

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

**CHAIRPERSON'S ANNUAL REPORT – November 26, 2014**

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. According to Policy, in a year when there is an Inaugural Meeting of a new Board, the report is delivered at the last meeting of the current Board.

It is difficult to summarize an entire year in one short report, 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 43 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 this year of \$213 million and a capital budget of \$35 million. As the 5<sup>th</sup> 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. The most obvious challenge was the labour dispute which interrupted a normal conclusion to the 2013/2014 school year end, as well as the school start up this September. The labour dispute was hard on everyone in our school system, and with five years before the next contract negotiations we must all work towards finding a better way to deal with teacher contracts.

I believe the other 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. This is not a new problem, but having to find \$4 million in savings this school year does affect the students in our system. 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. We will continue to look for ways to cut costs in order to balance our

budget, but BC's public education system cannot keep making deep cuts and continue to provide the programs and services of which we are so proud.

Despite these challenges, the past year is still noteworthy for many positive accomplishments.

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 Student Reading Results, School Completion Levels, Achievement Results for Aboriginal Learners, and Participation Levels in Skills and Technical Training. As trustees visit classrooms and schools, we see evidence of the work which goes into accomplishing these goals.

At the regular public meeting on December 10th, the Superintendent will be presenting his Report on Student Achievement 2014/2015. 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 except to say that we are sustaining the levels of improvement that we have achieved in early learning and the graduation program.

I should mention, however, that we 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.

A community celebration was held for the signing of our second Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement on January, 15<sup>th</sup> 2014, and we will continue to work collaboratively with our Aboriginal partners, including Westbank First Nation, on behalf of all the Aboriginal learners in our School District.

In 2012 the Board approved the District's Long-Term Facility Plan, with a proposal to gradually transition the District to a consistent grade configuration: K - Gr 5 Elementary, Gr 6 - 8 Middle, and Gr 9 -12 Senior Secondary Schools.

Accordingly, starting in September, both Okanagan Mission and George Elliot Secondary Schools welcomed grade 7 students to their campuses. This was made possible by the construction of a \$17.5 million addition to Okanagan Mission Secondary and the placement of the annex at George Elliot Secondary.

Public Consultation Meetings were recently completed at schools in the Rutland community to discuss possible changes to and the timing of grade configurations in that area. Parents and community members are currently being asked to complete an online survey to provide their feedback on the timing of the possible grade reconfiguration.

Also this fall, four public consultation meetings took place with the Lake Country Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) regarding the enrolment challenges associated with the current catchment area boundaries. Parents and community members were also requested to provide their feedback by completing an on-line survey. The Board will review all input and make a decision early in the new year as to how the catchment areas should be revised.

The new Mar Jok Elementary in West Kelowna opened in September which alleviated the overcrowding at Shannon Lake Elementary and Rose Valley Elementary.

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

In September, the Central Okanagan School District hosted the 2014 Canadian Student Leadership Conference. Over 800 grade 9 through 12 students representing 173 schools from 11 of our Provinces and Territories arrived for a five-day program that included an amazing group of keynote speakers, workshop opportunities and leadership experiences which empowered and inspired delegates to make a positive difference in the lives of other Canadians.

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 43 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 in a variety of different activities.

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 a new term with a new Board, I wish to especially thank Trustees Brinkerhoff and Pendharkar for all their work on behalf of our students and our School District. I have come to know them over the past three years and have appreciated their honesty and their ethical decision-making. They are both very involved in community affairs and I am sure we will be seeing them again.

Regarding the new board – which takes office on December 8<sup>th</sup> - I am convinced that the Central Okanagan Board of Education will continue to stand up for Public Education.

Respectfully submitted

Moyra Baxter

Chairperson

Board of Education – Central Okanagan School District No. 23