

School District 72 Board News

MEETING OF
SEPT. 2 2025

September 3, 2025
INFORMATION RELEASE

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You can watch a recording of this meeting on the district's YouTube channel at:
<https://youtu.be/SRaE3p3jA4o>

Chairperson Remarks

In her opening remarks, Chairperson Kat Eddy welcomed everyone to the first public meeting of the Board of Education for the 2025-2026 school year. She extended warm wishes to families across the district, expressing hope that the summer months provided time to rest, recharge, and enjoy the natural beauty and opportunities that the Campbell River region offers.

Chairperson Eddy also shared her excitement for the year ahead and introduced Anne Tenning as the district's new director of Indigenous education. Tenning joins SD72 from the Central Okanagan with extensive experience in education and is a proud member of the Stz'uminus First Nation. The board looks forward to her leadership in advancing success for Indigenous learners and continuing to strengthen relationships across the community.

To close, Chairperson Eddy expressed confidence that the 2025-2026 school year will be a positive and productive one for students, staff, and families.

Watch this segment: [0:01:15](#)

Superintendent Remarks

Superintendent Geoff Manning began his comments by welcoming everyone back to the new school year. While district staff at the board office have been back for several weeks, and principals, vice-principals and teachers have also been preparing, he noted that there is something special about the first day of school. He also shared his appreciation for the energy and enthusiasm staff brought with them as they returned from summer break, ready to have a positive impact on students' lives.

While it is too early to provide a definitive enrollment update until after the 1701 count at the end of the month, Superintendent Manning expressed confidence that the district is on track to meet or even surpass projections.

He acknowledged that a new school year always brings challenges, such as the ongoing recovery from the Carihi fire, which will be discussed later in the meeting. However, he emphasized that challenges can be reframed as opportunities to solve problems and move the district forward in a positive direction.

In closing, he wished everyone a strong and positive start to the school year.

Watch this segment: [0:02:15](#)

Careful Spending Ahead After Use of Savings

Secretary-Treasurer Kevin Patrick presented the Board of Education with the annual management team recommendations for the district's reserves, which are funds set aside from past budgets to help cover unexpected costs or specific projects.

Secretary-Treasurer Patrick shared that the district ended the past school year slightly under budget, which is good news. However, the amended budget had increased the district's expected deficit from \$600,000 to \$1.6 million. This larger deficit meant the district had to rely heavily on reserves to cover costs.



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At the start of the year, the district held about \$2.6 million in reserves. By the end of the 2024-2025 school year, that amount had dropped to \$1.2 million. The main pressure came from rising employee benefit costs, which increased by about 20 percent while government funding only rose by about two percent. To make up the difference, reductions had to be made elsewhere, and unrestricted reserves were used to help balance the budget.

The district has policies for how reserves are used. Some, like Indigenous education funding, are targeted and can only be spent in specific areas. Others, such as school supply accounts or international program surpluses, are decided by the board.

Reserves have supported items such as IT equipment, strategic priorities, and health and safety projects. However, the ability to add new projects this year is limited. Strategic priorities funding, for example, has dropped from \$200,000 in past years to just \$57,000 now.

The district is maintaining its emergency contingency fund, but other reserves have been significantly reduced. Without new additions this year, Secretary-Treasurer Patrick warned that the board and senior leadership will need to be very careful with spending. Departments and schools are expected to stay within their budgets, and Secretary-Treasurer Patrick cautioned that requests for extra funding may not be possible this year.

While some enrollment growth may help, whether it improves the financial picture will depend on where students are added and what staffing changes are needed. Secretary-Treasurer Patrick said that the district is also closely looking at how and where the Classroom Enhancement Fund can provide additional support for existing services.

Over the past decade, district reserves have declined from about \$6 million to \$1.2 million based on increased cost pressures and to maintain services for students. Secretary-Treasurer Patrick highlighted that for many years, the provincial government has directed school districts not to keep substantial reserves, but that leaves little room for boards to absorb new cost pressures.

The board passed a motion to accept the internally restricted reserves as presented and to write a letter to the Ministry of Education and Child Care advocating for funding that better reflects inflation, provincially negotiated benefit costs, and the true cost of operating schools.

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Board of Education Reviews its Performance

On August 22, the Board of Education reviewed the results of a board evaluation process that took place in May. The review was led by Gordon Li of the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA), who guided trustees through a confidential process that looked at six key areas: governance, Indigenous education, the ability to work with people, values-based and evidence-informed decision making, planning for student success, and financial and resource management. These areas reflect the governance standards set by the Ministry of Education and Child Care, and the evaluation is intended to help the board measure their effectiveness against those expectations.

According to Chairperson Eddy, the results overall showed that the board is working well together. Communication was described as collegial and respectful, and trustees were found to have a solid understanding of their governance role.

The review also highlighted areas for growth. Trustees noted the need for stronger evidence of student success connected to the district's strategic plan. The board expressed interest in making this information more visible to the public so that progress can be better discussed and understood. Indigenous education was another key focus and trustees recognized that more work is needed at the governance level to support improved outcomes for Indigenous students.

While the board normally undertakes this evaluation every year as part of its governance policy, with trustee elections taking place in 2026, Chairperson Eddy said that the board



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will plan to focus on transition planning and supporting the incoming board.

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Portable Classroom Delays Create Challenges at Carihi

Superintendent Geoff Manning shared with the board that a major challenge facing the district at the start of this school year has been the delay in portable classrooms scheduled for delivery to Carihi Secondary. The district had been expecting four new portables in September but was informed late in the summer that they would not arrive until mid to late November.

This delay required the district to pivot quickly to find classroom space for students who had been assigned to the portables. Two classes have been temporarily relocated to Robron Centre, with bussing provided for those students. Superintendent Manning said that district leadership determined that transporting just two classes to the former Oyster River Elementary would create an unnecessarily long commute, so keeping them closer to Carihi was the better solution.

In addition, two portables already within the district are being moved to Carihi. Operations staff worked over the long weekend to prepare those units, and they are expected to be ready by the third week of September. Once completed, the relocated students will be able to return to Carihi.

The district is also continuing to look for solutions for the culinary arts program to ensure students have access to a safe and effective kitchen space. At the same time, the two classrooms under the stage have been fully remediated, with power and fire alarms activated just in time for the first day of classes.

Superintendent Geoff Manning acknowledged that this is not the ideal way to begin a new school year. He expressed gratitude to operations, maintenance, and custodial staff, as well as Carihi's teachers and administrators, for their

hard work and patience as the district works through these challenges.

Watch this segment: [0:28:15](#)

Trustee Joins Provincial Indigenous Education Advisory Council

Trustee Jan Gladish has been appointed to the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA) Indigenous Education Advisory Council. This provincial group provides guidance to school boards across British Columbia on strengthening Indigenous education.

The council met recently on the traditional lands of the Stó:lō Nation. The gathering included cultural teachings, conversations with respected leaders, and discussions on ways school boards can better support Indigenous learners. Trustee Gladish described the experience as both powerful and thought-provoking.

The meeting highlighted several important themes for trustees to consider. These included the importance of creating visible spaces for Indigenous culture in schools, encouraging more students to pursue post-secondary education, and supporting the revitalization of Indigenous languages. Council members also raised concerns about racism in schools, the need for more land-based learning opportunities, and the responsibility of school districts to counter denialism related to residential schools and other harmful government policies.

The council's ongoing work includes subcommittees on land-based learning, Indigenous student leadership, and language revitalization. Trustee Gladish's involvement ensures that SD72 is part of the provincial dialogue on how best to support Indigenous students and strengthen relationships with First Nations communities.

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Campbell River to Host Vancouver Island School Trustees Gathering

The Campbell River School District will welcome trustees from across Vancouver Island on October 3 and 4 for the



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fall meeting of the Vancouver Island School Trustees' Association (VISTA) at Robron Centre. The event will bring together approximately 50 trustees to learn, share, and collaborate on issues that matter to school districts across the region.

Themed *Journeys to Success*, the gathering will highlight student achievement, Indigenous worldviews, and student-centered learning environments – all key focus areas in the district's strategic plan.

Friday's program will include featured speakers on neurodiversity and land-based learning, followed by a networking dinner and an evening panel of Indigenous leaders facilitated by the district's new principal of Indigenous education, Anne Tenning. Saturday will focus on branch business, including a session with Gordon Li from the BC School Trustees Association, who will speak about board evaluation and governance practices.

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