

September 29, 2026

Good evening and welcome.

September is naturally a season of new beginnings and firsts in school districts across BC: the first day of school, new classes, new teachers and new friendships, the first homework assignments, and the first steps toward new learning goals. I think there's something incredibly meaningful about being part of a community that creates this shared sense of anticipation, opportunity, and renewal each September for the thousands of students, staff, and families in the Burnaby School District.

At Burnaby's forty-one elementary schools, new kindergarten students (along with their parents and caregivers) are easing into new routines and new experiences while this year's grade 12 students at our eight secondary schools are already celebrating some of their first "lasts" in the Burnaby School District.

Earlier this month, the District also marked the opening of the new school at Stride Avenue along with new, expanded learning spaces at Brentwood Park and Nelson Elementary schools. For the students and staff sharing these new spaces, I know the start of this school year is especially exciting for them. We're also seeing new child care spaces open at multiple sites across the District this month and next, providing Burnaby families with stronger connections between our schools and the community we serve.

And while the new school year is beginning around us, tonight is also the final public meeting of the current Board of Education before municipal elections take place next month. October 17 will bring new faces and new voices to this side of the table. And as you may know, some of my fellow Trustees have decided not to seek re-election. So, I wanted to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all of the Trustees for their years of service to Burnaby students, staff and families.

I find it quite fitting that this season of new school beginnings is unfolding just as some journeys are coming to an end. I see it as a reminder that while our work as elected Trustees has a defined term, the work of education does not. Education is enduring.

Board mandates have beginnings and endings, and Trustees will come and go. But the work of education and supporting students will continue to happen each and every day. Each September, the cycle begins anew with students returning to classrooms where they are welcomed, supported, and encouraged to learn and grow. I know it comes as no surprise that this continuity is made possible by the incredible staff who work in the Burnaby School District.

So, thank you. Thank you to the 4,700 teachers, education assistants, support staff, maintenance and facilities staff, principals and vice-principals, administrators, custodians, counsellors, and all of the District staff who contribute to Burnaby schools and make a meaningful difference in the lives of so many learners.

I know that many staff members have been working hard for weeks to prepare for school startup, working tirelessly to ensure that our school spaces are welcoming and ready to take on the challenges of this school year. And I know many of them will continue to put in long hours over the months ahead to ensure that every student feels supported, safe, and seen as they navigate new experiences, new learning, and new opportunities.

Whatever changes result at this Board table after October 17, whatever changes may happen more broadly with public education at the provincial level, I know the shared commitment to student learning and student success will remain at the heart of our District and that this important work will continue. Because it is the dedicated staff who carry this work forward year after year.

So, as we begin this new school year and approach a period of transition for this Board, I want to ground ourselves in the understanding that the work before us is bigger than any term of office. It is the ongoing work of creating inclusive learning environments where every student feels they belong, and every student has the opportunity to thrive. That work is made possible by the collective action and dedication of the District's amazing staff. Thank you again to staff for all you do for Burnaby schools.

With that said, I want to conclude this Chair report, focused on what I believe are the most important parts of Burnaby's education system: on the nearly 27,000 students in Burnaby schools and on the incredible staff who support them every day.

I wish everyone a happy, healthy, and great start to the new school year, and I look forward to seeing all that will be accomplished in the 2026-27 school year.

Thank you.

Kristin Schnider, Chair
Burnaby Board of Education