

**January 26, 2021**

Good evening and welcome to the first Board Meeting of 2021.

A new year is a good time to reflect on our last year's work, and to take stock of our goals and priorities.

It is surreal to think that it was a year ago yesterday, that the first case of COVID-19 was reported in Canada. Though our day-to-day operations look very different than they did a year ago, what has stayed steadfast is our commitment to our [values](#) and priorities as a district. These values and priorities have helped ensure system alignment in strategic governance and planning decisions in our regular duties as a board, addressing emerging issues and decisions related to COVID-19 response.

Tonight, I will be providing an update on one of these strategic priorities outlined in our [Strategic Plan – Strengthened by Partnerships](#) as we strive to deepen engagement, collaboration and information sharing with educational and community partners, and families.

There are many ways in which the Burnaby Board of Education is making engagement a priority – both engagement with our partner groups and with our broader community. As discussed at our December Board Meeting, we are taking steps to enhance transparency in our board governance through the creation of a Committee of the Whole. The bylaw that would pave the way for that are on tonight's agenda. If passed, that committee will meet once a month, beginning in February.

In addition to increasing transparency and encouraging collaborative dialogue, the Committee of the Whole is also intended to be a place of engagement with our partner groups, including the District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC), the Burnaby Teachers' Association (BTA), CUPE Local 379, the District Student Advisory Council (DSAC), and the Burnaby Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association (BPVPA). It is this type of meaningful, generative dialogue that fosters new ideas as we strive to grow and improve together, and as we continue to increase opportunities for student voice and engagement.

In addition to DSAC representing students on the Committee of the Whole, last March, an additional 75 students participated in our Sustainability Visioning Expo which will inform our Sustainability Strategic direction moving forward. On the Anti-Racism Ad-Hoc Working group, more than 20 students – representing all of our high schools - are helping us shape the community consultation on Anti-racism scheduled for this Spring. These are prime examples of how we are providing additional opportunities to enhance student input and agency on

topics and issues that they care deeply about. They are also conversation starters to deepen engagement, collaboration and information sharing with our broader community on topics such as Anti-racism and Long-Range Facilities Planning.

What parents, students, staff, partner groups and the community say is helping to inform the work of Trustees and that of the District. All of us together have a common goal to build on and enhance outstanding public education offered in Burnaby schools.

For the past 10 months we have learned tremendously about delivering education during a pandemic — there is still much to learn. As we look ahead to the rest of this school year, and to September 2021, we will rely on the voices of many to better understand your experiences and gather insight and perspectives – always with a view to challenging ourselves to be better to the benefit of our students.

**Jen Mezei, Chair**

**Burnaby Board of Education**