

June 24, 2025

Good evening and welcome.

As we approach the end of another school year, I want to take a moment on behalf of the Burnaby Board of Education to reflect on the season we are in and all that it represents for our school community.

These past several weeks have been filled with meaningful celebrations: graduation ceremonies, staff retirements, year-end showcases, school-leaving events, and moments of shared joy in classrooms, hallways, gyms, and theatres across the District. And while these events may differ in scale and format, each one marks an important milestone, some deeply personal, others widely shared. What they all have in common, however, is significance.

In Burnaby, these moments are not merely a reflection of tradition or formality. They are rooted in our shared values: where students are supported, celebrated, and seen. Each milestone, whether it's a child crossing a stage in their cap and gown, a teacher taking their final walk down a school hallway, or a parent quietly shedding a proud tear from the back of an auditorium, is a reminder of how much we've all grown together.

I want to begin by congratulating all students and families across the District. Whether your child is graduating from Kindergarten or Grade 12, finishing a year of high school, adult education, or an alternate program, these moments are important. They are the result of persistence, support, courage, and care. Thank you to each student and to every family member – parents, grandparents, caregivers, extended relatives – who have walked alongside them, cheered them on, and played such a meaningful role in shaping their learning journey.

To our Grade 12 students: this moment is especially for you. On behalf of the Board, I want to offer our heartfelt congratulations on your graduation. You have reached the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. And while every graduating class is unique, your story is one that is truly remarkable.

Many of you were in Grade 7 in the spring of 2020. You missed your elementary school leaving celebrations. You started high school not with the usual excitement of orientation events or social gatherings, but in the midst of a global pandemic. You wore masks, kept your distance, shifted through quarter systems, and adapted to change at every turn. You experienced uncertainty during a time when the world itself felt unsure.

And yet, you persevered.

Through those years, and through this one, you continued to learn, to grow, and to build community in ways that challenged traditional norms and highlighted what's truly essential in education: connection, compassion, and resilience.

As a parent of one of this year's graduates, I have experienced some of those same emotions. I have seen the late nights, the moments of doubt, the bursts of joy. I've witnessed the incredible support of teachers and staff, the kindness of friends, and the unwavering strength of families who have had to navigate new territory together. It has made this moment even more profound, and it has deepened my gratitude to every educator, support staff worker, District team member, and administrator who helped make this year, and this milestone possible.

To our incredible staff: thank you. Whether you are retiring this year after a career of shaping young minds or returning in the fall after a well-earned summer break, please know how deeply valued you are. Your work does not go unnoticed. It is seen in every student who grows more confident, every classroom where curiosity flourishes, and every hallway where belonging is felt.

This year has not been without its challenges. Operational funding shortfalls have presented real difficulties for our District, and indeed were experienced by school districts across the province this year. As Trustees, we have heard from students, families, and staff who are concerned not only about what these shortfalls mean now, but what they will mean in the years ahead. We share those concerns.

And while this is not a global pandemic, the circumstances we face require the same resilience, creativity, and community spirit that carried us through those earlier years. The Class of 2025, alongside their families and the School District staff who supported them, have shown us what's possible when we meet adversity with determination. They've modeled the very qualities we'll need as we continue to advocate for a public education system that is fully and equitably funded, one that meets the needs of every learner.

We will not stop advocating. As a Board, we are united in our commitment to speak up, to collaborate with partners, and to push for the resources that students and staff in Burnaby deserve. The journey ahead will require partnership, tenacity, and vision. We know the challenges are complex, but we also know that we are stronger when we work together.

To my fellow Trustees: thank you. This has been a successful year, though not an easy one. Your thoughtfulness, integrity, and tireless advocacy for students have helped carry our collective work forward. I am proud to serve alongside you, and I am inspired by your dedication.

As we look to the weeks ahead, I hope each of you in our community is able to find moments of rest, celebration, and reflection. Whether you're attending a Grad Dinner Dance, saying goodbye to a colleague, preparing for summer programs, or simply looking back at a year of growth and challenge, know that you are part of something meaningful.

In Burnaby, we believe that every student deserves to feel seen. To feel celebrated. To be supported. This belief has been evident in every corner of our District this June. From the gymnasiums filled with applause to the classrooms filled with laughter, and in the quiet pride of families watching their children step into what's next.

To this year's graduates: we are so proud of you.

To Burnaby families: thank you for being our partners.

To School District staff: you are the heart of our schools.

To the Burnaby community: let us continue, together.

Wishing you all a restful, joyful summer, and my deepest appreciation for a year that reminded us, once again, of the power of public education and the strength of our shared community.

Thank you.

Kristin Schnider, Chair
Burnaby Board of Education