

March 10, 2026

Good evening and welcome.

Recently, we have seen advocacy building across our community from many directions, through many voices, and in a variety of forms. These efforts have been motivated by shared challenges and a common sense of urgency. At the same time, they also appear to reflect something deeper: a continued and renewed commitment to stand up for public education and for the students at its centre.

I can tell you with absolute certainty, advocacy does not begin in boardrooms. It begins in classrooms, in conversations, and in the community. It is built, piece by piece, through the everyday efforts of those who care deeply about public education and the students we serve. As a Board, we are part of that work, but we are most certainly not alone in it. And, without a doubt, we are strongest when we work alongside our community. A board of seven will never carry the same strength as a community of many.

At its core, our shared purpose is clear: every student deserves the very best learning opportunities. Yes, that means strong foundations in literacy and numeracy, but it also means so much more. It means access to diverse and meaningful programming. It means wraparound supports that recognize the realities students face beyond the classroom. It means fostering wellness, connection, and a deep sense of belonging. And it also means ensuring that every student sees themselves reflected, valued, and confident in who they are.

Grassroots advocacy is powerful precisely because it is not singular. It reflects a range of perspectives, approaches, and perhaps most importantly voices. As we have seen, some advocacy is quiet, built through relationships, consistency, and care. Some is louder, calling for change with urgency and clarity. But both are necessary. Both are valid. And together, both create the momentum that moves this work forward.

In preparing this report, I pulled up some past Chair reports, written by some of the Trustees around this table when they sat in this seat. I'm not sure exactly what I was looking for when I went looking through Board files: perhaps guidance, maybe affirmation, or maybe more likely a reminder of how and why we take on this work.

Through those reports I read,

"When we are faced with problems that are complex, we were able to find nuanced solutions and a path forward by collaborating together."

"Actions that we will take together, and that will result in better supporting learning environments in Burnaby will allow every Burnaby student to feel included and to succeed."

"We will continue to advocate together for a Burnaby School District that we can all be proud of - one defined by opportunity, engagement, compassion, and optimism."

As these quotes reveal, this work is not done in isolation. It is done collectively, and it is inherently strengthened by partnerships. The sentiment remains as true today as it was when those words were first spoken by others around this table.

Perhaps the most important lesson in this shared work is that no one group can carry the load alone. Each one of us plays a distinct role, bringing forward important perspectives and concerns. Each voice offers solutions and aids in keeping our collective focus where it must belong: keeping students at the centre of our decisions. No one perspective outweighs another. No one group shoulders the responsibility on their

own. It is through this collective effort that we remain grounded, intentional, and effective, even in challenging times.

With that in mind, and on behalf of the Board, I want to extend our deep appreciation to staff unions: the BTA and CUPE Local 379, whose advocacy continues to highlight the realities within our schools and the needs of those who support learners every day.

To students across the District, through DSAC and beyond, whose voices bring urgency, honesty, and clarity to what matters most.

To parents and families, whose engagement and advocacy ensure that our schools remain connected to the communities and the diverse lived experiences across Burnaby.

And to administration, whose leadership and commitment help translate advocacy into action within our system.

The advocacy of these partner groups is not separate from the work of the Board; it is essential to it. It strengthens our collective voice, sharpens our focus, and reinforces our responsibility to continue pushing for what students need and deserve.

Together, these voices do more than raise concerns. They raise expectations. They push us to do better, to think differently, and to refuse to accept a version of public education where any student, staff person, or community member feels unseen, unheard, or undervalued.

This is the strength of grassroots advocacy. It is steady, it is collective, and it is grounded in a shared belief: that Burnaby students, and our community, deserve nothing less than our very best.

Thank you.

Kristin Schnider, Chair
Burnaby Board of Education