

September 24, 2019

Good evening. Welcome to the first Board Meeting of the 2019-20 school year. I hope that you had a wonderful summer that included some down time with the people you care about.

Burnaby Schools certainly were busy places to be this summer. We offered many new enrichment courses for Summer Session that were both fun and aligned with BC's redesigned curriculum – everything from fashion design and cooking to iPad film making and engineering. All of these incredible choices led to record registration, with 7400 students attending this summer – that's nearly 800 more than in 2018.

As Trustees, we enjoyed joining staff and families at two Pride events: the parade in Vancouver and the celebrations in Burnaby.

Our Facilities folks worked hard throughout the summer getting our buildings and grounds ready for September. Their work included the installation of a new rainbow crosswalk here at Burnaby Central and a rainbow sidewalk at Cariboo Hill.

We started the first week of school with a bang at Cariboo, where we showed off that new crosswalk while hosting a Ministry of Education funding announcement. Their media event involved additional funding for work connected to Sexual Orientation Gender Identity, or SOGI. We are proud to be a leader in creating inclusive, welcoming environments in our schools and were extremely pleased to be asked to host the event.

I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge the importance of Orange Shirt Day, which is on Monday September 30. It's one of the visible ways in which our District strives to highlight our shared history in Canada, as well as a way to honour those who attended residential schools. A deep commitment to reconciliation is a key part of our new strategic plan.

Shortly after our election last fall, we began the strategic planning process. Many voices were taken into consideration when developing the plan. It supports student success by partnering with community and families, strengthening schools, and empowering staff to do their best work. We're excited for the weeks ahead, as our plan is shared publicly. There is much to look forward to in the coming year.

Another one of our goals in our strategic plan is about increasing awareness of climate change and decreasing our environmental impact. Recently, young people have pushed climate change into the news headlines throughout the world. Students are banding together for the Global Climate Strike and demanding action to address climate change. On Friday September 27 there will be a series of international strikes and protests, including here in BC.

As a District, we're proud of the fact that young people are taking a leadership role on this pressing global issue. As Trustees and as a district, we're supportive of students' efforts to build awareness about climate change and to be involved in their communities.

While we're deeply committed to environmental sustainability and student voice, the days during the Global Climate Strike will remain regular instructional days, with the exception of schools that have an existing Professional Development Day.

Our District will support teachers who wish to take students on a curricular-related field trip. As always, standard protocols for field trips will be followed.

Should an individual student wish to attend a climate protest, we encourage them to have a conversation with their families. If their parents or guardians give them permission, we ask – as they normally would – that they notify the school of their absence.

This issue matters to all of us. It is so important that climate change and environmental issues are embedded in the curriculum. Our environment will be a topic of conversation in classrooms and during school activities across the District – not just this week, but throughout the school year.

Gary Wong, Chair
Burnaby Board of Education