

October 26, 2021

Good evening and welcome.

It's hard to believe that we're already nearly two months into the school year. It has been heartwarming, during this time, to see so much of what was taken away by the pandemic gradually return.

Throughout COVID-19 I've been impressed by how, with thought and creativity, students and staff were able to maintain important connections to community – this, despite protections against the virus literally putting distance between us.

I've appreciated seeing some of those connections, along with student achievement, celebrated in an ongoing feature called *20 Under 20* in *The Burnaby Beacon*. The local media outlet has put together the list using nominations of "amazing young people doing incredible things in Burnaby."

Secondary and elementary students in the Burnaby School District are receiving recognition on the list for their leadership and contributions. Students have been nominated by teachers, administration, district and school staff, community organizations and a trustee.

Some examples of what students have been honoured for are: sharing Indigenous culture, advocating for those with disability, volunteering skills to support local businesses struggling during the pandemic, leading on anti-racism work, supporting local community organizations to help people who need it, being a local leader on the Youth Covid Response Team, promoting mental health literacy and wellness among peers, publishing a book and sharing sales proceeds to raise money for a worthy cause, supporting sustainability and environmental efforts, and leading on SOGI work. Impressive. And there are many more inspiring children and youth in our schools leading by example.

The District's Mission is "a premier learning community where we engage and innovate to inspire global citizenship." The students highlighted in the 20 Under 20 list exemplify that. They show how we are strengthened by partnership, having an inclusive and caring community of learners, and lifting up student voice. It is deeply rewarding to see these values and priorities reflected to us by the students, themselves.

Truly, children and youth in our schools are not just the leaders of tomorrow, but the leaders of today.

Jen Mezei, Chair
Burnaby Board of Education