

Board Highlights

Notes from the September 17, 2025 Regular (Public) Meeting of the
South East Cornerstone Public School Division (SECPSD) Board of Education



MONITORING REPORT ON SYSTEM GOAL #1 - Our students have opportunities to learn and succeed in every school.

The regular meeting of the Board of Education got underway with a presentation in support of the first of four monitoring reports on system goals which will come to the Board over a nine month period.

Director of Education Keith Keating's written report included a litany of support roles that are in place to ensure students learn and succeed. He emphasized that the collaborative response structure will continue to be implemented to further strengthen teacher collaboration and efficacy. Every school has the structure in place, and it is being monitored and refined to ensure success for all students.

Professional development remains a priority and will continue to be supported through the Witsby platform which was fully implemented in 2024-2025. Additionally, the division has a range of supports available and accessible to assist students and families facing mental health challenges or other difficulties. The Director explained that SECPSD is committed to focusing on the four priorities outlined in the Provincial Education Plan, to improve success and achievement for every student in every school.

Division wide graduation measurements for both on-time (three years) and extended time (five years) in three categories (all students, non-FNMI students and FNMI students) were compared to those from the past year as well as to ten years ago. Keating pointed out that although on-time rates dipped a bit from 2023-2024 to 2024-2025, it is anticipated that the division rates will remain well above the provincial average as in previous years. Comparing 2019-2020 to 2020-2021 cohort data for extended-time graduation rates there was slight growth in the all students category, a slight drop for non-FNMI students and a 3% increase for FNMI students. To illustrate progress, the Director presented charts of on-time graduation rates for 1999-2000 to 2024-2025 and extended-time graduation rates for 2001-2002 to 2024-2025 and noted that while significant strides have been made, there is still work to be done to support students and improve numbers.

Keating informed the Board that provincial results will be available in about three weeks and will be shared in an upcoming data wall walk. Following his comments, two presentations were shared showcasing excellent success and achievement of students.

Through dialogue, as well as PowerPoint and video presentation, Instructional Coach Raquel Bellefleur, Indigenous Knowledge Keeper Keegan McArthur and Westview School Teacher Kim Mytopher gave board members a thorough look into a grade 6 land-based learning pilot project undertaken with pupils from eight schools across the division.

Bellefleur explained that over six days during May and June, 2025 students participated in a full day of hands-on learning at the Moose Mountain Medicine Wheel (Pheasant Rump). This connected them with Indigenous worldviews and language, as well as relationships to the land. Pre- and post- activities were also carried out with grade 6 curriculum connections provided to support classroom learning. After the field trip, students were enthusiastic to share the learning experience with their peers in a variety of ways such as a full school assembly presentation, a plant poster fair and plant knowledge project, and through the creation of amazing drawings from memory. The outdoor activity helped strengthen relationships, build cultural

understanding through experiential learning, promote exploration, curiosity and critical thinking, and encourage respect, responsibility and reciprocity with the environment.

McArthur took note of student engagement and spoke of how he really likes to promote *play and learn*, and how even though the students had high energy when they tuned in they really used all their senses in the learning experience. Students were comfortable speaking with the tour guide/educator saying, “Keegan helped me learn by describing the plants clearly. He explained things in a calm voice and made sure we understood.”

Referring to the 33 student participants from her class, Mytopher said “We were lucky to do this project.” She mentioned that a lot of students grew up during the COVID-19 pandemic and that this was their first field trip ever. She spoke of how thrilled they were to enjoy the outdoor learning experience and that they were even excited to see cows! Since the beginning of the school year, she has taken her students outdoors more often for learning. A tremendous amount of work went into the pilot project which was so well enjoyed by the students and praised by teachers. Mytopher concluded, “Every class should get a chance to do this.”

Bellefleur fielded a query from City of Weyburn board member Norma Hewitt-Lendrum as to whether the project will continue. She responded that she and McArthur have brainstormed about what can be done seasonally and that they are hoping it will expand based on availability and funding. Bellefleur also spoke of places to go in Saskatchewan for land-based learning including school grounds, Saskairie, and the Treaty Land Sharing Network.

Principal Dan Manning and Vice-Principal/RtI Coach Susan Husband then shared a compelling story of the history, data, successes and challenges of the French Immersion (FI) program at Assiniboia Park Elementary School (APES) in Weyburn. Since its launch in 2021, the program has grown from 47 K-2 students to 92 students of the 249 total school population, making APES an official dual-track English and French K-6 school. Plans are now underway for the ten grade 6 FI students to transition to Weyburn Comprehensive School next fall with the long-range plan for programming in French to continue to grade 12.

Husband presented very impressive end-of-year reading and math skills measurements for FI students, many of whom do not have French-speaking parents. She explained that up until grade 3 their instruction and reading is entirely in French. Then in grade three they are formally introduced to reading in English.

Manning spoke of the similarities between the French and English languages and noted the quick pick-up of English reading skills by the students. Data portrays no issues with English reading by grades 4 and 5, and math skills are also strong, as indicated by teacher assessments.

A “spoken word” video clip of FI students participating in a local event and another containing student testimonials of why they love French Immersion were shared. Several students humourously mentioned enjoying their “secret language” which their parents cannot understand.

The school leaders continue to work on developing APES to be a full dual track program with, for example, best resources and professional development, bilingual assemblies and adequate staff.

The Director of Education said, “There was a lot of passion from the moment Dan and Susan were approached with the opportunity. They ran with it. They were excited and pumped to share with parents about what that program may be.” He thanked all five presenters for the work they put into their presentations.

QUARTERLY FINANCE REPORT

The Quarterly Finance Report was presented by Marilyn Yurkiw, Manager of Finance and Payroll. The report presented was reflective of revenue and expenses received and incurred up to August 31, 2025. Yurkiw indicated that as the year end process is completed both revenue and expense values will change.

Adjustments still need to be made to account for the transactions made directly by the Ministry of Education for specific costs like C-Net. These will be completed once the grant confirmation information is received from the Ministry. Several transactions for various payables and receivables will still be made in the next few weeks. Capital asset additions and disposals all need to be reviewed and accounted for and then the amortization expense will be recorded as well. Yurkiw explained, "All of these transactions are quite substantial in size and so their values will impact the revenue and expenses in the financial statements once they are completed."

It was shared that Virtus Group are scheduled to be on site for the interim audit on September 24 and 25 and for the final audit from October 7 to October 9.

ARTICLES BY NORM PARK

Media articles (Financial Report, French Lessons, Monitoring Report) submitted by Norm Park, contracted reporter for SECPSD, are attached.

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

September 18, 2025	Public Section Executive Meeting
September 18, 2025	Board Chairs Council Meeting
September 23, 2025	Board Governance & Internal Controls Workshop
October 1, 2025	Board Strategic Planning Meeting
October 10, 2025	Teachers' Convention
October 15, 2025	Committee-of-the-Whole Board Meeting
October 15, 2025	Regular (Public) Board Meeting

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CORNERSTONE FINANCIAL REPORT INDICATES TYPICAL CHANGES COMING PRIOR TO AUDIT

September 17, 2025 Regular (Public) Meeting of the
South East Cornerstone Public School Division (SECPD) Board of Education



Submitted by Norm Park, Contracted Reporter for SECPD

Marilyn Yurkiw, manager of finance and payroll for the South East Cornerstone Public School Division, kept her comments relatively brief during the afternoon public meeting for board members.

It's not that Yurkiw was keeping the lid on any emerging financial issues, but rather the fact that there will be some anticipated changes made within the next two to three weeks that will change the financial complexion.

These changes within the revenue and expense values that come within the fourth quarter of the financial year for the division are expected, she said.

"Adjustments need to be made to account for the transactions made directly by the Ministry of Education for specific costs like C-Net. These get completed once we receive the grant confirmation and information from the Ministry," she said.

She added, "several transactions for various payables and receivables will still be made within the next few weeks. Capital asset additions and disposals all need to be reviewed and accounted for and then amortization expense will be recorded."

Following all these activities, Virtus Group, the contracted auditing firm will be on site for the start of the audit process on September 24th and 25th, she said. The final audit will be prepared from October 7th to 9th.

In the meantime, to keep the board members apprised of the current financial scenario, Yurkiw said the report is reflective of revenue and expenses up to August 31.

"Currently the year-to-date revenue received is \$118,129,203 and expenses to date are \$114,971,164," she said.

Other brief notes taken from the September 17 open business session included a bus transportation appeal and request from the Ogema district that was denied by the board, citing long standing protocols and current attendance boundaries.

SECPD board members and administration will be actively involved on several fronts within the next few weeks that started the day following their in-camera and public session on September 17.

The September 18 call was for the provincial Public Section executive meeting and board chair council sessions that would involve SECPSD chairwoman Audrey Trombley among others.

On September 23 board members will attend a board governance and internal controls workshop while October 1 will see the board gather for a strategic planning session.

The board also noted that the provincial Teachers' Convention is slated for October 10 and that they will gather again for their monthly committee-of-the-whole meeting in the morning followed by their public meeting in the afternoon of October 15 starting at 1 p.m. and will be live streamed as usual.

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WEYBURN SCHOOL EMBRACING FRENCH IMMERSION GROWTH

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Submitted by Norm Park, Contracted Reporter for SECPD

Assiniboia Park Elementary School leaders and students in their French Immersion project are definitely engaged in the South East Cornerstone Public School Division's mission statement mandate to provide opportunities for the youngsters to learn and succeed.

The school launched the French Immersion program during the 2021-22 school year, despite the challenges of a community recovering from the negative impacts brought about by the COVID pandemic.

The program has since grown from a Grade 2 level to the point where there are now 92 young people involved from Grade K through 6 with the expectations that once the current Grade 6 cadre of 10 students reaches Grade 7 levels and beyond, they will be included in an ongoing French Immersion program offered at the Weyburn Comprehensive School.

To outline the progress being witnessed and led within APES, Principal Dan Manning and vice-principal Susan Husband were invited to the SECPD boardroom on September 17 to deliver a presentation featuring the project.

Using data-driven graphs and videos, the Assiniboia team outlined the successes and challenges accompanying the program since its introduction. They pointed to the reading and comprehension levels that were generally successful and progressive as the students advanced within the program.

They also focused on the mathematics element in the program, also using the data driven charts and graphs to describe the strengths and occasional weaknesses that can, and are being addressed.

It was about process and procedure, Husband noted, with the results showing how the students are gaining strength in the reading skills.

Manning said the young learners have grasped the similarities between the two official languages, as well as the differences.

"There is assistance for those who might struggle," Manning noted while adding that professional development days are welcomed for those educators in the program since hiring and retaining French teachers is an ongoing challenge.

Husband spoke of how Assiniboia Park is moving along as a dual track school with 157 students joining the 92 French Immersion kids in regular school functions, noting how "keeping them together" remained as an important part of the school's mandate.

Manning mentioned several highlights that included overall community acceptance and engagement, special events and sharing opportunities to advance the program and its students.

Hiring the qualified teachers was one challenging issue, they noted, as was the transportation of the children within the school bus system.

The successes have included the fact that the desire to keep the school as a dual track entity appears to be working well with assemblies and special events.

The duo also expressed their positive reactions to the fact that funding to support the program appears to be solid and a French Language assistant has been hired to help advance the project.

A video featuring students in the program explaining “why I love French Immersion” was played for the benefit of the board members.

Director of Education, Keith Keating thanked the duo on behalf of the division and the board along with chairwoman Audrey Trombley.

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GETTING TO KNOW SECPSD'S CHARACTER AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Land Based Learning details presented to the Board

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Submitted by Norm Park, Contracted Reporter for SECPSD

It could be labelled as serious enlightenment delivered in modest, congenial fashion thanks to professional presenters speaking to a committed audience.

At least that's one way that could be used to describe what happens when the South East Cornerstone Public School Division decides to dedicate time to learning more about their respected Monitoring Report on System Goal #1. That's the modest title for their intention to relay information to the public that they have students who have opportunities to learn and succeed in every school.

It's simple and straightforward but not always easy to deliver this mission and vision statement by example.

Presentations by educators within the SECPSD system have been provided within this annual ritual carried out in the conference room in front of board members since the 2014-15 academic year.

That trend continued on September 17 in SECPSD's head office in Weyburn when board members received detailed information regarding the division's rapidly developing Land Based Pilot Project that currently brings students in Grades 5-7 (mainly Grade 6) together to gain some knowledge about Indigenous land based practices.

A second presentation focused on another emerging program gaining traction that entails French language immersion classes at Assiniboia Park Elementary School.

(Details of that presentation are noted in a separate article posted on this SECPSD board highlights platform).

Keith Keating, director of education for SECPSD, opened the session with comments regarding the provincial education plan and its four priority areas of focus that include student transitions, learning supports and assessments, mental health and well being plus Indigenous education, the latter of which would be the focus on that day's presentation.

Keating added that a collaborative team structure would continue as a part of the division's commitment to those goals.

To outline the commitment, Keating spoke of the various supporting roles provided by a variety of SECPSD professional co-ordinators, counsellors, liaisons, section directors, pathologists, therapists, psychologists, intervention educators and career development specialists et al. They are all embraced within the SECPSD structure.

Data gathered by the division involves tracking each student plus overall transition and graduation rates among other items.

Keegan McArthur, an Indigenous Knowledge Keeper from Pheasant Rump was one of the presenters at this particular session. He was joined by Raquel Bellefleur, an instructional coach, and Kim Mytopher, a teacher from Estevan's Westview School.

Eight schools partook in the opportunity to explore the pilot project, most of them being in the Grade 6 level but also some multi-grade groupings.

The schools included Midale, Lampman, Westview, Yellow Grass, Redvers, Weldon (Bienfait), Wawota and Manor.

The groups generally assembled at or near the Moose Mountain Medicine Wheel during the months of May and June of this year.

Early reports indicated the students quickly embraced the opportunities to engage in hands on learning of Indigenous practices, world-views and relationships with the land. Pre and post activities were conducted in and out of the classrooms to emphasise what was being taught and retained.

McArthur delivered a host of ideas including plant-based lessons and relationship with the land along with cultural understanding, hands-on exploration, and respect for the environment as well as strengthening connections among students, Indigenous elders and knowledge keepers plus the local communities.

One typical field trip involved a field lunch, plant identifications, harvesting red willows and the Medicine Wheel tour, all within a typical school day.

A series of videos were revealed by the trio of presenters to display the students' enthusiasm over what they were learning.

Trip reflections were part of the follow up process said Bellefleur while Mytopher spoke of why the land based learning process yielded important educational information moving forward.

The post activity report said the students focused on reflections of the field trip, plant knowledge checks, the creation of posters and general student feedback, Bellefleur and Mytopher explained.

The impact on students was overwhelmingly positive, the trio suggested and feedback has led to more facilitation and learning opportunities as well as preparation for further exploration.

There is a growing expectation for the project to be boosted forward the trio said in comments made following the formal presentation, with the expectations of adding to a curricula model.

During the session McArthur said the students appeared to embrace the opportunity to "get out, see, feel and hear the meaning behind the experience," for an entire day.

Bellefleur added there was no denying the experience was met with enthusiasm and McArthur noted there were also calming activities and displays.

In total, the trio felt the feedback from other teachers and students as well as from those who participated was well above original expectations.

Mytopher noted how the field trips “brought students together.”

McArthur had noted with a laugh how kids learned that in some instances you see things above ground and others you “have to dig up.”

Bellefleur added that on the practical side, the field trips were affordable outings and McArthur added that the trips also engaged local farmers as well as the Indigenous communities.

Land based learning opportunities are encouraged at locations such as the aforementioned Medicine Wheel at Pheasant Rump as well as Saskairie, Moose Mountain Provincial Park and via the Treaty Land Sharing Network.

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