

**March 28, 2023**

Good evening and welcome, to those in-person and online, to this Board's March public meeting.

A special welcome to students in attendance from Armstrong Elementary and Burnaby Central Secondary, we look forward to learning about your experiences upcoming in the agenda.

Yesterday marked their return to classes following a two-week spring break and I would like to welcome back students, staff, and teachers after a well-deserved break. A break that has increasingly become important over the last few years.

The last few years have amplified the challenges to mental health to our students, the stress they feel in their studies and the stress they feel in their social emotional development, and to our teachers and staff who also experience stress. Stress associated to caring for their student's learning and emotional development. And that stress is increasing.

Our schools have seen space challenges this year with an increase in English Language Learners. Learners whose families are coming to Burnaby from other parts of the world either for work or because they are refugees fleeing their homes. For these families, Burnaby schools are essential, safe places.

All students, teachers, and staff need support. Meaningful support is a result of three components: planning, money, and the work. The teachers and staff are this district's backbone and have always done the work in supporting our learners. This Board is dedicated to the planning. Tonight, we will hear a report on what we heard during our public consultation for our Long-Range Facility Plan. A plan that forms the 5-year strategy for managing the growth of our students in the buildings in which learning occurs.

Part of that feedback came from students and I'd like to share a conversation I had with one of those students. Vijay is a grade 12 student and a member of the District Student Advisory Council. I ran into Vijay in the community over the weekend and he shared with me just how excited students had been to have been asked for their input on the Long-Range Facility Plan. Students from the District Student Advisory Council, and also students they had reached through word of mouth and social media. He explained that by being included, they better understood the decision-making process, they valued that their ideas were being considered and the students felt better connected to the decision-making process.

In the coming weeks we will be consulting with students, teachers, staff, and parents regarding our financial plan, our budget. Meaningful support has three components, and the only component we do not have control over is the supply of money.

Using the Long-Range Facility Plan, and our budget as a backdrop, this Board, with the support of senior staff, will identify gaps in funding and supports, and we will advocate. We will continue to advocate for an increase and shift in financial supports.

Society's pressures are increasingly downloaded onto schools and therefore onto students, teachers, and staff throughout this country.

As a system, we cannot solve all our issues overnight, but together we will continue to work towards the goal of better learning and working environments that ensures everyone feels safe and included in Burnaby schools.

**Bill Brassington, Chair**  
**Burnaby Board of Education**