

May 13, 2014

## SCHOOL TRUSTEES

Chair  
Baljinder Narang

Vice-Chair  
Ron Burton

Meiling Chia

Larry Hayes

Harman Pandher

James Wang

Gary Wong

Last week was Mental Health Awareness week in Canada. Here are some facts about it.

- We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health.
- Mental health is more than the absence of mental illness. It's a state of well-being.
- However, 1 in 5 people suffer from mental illness, which means that they have a chemical imbalance in their brain that interferes with the way they behave or respond to various situations.
- Mental illness concerns often manifest when students are entering intermediate or secondary grades.

We work hard in Burnaby Schools to support the learning needs of our students. However, a child cannot learn when they are emotionally distressed – and so addressing the mental well-being of our students is equally as critical. Our administrators, teachers and counsellors are trained to identify students who are showing signs of trauma, mental illness, self-injury, suicide ideation, or even suicide. And once identified they are quick to respond and provide the supports they need to get help.

Yesterday, the District's Critical Incident Response Team hosted a workshop and launch of its new Suicide Prevention Protocols. It included a review of the *Child & Youth Suicides 2008-2012 Report*, presented by Michael Egilson from the Ministry of Justice, and a presentation on *Understanding Self-Injurious Behaviour* by James Musgrave Team Leader for Aboriginal Child & Youth Mental Health. There were more than 140 attendees including representatives the Fraser Health Authority, Child & Youth Mental Health, the Ministry for Children & Families, the Ministry of Justice, the Burnaby RCMP, local community non-profit agencies, and district staff.

Our role as a trustee doesn't end at our school borders. The well-being of our students isn't just a school issue but a community issue. Many of us sit on local committees that address these concerns including the City of Burnaby Community Policing, Sexual Exploitation Committee, and the Healthy Community Partnership.

Last year we recognized vice-chair, Ron Burton who hit a provincial milestone, with his 25 dedicated years of service to public education. Tonight, I would like to recognize Trustee Larry Hayes who has served on the board for 12 years since 2002. And Trustees James Wang and Gary Wong who have each served two terms – as have I. This equates to many hours of advocating and decision-making at the district - and beyond, for we wear many hats, representing our district on committees in the Burnaby community and provincially – work that includes supporting mental health.

Thank you for your interest in public education

**Baljinder Narang**  
**Board Chair**