

AGENDA

OPEN MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION NICOLA SIMILKAMEEN SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 58

**MERRITT SCHOOL BOARD OFFICE
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2026, 6:00 P.M.**

Success for ALL Learners Today and Tomorrow

1. Acknowledgement of the Traditional Territories and Metis Community
2. Agenda
3. Minutes of the Open Meeting held February 11, 2026
4. Business Arising from the Minutes
5. Reports
 - a) Closed Meeting held February 11, 2026
 - b) Closed Meeting held February 17, 2026
6. **EDUCATION**
 - a) Indigenous Education Report (in-person)
 - b) Inclusive Education, Early Learning and Child Care Report
 - * c) Superintendent's Report
7. **OPERATIONS**
 - a) Potential School Closure
8. **AUDIT AND FINANCE**
 - a) n/a
9. **POLICY**

First Reading, Second Reading, Third Reading

- a) None

Policies Recommended for Repeal

- a) None

Administrative Procedures

- a) Compression or Weighted Vests and Blankets
- b) Parent Advisory Councils (PAC and DPAC)

10. **TRUSTEE REPORTS**

- * a) P.A.C. Reports
- * b) Other Reports
- Provincial Council Update (Jamie)

11. **CORRESPONDENCE**

- a) Delay School Closure Petition

12. **PUBLIC QUESTION PERIOD**

13. **ADJOURNMENT**

MINUTES

**OPEN MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE
NICOLA-SIMILKAMEEN SCHOOL DISTRICT (NO.58)**

**MERRITT BOARD OFFICE, BOARD ROOM
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2026, 6:00PM**

Success for ALL Learners Today and Tomorrow

Present:	Chairperson	G. Swan
	Vice-Chair	L. Ward
	Trustees	J. Jepsen J. Kent-Laidlaw E. Hoisington J. Chenoweth D. Rainer
	Student Trustees	J. Davis
	Superintendent	C. Lawrance
	Assistant Superintendent	M. Sheldon
	Secretary Treasurer	M. Friesen
	Assistant Secretary Treasurer	L. Rusnjak
	Executive Assistant	K. Buckland

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES AND METIS COMMUNITY

MINUTES

25/196 It was moved by Vice-Chair Ward and seconded by Trustee Hoisington

THAT the minutes of the Open Meeting held January 14th, 2026, be adopted as presented.

MOTION CARRIED

Business Arising from the Minutes

None.

PRESENTATION TO THE BOARD

Tatiana Mueller, Waste Reduction Coordinator with the Thompson-Nicola Regional District, presented to the Board. She provided pamphlets for school administrators interested in organizing a presentation for their schools.

EDUCATION

Indigenous Education Report

Superintendent Lawrance presented the Indigenous Education report to the Trustees, highlighting the successful winter celebration/PowWow that was held at NVIT.

Inclusive Education, Early Learning and Childcare Report

The Superintendent presented the written report from the Director of Instruction – Inclusive Education and Early Learning/Child Care, Adriane Mouland, highlighting ongoing supports provided by English Language Learning (ELL) teachers to meet the diverse needs of students across the District.

2026-2027, 2027-2028, 2028-2029 School Calendars

Superintendent Lawrance presented the survey results on the two options and a 3-year school calendar, noting that there were two rounds of feedback. In November between teachers and parents, the District received 247 responses, 70% felt that a 3-year calendar would be helpful. Option C was an overwhelming choice. In January, the District sent out another survey, with two versions as choices, which the District received seventy-seven responses between parents and staff, 94% preferred version 2, with 2 weeks spring break and 6% preferred version 1, which was 1 week spring break.

The Lower Nicola Indian Band submitted a letter opposing the inclusion of embedded Pro-D days, citing concerns about negative impacts on literacy, numeracy, and relationships with at-risk Indigenous youth. The letter presented to the Indigenous Education Council, which expressed overall support for Lower Nicola's position. District staff outlined alternative approaches for embedding professional development within the existing calendar while working to meet the needs of teachers.

25/197

It was moved by Trustee Hoisington and seconded by Trustee Jepsen

in support of the recommendation from the Superintendent on the three-year calendar, version 2.

MOTION CARRIED

Superintendent's Report

The Superintendent circulated her report and spoke about the various events that have taken place across the School District over the past month.

OPERATIONS

Potential School Closure Update

Superintendent Lawrance updated the Trustees on the completion of all sixteen community consultations, noting that minutes from the January and February consultation meetings are posted on the District's "Potential School Closure" website. She further noted that the Board will make decisions regarding school closures and the Strategic Plans and Objectives at the March 11 Board meeting, to be held in Merritt.

Bylaw – Parking Lot Covenant

a. Rescinding Modification of Covenant Bylaw

Secretary Treasurer Mark Friesen advised the Board that the Land Title Office identified an error in the registration of the original covenant relating to the Princeton Skills Centre parking agreement. As a

result, he is requesting that the Board rescind the existing modification of covenant bylaw and consider two new bylaws to ensure correct registration and reflect the intended parking modifications.

25/198 It was moved by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw and seconded by Trustee Hoisington

THAT the Board of Education of School District #58 (Nicola-Similkameen) rescind the Modification of Covenant Bylaw No. 2025-26 MCSD58-01 which was passed at its October 8,2025 meeting.

MOTION CARRIED

b. Release of Covenant Bylaw

Secretary Treasurer Mark Friesen advised the Board that the owner of an adjacent property has requested a reduction in parking spaces at the Princeton Skills Centre to support waste management and access for redevelopment. To accommodate this request, the existing parking covenant with the City of Princeton must be discharged and replaced with a new covenant reflecting the reduced number of parking spaces for the benefit of Lots 2 and 3.

25/199 It was moved by Trustee Rainer and seconded by Trustee Hoisington

THAT the Board of Education of School District #58 (Nicola-Similkameen), 162 Tapton Avenue, Princeton BC, release of covenant bylaw 2025-26 MCSD58-02, forward for first and second reading.

MOTION CARRIED

25/200 It was moved by Trustee Rainer and seconded by Trustee Chenoweth

THAT the Board of Education of School District #58 (Nicola-Similkameen), 162 Tapton Avenue, Princeton BC, release of covenant bylaw 2025-26 MCSD58-02, forward for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

25/201 It was moved by Trustee Rainer and seconded by Trustee Hoisington

THAT the Board of Education of School District #58 (Nicola-Similkameen), 162 Tapton Avenue, Princeton BC, release of covenant bylaw 2025-26 MCSD58-02, for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

c. New Covenant Bylaw

Secretary Treasure Mark Friesen advised the Board that to support the redevelopment of the adjacent property (Lot 3), a new parking covenant must be registered with the Land Title Office. Subject to the Board's approval of Release of Bylaw No. 2025-26 MCSD58-02, which discharges the existing covenant with the City of Princeton, a new covenant will be created to reduce the number of parking spaces and designate parking on Lot 1 for the benefit of Lots 2 and 3.

25/202 It was moved by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw and seconded by Vice-Chair Ward

THAT the Board of Education of School District #58 (Nicola-Similkameen), 162 Tapton Avenue, Princeton BC, of a new covenant bylaw 2025-26 MCSD58-03, forward for first and second reading.

MOTION CARRIED

25/203 It was moved by Trustee Rainer and seconded by Trustee Hoisington

THAT the Board of Education of School District #58 (Nicola-Similkameen), 162 Tapton Avenue, Princeton BC, of a new covenant bylaw 2025-26 MCSD58-03, forward for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

25/204

It was moved by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw and seconded by Trustee Rainer

THAT the Board of Education of School District #58 (Nicola-Similkameen), 162 Tapton Avenue, Princeton BC, of a new covenant bylaw 2025-26 MCSD58-03, for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

AUDIT AND FINANCE

2025-2026 Q2 Quarterly Financial Update

Secretary Treasurer Mark Friesen updated the Board on the Q2 Quarterly Financial report.

2025-2026 Amended Budget Bylaw Process

Secretary Treasurer Mark Friesen provided the Board of Education with an overview and detailed breakdown of the 2025–2026 Amended Annual Budget that is required to pass the 25-26 Amended Budget Bylaw.

25/205

It was moved by Trustee Rainer and seconded by Trustee Jepsen

THAT the Board approves the \$42,599,748 Amended Budget Bylaw for first reading.

MOTION CARRIED

25/206

It was moved by Trustee Rainer and seconded by Trustee Jepsen

THAT the Board approves the \$42,599,748 Amended Budget Bylaw for second reading.

MOTION CARRIED

25/207

It was moved by Trustee Hoisington and seconded by Vice-Chair Ward

THAT the Board approves the \$42,599,748 Amended Budget Bylaw move forward to third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

25/208

It was moved by Trustee Rainer and seconded by Trustee Kent-Laidlaw

THAT the Board approves the \$42,599,748 Amended Budget Bylaw for third and final reading.

MOTION CARRIED

2026-2027 Preliminary Annual Budget Process

Secretary Treasurer Mark Friesen presented a memo that outlines the proposed 2026–2027 budget development timeline, beginning with enrollment projections in February and preliminary funding tables in March. Budget assumptions and two public consultations are planned for April, with the annual budget targeted for first reading in May and second and third readings in June 2026.

POLICY & ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

Administrative Procedures

The Board reviewed the Teacher Evaluation and Professional Growth Plans, as well as the Communicable Disease Outbreak Management administrative procedures.

Trustee Reports:

Student Trustee Reports

Assistant Superintendent Sheldon had assigned Merritt Student Trustees to present their perspective on what do you believe students need to develop, experience, or learn throughout their time in school in order to be well prepared for life after graduation?

Student Trustee Jacob emphasized that while students are able to complete their school assignments, many lack practical life skills such as preparing for a job interview, managing personal finances, managing their time, and communicating effectively through email. He noted that many students are uncertain about their future career paths and would benefit from guest speakers providing information about trades, colleges, and universities.

P.A.C. Reports

Trustee Hoisington reported on Nicola Canford Elementary.

Trustee Rainer reported on John Allison Elementary PAC.

Trustee Chenoweth reported on Collettsville Elementary and SCIDES.

Trustee Kent-Laidlaw reported on Princeton Secondary School.

Trustee Jepsen reported on Diamond Vale Elementary and Merritt Central Elementary.

Trustee Ward reported that Vermilion Forks Elementary PAC was rescheduled for a later date.

Chair Swan was reported on Bench Elementary and MSS PAC Meeting.

Other Reports:

None.

CORRESPONDENCE:

DPAC request for fund for BCCPAC conference

Trustees discussed the letter from DPAC that was in the Open Package.

25/209

It was moved by Trustee Chenoweth and seconded by Trustee Rainer

THAT the Board approves to increase the financial support up to \$3,000 to help cover expenses related to sending DPAC representatives to the BCCPAC Annual Conference and AGM April 24-26, 2026.

MOTION CARRIED

PUBLIC QUESTION PERIOD

None.

ADJOURNMENT

25/210

Motion to adjourn was made by Trustee Jepsen and seconded by Trustee Hoisington

THAT the Open Board meeting be adjourned at 8:05pm

Chairperson

Secretary Treasurer

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Trustees

**FROM: Courtney Lawrance
Superintendent of Schools**

RE: INDIGENOUS EDUCATION REPORT

DATE: March 11, 2026

The District Principal of Indigenous Education's report is attached. The District Principal of Indigenous Education will be in person to present on the 'How Are We Doing' report.



CL/sc

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION UPDATE

MARCH 11, 2026

As spring approaches, our Indigenous Education work continues to reflect themes of renewal, connection, and growth. Across schools, students are engaging in land-based activities, cultural practices, language learning, and wellness supports that strengthen identity, belonging, and learning. Embracing these seasonal connections as we move into a new cycle of learning.



INDIGENOUS EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Planning is beginning to get underway for the Spring Months. Next on the event list is an elders gathering. Our district honors the elders that come into our schools. They carry lived knowledge, cultural teachings, and wisdom that cannot be learned from textbooks. As respected knowledge holders, they help ensure Indigenous teachings are shared authentically and with care, grounding learning in community values, language, and history. Their presence strengthens relationships between schools and Indigenous communities, models respect and reciprocity for students, and supports identity, belonging, and wellbeing for Indigenous youth.

It is also time to be outside. Planning will also get started to host traditional games for all grade 6 students in the district.



LOCAL EDUCATION AGREEMENTS



LEA meetings continue with all the bands to build shared understanding, trust, and accountability for Indigenous student success. These meetings create space to align goals, share information, and address priorities such as identity, language, culture, attendance, and wellbeing. Updates on school closure information, financial updates, pro-d for teachers are some items that were on the agenda.

Work is also focusing on the ensuring that admin and school staff are completing the Indigenous focused pro-d hours. They were reminded that Indigenous-focused Professional Development must enhance student achievement and/or integrate Indigenous worldviews and perspectives into learning environments. The schools are doing some great work. Some examples are: Language learning for teachers, Truth and Reconciliation, Traditional place names and mapping of local areas, "Weaving Decolonizing Practices in Education" (Leona Prince), Decolonization workshop with Warren Hooley.

ISA's have a long list of the great work they are doing in schools every day, these are a snapshot. I would also like to welcome Veronica Jameson to the ISA team. She will be covering the temporary position until the end of the school year at Nicola-Canford.

Nicola-Canford: boys' group, drumming, baking, ski trip, hoop dancing, Taekwondo.

MSS: Gr. 10 tour at NVIT, ski trip, internet safety with RCMP, MSS alumni presentation, smudging, drumming, homework club, lahal, boys/girls' group, Indigenous military recruiters.

John Allison and Vermillion Forks: Academic support, beadwork, career exploration, nature walks, baking, skiing, welcome room art, games, forming friendships.

Diamond Vale: Character teachings (Love), girl's group, Science Fair support.

PSS/Bridge: Jason Simon (former Indigenous Hockey player) presentation, gr.12 volunteering program, new semester routine building, ribbon skirts for grad. At the Bridge, 8-week garden project sponsored by ISPARC.

Bench: nte?kepmxcin learning, literacy groups, hand drumming, storytelling.

Central: reading groups, Science Fair support, basketball/handball coaching, legend stories.

Colletville: Cottonwood harvesting, girl's group.

CLC: post-secondary presentation from UBCO, visit to James Teit collection at Museum.



LANGUAGE TEACHING

Nicola- Canford : nte?kepmxcin

Intermediate students completed a family unit using songs, games, and stories, created a comic book in nte?kepmxcin about love or respect, while primary students finished a clothing unit. Songs, games, and stick games were popular for learning new concepts, and activities included an ice fishing trip with ice skating, snowshoeing, and elders.

MSS- nte?kepmxcin

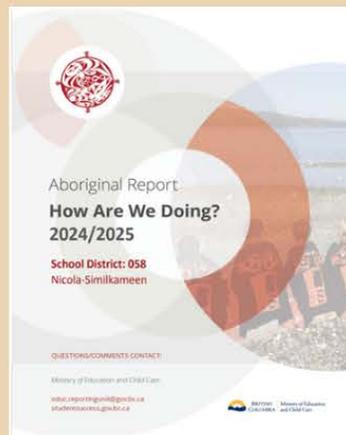
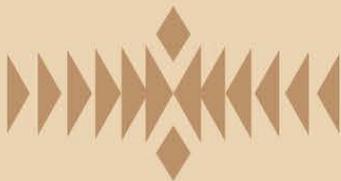
Each week, the class starts with gratitude, affirmations, or a prayer, often reflecting on Dr. Marie Anderson's grandmother teachings to guide classroom values. Students practice speaking and listening through conversation scripts, greetings, and introductions, using flashcards and written words as they grow more confident. Activities include giving compliments, playing educational games like tic-tac-toe or a bingo-style game to reinforce sounds, and sometimes physical Total Physical Response (TPR) lessons. The approach varies depending on the students' energy and schedule, alternating between grammar lessons and interactive games to keep engagement high. They often share oral words or sounds in a circle and remind students that practicing these sounds is like exercising their mouth, tongue, lips, and throat.

MSS and Central - nsyilxcən

Introductions, pronunciations, counting 1-10, place names, and the sound chart.

HOW ARE WE DOING REPORT FOR 2024-2025

Summary Attached



HAWD Report Summary 2024-2025

How are Indigenous students in SD58 developing and what are areas for interventions or further action?

Background:

Self-Identification: Students who self-identify as having Aboriginal ancestry (First Nations—Status or Non-Status, Métis, or Inuit) are included in all Aboriginal student reporting. In 2024–25, 901 of 2,458 students (36.7%) self-identified as Aboriginal. An additional 69 students (2.8%) who had identified in previous years did not do so this year.

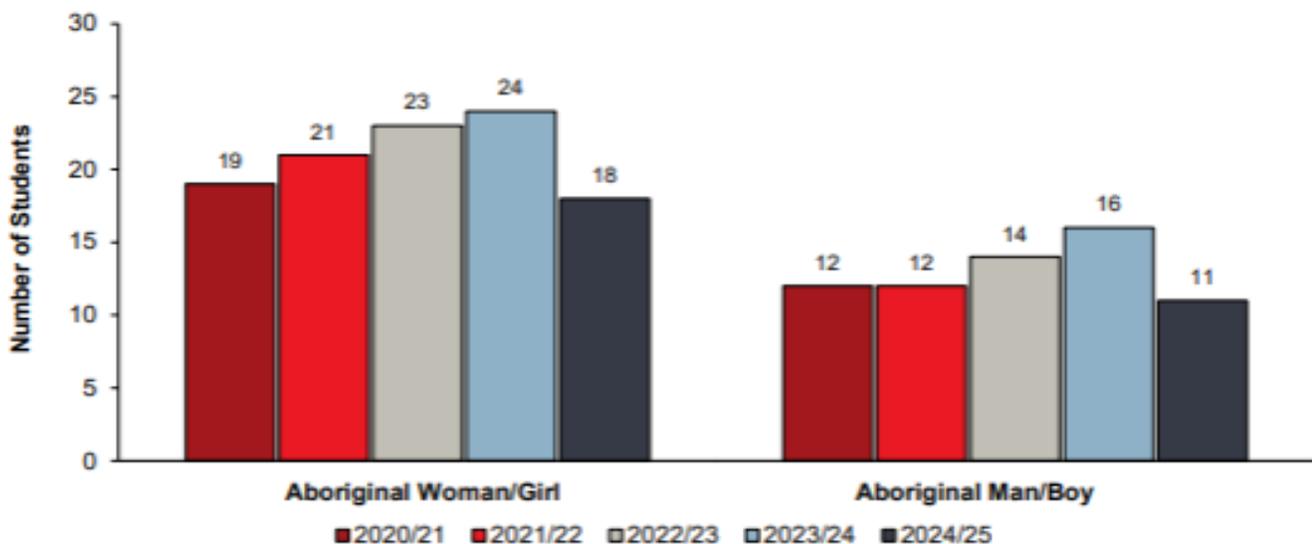
The data below will be based on 970 Aboriginal students and includes SCIDES students.

- 39% of our total school population is Aboriginal
- 29 on reserve
- 741 off reserve

Students in Alternate Programs:

29 of the 37 students enrolled in alternate programs are Aboriginal, representing **78%** of the district’s alternate program enrollment—slightly higher than the **76%** reported in 2023–24 and significantly above the provincial average of **41%**. FNEC has expressed concerns about the high representation of Aboriginal students in alternate programs. The district must ensure that these numbers do not reflect systemic bias or the inappropriate streaming of students out of mainstream education and instead confirm that students are being adequately supported.

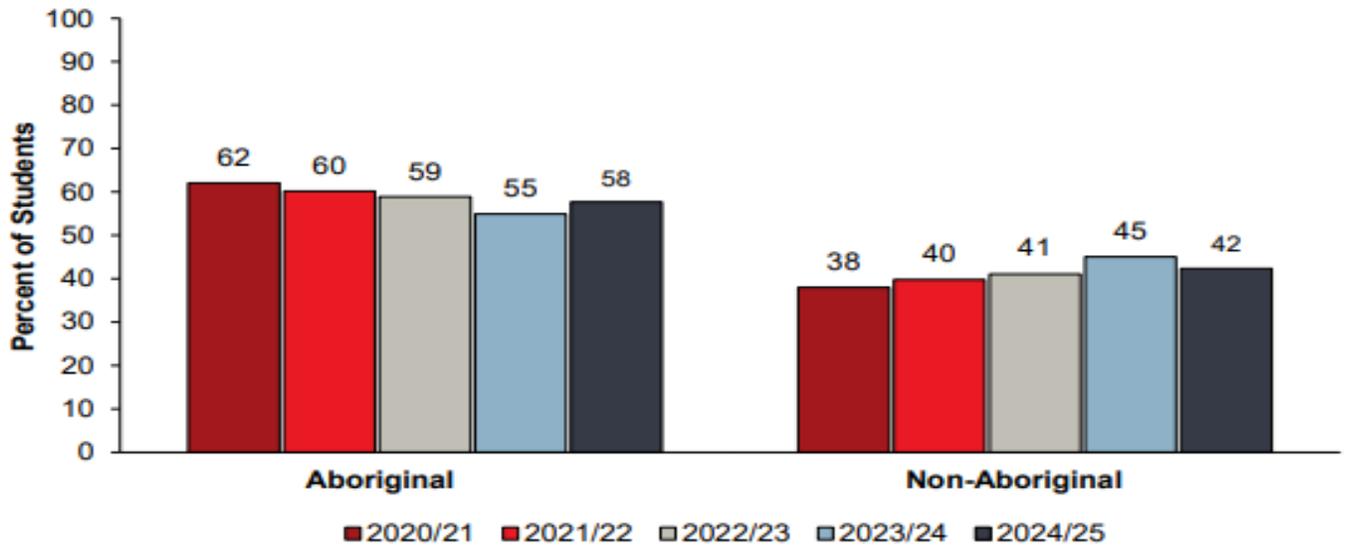
Number of Aboriginal Students in Alternate Programs - School District



Students Identified in an Inclusive Education Category:

Of the 352 students identified in an inclusive education category, **203 are Aboriginal**, representing **58%**, which is significantly higher than the provincial average of **38%**. Among these students, **1%** are identified in sensory categories, **42%** in learning categories, and **12%** in behaviour or mental-health categories.

Percent of Students Identified in an Inclusive Education Category (All)



Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) Results (On track or extending):

Reading/Literacy

Gr. 4- Aboriginal – 59% on track

- Higher than provincial average, 52% on track
- Higher than 2023-24 (52%)
- Non-Aboriginal – 57% on track

Gr. 7- Aboriginal – 54% On Track,

- Higher than provincial average, 49% on track
- 2023-24 55% on track
- Non-Aboriginal – 69% On Track

Group	Grade 4 On Track (%)	Grade 7 On Track (%)
Aboriginal	59	54
Non-Aboriginal	57	69
Provincial Average	52	49

**Overall, as a district just over half of our population are proficient in FSA scores in Literacy but are higher than provincial average. Grade 4 results show growth.*

Literacy Assessment: Grade 10:

Group	Writers (#)	Emerging (#)	Developing (#)	Proficient (#)	Extending (#)
Aboriginal	80	18	35	27	0
Non-Aboriginal	105	15	40	47	3

- Aboriginal students 34% proficient, higher than provincial average (25% proficient)
- Lower than 2023-24 (38% proficient)

Literacy Assessment: Grade 12:

Group	Writers (#)	Emerging (#)	Developing (#)	Proficient (#)	Extending (#)
Aboriginal	82	6	43	31	2
Non-Aboriginal	104	2	33	55	14

- Aboriginal students 38% proficient, lower than provincial average (52% proficient)
- Lower than 2023-24 (52% proficient)

**Literacy assessments in grade 10 and 12 are very concerning, less than half of Aboriginal students are proficient in Literacy*

Numeracy: FSA Data:

Gr. 4- Aboriginal – 57% on track

- Higher than provincial average, 46% on track
- Higher than 2023-24 (51% on track)
- Non-Aboriginal – 58% On Track

Gr. 7- Aboriginal – 54 % On Track

- Higher than provincial average (32%)
- Higher than 2023-24 (37% on track)
- Non-Aboriginal 39% on track

**Overall, as a district just over half of our population are proficient on FSA scores in Numeracy but are higher than provincial average. Grade 4 results show growth. There is good growth in numeracy data from last year's results.*

Numeracy Assessment- Grade 10:

Group	Writers (#)	Emerging (#)	Developing (#)	Proficient (#)	Extending (#)
Aboriginal	81	29	38	11	3
Non-Aboriginal	104	24	47	26	7

- Aboriginal students 14% proficient, Lower than provincial average (25% proficient)
- Higher than 2023-24 (12% proficient)

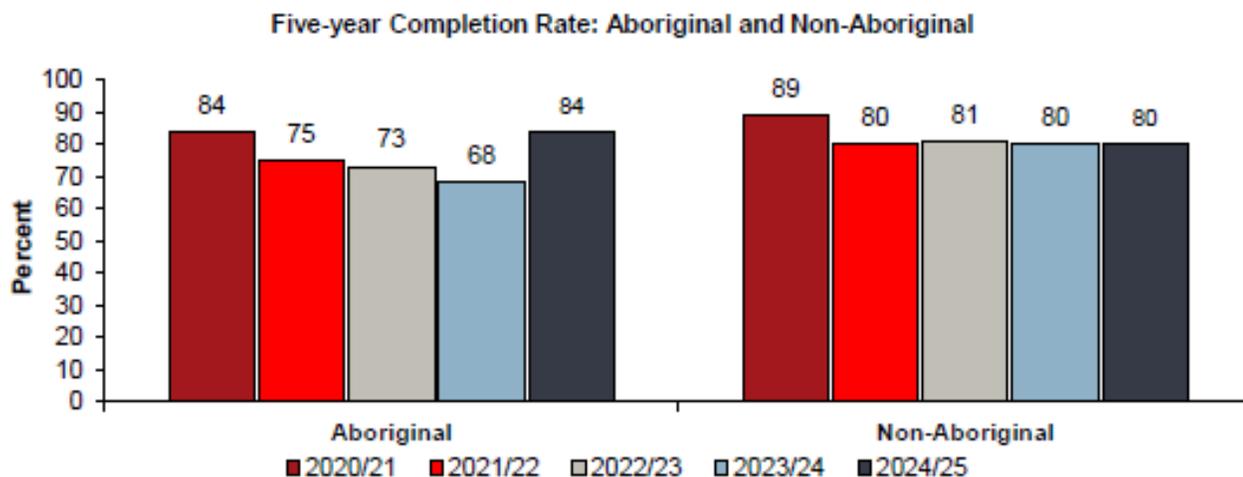
Key Insights and Gaps from Math courses for grade 12's in Pre-calculus, Calculus, Foundation of Math

- Participation:** Aboriginal student enrollment in senior math courses is significantly lower than non-Aboriginal peers (e.g., 3 Aboriginal vs. 19 non-Aboriginal in Calculus 12).
- Trends:** Achievement rates for Aboriginal students in math are stable or slightly improving Aboriginal students who enrolled in Grade 12 Foundations of Math, Pre-Calculus, or Calculus were highly successful, with most earning C+ or better, Aboriginal students who reach Calculus 12 or Foundations of Math 12 are highly successful, but very few enroll.
- Efforts to increase Aboriginal student participation and support in advanced math are critical for closing achievement gaps.

Five Year Completion Rate:

In 2024-25, 84% percent of Aboriginal students graduated. (80% Dogwood, 4% Adult Dogwood)

- 80% of non-Aboriginal students graduated.
- We are higher than the provincial average of 66 %

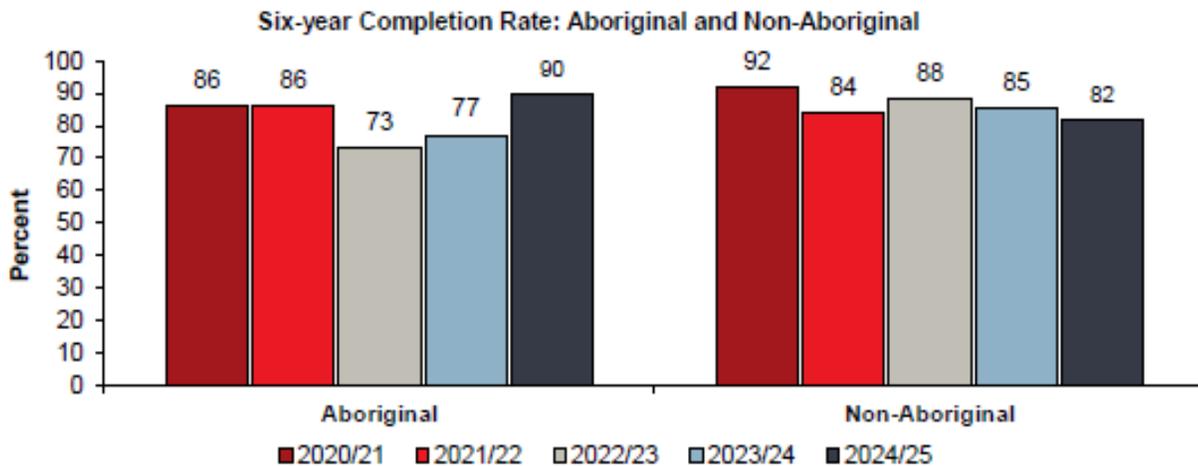


- SD 58 had a total of 41 adult dogwoods, 20/40 were Aboriginal. (49%)
- 10 of those students were under 19 years of age, 2 were 19-20 years, 8 were over 20 years
- 90% of those students were in an alternate program or online learning
- We are below the provincial average of 57% for adult dogwood.

(Note: The **20 of 40 Aboriginal Adult Dogwood graduates** describes who completed an Adult Dogwood in 2024–25, while the **4% five-year completion rate** measures how many Adult Dogwood students completed within a specific five-year cohort window, they use different populations and timelines and are not comparable.)

Six Year Completion Rate:

In 2024-25, 90 percent of Aboriginal students graduated. (81% Dogwood, 9% Adult Dogwood)
We are higher than the provincial average of 77%



* When the six-year rate is reported, numbers for prior school years are not updated. When the six-year rate is reported with the seven- and eight-year rates, numbers for prior school years are updated.

Student Learning Survey Results:

Students were asked various questions to provide their perspectives regarding their sense of belonging. (I.e. Do you like school? Do adults treat you fairly? Do you feel safe? Have you been bullied? I am happy at school. Is school a place where you feel like you belong? Are you learning about First Peoples at school?)

Data that stood out:

Grade 4 students answered in a range between 43-47% on all questions mentioned above.

- Non Aboriginal student’s answers were between 55-62%
- provincial average responses were generally higher

Grade 7 students answered in a range between 44-82% on all questions mentioned above

- Aboriginal students report higher rates for “adults treat all students fairly” in 2024/25.
- 67% feel safe at school

Grade 10 students answered in a range between 30-71% on all questions mentioned above

- Aboriginal students report higher rates for “adults treat all students fairly” in 2024/25.
- both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal consistently report lower sense of belonging

Grade 11 students

- Aboriginal students report lower positive experiences in most well-being measures but outperform in “adults treat all students fairly” in 2024/25.
- only 21 % of students feel that school is preparing them for a job in the future

Grade 12 students

- 68% feel safe at school
- 62% feel 2 or more adults care about them compared to 91% for non-Aboriginal

Attendance -Chronically Absent Student Rate (missed 10% or more of instruction days in school year):

In 2024–25, 63.0% of SD 58 Aboriginal students in Grades K–7 were chronically absent, closely aligning with the provincial Aboriginal rate of 62.8%, though a gap remains compared to non-Aboriginal students. (52.3%)

Chronically Absent Student Rate: Grade K-7:

School Year	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal	
	September Total Students	Rate	September Total Students	Rate
	#	%	#	%
2022/23	477	71.5	606	60.8
2023/24	463	59.5	626	48.5
2024/25	424	63.0	600	52.3

In 2024–25, 82.3% of SD 58 Aboriginal students in Grades 8-12 were chronically absent. Higher than the provincial average of 78.8 %. A gap remains compared to non-Aboriginal students in district. (71.5%)

Chronically Absent Student Rate – Grade 8-12:

School Year	Aboriginal		Non-Aboriginal	
	September Total Students	Rate	September Total Students	Rate
	#	%	#	%
2022/23	393	81.0	364	69.0
2023/24	382	83.5	374	74.4
2024/25	410	82.3	383	71.5

- Attendance remains a significant challenge locally and provincially.

Summary of Strengths:

- 1. Five-year completion rate** for Aboriginal students rose to **84%** in 2024/25 (up from 68% in 2023/24), nearly matching non-Aboriginal peers (80%). **Six-year completion rate: 90%**
Significance: These rates reflect strong progress in high school completion, a key indicator of long-term educational success
- 2. Sense of Belonging, Safety, and Adult Support**
 - Student Learning Survey (2024/25):
 - Grade 4: 82% feel welcome, 70% happy, 73% feel they belong, 79% say adults care.
 - Grade 7: 67% feel welcome, 70% happy, 65% feel they belong, 82% say adults care.
 - Grade 10–12: Consistent positive responses for belonging, safety, adult support, and respect for differences.
 - Respect for diversity and support: High rates across grades, supporting positive school climate
- 3. Course marks (C+ or better, 2024/25):**
 - English 10 (combined): 68%
 - English First Peoples 10: 61%
 - Foundations of Math & Pre-Calculus 10: 61%
 - Science 10: 55%
 - Calculus 12 & Foundations of Math 12: 100%

Aboriginal students are achieving solid marks in key academic subjects, with notable strengths in senior math courses

- 4. Steady Proficiency in Literacy and Numeracy for all grades**
- 5. Cultural Learning and Post-Secondary Transitions**
 - Learning about Indigenous Peoples: High participation rates in learning about First Peoples, supporting cultural identity and engagement.
 - Post-secondary transitions: Aboriginal students consistently enter community colleges, institutes, and universities.
 - First Nations Languages Courses: 46% of Aboriginal students achieved C+ or better in 2024/25.

Summary of Areas of Growth:

- 1. While Aboriginal students show strong participation, their achievement rates (C+ or better) in key courses are consistently lower than non-Aboriginal peers:**
 - English 10 (combined): 68% (Aboriginal) vs. 73% (Non-Aboriginal)
 - Foundations of Math & Pre-Calculus 10: 61% vs. 82%
 - Science 10: 55% vs. 78%

Growth Opportunity: Focused support in literacy, numeracy, and science to close achievement gaps

2. Aboriginal students in Grade 4 and 7 FSA assessments have lower rates of “On Track” and “Extending” proficiency compared to non-Aboriginal students.

- Grade 4 Literacy: 37% “On Track”, 57% “Extending”
- Grade 7 Literacy: 46% “On Track”, 54% “Extending”

Growth Opportunity: Increase proficiency levels in early grades to build foundational skill

3. Attendance—Chronic Absenteeism in Secondary Grades

Aboriginal students in Grades 8–12 have higher rates of chronic absenteeism than non-Aboriginal peers:

- 71.5% not chronically absent (Aboriginal) vs. 78.2% (Non-Aboriginal)

Growth Opportunity: Improve attendance and engagement in secondary grades

4. Aboriginal students are overrepresented in alternate programs and behaviour/mental health categories, achievement and support outcomes lag behind non-Aboriginal peers.

Growth Opportunity: Enhance inclusive education, mental health, and behaviour supports ensure equitable outcomes

5. While community college entry rates are strong, Aboriginal students are underrepresented in university transitions:

- University entry: Lower than non-Aboriginal peers

Growth Opportunity: Expand pathways and support for Aboriginal students to pursue university and other post-secondary options

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Trustees

**FROM: Courtney Lawrance
Superintendent of Schools**

**RE: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION, EARLY LEARNING
& CHILDCARE REPORT**

DATE: March 11, 2026

The Director of Instruction for Inclusive Education, Childcare, and Early Learning's report is attached.



CL/sc

**Director of Instruction – Inclusive Education &
Early Learning Child Care Report
March 2026**

**To enhance accessibility, this document can be easily read out loud through various text-to-speech programs. The background color, font size, and font choice are intentionally selected to enhance readability. **

Over the past month there are two important highlights to share:

Supporting Safety and Care through CPI Training – Winter Edition

During our February Professional Development Day, a group of our Education Assistants came together to participate in *Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI)* training. This important learning focused on strategies to prevent and safely de-escalate challenging situations, while emphasizing care, dignity, and respect for all students. Providing our staff with these skills helps ensure safe and supportive learning environments across our schools. We have been able to provide CPI training for 75 of our Education Assistants this school year.

Ready, Set, Learn Events

Ready, Set, Learn events were recently held at each of our elementary schools and were very well attended by families across the district. Designed for families with children aged three to five, these events provided welcoming and engaging opportunities for young learners and their caregivers to connect with their local schools before entering Kindergarten.

Each school created a fun, play-based environment where children could explore a variety of hands-on learning activities while families had the opportunity to become familiar with the school setting and meet members of the school community. The strong turnout highlighted the continued interest families have in early learning

opportunities and in building early connections with their neighbourhood schools.

The success of these events was made possible through the dedicated work of our StrongStart Facilitators and the support of our Healthy Schools Promoting Teacher, who collaborated with school teams to design developmentally appropriate activities and provide families with information about early learning programs and community services.

Ready, Set, Learn plays an important role in supporting positive transitions to school by fostering relationships between families, schools, and community partners. Through these early connections, families gain confidence in the school system and children begin to see school as a welcoming and engaging place to learn.

As we lead up to Spring Break and onward, I am looking forward to continuing the transition into Kindergarten offerings that the District provides as well as working with schools to start planning for the next steps for each of our students.

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Trustees

**FROM: Courtney Lawrance
Superintendent of Schools**

RE: POTENTIAL SCHOOL CLOSURE

DATE: March 11, 2026

Potential school closure is one of the most difficult decisions for a Board. Following the process outlined in Policy 6.50 School Closure, the Board has conducted 16 separate public consultation meetings and responded to several questions surrounding a potential school closure.

The Board has set this date, March 11, 2026, to pass a motion on one of the following four options:

- 1) No school closure
- 2) Close Merritt Central Elementary School; Merritt Central students transfer to Collettsville Elementary; French Immersion program moves to Diamond Vale Elementary (dual track)
- 3) Close Collettsville Elementary; French Immersion program moves to Diamond Vale Elementary (dual track)
- 4) Close Collettsville Elementary; French Immersion program moves to Merritt Central Elementary (dual track)

Should the Board pass a motion that includes a recommendation to close a school, the appropriate school closure bylaw will be presented and passed through three readings as required in Section 73 of the School Act.



CL/sc

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Trustees

**FROM: Courtney Lawrance
Superintendent of Schools**

**RE: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**

DATE: March 11, 2026

Recommendations:

We continue to work on our Administrative Procedures, which is the next step in the policy review process.

Policies:

First Reading, Second Reading, Third Reading

a) None

Policies Recommended for Repeal

a) None

Administrative Procedures (For Information Only)

- a) Compression or Weighted Vests and Blankets
- b) Parent Advisory Councils (PAC and DPAC)



CL/sc

Administrative Procedure		Nicola Similkameen School District
Section:	Inclusive Education	
Title:	Inclusive Education – Compression or Weighted Vests and Blankets	

Background

The Board of Education is committed to inclusive, equitable learning environments that support the diverse sensory, physical, and self-regulation needs of students. Some students experience challenges with sensory processing, body awareness, attention, or emotional regulation that may impact their ability to access learning and participate fully in school activities.

Weighted vests, weighted blankets, and similar deep-pressure sensory tools may be used as supportive regulation strategies for specific students when recommended by a qualified Occupational Therapist (OT). These tools are intended to support student regulation, engagement, safety, and well-being, and must be used purposefully, individually, and as part of a broader student support plan that prioritizes student dignity, autonomy, and safety.

This Administrative Procedure establishes clear expectations for the safe and appropriate use of weighted sensory tools under Occupational Therapist guidance.

Guiding Principles:

1. *Student-Centered and Strength-Based:* Weighted sensory tools are used to support individual student needs and strengths, not to manage behaviour or enforce compliance. Their use is grounded in respect for student dignity, voice, and well-being.
2. *Professional Direction and Oversight:* Weighted vests, weighted blankets, and related sensory tools may only be implemented under the direction and guidance of a qualified Occupational Therapist.
3. *Purposeful and Time-Limited Use:* These tools are used intentionally for specific regulation purposes and are not intended for continuous or unrestricted use throughout the school day.
4. *Safety and Autonomy:* Students must be able to remove the weighted item independently. Weighted tools are never forced, withheld, or used in a manner that restricts movement or choice.
5. *Integrated Within Student Support Planning:* Use of weighted sensory tools is documented within a student's Competency Based Individual Education Plan (CBIEP), Student Support Plan, or other appropriate planning documents, and is reviewed regularly as part of ongoing monitoring.

Procedures:

1. Weighted vests or blankets and compression vests are only to be used under the direction and guidance of an Occupational Therapist.
2. Before using or considering one of these tools with a student, the Occupational Therapist contracted by Nicola-Similkameen School District must complete the Compression Vest and Weighted Vest/Blanket Protocol.

3. The Compression Vest and Weighted Vest/Blanket Protocol will be signed and kept on file in the student's student service file.
4. No weighted vests or blankets and compression vest can be used until the protocol is in place.

Forms:

- [Compression Vest & Weighted Vest or Blanket Protocol](#)

Reference: [Compression Vest & Weighted Vest or Blanket Protocol](#) Mission Public Schools

Date of Original Superintendent Approval: March 11, 2026

Compression Vest & Weighted Vest/Blanket Protocol



The use of a weighted blanket, weighted vest, or compression garment may be used only when recommended by an Occupational Therapist (OT) for a specific student and is not to be shared with another student. Use of a weighted or compression vest or weighted blanket can be an effective tool to help the student self-regulate while at school. The item can be used as part of the daily routine as recommended by the OT. *It should never be forced on a student.* If at any time the student does not want to wear the vest or use the blanket, do not insist that they do so. If the student becomes more dysregulated or may suddenly become sleepy, cease use of the item immediately and contact the OT. With the blanket, never wrap the student or cover the face. The student should be able to remove the blanket themselves. If a parent/caregiver requests that a weighted or compression item be used at school, please contact the district OT.

To implement a weighted vest or blanket, or a pressure vest in a safe and efficient way, the following plan must be completed by the OT and must be reviewed by the Case Manager (e.g. Student Support Teacher) at least every 6 months, and by an OT every year or as required. Should concerns arise prior to the scheduled reviews, please contact the OT.

Date:	
Student Legal Name:	
Student Date of Birth:	
School:	
Weight of Vest or Blanket:	

INDICATIONS FOR USE (i.e. student is agitated, student seeks deep pressure, etc.)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE (i.e. maximum 20 minutes on at a time, then off for at least 20 minutes).

The vest should be used during specific activities such as seatwork, circle time, walk to office, etc. The vest should not be used during gym, or lunch breaks. The vest or blanket should not be used if the child is unsupervised.

Team Members	Name (please print)	Signature
Occupational Therapist:		
Case Manager:		
Education Assistant:		
Teacher:		
Principal:		
Parent/Guardian 1:		
Parent/Guardian 2:		

Administrative Procedure		Nicola Similkameen School District
Section:	District Administration	
Title:	Parent Advisory Councils (PAC and DPAC)	

Background

Parents Advisory Council (PAC) is a means of enhancing communication and cooperation between home and school and a means of promoting parent/guardian interest and participation in advising and assisting the school in areas of mutual concern. The primary focus of a PAC is to improve the quality of education by promoting and supporting a well-informed parent/guardian body for the school.

PAC

1. The School Principal shall support the right of school parents to form a PAC and support the sharing to school parents of information from the PAC executive including the date, time and location of PAC meetings.
2. Each PAC is autonomous and must have their own constitution and bylaws as per The School Act, under which they operate and are governed. The following link provides information and tips on how to write a constitution and bylaws: [Tab 6 Constitution and Bylaws](#) of the Leadership Manual.
3. The School District recognizes that as per the School Act:
 - a. every parent/guardian has a right to belong to a PAC.
 - b. there shall be only one PAC for each school.
 - c. a PAC, through its elected officers, may advise the Board and the School Principal and staff of the school respecting any matter pertaining to the operation of the school.
 - d. a PAC should operate in such a way that it is representative of parents/guardians in the school.
 - e. any individual participating on the PAC refrains from discussing, influencing and voting upon any matter in which he/she or his/her family has a pecuniary interest or in which he/she may be in a position of perceived bias by virtue of another role that individual holds in the education system.

PAC Activities on School and School District Grounds

As an autonomous organization, a PAC has the right and responsibility to ensure safety and liability protection for PAC activities conducted off school and School District grounds.

1. For PAC activities on school and School District grounds, the following will apply:
 - a. PAC must obtain the approval of the School Principal prior to organizing, advertising and carrying out the activity.
 - b. PAC must consider community and parental attitude to this activity.
 - c. PAC must consider the welfare and feelings of all students, whether or not all students are participating in the activity.

- d. PAC activities not authorized by the School Principal will not be covered by the School Protection Plan general liability insurance.
- e. At all times, all activities shall be under the supervision of the PAC under such conditions as approved by the School Principal and supervision must be appropriate in terms of the number and age of the students and/or public, and the duration and nature of the activity.
- f. The School Principal is responsible for ensuring PAC is aware of the incident reporting requirements as required by the School Protection Program and will ensure any such incidents are properly reported.

DPAC

The School District supports the establishment of a District Parents' Advisory Council (DPAC). It is the role of the DPAC, through its elected officers, to advise the Board and Superintendent (or designate) on any matter relating to the School District.

1. The DPAC, in consultation with the Superintendent (or designate), shall make bylaws governing its meetings and the business and conduct of its affairs, including bylaws governing the dissolution of the Council.
2. The DPAC is to be comprised of persons representing PACs within the School District.
3. The DPAC must elect officers according to established bylaws.
4. The DPAC, through its elected officers, may advise the Board through the Superintendent (or designate) on any matter relating to the School District.
5. The Board of Education through the Superintendent (or designate) may allocate operating funds to the DPAC. The funds can be designated for specific purposes. The elected officers of the DPAC will account to the Superintendent (or designate) as to the dispersal of those funds.
6. No new funding will be allocated until the officers of the DPAC render an accounting to the Superintendent (or designate).

Date of Superintendent Approval: March 11, 2026

From: [chelsea werrun](#)
To: [Gordon Swan](#); [John Chenoweth](#); [Everett Hoisington](#); [Justin Jepsen](#); [Leah Ward](#); [Dave Rainer](#); [Jamie Kent-Laidlaw](#)
Cc: [schoolclosure2025](#); [Misty Sheldon](#); [Kassey Buckland](#); [Mark Friesen](#); [Courtney Lawrance](#)
Subject: Community letter regarding the proposed school closure - attachment
Date: Saturday, February 21, 2026 10:59:44 AM
Attachments: [School Closure Relay Request \(signed\).pdf](#)
[Request to Delay School Closure Decision \(Letter\).pdf](#)
[Letter of Support - Request to Delay School Closure Decision \(final online responses\).pdf](#)
[Online Response Summary Pie chart.pdf](#)

Dear Chair Swan and Trustees,

Please find attached the community letter regarding the proposed school closure. I had intended to present this letter at the February Board meeting; however, due to illness, I was unable to attend. I would like to ask that you reply to this message to confirm receipt of it.

This letter reflects the concerns of a significant number of families and community members who felt it was important to speak collectively. While the full list of signatures has been gathered, not all individual names have not been included in this submission due to confidentiality considerations. We have included the signatures of individuals that signed the paper form which is attached to this email.

We respectfully request that the Board formally acknowledge receipt of this letter, including the over 600 signatories, and confirm how the concerns outlined will be taken into account as part of the decision-making process regarding the potential school closure.

As March 11 approaches, you as a Board have a significant decision before you. We hope that, upon review and reflection, the School Trustees can make a decision that reflects a process that is honest, fair, transparent, and considers the full story. Most importantly, we ask that you can confidently say you listened to understand—rather than to defend a process.

Thank you for your time, attention, and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Chelsea Werrun

Dear Board of Education for Nicola-Similkameen School District,

We, the undersigned parents, caregivers and community members, respectfully urge the District to delay any decision regarding a school closure. At this time, there is insufficient information, planning, and community confidence to support a decision of this magnitude.

Families are not opposed to change when it is necessary and well planned. However, we are concerned about decisions being made without adequate evidence, transparency, or a clear demonstration of how student well-being will be protected. Given the permanent nature of a school closure, the level of evidence and planning required should be proportionate to the long-term impact on students, families, and the broader community.

Our concerns include the following:

Insufficient information to support decision-making

- Enrolment projections are not finalized and will only be confirmed after a closure decision is made
- No detailed transition plan has been provided for students, families, or staff
- Financial projections remain uncertain, including assumptions related to SCIDES enrolment, local economic conditions, and provincial funding

Unaddressed impacts on students and the community

- The impact of school relocation or consolidation on students with special needs and students at risk
- Increased transportation times and accessibility challenges for families
- Potential social and emotional harm to a cohesive school community
- Inconsistent or unclear information throughout the consultation process, making it difficult for families to assess the risks and implications of the proposed options

A comprehensive transition plan is essential to determining whether a school closure is feasible, safe, or in the best interests of students. Asking families to support such a decision without this information undermines responsible planning and governance. Research on the impacts of school closures, including a working paper by Jeonghyeok Kim, found that students affected by closures tend to experience declines in academic outcomes and lower long-term educational attainment, with effects disproportionately larger for economically disadvantaged students (Kim, 2024).

We are therefore requesting a one-year delay in any closure decision to support sound decision-making and to allow for:

- Accurate enrolment projections to be confirmed
- Financial data to be fully analyzed and shared with the community
- A complete, evidence-based transition plan to be developed and publicly reviewed
- Impacts on programs, staffing, and student supports to be assessed
- Meaningful community consultation to occur with full and reliable information

If the District chooses to proceed despite these concerns, we respectfully request a clear written rationale and a formal response addressing the issues raised in this letter.

Sincerely,

Concerned Community Members of Nicola-Similkameen School District

Reference: Kim, J. (2024). *School closure and student outcomes: Evidence on academic performance, high school completion, and later life outcomes*. Working paper. Retrieved from https://jeonghyeok-kim.github.io/assets/School_Closure_and_Student_Outcomes.pdf