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“To prepare and support an inclusive, caring community of learners for the challenges of a changing tomorrow” ... a simple concept made up of seventeen words that can help shape the lives of so many in our District. This short phrase, our Mission Statement, was developed to summarize a multitude of policies, practices, ideas and concepts to assist us in being the best that we can be for our students and staff. Without action, without partnership and without a genuine belief in our Mission Statement, all we do have are words ... and words on their own mean nothing.

The recent heartbreaking death of Amanda Todd has, once again, reminded all of us how all of the words in the world can't prevent tragedy. The schools that Amanda attended had policies too ... but that isn't good enough. The “buy-in” of treating all people with dignity and respect has to go far beyond the walls of any school or the boundaries of any District ... because without that “buy-in”, all we have are words.

Yes ... schools, teachers and government all have a role to play ... but pointing fingers, laying blame and trying to make a very complex issue simple does nothing to move us forward. Today, the Premier held the “ERASE Bullying Summit” to identify key priorities and actions that will help school, communities and individuals work together to combat bullying. All good ... but just one piece of a solution.

Here in Burnaby, we're very proud of what we've done and continue to do to ensure that Burnaby's schools are safe and caring places. Is the job done ... no ... and we must rely on the entire community to foster a culture of change toward respect for all ... because without action ... all we've got are words.

Larry Hayes
Board Chair / Trustee
Burnaby Board of Education SD41