

**April 28, 2020**

Good evening and welcome to our first virtual Board Meeting.

I would like to begin by acknowledging that today – April 28 – marks the Day of Mourning: a day designated across Canada to remember and honour workers killed or injured in the workplace.

One of our former teachers was among those who died in the recent mass shooting in Nova Scotia. While it's been about twenty years since Lisa McCully – who was then Lisa Kierstad – taught in Burnaby, she is still remembered by former colleagues here as a warm and enthusiastic teacher whose love of life was compelling and contagious. Still teaching out east, she had been regularly posting how much she missed seeing her students since in-classroom instruction was suspended, due to COVID-19. Our hearts and thoughts go out to her family and all who knew Lisa.

On behalf of the Burnaby Board of Education, we would like to recognize all workers – who have been injured or killed in tragedies and/or accidents both in the past and recently – with a moment of silence.

[Moment of silence]

Thank you.

When we broke for Spring Break, I don't think any of us could have predicted what things would have looked like when we came back. Trustees and I want to publicly show our appreciation for each and every employee of the Burnaby School District.

The words “thank you” are incapable of conveying the immense gratitude we feel for what you have done for our students, their families, the wider community and each other. Each and every one of you has played a valuable role in what amounts to the creation and support of an entirely new way of delivering public education. As if that weren't remarkable enough, you have done it virtually overnight. We're also aware that you have done it with personal sacrifice, such as with long hours and time lost with your own loved ones. And some of you have done it while taking care of the children of essential service workers in our schools. We are grateful for you volunteering to take on this important work for our healthcare heroes and other workers whose jobs are so critical.

Whether or not you work directly with students, you are making an incredible difference. While we can't comprehensively name everyone's role here, please know that we see you and appreciate you: staff who are implementing the critical health, safety and cleaning protocols; staff who are providing food for students and families; staff who are maintaining important functions for business, information technology, and administrative supports; administrators who are reaching out directly to families and so effectively communicating the needs of your school communities; and teachers who are using creative approaches for students' continued learning and inspiring us all. All of you, whether named or not, are single-handedly, and together, maintaining our district's mission in the midst of a pandemic:

*To engage and empower a caring, inclusive community of learners for the opportunities of today and tomorrow.*

Our schools are the heart of our community, and it is truly wonderful to see how they are continuing to serve in that role, even in this new age of social and physical distancing. It is not lost on us that you are doing all of this while managing your own concerns about your loved ones and the world around us in these challenging times.

It is incredibly inspiring to see how the District has come together to ensure all learners have access to technology, food security and other assistance, such as support for mental health. It is another example of how caring and compassion are woven into the very fabric of our district's culture.

This time apart from our "normal life" has made us all reflect on and reassess our priorities. While things look different and can't be perfect, we're so proud of how you have managed to maintain what matters most. You are truly remarkable. We are truly grateful.

We look to you with confidence and appreciation, while wishing you and your loved ones the very best of health in these challenging times. Thank you for supporting our students, their families and each other.

Stay well and strong.

**The Burnaby Board of Education:**

**Gary Wong, Chair**

**Jen Mezei, Vice-Chair**

**Peter Cech, Trustee**

**Larry Hayes, Trustee**

**Bill Brassington, Trustee**

**Christine Cunningham, Trustee**

**Ryan Stewart, Trustee**