

**THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
CENTRAL OKANAGAN – SCHOOL DISTRICT #23**

CHAIRPERSON'S ANNUAL REPORT – December 9, 2009

With 22,000 students and more than 2500 staff members associated with our 42 schools, the Central Okanagan is the 6th largest of the 60 School Districts in the Province. We are also the largest single employer within the immediate area with an operating budget of more than \$170 million. In the past year we have also managed a capital additions budget of \$8,300,000, all of which has contributed in a significant way to the local economy. We are also one of a small number of districts in the province that continues to grow – mostly as a result of in-migration into the area.

Each year the Chairperson of the Board of Education has the responsibility to provide an **Annual Report** to the District and larger community on the accomplishments of the previous year. The Board established **3 major goals** to work on over the previous year - to improve the **Graduation Rate**, and to enhance student achievement in the areas of both **Literacy** and **Numeracy**.

A major accomplishment during this time was the increase of our **Graduation Rate** by another percentage point to **83%**. This continues a trend line that has been on a positive upswing since we were stalled at 76% from 2002 until the 2005/2006 school year.

In terms of **Literacy**, our work at the primary level, especially using data derived from the Early Learning Screener, is showing that we are significantly reducing the number of students at-risk in any of the key literacy skills by the end of grade 3. We are also seeing student achievement above provincial averages when measured by instruments such as the FSA at grade 4 and 7, and the provincial exams at grades 10 and 12.

The expanded mandate for 'cradle to grave' literacy that Board's received over a year ago, continues to encourage other **Early Learning** initiatives, including our expansion from 3 **Strongstart Centres** last year, to 7 this year. In addition, we continue to support 13 **preschool programs**, a **Playschool** at RSS and a **Teen Parent Program** at KSS. We have also offered a variety of other programs to support children of preschool age, including

'Ready, Set, Learn' events, **PALS** (Parents as Literacy Support) Programs and more recently, **ELFF**(Early Learning For Families) sessions.

In terms of **numeracy**, while our results typically have us performing at or above provincial averages, we are in the process of making significant changes in our delivery models. We have recently adopted a **K-12 Numeracy Strategic Framework** that introduces a numeracy component to the early learning screener as well as the use of problem sets into the intermediate grades.

In addition, the Board established 4 supplemental **areas of focus**:

- The Board continue to implement a four-year comprehensive plan to improve classroom instructional practices through a focus on Quality Assessment and the use of Data Warehouse technology (Skopus and Skovision). Significant evidence has been provided in the Superintendent's Report on Achievement about the work that has been done in this area. The use of the data warehouse and school improvement planning tools have been piloted in six schools in the previous year and will be expanded to all schools during this school year.
- The Board work to improve student success by connecting students to a variety of learning opportunities by establishing further schools of choice or programs of choice within each region of the School District by June 2010. While no new 'schools of choice' were opened in the District, we did add 6 new BAA (Board/Authority Authorized) courses and 3 new academies during the previous year.
- The Board continue work toward improving student health, and work toward improving employee health and wellness including the reduction of overall absenteeism. In the past year, the Board has mandated the elimination of man-made Trans fats in schools. District Healthy Food Fairs and Health Forums have been held to provide students, teachers and Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) with healthy food alternatives. The Interior Health Authority (IHA) has recognized the School District for significant achievement in health promotion. In addition to the District's Health Promoting Schools Committee, the School District has struck a Wellness Committee with representation from all partner groups. The District's Wellness Committee has recently established policy in promoting/supporting employee wellness initiatives.

- The Board encourage substantive structural change in District and school programs, and operational procedures toward creating long-term economic viability and stability for the School District. The Board has engaged in a series of working sessions with senior staff and partner groups that have been focused on increasing revenue, reducing expenses and creating efficiencies. This aligns with the work that has been done within the Strategic Plan to review programs and establish goals for all areas of our operation to ensure economic viability and stability.

Along with significant accomplishments in student achievement in the past year, our District also had much to celebrate in the areas of **athletics and extra-curricular activities**. Our sports teams went on to distinguish themselves, including the KSS Girls' Fieldhockey Team that won the **provincial championships**. Individual athletes, such as Connor Clerke from KSS and Hayley Pipher from Mount Boucherie also won provincial championships in their respective sports of cross-country running and swimming.

Student leadership was also thriving in the Central Okanagan School District during the past year. Not only do we have an excellent complement of student leaders in our schools, but we have also enjoyed the leadership provided by the members of the **District Student Council**. Three recent events that encourage us about the future in terms of student leadership were the training of representatives from each of the high schools to lead the **Smart Risk** initiative, the participation of 351 students and 37 staff in the **Free the Children - Me to We** event in Vancouver, and the great job that was done by our staff and students in hosting of the **BC Student Leadership Conference**. We now look forward to our students from the High Performance Program at Okanagan Mission Secondary School who will be helping us get ready to welcome the **Olympics** to our province by acting as torch bearers in the near future.

Our **International Education Program** also expanded during the past year with the signing of a significant agreement with the Topia Academy - a well-established and constantly growing English-learning institute from Korea. This has swollen our numbers of International students to close to 100 students, which is above the targets we had set for the past year.

In terms of our Aboriginal Education Program, we are finishing the third year of our current Enhancement Agreement. Our focus continues to be on reaching the goal of 75% of our

students graduating within six years of their entry into grade 8. Our overall trend line continues to be positive, although it will require the concerted efforts of our entire community to help us achieve this target.

On the **Capital Project** side of our operation - The finishing touches were done on the **Dr. Knox Middle School** project which has been open for more than a year now, and this September saw the opening of the new **Chute Lake Elementary School**. This is our 'greenest' project to date, with architectural and environmental features that have won us awards as a School District already. The purchase of the property adjacent to **Okanagan Mission Secondary School** also provided us with the opportunity to relocate the **portable school** from the old Dr. Knox Middle School site to Okanagan Mission Secondary School, where it is scheduled to open for the start of semester 2. This will help us to relieve some of the pressure resulting from the growth in student enrolment in that part of our District.

Two themes have certainly characterized the past year – '**Challenge**' and '**Change**'. The **changes** have come to us in a variety of forms including the **turnover in key personnel**. While the number of retirements overall was down from the previous year, we still saw 38 of our senior staff and teachers, and 15 of our support staff complete their careers in the School District. We also saw the departure of Superintendent of Schools Mike Roberts and the retirement of Executive Assistant Marion Stolze, along with Human Resources Director – Rod Odlum. A number of other personnel were added to replace vacancies at the school and District levels, including:

- 3 new principals; 5 new vice-principals and 5 new District Staff members
- The senior management team has also changed significantly with a new executive assistant, new Director of Instruction K-12, new Director of Human Resources, new Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent.

The **challenges** have come to us in a variety of forms, not the least of which have related to our **Budget**. We have now experienced three consecutive years of multi-million dollar budget shortfalls which has made it difficult to maintain a level of stability in the District. It has also forced the Board to make difficult decisions, including the introduction of a user **fee for transportation**.

The past five months featured a variety of other **challenges**, including:

- The **fires** in both Glenrosa and Rose Valley that resulted in major evacuations as well as the use of School District facilities and staff as part of the response;
- The staggering list of Provincial **budget cuts**, including the **Annual Facility Grant**, that typically provided our District with \$3.7 million a year – obviously this resulted in **staff layoffs** within our Operations Department;
- The announcement by the Provincial Government of their intent to introduce **Full Day Kindergarten** starting in September, 2010; and
- The arrival of the **H1N1 Virus** and the associated challenges for our community.

Despite this amount of change and the number of challenges we have faced, I am pleased to report that our District continues to make good progress toward its goals. Our Board has continued to place the interests of our students as its number one priority, and it continues to focus on maintaining the integrity of our classrooms and schools. Our committee structure also provides an opportunity for all partner groups to provide input into Board decisions.

There is no question that the coming year will continue to hold significant challenges for us. The budget shortfall we anticipate for 2010-2011 is approximately \$6 million, which will make it difficult to sustain all that we are currently doing. Having said this, our partner groups have actively participated in our Budget working sessions and we value their input as we move forward into the future.

I wish to thank our senior staff and all employees for the exceptional work they do on behalf of our students each and every day. Also, thank you to my fellow trustees for their commitment to the strategic guidance and oversight of our School District. You should be proud of your efforts on behalf of the students, parents, staff and community members of the Central Okanagan. We will continue to lobby on behalf of public education in our district and province as we move into the second year of our term as trustees.

Rolli Cacchioni,
Chairperson
Board of Education – Central Okanagan School District No. 23