, October 29, 2024, at the Stratford Town Hall, Crossroads Room

Present: Heather Mullen, Board Chair
Stephanie Arnold, Vice-Chair
Beverley Ann Boulter, Trustee
Amanda Blakeney, Trustee
Wade Czank, Trustee
Beckie Keezer, Trustee
Jacob Jadis, Trustee
Jaclyn Massey, Trustee
Jocelyne Ludgate, Trustee
Rachel McCarthy, Trustee

Also, in Attendance:

Tracy Beaulieu, Director of the Public Schools Branch
Heather Palmer, Assistant to the Director
Karen Redmond, Manager, Policy, and Planning
Dale Sabeau, Consultant
Vicki Whitlock, Director, EAL/FAL Programs and Services

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

29/10/01

It was moved by Jocelyne Ludgate and seconded by Jacob Jadis that the agenda be approved as amended with the removal of Agenda Item #7 and the addition of 7(a) Policy Committee. Motion carried.

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

3.1 MINUTES OF THE July 30, 2024 BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

29/10/02

It was moved by Wade Czank and seconded by Beverley Ann Boulter that the minutes of the July 30, 2024, Board of Trustees meeting be adopted as presented. Motion carried.

4. BOARD CHAIR REPORT

(The complete Board Chair's report will be filed with the official minutes.)

Chair, Heather Mullen shared the following report:

Looking back over the past few months, the two key standout areas are engagement and planning.

Engagement

The Public Schools Branch has recently concluded public engagement on the Charlottetown Area School Report. We held three public sessions in the Charlottetown area and also received valuable feedback via email. I would like to extend my gratitude to Dale Sabean for his work on the report and for delivering presentations at each session, as well as to our PSB leadership team—Dominique Lecours and Matthew MacLeod—for their support at these events. Thank you to all the community members who attended the meetings and those who took the time to share their feedback with us online. The information shared at the public meetings and online will be compiled into the summary report which Dale Sabean will present to the Board on October 29th.

Planning

The Charlottetown School review is just one example of how the Public Schools Branch is planning for the future. This fall, the Board and PSB staff will be developing a new strategic plan. We have also commissioned Dale Sabean to review population growth across PEI schools. Additionally, we will begin exploring the next steps for adjusting school zones in the Charlottetown area in preparation for the opening of Stratford High School. We value the public's ongoing support and feedback as we continue to plan for the future of the Public Schools Branch.

Heather Mullen
Chair, Board of Trustees
Public Schools Branch
Prince Edward Island

Meeting Scheduled – End of July - October 2024

July 31 - Hearing Committee

August 8 - CSBA Meeting

August 22 - PSB Planning Meeting

September 3 - Hearing Committee

September 19 - PSB Planning Meeting

September 27 - Engagement Think Tank, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

October 1 - Public Engagement Session, Charlottetown School Report

October 2 - CBC Radio re Charlottetown School Report

October 8 - Public Engagement Session, Charlottetown School Report

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October 9 - Queen Charlotte Home and School

October 10 - Public Engagement Session, Charlottetown School Report

October 16 - Colonel Gray Home and School

5. DIRECTOR REPORT

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

Director, Tracy Beaulieu shared the following report:

[PBS Director's Report – October 29, 2024](#)

Director of Public Schools Branch Update

The Public Schools Branch is placing a strong focus on building its capacity to address challenges stemming from rapid population growth and the increasing complexity of student needs. As student enrollment rises, schools are facing heightened demands for resources, space, and specialized supports to meet the diverse needs of all learners. To address these pressures, the PSB is working closely with the Board of Trustees, the Department of Education and the Minister / Deputy Minister to advance its Inclusion Action Plan. This plan aims to ensure that students and staff receive the necessary support to thrive in our current learning environment. By collaboratively engaging in strategic dialogues there will be greater transparency in the reasons behind the PSB seeking to secure additional funding, resources, and policy to implement comprehensive inclusion strategies that focus on both the academic and social-emotional well-being of students. Moving forward, this partnership will be critical in enabling schools to effectively manage growth while ensuring that students have equitable access to quality education. We are very grateful for the openness and support that has been shown to the school authority thus far.

Below is a sample of work that has been conducted to support this focus to date.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Positions Hired & Baseline Surveys Completed:

- Funding awarded to pilot eighteen schools in Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports in schools with K-4 cohorts
- All Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) positions have been filled.
- Currently moving toward hiring a PBIS Coordinator to lead the work
- Baseline surveys have been conducted to assess current needs and outcomes related to PBIS.
- UPEI research, CRIA analysis, and various other focus groups have been engaged

Think Tank Meeting (pertaining to violence in schools)

- Collaborative meeting held with union partners, trustee chairs, deputy minister, and board staff
- Focus on key areas of concern, priorities, and collaborative solutions.

Strategic Plan & Work Plan:

- Work is underway to shape the strategic plan and create work plans that align with it.
- Focus areas include enhancing staff (personnel and training) to address infrastructure and optimal learning environments, have intentional conversations to support student learning, and aligning resources with priorities.

Management Plan:

- Initial steps towards developing the 2025-2026 Management Plan.
- Current focus includes aligning goals and strategies with organizational needs.

Attendance:

- Ongoing efforts to address and improve attendance rates.
- Commitment to understanding the reason behind chronic and severe absenteeism
- Strategies being discussed and implemented to engage students and reduce absenteeism.

Policy/Procedure Updates:

- Review and updates of current policies and procedures to ensure alignment with organizational goals.
- Emphasis on awareness, ensuring transparency, and compliance.
- PD for administrators that focuses on implementing policies, procedures and best practices.

EAL/FAL Update

The EAL/FAL Division continues to provide programs and services to newcomer students in both the PSB and CSLF on PEI. Over 3,500 EAL/FAL learners from 103 countries bring cultural and linguistic diversity into PEI schools and classrooms. EAL and FAL itinerant teachers view additional language learning as an experiential and interactional process, wherein knowledge is co-constructed and high expectations of all learners are upheld as language learning is viewed from a strengths-based perspective.

Data and Trends

The figure below included 472 new EAL/FAL students registered in schools since July of 2024. Approximately 60% of these new students are receiving EAL itinerant support, with a third of these students at lower levels of language proficiency.

| District/Board | Numbers of Students | Percentages |
|----------------|---------------------|---------------|
| PSB | 3396 | 96.04% |
| CSLF | 140 | 3.96% |
| Total | 3536 | 100.0% |

While most of our additional language learners are within the Charlottetown area, there has been an increase in the number of students arriving in the Summerside, West Prince, and Eastern Kings areas. There has been a significant increase in the Summerside-West area, accounting for 19.65 % of our total EAL/FAL population.

1,085 EAL/FAL Students are receiving itinerant teacher instructional support. In addition, the secondary EAL online program has its highest number of students to date (52). The FAL itinerant teachers (2.5) have almost 100 students on caseload, which is also the highest to date.

Considerations

EAL/FAL students continue to arrive from other countries in crisis (i.e. Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, Somalia, Ukraine, etc.). These students have experienced trauma and loss. In 2019, we saw 8 students with exceptional needs, and now we are seeing approximately 1-2 students per week with exceptional needs who require additional support. 25 students to date have presented with significant exceptionalities, requiring the support of an educational assistant, a youth service worker, or other support services, for which the staffing and resources have run out, creating a wait list for EAL and FAL learners starting school.

Anticipated immigration trends with the aim of continued population growth and fulfillment of labour market needs will result in continued EAL/FAL student arrivals throughout the school year. As new EAL/FAL students arrive, careful consideration is given to the impact at the school and classroom level. Itinerant teacher support will be deployed to other schools where needed. The progress of EAL/FAL students will be monitored to ensure every avenue for success.

EAL/FAL Kindergarten Registrations

EAL/FAL kindergarten registrations will be completed by the EAL/FAL assessment staff at the EAL/FAL Reception Centre. Schools will refer any newcomer families of EAL/FAL children, who were born outside of Canada or who speak another language at home other than English, French, or Mi'kmaq in the home, to the EAL/FAL Reception Centre.

EAL/FAL Students in Kindergarten

222 EAL/FAL children are in kindergarten. Their language proficiency levels will not be assessed until the end of the school year to ensure more validity. Kindergarten teachers with EAL students in their classrooms have access to the EAL Teacher Support Specialist for consultation. Past practice has not included EAL/FAL itinerant support in kindergarten due to the implementation of the play-based curriculum. However, as EAL/FAL numbers and needs in kindergarten classrooms have significantly increased in the last few years, the EAL/FAL team is collecting data and research in consideration of piloting a kindergarten program in January 2025.

STEP

Numbers of newly arrived EAL students with lower levels of English language proficiency continues to increase. A soft landing into PEI schools via the School Transition EAL Programs (STEP) is provided and well-received at Queen Charlotte, Spring Park, Prince Street, Sherwood, West Royalty, and Athena Consolidated.

Finance Update

After a very busy school September start up, the staff in Financial Services are continuing their work to support schools, staff and students.

Accounting Department

School Cash Online Catalogue

In recent years, significant investments and internal reorganizations have been made to upgrade accounting/fund software for schools (School Cash Online Catalogue) and be able to provide a more focused support for schools. This added capability allows schools to offer applicable costs for students/parents online for payment via a secure portal. This software not only reduces cash in

schools (improving internal controls), it also increases efficiency for school administration and parents while offering more timely and detailed reporting. The accounting department, through our continued internal reorganization of resources and efforts, continues to work with schools (recently, adding another one of our largest high schools) using and actively working with the School Cash Online Catalogue.

Public Schools Branch Amazon Account

For some years, Public Schools Branch departments and schools have relied heavily on Amazon for ease of purchasing and best prices (following proper PSB procurement/purchasing limits). Because of it being an online purchasing platform, staff and schools would need to purchase from a personal credit card and seek reimbursement or use a PSB purchasing card. Starting in 2024-25, the Accounting department engaged with Amazon to create our own centralized account and purchasing system. Departments and schools are now able to login under a PSB account, make approved purchases (based on approved categories and spending limits), have approvals go automatically to proper signing authorities and the PSB receives one invoice for processing with proper department/school organization for accounting coding. These efforts by staff to implement this system will lead to more efficient purchasing and accounting processes. On top of that, it will provide better controls and reporting on purchasing.

Payroll Department

The Public Schools Branch Payroll Department, in the face of increases in overall front-line system staffing (both permanent and substitute), continues to adapt/reorganize and offer continued high-level payroll services. With this year being no different, this department of nine (9) staff continues to find efficiencies, addresses challenges with solutions and operate a rigorous, ever changing and highly complex payroll environment to deliver consistent and accurate compensation for Public Schools Branch staff.

The Payroll Department has worked extensively with the Human Resources Department to address better employee information reporting. Currently, both departments are working together to address proper employee/department/school usage of the Personnel Action Form (formerly the HR Action Form). This form contains essential processing information for both departments and improving the content and flow of information from this document from staff will provide better services. As Human Resources just finished their online learning series on this form, Payroll Services plans to follow up with an online learning session of their own to highlight the payroll importance of proper completion of the form.

Human Resources Update

School Staff Planning

Staffing for the 2024-2025 school year has been completed with all positions successfully filled. Recruitment and staffing efforts have continued as leave replacements are being addressed as they come forward and recruitment to substitute and casual positions are continuous and ongoing.

From July 1, 2024 to October 24, 2024 – HR Team has processed 4,166 job applications, successfully filling positions for 306 job competitions.

Collective Agreement - Bargaining

Changes from the recently ratified PEITF & CUPE 1145, 1770 & 1775 agreements have been implemented, with education sessions on the updates and changes having been delivered to leadership across PSB.

CUPE 3260 (EAs/YSWs) collective agreement expired on March 31, 2024, the Education Negotiating Agency (ENA) team has been formed, expected to commence bargaining in the late Fall 2024 or early 2025.

Projects

New Applicant Tracking System (ATS), replacing Canada Gateway is tracking to go live on December 7, 2024. The Human Resources team has started training in the new system and has completed the first 6 workshops on the new system to date. Further training for Human Resources and all Users will be taking place over the next 6 weeks. The new ATS system will provide for significant improvements for the candidate application experience as well as the workflows internally within PSB.

HR Learning Series

Human Resources has initiated a new learning/professional development series for leaders across PSB. The 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month, starting on October 22, 2024, HR will be hosting a virtual learning series providing training, guidance and support on a variety of human resources and leadership topics.

Property Update

Maintenance & Minor Capital Repairs:

Property Services are active at the schools with day-to-day maintenance across the system. Property Services is also working with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure (DTI) on the ongoing 2024/2025 minor capital repair projects. Property Services has already started looking forward to next year's minor capital repair priorities. These priorities will be designed and tendered early in the new year in preparation for 2025/2026 summer construction.

Major Capital Projects:

Property Services and DTI are continuing to work on two major capital projects, Sherwood Elementary and Stratford High. Construction on these projects is progressing well, with Sherwood expecting to be complete this winter. A major capital project for Queen Charlotte addition was also initiated. The planning committee that was appointed has met several times and a space program and concept floor plan was created. DTI is currently working through their process.

School Safety:

School Safety Services is preparing to do the third and final deployment of radon testing equipment in the 16 schools that remain to be tested. Monitoring will also be completed at the three schools that received their mitigation system this past summer to ensure the systems are operating as designed. The deployment will be completed in mid-November and the equipment will take readings over the next three months.

Student Services Update

Director of Student Services - Sandra Jay

It has been a busy and challenging start to the school year for the Student Services Department. A new Speech Language Pathologist has been hired. Madeline Duffy will begin on October 29th. We have a new OT assigned to our schools. Her name is Clare Murphy, and she is replacing Chloe Bruce who is on maternity leave. We welcome Madeline and Clare to the team in Student Services.

An additional thirty positions for Educational Assistants, Youth Service Workers and Student Attendants were provided by the Department of Education and Early Years in late August to

address the needs that were identified after the annual Student Needs Assessment Process (SNAP). These ‘unanticipated needs’ are students who have moved to the province, had a recent diagnosis, were not yet identified by Early Years Centers or were not in an Early Years Center. In addition, there were children who moved to a different school which required the movement of support. It was a busy time as managers and consultants worked to evaluate needs and put support in place and this process is on-going.

With the hiring of these additional supports in schools and other factors, there is a concern regarding the availability of substitutes for our CUPE 3260 group. Schools have already been unable to fill absences. Administrators must reassign staff, adjust schedules and be creative in meeting needs. HR staff are working to add substitutes to the list, but schools are expecting it will be a challenging year in this regard.

The Department of Education and Early Years and PSB Student Services have partnered to expand the **Just Words Tier 2** pilot that began at Stratford Elementary in 2023-24. This program will now be offered in twelve schools.

JUST WORDS is a resource program intervention that belongs to the same program framework as **Fundations** and the **Wilson Reading System**. It is a targeted program for small groups of students in Grade 4-6 (and up) who have mild to moderate gaps in their decoding and spelling proficiency. It is an accelerated word study program to develop proficient readers and spellers. It is a welcome addition to our intervention options, particularly for students in Gr 4-6.

Our School Occupational Therapists have developed a School Therapy OT (STOT) Google Site to provide easy and timely information (handouts, videos, OT Tips). This information will be extremely helpful in supporting school staff as they start the school year, and throughout the year, as they support students. It provides information and videos on such topics as self- and co-regulation, personal care, body awareness, fine and gross motor skills.

The Student Services Divisional Meeting was held on October 24th. A presentation on PBIS was provided by Jeff Clow, Administrative Support Leader. Director Tracy Beaulieu was present to provide background on this direction by the PSB. Additional topics included a PREPaRE video for school staff, PowerSchool and the OT Google Site. There was a presentation by Human Resources Director Jonathan Mosher on his division and changes.

Transportation Update

School Bus Safety Week

October 21 to 25 was recognized as our third annual provincial school bus safety week. It was an excellent opportunity to place focused attention on safer school bus transportation and the amazing work of our school bus drivers and system support staff every day. Focus this year was placed on public outreach and in-school messaging, with additional messaging sent to drivers by our director. https://youtu.be/YSATdikEV_8?feature=shared

Student Travel Times and Overcrowding continue to challenge.

While average student ride time on PSB Buses remains at approximately 26 minutes, there are currently 934 students eligible for PSB bus transportation whose travel time would exceed our stated goal of 1 hour.

Standard buses have a legal capacity limit of 70 passengers. All regular routes have been modified such that regular ridership now currently falls within this legal limit. With that said, ridership (or actual number of students on the bus) differs from the total number of students eligible for

transportation via PSB bussing. If all students who were eligible for PSB transportation actually took PSB buses to and from school, we would have 76 PSB buses with ridership numbers greater than 70.

Further, the space occupied by 70 kindergarten students differs greatly from that of 70 high school students. While we attempt to structure loads of 3 to a seat for elementary grades and 2 to a seat for Intermediate and High School students, factors such as special needs requirements, larger kitbags, growing volumes of transportation to locations other than a student's primary residence (i.e. mom's one day, Dad's the next, childcare, etc.), and so on make it ever challenging to consistently reach a threshold considered "comfortable" by many individual's standards.

Driver, Bus, and Infrastructure Additions

To help offset some of the challenges above, the PSB was granted an increased driver FTE compliment of two drivers this year, bringing our total to 264 drivers. Our substitute pool is currently approximately 40. We anticipate a requirement to hire approximately 50 new drivers annually for the foreseeable future to offset attrition.

40 new buses have been promised for purchase this fiscal year (to arrive prior to March 31). This will offset PSB buses removed from our fleet due to age restriction legislation and/or condition. This year's purchases will be 28 diesel and 12 electric, bringing our electric bus total to a milestone of 100 electric bus units.

Level 3 electric bus charging infrastructure has been tendered for installation at all Island High Schools in Queens and Kings counties. Prince county high schools are scheduled for tender/installation in our next fiscal year.

6. BOARD BUSINESS

6.1 School Study Report (Charlottetown Family of Schools)

11/29/03 It was moved by Jacob Jadis and seconded by Jocelyne Ludgate that the status quo be maintained at Donagh Regional, Sherwood Elementary, Queen Charlotte Intermediate, but that student enrollments and the need for modifications at these schools be monitored. Motion carried.

11/29/04 It was moved by Wade Czank and seconded by Jacob Jadis that physical modifications and modernizations be made to Parkdale Elementary, Prince Street Elementary, Spring Park Elementary, Stratford Elementary, and West Kent Elementary to create additional space for individual and small group instruction/services, and that student enrollments continue to be monitored. Motion carried.

11/29/05 It was moved by Jocelyne Ludgate and seconded by Beverley Ann Boulter that that physical modifications and modernizations be made to Glen Stewart Primary to relocate administrative offices, create additional classroom space and space for individual and small group instruction/services, and that student enrollments continue to be monitored. Motion carried.

11/29/06 It was moved by Stephanie Arnold and seconded by Jaclyn Massey that the PSB immediately seek government approval for the construction of a new elementary school to serve approximately 600 students in the L.M. Montgomery catchment area. Motion carried.

11/29/07 It was moved by Beverley Ann Boulter and seconded by Amanda Blakeney that a stand-alone school study be commissioned for St. Jean elementary to look further into current and future enrollments, occupancy and the physical space. Motion carried.

11/29/08 It was moved by Stephanie Arnold and seconded by Wade Czank the PSB immediately seek government approval for the construction of a new elementary school to serve approximately 600 students in the West Royalty catchment area. Motion carried.

11/29/09 It was moved by Jocelyne Ludgate and seconded by Jacob Jadis that the Enhanced Learning Placement (ELP) be relocated from Birchwood Intermediate to another facility to create additional instructional space. Motion carried.

11/29/10 It was moved by Stephanie Arnold and seconded by Amanda Blakeney that the PSB immediately seek government approval for the construction of a new intermediate school to serve approximately 800 students in the Stratford area to serve the Stratford and Donagh catchment areas and that once approved, the

PSB commission a School Study to determine the redistribution of students in the Queen Charlotte Intermediate, Stonepark Intermediate and Birchwood Intermediate catchment areas. Motion carried.

11/29/11 **It was moved by Jacob Jadis and seconded by Jocelyne Ludgate that if an intermediate school is not constructed in Stratford, that additional classrooms be added to Stonepark Intermediate. Motion carried.**

11/29/12 **It was moved by Wade Czank and seconded by Beverley Ann Boulter that the Student Well-Being Team Offices be relocated from Stonepark Intermediate to another facility to create additional instructional space. Motion carried.**

11/29/13 **It was moved by Jocelyne Ludgate and seconded by Jacob Jadis that due to the upcoming opening of Stratford High, the PSB commissioned a stand-alone School Study for Charlottetown Rural High School and Colonel Gray Senior High to consider the redistribution of students attending those schools. Motion carried.**

6.2 Policy

11/29/14 **Policy 406 (Attendance and Engagement) – deferred**

11/29/15 **It was moved by Jacob Jadis and seconded by Rachel McCarthy that Policy 407 (Student Suspension) is approved as presented. Motion Carried.**

11/29/16 **It was moved by Wade Czank and seconded by Jacob Jadis that Policy 408 (French Immersion) is approved as presented. Motion Carried.**

6.3 Strategic Plan – deferred

6.4 New Trustees

Appointed Trustees, Jacob Jadis and Stephanie Arnold have been appointed for another two years. Jodie Zver, PSB appointed Trustee did not renew for another term.

6.5 Auditor General's Report – deferred

7. Hearing Committee – removed

7(a). Policy Committee

11/29/17 **It was moved by Stephanie Arnold and seconded by Beckie Keezer that the Board of Trustees appoints a Policy Committee consisting of Trustees Amanda Blakeney, Wade Czank and Heather Mullen and that the Policy Committee appoint a Chair from among its members.**

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 p.m.