

**THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
CENTRAL OKANAGAN PUBUC SCHOOLS**

CHAIRPERSON'S ANNUAL REPORT - NOVEMBER 2021

Board Policy states that the Chairperson of the Board shall provide an Annual Report at the Board's Annual Meeting. I appreciate the Board's indulgence in allowing me to submit this report two weeks late.

Throughout the school year, the Superintendent of Schools provides regular reports and updates, so this report will focus on our major accomplishments and tasks since last year's Annual Meeting. At the end of this report, I provide a link to the Superintendent of Schools/CEO Report on Student Achievement 2021.

With approximately 24,000 students and over 4,000 staff members associated with 46 schools, Central Okanagan Public Schools is a large and complex organization. We are the largest single employer within the Central Okanagan, with an annual budget of over \$311 million. As the fifth largest school district in the province's fastest-growing region, which continues to grow by hundreds of students each year, we still have urgent needs for school spaces - especially the need to build new schools and replace older schools.

While we had hoped to be able to meet in person, COVID-19 caused us to revert to Zoom meetings until the end of the school year in June. During that time, the Board of Education continued its work. This allowed us to participate in school and community-based events, including eight School Community Learning Plan Conversations. We also met with municipal councils, the Westbank First Nation, and our local MLA's, via Zoom.

In September, in order to be able to once again hold our Public Board and Committee Meetings in the Board Room, we installed Plexiglas barriers between seats at the Board Table, and we practice the COVID-19 protocols for gatherings. This has meant that we have had to limit the number of people who can attend in the public gallery, so we have provided a webcast of all the Board Meetings. We know this is less than ideal, but I commend the Board, our partners, and our staff for helping us continue our important work in less-than-ideal circumstances.

While our Board meetings remained virtual, trustees continued to enjoy learning about the many innovative programs in the District through the "Inside 23" portion of our meetings. The Board thanks staff and students who joined us virtually and created videos such as the École Dorothea Walker Elementary's *"Share Some Good News"* and Rutland Senior Secondary's unique promotional video. Although performances were often livestreamed or recorded, students continued to connect to our community through musical, dramatic, and artistic performances such as Okanagan Mission Secondary's virtual holiday concerts for seniors. Many of these were highlighted in our now-digital version of the *"Together We Learn"* publication, particularly the "Creativity" issue from the end of the year, which featured creative works and insights from nearly every school in the District. The Board also thanks Kelowna Art Gallery for hosting two beautiful exhibits of student work this year: the *Dreaming Forward* exhibit, which displayed

learning of Indigenous art from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, and the *Bright New World* exhibit, which featured 139 student artworks from nine schools.

This year, the Board of Education approved the Strategic Directions for the Strategic Plan 2021-2026. The Strategic Plan, aligned with the District's Framework for Enhancing Student Learning, serves to focus the District's work on the Board of Education's priorities and supports the District's Mission, Vision, and Overarching Goal. In all, for the Strategic Plan and Long Term Facilities Plan, we conducted five surveys and seven town hall meetings.

The Board of Education considered the input and recommendations from the extensive Long Term Facilities Plan (LTFP) consultations that took place throughout the school year. The LTFP guides the District in its future decision-making for the next decade and beyond. The Plan also provides the critical context for discussions with the Ministry of Education regarding requests for capital funding consideration and to provide a consistent organized approach to capital priorities. After approving the final Plan, the Board also approved an Annual Board of Education Advocacy Plan to engage the public in the continued advocacy for our most urgent capital projects.

The Board of Education passed significant motions around a new Westside Secondary School. If approved by the Ministry of Education, it is the Board's intention to repurpose the École George Pringle Elementary site. Staff has worked hard to meet each provincial requirement for the project in a timely fashion, and the Board of Education is now strongly advocating for the Ministry of Education to give us final approval as soon as possible.

We know that this plan has raised concerns among the current École George Pringle Elementary community, but this is the only viable option available to the Board to establish more secondary space on the Westside. The Board has committed to working with families by providing support for all students affected by the changes. Also on the Westside, a comprehensive community consultation is now underway to establish new catchments for the Westside family of schools.

The Board approved the establishment of the French Immersion Program at École H.S. Grenda Middle School, in Lake Country, which opened in September, and established middle school catchments for English and French students.

The mitigation of COVID-19 continued to overshadow school starts, but our staff worked tirelessly to follow public health orders, manage safety plans, and minimize the disruption to learning. With the return to in-class learning for everyone, both staff and students managed to focus on the business of learning, finding new ways to connect and collaborate. With the approval of safe and effective vaccines in the Spring of 2021, our District staff worked collaboratively with Interior Health to schedule two staff vaccination clinics in April and June, which was a tremendous organizational achievement. Interior Health also hosted family/community vaccination clinics at Rutland Senior and École Kelowna Secondary.

Due to the passing of longtime School District teacher, administrator and trustee Rolli Cacchioni, the Board of Education held a by-election in the Spring of 2021. The official results were declared on June 30th and the Board welcomed Trustee Wayne Broughton to the team.

In the Spring of 2021, the mass grave of 215 children was confirmed at the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. The Board of Education offered its condolences to the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation, on whose land the former school sits. The Board also offered condolences to all First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Elders, children, parents, and community members who continue to endure the hurt, oppression, and intergenerational trauma from Canada's forced residential schooling for Indigenous children. The Board of Education recognized that education has both opportunity and responsibility to correct the wrongs of the past and present, and we will continue this effort. Central Okanagan Public Schools' commitment to action is reflected in the Equity in Action for Truth and Reconciliation Agreement.

Graduation celebrations continued to be innovative in the face of COVID-19 restrictions, and graduates across the District were able to celebrate with walks across the stage and virtual ceremonies. Graduation/Blanketing ceremonies for the Indigenous Education Program were held outside at each secondary school site. Our six-year graduation rate remains high, at 96.5%. For Indigenous graduates, the graduation rate is now 84.4%, above the provincial average of 70.7%. Although Trustees had to send virtual greetings to graduates again this year, I was pleased to record mine alongside Chief Derickson of the Westbank First Nation and celebrate the fifth year in a row that 100% of Westbank First Nation Grade 12 students graduated. The Board of Education once again expressed gratitude to all the donors of the many bursaries and scholarships. The bursaries and scholarships administered through the Central Okanagan Bursary and Scholarship Society (COBSS) provided our graduates with 550 awards, totaling \$489,180.

We deeply appreciate the many community partnerships that continue to grow and enrich the lives of our students. Community members volunteer their services, provide funds for projects at schools, and generally show a great deal of support to our schools and our students. These are non-profit groups, service clubs, and individual volunteers.

I don't think any of us expected that in November 2021 we would still be dealing with COVID-19, and I want to recognize every single employee of the School District. Each of them has shown that they can be flexible, innovative and most of all that they are committed to the students and to each other.

I should particularly mention the three senior staff members I have worked with most closely: the Superintendent of Schools/CEO Kevin Kaardal, Secretary-Treasurer/CFO Ryan Stierman, and Deputy Superintendent Terry Beaudry, have been tireless in their commitment to the Board and to public education.

Senior staff members serve as liaisons to our Board Standing Committees and to the Trustees who chair those committees. In the Board Office, three Executive Assistants provide support to Trustees, Board Meetings, and Committee Meetings. Mona Essler, Michelle DesRochers, and Yvonne Hildebrandt remained positive and hardworking throughout the year, making sure our Board could still meet and connect with the public.

Also, thank you to my fellow trustees for your commitment to the governance and oversight of our School District. You should be proud of your perseverance and continued efforts on behalf of the students, parents, staff, and community members of the Central Okanagan.

Our Board of Education comprises seven different personalities of different backgrounds. It would be disingenuous to suggest that we always agree but it is important that we continue to listen to each other's points of view and always remember why we are here.

We also remained calm and listened as we received many difficult phone calls, letters and emails from members of our community and indeed from around Canada and other countries. To be honest, these were mostly from those who were opposed to the wearing of masks and to vaccinations, but as public officials we have a responsibility to receive their input and consider it.

As we move forward into the last year of this Board's term of office, I have no doubt that we will continue to experience many challenges. However, there are always many reasons to celebrate and I look forward to those celebrations.

Respectfully submitted,

Moyra Baxter

Link to Superintendent of Schools/CEO Report on Student Achievement 2021:

[http://www.sd23.bc.ca/pages/Publications.aspx#/=](http://www.sd23.bc.ca/pages/Publications.aspx#/)

(under Framework for Enhancing Student Learning).