Dr Knox Parent Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes | September 23, 2026

PAC 2026/27 EXECUTIVE

PRESIDENT	POSITION OPEN
VICE-PRESIDENT	TIFFANY THESEN-YEE (ACTING PRESIDENT UNTIL FILLED) - PRESENT
TREASURER	KELLIE GARCIA - PRESENT
SECRETARY	ERIKA LACHANCE - PRESENT
CO-PAC REP	POSITION OPEN
MEMBERS AT LARGE	PAULYN CHUA (REGRETS)
	JASSIE KAKOSCHKE (REGRETS)
	MEGHAN MUHLE - PRESENT
	ERIN ODERMATT - PRESENT

1. WELCOME AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- Land Acknowledgement
  - The meeting began with a land acknowledgement, recognizing that we are gathering on the traditional and unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan people.
- PAC Welcome
  - Tiffany Thesen-Yee, Vice-President and Acting President, welcomed attendees and encouraged parents to continue participating in PAC meetings throughout the school year.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion to approve September 23, 2026 Meeting agenda
***Moved by**: Kellie Garcia*
***Seconded by**: Courtney St. Martin*

3. PAC EXECUTIVE

Presented by: Tiffany Thesen-Yee, Vice President (Acting President)

- The PAC Executive and school administration were introduced, followed by introductions from parents and other attendees.

- COPAC Representative
    - Chandra Ashlin submitted an application for the COPAC Representative position but was unable to attend the meeting.
    - Tiffany shared Chandra's submitted biography with attendees, and Kellie provided an overview of COPAC and the responsibilities of the PAC representative.

Motion to appoint Chandra Ashlin as the new PAC COPAC Rep
***Moved by**: Erin Odermatt*
***Seconded by**: Meghan Muhle*

- President
    - Kellie nominated Courtney St. Martin for the position of PAC President.
    - Courtney introduced herself and shared some background with attendees.

Motion to appoint Courtney St. Martin President
***Moved by**: Kellie Garcia*
***Seconded by**: Erin Odermatt*

4. ADMINISTRATORS UPDATE

Presented by: Tiffany Thesen-Yee, Vice President (Acting President)

Janet Williams, Principal – Welcome and Introductions

- Janet welcomed attendees and thanked parents for participating in the first PAC meeting of the school year. She emphasized the importance of parent voice and partnership with the school and described PAC as an important connection to the parent community.
- Janet introduced herself as the new Principal of Dr. Knox. She has 21 years of experience as a principal, previously taught at the secondary level and has also worked in elementary schools.
- The School District experienced approximately 34 administrative changes for the 2026–27 school year.
- Janet grew up in the Okanagan. She is familiar with Dr. Knox, and the transition students make from Dr. Knox to KSS and already knows a number of Dr. Knox students and families through her previous work at Dr. Knox's feeder schools.
- Janet identified student safety, belonging and inclusion as priorities. She emphasized the importance of ensuring students feel seen, valued and heard, particularly students who may otherwise feel marginalized or unable to advocate for themselves.
- The school has welcomed new WEB Leaders this year as part of the ongoing initiative supporting the goal that all students feel they belong at Dr. Knox.

- Janet looks forward to building on the work already underway at the school and learning directly from students about their experiences.

Elizabeth Isabelle, Vice Principal

- Elizabeth shared her background, including growing up in a bilingual francophone family in Montreal, studying in Toronto, working professionally in dance and operating a dance studio in Vancouver before pursuing teaching.
- Elizabeth has taught a variety of subjects and has worked at KLO and École de l'Anse-au-sable since moving to Kelowna approximately five years ago.
- Elizabeth introduced Learner Agency and Student Voice as a key school theme and area of focus for the 2026–27 school year.
- Student belonging and voice are particular areas of interest for Elizabeth. Beginning September 24, her and Janet Williams will host a weekly Student Matters lunch gathering on Thursdays that is open to all students.
- The gathering is intended to provide students with a safe and welcoming space to:
    - share what is important to them;
    - discuss their experiences at school;
    - identify things they would like to see changed or improved; and
    - develop ideas into student-led initiatives with support from staff.
- She emphasized that the intent is not simply to gather student feedback, but to help students recognize that their ideas can lead to meaningful and lasting changes within their school.
- The initiative aligns with the School District's broader focus on student agency and four areas of development:
    - Identity – helping students understand who they are, what matters to them and how they learn best;
    - Belonging – ensuring students feel connected and included while at school;
    - Mastery – supporting students in learning, inquiry and understanding the world around them; and
    - Efficacy – helping students understand that they have the ability to make a difference.
- Elizabeth noted that students have diverse needs and strengths, and the goal is to move beyond simply offering students voice and choice by helping them understand what they need, what they want and how they can contribute to change.
- Elizabeth shared Janet’s principle, that "doing is better than perfect,". She emphasized creating a school culture where students and adults are able to try new things, take appropriate risks, learn from one another, adjust when necessary and recognize that learning is an ongoing process.

Rebecca Austin, Vice Principal (regrets)

General Administration Updates

- **School Demographics**
  - Dr. Knox currently has approximately 1,095 students and a diverse learning community.
  - Administration shared the following approximate demographics:
    - 18% of students are enrolled in French immersion;
    - 13% identify as Indigenous;
    - 7% are linguistically gifted (ELL);
    - 8% have an identified learning disability; and
    - 7% have an ASD designation.
  - Administration noted that these demographics reflect the complexity and diversity of the Dr. Knox student population and reinforce the importance of recognizing individual student strengths, experiences and needs.
- **School Communications and Student Information**
  - Janet encouraged families to contact the school when communications or instructions are unclear. Administration welcomes feedback and will continue adjusting communications where needed.
  - Student demographic and verification information is now managed through an online portal. Administration is refining the verification process and will provide families with easy-to-follow instructions for reviewing their information and identifying any changes that are required.
  - Administration also acknowledged challenges experienced with the portal over the summer, including student schedules being made available before they were intended to be released. Janet noted that administration continues to learn and adjust as new systems and processes are introduced.
- **School Start-Up and Budget**
  - Administration reported that school start-up is progressing well and the administrative team is confident that planned programming and activities will continue as expected.
  - Knox operates with an annual budget of approximately $11.5 million.
  - School funding is primarily generated through Ministry of Education funding based on student enrolment, with additional funding associated with factors such as student vulnerability, international students and English Language Learners.
  - Approximately $10.5 million of the $11.5 million budget is allocated to staffing.
  - After staffing costs, just over $500,000 remains to support the school's other operating expenses.
  - Examples of expenses funded through the remaining operating budget include:
    - approximately $70,000 for student and staff supplies;
    - approximately $19,000 for Home Economics;
    - approximately $15,000 for library resources;
    - approximately $2,800 for photocopying;
    - telephone and postage;
    - student supervision; and
    - replacement furniture, computers and other school needs.
  - Administration noted that this leaves approximately $50,000 per month to support the operating needs of approximately 1,100 students and staff.
- **School Expansion**
  - Work on the Dr. Knox expansion remains underway.

- Administration has completed walkthroughs of the new spaces and identified approximately 36 outstanding items requiring attention.
- Some items, including desks, have needed to be returned or corrected, and administration is continuing to work with the contractor to complete the remaining work.
- Administration is hopeful that the expansion will be completed by the first week of November.
- Once the work is complete, the school hopes to invite current families and former students back to the school for a public unveiling and ribbon-cutting event.
- The event would provide an opportunity for the community to tour the new spaces, ask questions and see the results of the approximately $23 million expansion project.

5. PAC Business

Presented by: Tiffany Thesen-Yee, Vice President (Acting President)

- Families were directed to the Dr. Knox PAC website for PAC information and resources:
  - https://drk.sd23.bc.ca/parent-advisory-council-pac-drk.sd23.bc.ca
- Tiffany noted that additional updates and PAC business will be shared as the school year progresses.

6. PAC Budget Update

Presented by: Kellie Garcia, Treasurer

- Budget template is shared with the attendees
- **PAC Funding**
  - Kellie shared the PAC budget template and provided an overview of the PAC's funding sources and how funds are typically allocated.
  - The PAC expects to receive approximately $21,000 through the Gaming Grant in October.
    - Unspent Gaming Grant funding from previous years may be carried forward for up to two years.
    - Gaming Grant funding is subject to eligibility requirements that determine what expenses it can be used to support.
  - Additional current funds include approximately:
    - $2,300 in the PAC general account; and
    - $3,400 in the school account from previous fundraising.
  - Total funding available is currently estimated at approximately $28,000.
  - Tiffany noted that the PAC had considerably more funding available last year because Gaming Grant funds from the previous year had not been fully spent. That carry-forward will not be available at the same level this year, so the amount available for school requests will be lower.

- **PAC Expenses and School Funding Requests**
    - School requests represent the PAC's primary use of Gaming Grant funding. In recent years, the PAC has generally been able to support these requests without additional fundraising.
    - Regular PAC expenses also include items such as:
        - teacher appreciation;
        - the Central Okanagan Bursary and Scholarship Society (COBSS) bursary;
        - staff gifts; and
        - BCCPAC membership, which provides the PAC with voting rights at BCCPAC conferences.
    - Kellie reviewed the previous year's budget as an example of the types of requests typically received from the school and how the PAC considers them.
    - Funding requests must be reviewed against applicable Gaming Grant requirements, as not every school expense is eligible to be paid from Gaming funds.
    - The Executive will meet with school administration to review anticipated requests and develop a proposed 2026–27 PAC budget.
    - The proposed budget will be brought forward at the October 14 PAC meeting for discussion and approval.
    - All Dr. Knox parents and guardians are members of the PAC, regardless of whether they regularly attend meetings. Families were encouraged to attend the October meeting and participate in the budget discussion.
- **Fundraising**
    - The PAC discussed the possibility of introducing additional fundraising during the 2026–27 school year.
    - Fundraising could be used to support specific requests or initiatives that cannot be accommodated within available PAC funding or Gaming Grant eligibility requirements.
    - Where there is a specific project the school community would like to support, the PAC could communicate the need to families and organize targeted fundraising.
    - General fundraising at the beginning of the school year was also discussed as an option to create additional flexibility for future school needs.
    - The PAC's previous president noted a general fundraising initiative used at a different school, formerly referred to as Easy Give. This was noted as an example.
    - Approximately $899 was also noted from recycling fundraising.
- **Signing Authority**
    - With the appointment of Courtnie St. Martin as PAC President, PAC signing authority requires updating to reflect the new Executive.

Motion to change PAC signing authority to new President
***Moved by**: Tiffany Thesen-Yee*
***Seconded by**: Meghan Muhle*

7. COPAC UPDATE

Presented by: Kellie Garcia, Treasurer

- The first COPAC meeting of the 2026–27 school year was held in September.
- Chandra Ashlin was appointed as the new Dr. Knox COPAC Representative earlier in the meeting and will represent the PAC at future COPAC meetings.
- Kellie noted that there may be additional parent interest in becoming involved with the PAC Executive.
- The next COPAC meeting is scheduled for October 5, 2026.

Note: Information from the September COPAC meeting will be added following receipt of the COPAC meeting notes.

8. NEXT MEETINGS

Presented by: Tiffany Thesen-Yee, Vice President (Acting President)

All scheduled meetings will be held on Wednesdays at 6:30pm

- October 14 - PAC Meeting
  - In person, Dr. Knox library
  - 2026-27 PAC budget discussion and approval
- November 18 - Executive Meeting
  - Online
- February 17 - PAC Meeting
  - In person, Dr. Knox library
- April 14 - Executive Meeting
  - Online
- May 19 - PAC Meeting & AGM
  - In person, Dr. Knox library
  - Final scheduled PAC meeting of the school year

Additional full PAC meetings may be scheduled if significant matters arise during the school year that require discussion with the broader PAC, including matters brought forward by parents or school administration.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to attend PAC meetings and participate in discussions throughout the year.

9. PAC GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

- **Volunteer Criminal Record Checks**
  - A parent asked whether Criminal Record Checks need to be renewed in order to continue volunteering and participating in school activities.

    - Administration advised that Criminal Record Checks generally require renewal every four years.
    - Parents who are unsure whether their existing check is still valid can contact the school office to confirm whether renewal is required.
- **Student Supervision and Parent Volunteers**
    - A parent asked about the school's supervision budget and whether parent volunteers could assist with supervision as a way of reducing costs.
    - Administration explained that supervision during the school day is generally provided by staff, including CEAs who are already working at the school.
    - While volunteers can support the school in a number of other capacities, administration indicated that replacing staff supervision with parent volunteers would not be an appropriate avenue for reducing supervision costs.
    - The school's volunteer requirements and Code of Conduct also need to be considered when determining appropriate volunteer activities.
- **Dr. Knox Backpack Policy**
    - Parents asked administration to clarify the school's new expectations regarding backpacks and raised concerns about how the policy is affecting some students.
    - Administration explained that the primary reason for requiring backpacks to remain in lockers is space and safety. With approximately 1,100 students moving through the school, backpacks significantly increase congestion in hallways and classrooms.
    - Now that every student has access to a locker, administration and staff supported implementing the policy at the beginning of the school year.
    - Administration acknowledged that keeping backpacks in lockers also supports expectations around students leaving their phones in their lockers, although this was not identified as the primary reason for the policy.
    - Students are permitted to carry lunch kits, and administration emphasized that the policy is not intended to prevent students from accessing food, medication, menstrual products or other necessary personal items.
    - Administration noted that students have approximately 40 minutes for lunch and can access their lockers during that time. Staff have been encouraged to help students adjust to the new expectations rather than approach the issue as a disciplinary matter.
    - Administration also noted that approximately 400 students currently spend lunch outside. As colder weather arrives, more students will remain indoors, making space and congestion increasingly important considerations.
- **Access to Menstrual Products and Other Personal Items**
    - Parents raised concerns about the impact of the backpack policy on students who need discreet and reliable access to menstrual products, medication and other personal items throughout the school day.
    - Particular concern was expressed for students who are newly managing menstruation and may already feel anxious or self-conscious about accessing products at school.
    - Parents noted that requiring students to place menstrual products in a lunch kit or carry them visibly may create unnecessary embarrassment or stigma.

    - Allowing students to carry a small crossbody bag or fanny pack was suggested as a possible middle ground that would maintain the restriction on full-sized backpacks while allowing students to discreetly carry essential personal items.
    - Parents also noted that this could be applied consistently to all students rather than being treated as a gender-specific exception or requiring students to disclose a medical or personal reason.
    - Administration acknowledged the concern and indicated that the issue would be discussed further with staff.
    - Administration noted that students are currently able to access their lockers as needed and that staff can assist students who need menstrual products. However, the discussion highlighted broader concerns about students' comfort accessing products and school washrooms.
    - The possibility of PAC supporting menstrual products in school washrooms was also raised. It was acknowledged that students use different products and that providing products in washrooms may help with access but would not necessarily address every student's needs.
- **Student Feedback on the Backpack Policy**
    - Parents shared that some students find returning to their lockers during lunch frustrating because it reduces the limited time available to socialize with friends.
    - Parents noted that the backpack policy has become a significant topic of discussion within some students' social groups.
    - Administration reiterated that the policy is intended to address the realities of space and safety in a school operating with a large student population.
    - Administration also emphasized the importance of hearing directly from students about their experiences and anticipated that the new Student Matters gathering and other student voice opportunities would provide additional feedback.
    - Administration noted that restrictions on backpacks are also used at other middle schools.
- **School Washrooms**
    - The discussion regarding menstrual products led to a broader conversation about students' experiences using school washrooms.
    - Several parents reported that their children avoid using school washrooms because they do not feel safe or comfortable in them. Concerns included cleanliness, inappropriate student behaviour and students choosing to wait until they return home rather than use a washroom during the school day.
    - Parents noted that these concerns have been raised by students across different grades and are not limited to the newly constructed gender-neutral washrooms.
    - One parent shared a different experience, noting that their child was comfortable using some school washrooms while another child had previously avoided particular washrooms.
    - Administration explained that there is supervision in the hallways, including near the washrooms, and that administration regularly monitors these areas.

    - Administration encouraged students to report concerning behaviour to an adult so that it can be addressed and reinforced that acceptable behaviour and students looking out for one another are important parts of school culture.
    - Administration acknowledged that students avoiding washrooms for an entire school day is concerning and expressed interest in hearing directly from students to better understand their experiences.
    - Administration indicated that student feedback, including through the school's student voice initiatives, may help identify specific concerns and opportunities for improvement.
- **Grade 7 Transition, Lunch and School Environment**
    - Parents discussed some of the challenges Grade 7 students are experiencing while adjusting to a much larger middle-school environment.
    - Concerns included navigating lockers and lunch routines, determining where students can eat, moving through crowded hallways and balancing these expectations without missing class time.
    - One parent shared that their child has adapted by carrying food in smaller containers that can fit within a binder and eating in classrooms where permitted.
    - Administration acknowledged that transitioning into a school of approximately 1,100 students can involve a significant learning curve, particularly for students arriving from much smaller elementary schools.
    - Parents also raised concerns about interactions between younger and older students in crowded hallways.
    - Administration noted that the school has been experimenting with strategies such as dismissing Grade 7 students slightly ahead of older students to give them additional time and space in the hallways.
    - WEB Leaders and other school initiatives are also intended to help younger students transition successfully and feel supported within the school community.
    - Parents also expressed enthusiasm for the school store reopening, which may provide students with another option during the school day.
- **Food in the School**
    - A parent asked whether there are school-wide restrictions regarding food.
    - Administration confirmed that energy drinks are not permitted.
    - Whether students may eat during class is generally determined by individual teachers.
    - Dr. Knox is an allergy-aware school. Administration noted that more than 20 students rely on EpiPens and asked families to remain mindful of serious allergies when packing food.
    - Students who require an EpiPen are expected to have it accessible to them.
- **Basketball Court and School Enhancements**
    - A parent asked whether the school's basketball court will be reinstated following completion of the expansion.
    - Administration confirmed that the basketball court will return and noted that it now has an improved playing surface.
    - The current plan includes one basketball court. Parents questioned whether additional courts could be considered, noting the size of the student population.

- Administration agreed that two basketball courts would still be limited for a school of this size, but explained that additional recreation infrastructure would need to proceed through the School District's enhancement process rather than being undertaken directly by the PAC.
- The PAC may be able to support an enhancement application once it proceeds through the appropriate District process.
- Kellie noted that enhancement applications had been paused for several years and may now be moving forward under a different process. Administration confirmed that the system has changed.
- The possibility of supporting future school enhancements can be discussed further as part of PAC funding and fundraising conversations.

- **PAC Funding, Fundraising and Student Initiatives**
  - Parents discussed the amount of funding currently available to the PAC and opportunities to increase support for the school through fundraising.
  - Kellie noted that middle-school PACs generally have fewer regular expenses than elementary-school PACs and expressed interest in exploring additional fundraising opportunities.
  - Parents discussed the potential to support student-led projects and initiatives, including opportunities connected to the school store.
  - Administration asked about the process used in previous years to invite staff to submit funding requests to the PAC.
  - Kellie confirmed that staff are provided with a funding request form to identify items or initiatives for which they are seeking PAC support.
  - Funding requests are reviewed by the President, Vice-President and Treasurer in consultation with school administration before recommendations are brought forward as part of the proposed PAC budget.
  - Administration asked how staff would know if PAC funding had already been allocated or whether they had missed a submission deadline.
  - Kellie noted that the PAC has not previously had to turn away requests solely because available funding had been exhausted. Where a worthwhile request cannot be accommodated within the existing budget, it could instead provide an opportunity for targeted fundraising.
  - Musical instruments were identified as an example of a significant request supported in the previous year.
  - It was also noted that having a longer-term understanding of school items or resources that require periodic replacement could assist the PAC with future budget and fundraising planning.
  - The proposed budget presented at the October PAC meeting will provide parents with an opportunity to review anticipated requests, discuss priorities and consider whether individual requests meet applicable funding guidelines before the budget is adopted.
- **Field Trips and Other School Activities**
  - A parent asked whether PAC funding is commonly used to subsidize or support school activities such as field trips.
  - Administration and the Treasurer noted that the PAC does not typically fund field trips.

    - Other requests may be considered through the regular PAC funding request and budget process, subject to available funds and applicable funding requirements.
- **Yearbook**
    - Parents asked about the Dr. Knox yearbook and what students and families can expect.
    - Members familiar with the previous year's yearbook described it as a high-quality hardcover publication.
    - Administration confirmed that the yearbook is student-designed through the Grade 9 yearbook class.
    - Students contribute to the themes and design of individual pages, providing students with ownership and pride in the finished yearbook.
- **School Bus Transportation Fees**
    - A parent asked when families should expect to receive invoices for school bus transportation.
    - Kellie clarified that transportation fees are administered by School District Transportation, rather than through the PAC.
    - Questions regarding transportation invoices should therefore be directed to the School District.
- **Class Change Requests**
    - A question was raised about whether students can still request a class change if they did not hear back after submitting a change request earlier in the school year.
    - Administration advised that the class-change process has generally concluded and schedules have been finalized.
    - Families may still contact the school counsellor to ask whether a change is possible.
    - Changes may be considered where capacity exists, although administration noted that availability is now limited.
    - Even where a requested change cannot be accommodated, families may contact the counsellor for additional information about the student's schedule or why a change is not possible.

-- Meeting adjourned at 7:57pm --