School District 72 Board News

MEETING OF MAY 5, 2026

May 6, 2026
INFORMATION RELEASE

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https://youtu.be/l_U4zdiYhoA

Chairperson Remarks

Chairperson Craig Gillis opened the meeting by welcoming guests and acknowledging the busy pace of May and June, as the district prepares for important decisions and year-end events.

He recognized retiring district employees, who will be celebrated on May 28, and noted the first district graduation event on June 11, honouring Indigenous graduates. He also acknowledged Red Dress Day, the National Day of Awareness for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and the National Day of Mourning for workers who have died or been injured because of their work.

Chairperson Gillis thanked DPAC, district early learning staff, student leaders and community partners for hosting a parent engagement event that brought about 50 people together for dinner and a presentation by Charlene Siddon from School District 71. He also celebrated Carihi Secondary's production of Something Rotten, calling it an outstanding example of student-centred learning and student talent.

He highlighted recent public recognition of the district's inclusive education work, including supports such as EASE, Second Step, the Foundry partnership and Go-To Educator training. He also noted the board's work to review and revise Governance Policy 5, saying the process has helped strengthen the board's commitment to inclusion.

To close, Chairperson Gillis acknowledged ongoing concerns about delays in the Carihi Secondary fire rebuild. He thanked the Carihi PAC for advocating for a clear timeline, secured funding and a commitment to restoring the facility.

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Superintendent Remarks

Superintendent Geoff Manning opened his remarks by noting there are now only eight weeks left in the school year and highlighted several upcoming events, celebrations and achievements happening across the district.

He shared that the district has received $200,000 in provincial funding through BC's Playground Equipment Program for a new accessible playground at Ocean Grove Elementary School. The project will replace ageing equipment and create a more inclusive outdoor play space for students. Planning will begin in collaboration with the school and parent advisory council, with construction timelines to be shared in the future.

Superintendent Manning also spoke about Indigenous student celebrations taking place across district schools, noting that each school designs its celebration in ways that reflect its students and community.

He highlighted recent success at the Skills Canada provincial competition, where two School District 72 teams earned gold medals and qualified for the national competition in Toronto later this month. Timberline Secondary students Julian Ciumac and Dana Kim won gold in video production, while Carihi Secondary students Jett Taylor and Indy Cook captured gold in 3D animation. Both teams will represent British Columbia at the Skills Canada National Competition from May 26 to 30.

Looking ahead, Superintendent Manning shared that students from across the region, including students from SD72, are participating in the CASE Youth Leadership Summit on Cortes Island this week. The summit brings together youth from rural, remote and Indigenous communities to explore leadership through creative expression, storytelling, art, music, film, writing and land-based learning.

He also provided an update on kindergarten enrolment, sharing that the district has already registered 335 kindergarten students for next school year and is ahead of where enrolment stood at the same time last year.

In closing, Superintendent Manning spoke about the district's student achievement plan meetings, which are now underway in schools across the district. He recently attended Sayward School's student achievement plan meeting and highlighted the school's work grounded in the Circle of Courage framework, including drumming programs and improvements in student attendance. He noted the importance of aligning school plans, classroom learning and the district strategic plan to support improved student achievement.

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Sandowne Elementary Shares Collaborative Approach to Student Achievement Planning

Staff at Sandowne Elementary are taking a collaborative, evidence-informed approach to improving student achievement, with a strong focus on literacy, well-being, and Indigenous learning.

Principal Kelly Gage and Vice-Principal Georgina Knox presented the school's student achievement plan to the Board of Education, outlining how staff worked together to identify priorities that reflect both the district's strategic plan and the unique needs of the Sandowne learning community.

The process began with staff discussions about the challenges they were seeing in classrooms and what areas would have the greatest impact on students. Teachers then ranked priorities based on factors such as urgency, frequency, the school's ability to address the challenge, and how progress could be measured.

Through that work, staff identified three key goals: honouring Indigenous worldviews and perspectives, creating student-centred learning environments, and strengthening literacy and numeracy outcomes.

The presentation highlighted how Indigenous perspectives are being embedded into daily learning through storytelling, music, art, and community connections. Staff also identified resilience, perseverance, social intelligence, and student safety as important areas of focus in supporting student success.

To help make the goals more practical and measurable, staff used an "observable vision" process to identify what successful implementation would look like in classrooms. This included considering what students would be doing, what teachers would be doing, and what learning tasks would look like when the goals were fully in practice.

The school's plan was informed by multiple sources of evidence, including classroom observations, literacy assessments, Foundation Skills Assessment data, and feedback from students and staff. Sandowne also sought parent feedback on the plan, which administrators said was largely encouraging and supportive of the work underway.

Administrators shared that maintaining the plan as a "living document" has been a key priority. Mid-year staff reflections and discussions were used to assess progress, identify strengths, and guide next steps.

Trustees praised the collaborative culture at the school and the strong focus on literacy development. During the discussion, trustees also highlighted the school's emphasis on resilience and "grit" among students, with administrators noting that staff identified perseverance and not giving up when learning becomes difficult as important areas for student growth.

The presentation also emphasized the importance of instructional leadership, including classroom visits, reflective conversations with teachers, and strength-based feedback intended to support professional growth and responsive instruction.

Every school in the Campbell River School District develops a student achievement plan to help guide school improvement efforts, support student success, and align school-based goals with the district's strategic priorities.

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Board Invites Feedback on Proposed Changes to the Diversity, Equality and Equity Policy

The Board of Education is inviting public feedback on proposed changes to its diversity, equality and equity policy, with revisions intended to strengthen the district's commitment to

safe, inclusive and accessible learning environments for all students.

The revised draft policy, now titled "Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility," was brought forward by the board governance committee following earlier discussion at the March 17 public board meeting.

Trustees issued a notice of motion at the May 5 public meeting, beginning a public feedback period before the board considers the proposed policy changes at its May 26, 2026 meeting.

The proposed revisions expand and modernize the policy language based on recommendations and feedback from the district's Equity in Action Committee, school administrators, and members of the district's Accessibility Committee.

The Board of Education is encouraging students, staff, families and community members to review the draft policy and provide feedback before May 20.

The draft policy and information on how to submit feedback will be posted on the district website under 'News & Announcements'.

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Board Escalates Advocacy Over Delays to Carihi Fire Restoration

The Board of Education is increasing pressure on the provincial government over ongoing delays in approving major restoration work at Carihi Secondary following the November 2024 fire.

During the May 5 public board meeting, trustees expressed growing frustration with the length of time it has taken for the Ministry of Infrastructure to move the project forward, noting that students, staff and families have already spent more than a year adapting to disrupted learning spaces.

Trustees said they had initially been hopeful that the creation of the Ministry of Infrastructure would help speed up projects like Carihi's restoration, but that has not been the district's experience.

Chairperson Craig Gillis shared that he recently spoke directly with Infrastructure Minister Bowinn Ma about the situation. According to Gillis, the minister acknowledged the delays and indicated she would prioritize moving the project forward. However, with no additional action confirmed following that conversation, trustees agreed further advocacy was necessary.

Superintendent Geoff Manning told the board the district has worked extensively within the ministry's required processes and timelines, including using the ministry's templates and engaging an experienced consultant familiar with provincial capital project submissions. However, as the process continued, the district was repeatedly asked to provide new or additional information beyond the original instructions. It was noted that, at the time of the board meeting, the district had now responded to 16 separate requests related to the project definition report (PDR).

Manning said the district believed it was following the appropriate process, but it became increasingly clear that doing so was not leading to timely results for students and staff.

The Board of Education unanimously passed a motion directing Chairperson Gillis to send a formal advocacy letter to the Ministry of Infrastructure, with a copy to the Ministry of Education and Child Care, urging immediate action on the project and committed to the letter being made public.

Trustees also acknowledged and thanked the Carihi parent advisory council for their recent public advocacy efforts and petition demanding faster action from the provincial government on the project.

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SD72 Remains on Track Financially, but Cost Pressures Continue to Build

The school district is tracking slightly ahead of budget at the end of the third quarter, although ongoing inflationary pressures continue to create financial challenges for the future.

A quarterly financial report for the period ending March 31, 2026 shows the district currently sitting approximately $873,000 ahead of budget projections. Secretary-Treasurer

Kevin Patrick told trustees this is the strongest third-quarter financial position the district has seen in several years.

Patrick cautioned, however, that the surplus is expected to decrease somewhat before year-end because inclusive education enrolment and funding came in lower than anticipated, reducing projected revenue by approximately $260,000.

Overall revenues remain close to budget projections, with provincial operating grants, international student funding and First Nations funding generally tracking as expected.

Salary and benefit costs, which make up the largest portion of the district's budget, are also close to projections overall. Patrick noted that benefit costs have been a significant pressure point for districts across British Columbia in recent years as inflationary increases continue to outpace government funding increases.

Instruction spending, which represents the district's largest area of spending, remains very close to budget overall despite some pressures related to teachers teaching on call and benefit costs.

Operations and maintenance spending is currently below budget projections. Patrick explained that some operations staff costs are temporarily being charged to major capital and restoration projects, including the ongoing Carihi Secondary fire recovery work and childcare construction projects. While that shift is helping offset pressures within the operating budget, he noted it also means staff are spending less time on other maintenance work within schools.

Patrick said the district is aiming to finish the year with a small positive balance, noting that while large surpluses are not the goal, the district also has limited reserves available to absorb unexpected costs or emergencies.

The district will continue monitoring spending closely through the final quarter of the school year as it works to maintain services and supports for students while managing ongoing financial pressures.

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District Outlines Proposed Reductions for 2026-2027 Budget

The school district has outlined $2.15 million in proposed reductions and funding recoveries to address a projected operating deficit for the 2026-2027 school year.

Secretary-Treasurer Kevin Patrick presented the recommendations to the Board of Education during the May 5 public meeting, describing the budget process as one of the most difficult the district has faced in recent years. While the district had previously projected a $1.8 million deficit, an additional $300,000 in technology infrastructure costs that had not been included in the preliminary calculations pushed the shortfall to $2.1 million.

Patrick said the district continues to face growing financial pressures from inflation, rising operating costs and declining enrolment. The district expects to graduate approximately 480 Grade 12 students this year while welcoming about 350 kindergarten students in the fall, continuing a long-term enrolment decline that is reducing operating revenue each year. Trustees noted that the province's per-student operating grant has remained largely unchanged despite rising costs.

Budget planning began earlier this year and included consultation with employee groups, principals, the Indigenous Education Council and the district parent advisory council. Patrick acknowledged that feedback on the proposed reductions was extensive and, at times, conflicting. Some stakeholders called for deeper reductions to technology spending, while others emphasized the importance of maintaining technology access for students.

The proposed changes include a combination of staffing adjustments, department budget reductions, operational savings and additional revenue recovery measures. Patrick said the district's goal was to avoid major cuts to direct classroom services wherever possible and instead focus on reductions "around the edges" of the system. Many of the proposed staffing reductions are tied to retirements, resignations or other vacancies to minimize layoffs and direct impacts on employees.

A significant portion of the savings comes from proposed changes to school administration staffing. Due to declining enrolment at several elementary schools, the district is proposing adjustments to vice-principal allocations by

increasing the enrolment threshold required under the district's staffing formula. Patrick said the district reviewed the formula early because retirements and principal promotions created vacancies, allowing the district to avoid filling positions that may otherwise have needed to be reduced in future years.

Other proposed reductions include adjustments to teacher coordinator positions, secondary staffing tied to enrolment, education assistant staffing within distributed learning programs, and reductions to travel, supplies, services and school-based budgets. Patrick noted that some reductions, such as learning resource budgets, were spread broadly across schools rather than targeting a single service area.

The district is also proposing longer replacement cycles for technology equipment. Rather than eliminating technology access in primary classrooms, the district plans to extend the life of older secondary devices by converting them to lower-cost Linux systems and repurposing them for elementary schools. Patrick said this approach would help reduce future replacement costs while maintaining access for students.

To help offset reductions, the district is also proposing several funding recovery measures. These include increased operating contributions from the international student program, additional operational support funding connected to the Feeding Futures program, project cost recoveries and renewed applications for Category H special education funding. Patrick explained the district had proactively removed some students from the provincial funding category last year after identifying that documentation requirements were not fully being met. The district has since strengthened its processes and expects to recover funding for at least 35 students next year.

Trustees expressed concern about the long-term sustainability of district finances and the increasing impact of declining enrolment across British Columbia.

Trustees also emphasized that declining enrolment and rising costs are creating structural challenges that cannot be solved through local reductions alone. Discussions during the meeting highlighted the need for continued advocacy to the provincial government for funding that better reflects inflation and the realities facing public education.

The Board of Education is welcoming feedback on the proposed reductions over the coming weeks before considering approval of the preliminary operating budget at the May 26, 2026 public meeting. Feedback can be sent to the secretary-treasurer's office by email to natalie.crawshaw@sd72.bc.ca.

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