

September 22, 2020

Good evening. Welcome to the first Board Meeting of the 2020-21 school year.

I want to begin by acknowledging all of the hard work over the summer months preparing for this unique school year. On behalf of the Board, thank you to District staff. From cleaning and implementing new protocols to leading and planning, your role has been critical. And to our partners, thank you for your ongoing insight, including: the District Parent Advisory Council, Burnaby Teachers' Association, CUPE Local 379, Burnaby Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association, as well as local Indigenous Elders and leaders who provided guidance and wisdom. As trustees, we are also pleased that the Return to School plans reflected, to the extent possible, the valuable input shared in June in the survey by families, students and staff.

I want to acknowledge the variety of feelings people have about this school year. These are unusual times and there is no right or wrong way to feel. Please know that our schools are here to support you and your children. As trustees, we applaud how teachers, school and District staff are keeping students connected and learning, while ensuring the focus remains on our highest priority: health and safety. We also thank families and students for being mindful of the important role we each play in keeping our school communities healthy and safe.

As a Board we will continue to carry out our mandate – all while the District manages student learning during a pandemic. We know this will be a demanding year as we strive to move our collective work forward in a meaningful way, including the important work of developing an actionable anti-racism strategy that takes into account the voices of black people, Indigenous people and people of colour, in particular, in our school communities.

There is much to be done and much to look forward to in the coming year. The start of this school year has shown us that what is demanding can also be inspiring. And it is energizing to know that while the situation remains fluid, much also remains unchanged: students will continue to learn and grow, children will continue to laugh and play, and our community will continue to face each new day as we always have, together.

I want to take a moment now to acknowledge an important day in our District and throughout Canada: Orange Shirt Day, which is on Wednesday 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.

On behalf of the Board, I want to close by sending our best wishes to families, students and all staff as another year of learning gets underway.

Gary Wong, Chair
Burnaby Board of Education