

March 10, 2020

Good evening and welcome to our last Board Meeting before Spring Break.

I want to begin by talking about an event last week that goes to the heart of who we are in Burnaby Schools: the Diversity Dance. It's a fun evening open to all secondary students that encourages them to celebrate what makes each of us unique. Put on by the District's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity or SOGI Committee, this was the fourth year of the dance, which saw record attendance with 300 students. That's triple the number who came in the first year. This is also the second time we've invited our neighbours at the high school in New Westminster to join in on the fun. This dance is extremely popular and largely because it celebrates much of what makes our schools special: community, diversity and inclusion.

Normally at this time of year, many of our students would be preparing for international field experiences – trips to enhance their learning – over Spring Break. We announced last week the difficult decision to cancel those trips this year, because of concerns over the possible risk for students and staff of COVID-19. Our top priority remains the safety of our community.

We are proud that, as a community, we have seen tremendous support for each other as we navigate, together, the situation we find ourselves in with this new coronavirus. As circumstances evolve – and particularly in times of fear – it's essential that we remember who we are as a community: we support each other and we lead with understanding and compassion. This is an example that all of us can set for young people in Burnaby.

Finally, on behalf of the Board, I want to wish everyone a safe and wonderful Spring Break.

Gary Wong, Chair
Burnaby Board of Education