

November 24, 2020

Good evening and welcome.

I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional, unceded territories of the Coast Salish nations of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tseil-Waututh peoples. As someone who was born and raised in the Lower Mainland, I appreciate how my connections and experiences with this land have influenced the person I have become. As trustees, we are all on our own unique learning journeys that include Indigenous ways of knowing. I am incredibly grateful to the Elders and educators who are supporting us and our community in our journey and work.

- I also would like to acknowledge our outgoing Chair, Gary Wong and thank him on behalf of the entire Board for his leadership over the last two years. Gary's experience as a four-term school trustee has guided us through the process of coming together as seven individuals to become one cohesive board. Our Board today is enriched by differing perspectives and distinct lived experiences but has common purpose and shared values and priorities such as Anti-Racism, Sustainability and Long-Range Facilities Planning.
- As a board, we are proud of the collective work of our district, and especially so during these challenging times. Although the priority in our schools remains the health and safety of students, staff and the wider community, I am incredibly proud of the collaborative work our district has made on other foundational principles of the restart plan:
 - Supporting Vulnerable Students who may need special assistance
 - Providing continuity of educational opportunity for all students
- Our district provided multiple in-person, remote and hybrid options for families at the start of school, so they could make the best decision for their children. We understand that a lot has changed in the pandemic since then, and we are continuing to communicate with families, to monitor and to adjust as appropriate.
- The past eight months has only emphasized the importance of schools as a hub of connection and belonging, especially in a time of uncertainty and disconnectedness. Schools truly are the heart of our community, and it is heartening to see the many ways schools are connecting with and supporting students and families - whether in-person or remotely.
- Although many of our students and staff may not be physically in our buildings, we recognize and honour those students who are learning from home, as well as the teachers and support staff who are working with them, for their resilience and creativity.

- As the situation with COVID-19 evolves in BC, we will be ready. District and school staff continue to prepare for multiple scenarios. And as we move forward, they will continue to connect with partners, gather feedback, and look to the experiences of students, families and staff as we ready our district for what may come our way.
- Once again... I would like to thank Gary for his leadership, particularly as the board developed the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan. The priorities and values in it will continue to guide our collective work as we move forward together.

Jen Mezei, Chair
Burnaby Board of Education