

**MINUTES OF A SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
OF SCHOOL DISTRICT NO 38 (RICHMOND)
7811 GRANVILLE AVENUE, RICHMOND, BC
Via Zoom
ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 2021
AT 7 P.M.**

Present:	Chairperson	S. Nixon
	Trustees	D. Tablotney
		N. Goldstein
		K. Hamaguchi
		H. Larson
		R. Lee
		D. Sargent
	Superintendent of Schools	S. Robinson
	Deputy Superintendent	R. Ryan
	Secretary Treasurer	R. Uyeno
	Assistant Superintendent	L. Archer
	Assistant Superintendent	C. Brautigam
	Executive Director, Human Resources	L. Buchanan
	Executive Director, Learning Services	J. MacMillan
	Executive Director, Learning & Business Technologies	R. Laing
	Director, Communications & Marketing	D. Sadler
	Director of Instruction – Student Services	R. Steward
	Executive Assistant, Recording Secretary	C. Cleary

The Richmond Board of Education acknowledged and thanked the First Peoples of the hən̓qəmin̓əm' (hun-ki-meen-um) language group on whose traditional and unceded territories we teach, learn and live.

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

1. Adoption of Agenda

028/2021 MOVED BY H. LARSON AND SECONDED BY D. SARGENT:

THAT the Wednesday, March 10, 2021 Special Public meeting agenda of the Board of Education (Richmond) be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED

2. Transitional Learning Program

The Superintendent provided a report as attached to the Special Public agenda and read the recommendation staff were bringing forward for consideration by the Board for the Transitional Learning Program (TL).

The report provided trustees with background information on both programs for elementary and secondary schools. With the Ministry of Education provisions that this program be temporary and transitional in nature, the intention was that students return to school and face to face learning. However, given the unpredictable nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, parents have requested extensions to the program in December. The extensions, as approved by the Board, to extend the elementary program to Spring Break and the

secondary program to the third quarter were made with the hope that the health situation would improve or remain stable.

The Superintendent noted that there have been approximately 95 documented cases of a possible exposures to COVID-19 in Richmond schools since the beginning of the school year. Based on information provided by Vancouver Coastal Health, all of these cases originated in the community, not in schools. To date, there has not been one documented transmission of the virus in our District, with over 17,000 students attending school every day since September. The Provincial Health Officer and local Health experts have stated schools are safe places to be and the School District has, and continues to have, a significant focus on health and safety. However, for a variety of reasons there are a number of parents who have a different perspective and don't believe it is safe to send their child back to school at the present time.

The Superintendent then outlined how the Transitional Programs operate with approximately 4,000 students in TL for K-7. At the present time, there are just under 2,200 students enrolled in this program that accounts for 19% of elementary students across the District. Also, with the TL program for elementary, there is significant concern regarding student mental health. For some students they will now have been away from face to face learning for almost 18 months if the Board decides to extend the program. The Superintendent then pointed out how the workload for many teachers continues to be an issue, particularly for teachers who report that being responsible for both in person and transitional support continues to negatively impact the level of support they feel they are able to provide students who attend in person. There are also a number of students who are disengaged from the program despite the multiple efforts by teaching staff or principals or support staff reaching out. The additional teachers and cost to extend the elementary school TL program will be \$600,000 from the remaining Federal *Return to School* funds.

The Superintendent then provided an overview of the secondary TL program. The program enrolment for secondary started with approximately 400 students and is now at 300 for grades 8 and 9 that accounts for 3.5% of the total secondary student population. Students continue to miss out on the social aspects of being at school with their peers and staff and there are also reduced opportunities in the number of elective courses available online and experience cannot be hands on the way it is based in school in person programs. With 12 FTE teachers required, reallocated funds to cover the costs would be \$300,000 of the remaining Federal *Return to School* funds.

The Superintendent concluded his report stating that this recommendation is to extend the Transitional Learning program, but it is the strong belief of staff that the vast majority of students are most effectively supported by attending school in person and it has been the goal of the District to encourage a return to school.

Questions sent in via email and the Q & A feature were then answered:

1. If a parent sent their child back and there was a possibility of an exposure would the child still be able to move back to the TL program? The Superintendent responded that yes, if the Board extends the program and a parent changed their mind, they can certainly do that.
2. Can a child do a part time return to school for kindergarten? The Superintendent answered that the District would want to work individually with families and principals reaching out to have those conversations. It would be suggested that parents discuss concerns directly with principals and have as much flexibility as possible.

3. A parent asked if their child is in TL would they be able to return to school in September and have their spot held. The answer was yes.
4. A question was asked about the \$600,000 and how that would be spent. The Superintendent responded that costs are for the 20 FT staff salary and benefits.
5. A parent asked if there have been considerations for a hybrid learning model in September. The Superintendent responded that no final decisions have been made at this time regarding September; however, the Ministry of Education has made it clear that there will be a full return to 100% in person learning. The Richmond Board of Education will continue to monitor the situation between now and the end of June before any decisions are made about programs that will be offered.
6. Will there be a gradual return to school process and extra one on one support? The Superintendent answered that it would be handled on a case by case basis with the school principal so that students returning would be given the support they require.

Trustees thanked the Superintendent for the in depth report and had questions and comments around the federal funding allocation, and if using the funds for TL would take any support away from other areas. The Secretary Treasurer responded that these funds would come from uncommitted contingency funds as well as operational maintenance supplies and learning resources. The Secretary Treasurer reported that the District can continue to meet all health and safety requirements with a reduction in spending within these accounts.

A trustee asked about the social emotional well-being of students and if any additional supports will be available for students. The Superintendent responded that it would be addressed on a one to one basis and asked the Executive Director of Learning Services to also respond. The Executive Director noted that there are a number of in school supports and other innovative ways to create those connections with students. Classroom and transitional teachers are assessing and providing support for the social emotional learning for all of their learners. The District will work at the school and District level to ensure that any additional support needs are met.

A trustee asked what electives are available for secondary students in the TL program. The Executive Director of Learning & Business Technology answered that students in grade 8 have a set program. Students have opportunities to participate in a similar program to those in class with design skill and technology areas as well as arts education, physical education and French. Students in grade 9 would have a broader scope of courses but still limited in comparison to in person.

Liz Baverstock, President of the Richmond Teachers' Association noted that the challenges identified by the Superintendent are those the RTA has reiterated throughout the pandemic – the additional work remains the same along with student health check ins and centralized learning that have all added to teachers' workload. The District is not designed for this and normally we plan with a year's notice; however, school districts had to drop everything and make sure there was something in place for families. Providing necessary support both educationally and social emotional needs will require a transition protocol put in place for September. She concluded that the District will need to welcome students back in a variety of ways and with a plan. Again, masks as a requirement would help immensely.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Baverstock and then suggested that the Board consider the recommendations as two separate motions for the elementary and secondary programs:

029/2021 MOVED BY R. LEE AND SECONDED BY H. LARSON:

THAT the Board of Education (Richmond) extend the Elementary Transitional Learning Program in its current instructional format until June 29, 2021 (end of 2020-2021 school year) for all elementary schools in the district with the exception of Spul'u'kwuks Elementary and Garden City Elementary;

AND FURTHER THAT the Board of Education (Richmond) extend the Elementary Transitional Learning Program in its current instructional format at Spul'u'kwuks Elementary School until July 27, 2021 (end of 2020-2021 school year) and at Garden City Elementary until July 13, 2021 (end of 2020-2021 school year).

CARRIED

030/2021 MOVED BY D. SARGENT AND SECONDED BY N. GOLDSTEIN:

THAT the Board of Education (Richmond) extend the Secondary Transitional Learning Program in its current instructional format until June 28, 2021 (end of 2020-2021 school year).

CARRIED

3. Adjournment

031/2021 MOVED BY K. HAMAGUCHI AND SECONDED BY R. LEE:

THAT the special public meeting of Wednesday, March 10, 2021 of the Board of Education (Richmond) be adjourned at 8:08 pm.

CARRIED

S. NIXON,
CHAIRPERSON

R. UYENO,
SECRETARY TREASURER