

**THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
CENTRAL OKANAGAN SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 23**

CHAIRPERSON'S ANNUAL REPORT – December 11, 2013

Each year the Chairperson of the Board of Education provides an Annual Report to the District, and to the larger community, on the events of the previous year. To try and summarize an entire year in one short report is a difficult undertaking, and there is always the chance that something really important will be left out, but I will try and give a snap-shot of the Central Okanagan School District over the past year.

With approximately 22,000 students and 3000 staff members associated with our 42 schools, the Central Okanagan School District is a large and complex organization. We are the largest single employer within the Okanagan, with an annual budget of \$213 million and a capital budget of \$35 million. As the 5th largest school district in the province, we are also one of the very few districts which is not experiencing significant declines in student enrolment.

Over the past year, our District has experienced a number of challenges, some significant changes, and many accomplishments. At the regular public meeting which follows this Board Annual Meeting, the Superintendent will be presenting his Report on Student Achievement 2013/2014. This comprehensive report identifies areas where we are improving, where we are experiencing challenges, and the strategies we are using to help all our students be successful. I will, therefore, not directly address the area of student achievement, but would ask that the Superintendent's Report be attached to the Minutes of this Annual Meeting.

I believe the major challenge we face is related to our budget. As all BC school districts have acknowledged, our provincial grants have not kept up with inflation. The most recent challenge to our budget has been the directive that Boards must cover the costs of salary increases for our CUPE members which were negotiated directly with government. We have managed to find savings within our budget to cover these costs, but these "savings" will affect the students in our system. We will continue to look for ways to cut costs in order to balance our budget.

The Board has, for the past few years, budgeted to provide funds to cover innovative practices in our schools which provide teachers with support that, in turn, supports our students. It is our hope that we can continue to fund these types of initiatives which are so beneficial to students.

The District's overarching goal is that "Each Central Okanagan District Student (K-12) will provide evidence of being a Learner, Thinker, Innovator, Collaborator, and Contributor". As well, we are focussed on Graduation, Literacy and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.) As trustees visit classrooms and schools, we see evidence of the work which goes into accomplishing these goals.

We also remain focussed on raising the graduation rates for our Aboriginal Students. While we have seen the rate increase, we will not be satisfied until our Aboriginal students do as well as our other students, and *all* of our students do better than they are now.

We are looking forward to signing our second Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement on January, 15th 2014, and continue to work collaboratively with our

Aboriginal partners, including Westbank First Nation, on behalf of all the Aboriginal learners in our school district.

Just over a year ago, the Board approved the District's Long-Term Facility Plan, with a proposal to eventually change the Grade Configuration to K - Gr 5 Elementary, Gr 6 - 8 Middle, and Gr 9 -12 Senior Secondary Schools.

With this in mind, earlier this year focus groups were held in Lake Country and Okanagan Mission where there are currently no middle schools. The outcome of these meetings was Board approval to move the Grades 7s into the secondary schools in these areas. Starting in September 2014, both Okanagan Mission and George Elliot Secondary Schools will provide space for a "school within a school", and the grade configurations will conform to the rest of the district.

The long term plan regarding grade configurations will mostly depend on our secondary schools having space for another grade. With this in mind, we have procured sites in Lake Country (the Aspen Grove Golf Course) and the Ponds area in the Mission. We are actively looking for sites in other areas of the school district, which is another challenge for us. The replacement of Rutland Middle and Glenmore Elementary are still top priorities, and we continue to lobby government for capital funds to replace these schools.

Two major building projects are currently underway. Both the expansion to Okanagan Mission Secondary and the new Mar Jok Elementary in West Kelowna will open in September 2014. With the opening of Mar Jok, the overcrowding at Shannon Lake Elementary and Rose Valley Elementary will be alleviated. The discussion around changing the catchment areas for those

schools, and setting a new catchment area for Mar Jok, has not been easy. The District held three public meetings, and a Planning and Facilities Committee meeting, to receive input, as well as having on-line surveys. The catchment areas have now been approved and we look forward to the new school opening in September.

We also held three School Planning Council orientation evenings. These were a great success, and the Board looks forward to continuing to work with our SPCs over the next year.

Our students continue to excel in many areas. These include academics, sports, music and theatre. The Board approved several Academies over the past year, including Golf and Indigenous Studies, and as well, several Board Authorized Courses were approved.

None of the things we celebrate could have been accomplished without our teachers, support staff, administrators and senior staff, as well parents and community members. Many of our employees work behind the scenes: keeping our 42 school sites in good working order; keeping our financial books straight; looking after payroll and driving our school buses. Many of our staff members volunteer as well. Some coach our students, and give extra time to support them. Currently a large number of district staff has formed a committee to bring the Canadian Student Leadership Conference to our School District in September 2014, an event which will bring together about 700 students from across Canada.

The Board appreciates the input received from our partner groups. The participation on committees and attendance at Board Meetings by

representatives of the Central Okanagan Teachers' Association, the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3523, the Central Okanagan Principals' and Vice-Principals' Association, the District Student Council, and the Central Okanagan Parent Advisory Council is vital in helping the Board understand and hear everyone's point of view before making a decision. Thanks to all our partners for their work in supporting public education and the students we all serve.

I also wish to thank our senior staff and all employees for the exceptional work they do on behalf of our students each and every day. I should particularly mention the three staff members I have worked with most closely: The Superintendent, Secretary Treasurer, and Assistant Superintendent, and their Executive Assistants, Mona Essler, Barb Bertram and Bonnie Browns. Their support and advice is greatly appreciated.

Also, thank you to my fellow trustees for their commitment to the governance 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. As we move forward into the third year of our term as trustees, I know we will continue to stand up for Public Education.

Moyra Baxter

Chairperson

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