

# INSIDE BURNABY SCHOOLS

May 27, 2025



## FUN FOR EVERYONE: INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES

The first-ever **Unified Basketball** playoffs in the District were hosted by **Burnaby Mountain Secondary** last week. Teams from **Alpha**, **Byrne Creek**, and **Cariboo Hill** Secondary schools also joined in on the joyful competition. **Cariboo Hill** won the championship in an exciting final against **Byrne Creek**. In the 2023-24 school year, youth at **Burnaby Mountain** became the first to have a Unified Basketball team in the District. Teams are made up of students with disabilities or diverse abilities, alongside neurotypical youth and athletes. The hallmarks of Unified Sports include friendship, inclusion, and building understanding through sport. Let's take a look at the playoffs. Children at **Westridge Elementary** had the chance to learn wheelchair basketball from a world-class athlete. **Paralympian Amanda Pinheiro** shared her powerful story with students. She joined them as they took part in the **BC Wheelchair Basketball** school program. In addition to being a lot of fun, the program aims to provide awareness through empathy and experience. Children in several grades at **Brentwood Park Elementary** have been learning about accessibility. This work, exploring ASL and the meaning of accessibility, is by Grade 2/3 students. Many classes from across the District are participating in the **Easter Seals National AccessAbility Week Contest**. These entries are by students in Grades 8 to 10 who are taking media arts and design classes at **Alpha Secondary**. Each year, youth from BC and the Yukon are invited to submit a contest entry focused on inclusion and accessibility.

## HELPING STUDENTS THRIVE TOGETHER

May is **Mental Health Awareness Month**. **Cariboo Hill** and **Stride Avenue Community School** were among those that did the **Ice Bucket Challenge** – a viral trend to raise mental health awareness. The District has a long history of supporting food programs for students. With the addition of BC's **Feeding Futures** program two years ago, every school now has a meal program. **Stride** is among those with a program open to all children. The **Minister of Education and Child Care, Lisa Beare**, came to see it in action this month. At the annual **IDA HAT Breakfast**, students came together to mark the **International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia**. The event included workshops and speakers.

## STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS RECOGNIZED WITH TOP HONOURS

As part of **Burnaby Youth Week**, nearly 50 students from the District earned awards from the **City of Burnaby**. The students were acknowledged for their contributions to community. One of the recipients also won the logo contest. A Grade 7 student at **Suncrest Elementary** competed with Grade 9s, winning 3rd place in his category at the **Math Challengers Provincial Competition**. Musicians and vocalists from **Alpha Secondary** earned two gold and a silver award at the **Whistler Music Festival**. And Burnaby Schools students took nearly twenty percent of the medals at the provincial French speaking competition **Concours d'art oratoire**. A total of thirteen students earned medals, with two qualifying for Nationals.

## CREATIVITY OF STUDENTS HIGHLIGHTED THROUGH THE ARTS

Inspiring and beautiful art by students with disabilities or diverse abilities is on display in a professionally installed exhibition at a gallery open to the public. The fourth annual **Building a Better Tomorrow Through Art** opened this month with a reception for the student-artists, their families, and special guests. Led by the **Access team** at **Burnaby North Secondary**, the exhibition features the artwork of youth from five high schools. Following an opening reception, student art is also on display in two professionally installed exhibitions at the **Burnaby Art Gallery**. The public can see the work of secondary students from seven schools who are part of the **Artist Apprenticeship Program**. The second exhibition is by elementary students from nine schools. Their work was done through **Arts Alive**, which is a collaboration between the gallery and the District that is now in its 43<sup>rd</sup> year. Students of all ages from across the District performed at the **Burnaby Festival of Dance**. A tradition since 1980, it was hosted by **Burnaby Mountain Secondary** over three nights. Several schools have had performances where they also recognize the contributions of graduating students, such as **Cariboo Hill Secondary's Dance Showcase**. Following months of preparation, many have also had plays, such as this elaborate production of **The Little Mermaid**. Let's take a peek at the musical by children at **Confederation Park Elementary**.

## INDIGENOUS LEARNING: EMBRACING CULTURE AND REFLECTIONS

**Red Dress Day** is recognized by the District – as seen here at **Alpha Secondary** and **Westridge Elementary**. These poignant displays honour Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirited People. The school community at **Westridge** has also been learning from a mural by a former **Byrne Creek Community School** student. **Coast Salish artist Austin Harry**, who is of the **Wolf Clan** from the **Squamish Nation** and **Thunderbird Clan** from the **Namgis Nation**, created the design after discussions with students. Each animal symbolizes a distinct aspect of the self: mind, body, and spirit. Under the guidance of Master Carver and **Squamish Nation Elder Xwalacktun**, students and staff are carving a **Welcome Post** at **Stride Avenue Community School**. The transformed piece of cedar will be proudly placed at the front entrance once construction of the new school building is complete. Throughout the process, Xwalacktun has been sharing stories about Squamish Nation culture and Indigenous learnings. The planned design includes a representation of the Stride Dragon. A project by youth at **Burnaby Mountain** was featured in an online publication. Students from BC First Peoples 12 and the Summit program collaborated with **Sprouting Chefs** to expand the school's garden spaces. With hands-on outdoor activities, the students learned about soil, climate conditions, and Indigenous perspectives on the interconnectedness of land, culture, and community. With the support of Squamish Nation Elders, Indigenous elementary students from across the District shared local teachings with adults at the **Annual General Meeting** of the **British Columbia School Trustees Association**. A Canadian Olympian shared her story with children at both **University Highlands** and **Kitchener Elementary** schools. **Justina Di Stasio** has ancestry from the **Norway House Cree Nation** and is also a District elementary Indigenous Resource Teacher at five schools. The world champion wrestler brought in memorabilia and gave a first-hand account of the dedication required of an Olympic athlete.