

September 8th, 2009 Message from the Chairperson: Welcome Back

It is my pleasure as Chairperson of the North Vancouver Board of Education to wish you a warm welcome to the 2009/10 school year. I hope that the summer of 2009 was relaxing and enjoyable for everyone.

As we embark on the 2009/10 school year we can look back to the progress made on the significant projects that will shape the future of the School District for many years to come. The amalgamation decision for Balmoral Jr. Secondary with Carson Graham Jr. Secondary, the projects to rebuild Ridgeway Elementary and Queen Mary Elementary all required careful consideration of community concerns. The newly rebuilt Highlands Elementary is our most recent example of the importance we place on safe and sustainable facilities that provide an optimal learning and teaching environment. A new state-of-the-art facility for Carson Graham and the restoration of Ridgeway Elementary are now under way.

We can continue to make progress in the reinvigoration of our School District, even in a challenging economy that places many demands on our constrained budget. The same is true with progress in programs—we continue our commitment to innovative programming. We now offer the full continuum of K to 12 programming in International Baccalaureate (IB) studies. Capilano Elementary is now an IB candidate school to offer the Primary Years Programme, while Balmoral Jr. Secondary and Carson Graham are both accredited for the IB Middle Years and IB Diploma program respectively. Further innovative programs include the Hockey Academy (Windsor), Artists for Kids Visual Arts Academy (Carson Graham) and the Digital Media Academy (Argyle).

Last year our School District went through an intense budget planning process for the 2009/10 year, one that was not without compromises and some restructuring and consolidation of services. The Board's mandate was to minimize impacts to staff and program services, and we remained true to that objective, thanks in part to with the participation and input provided by our partner groups and community. We appreciate the strength of our administrative team shown throughout the process, and the willingness of everyone to collaborate on solutions that are in the best interests of students.

The most recent provincial budget deficit and accompanying announcements will have far-reaching impacts on everyone, not just education. Trustees in all school districts, including our own, can expect to be weighing competing priorities and heightened budget challenges for at least several years to come.

Informing and consulting with the community in decisions that affect students and programs will continue to be a priority for our Board and School District this year and herein lies the opportunity to deepen our connections and work together on behalf of students and in support of public education. I had the pleasure this summer of listening to a profound presentation by representatives of BC Student Voice, during which, one student observed: *A community's greatest leader is the community itself.*



The Board of Education's task is not only to make decisions on policy and direction, it is also one of advocacy. Our President's Council group was founded as a way to ensure all partners work together to advocate on behalf of our school district and that effort will continue in earnest this year. Effective advocacy will help ensure that both politicians and citizens see education as our hope for the future. Although the rewards may not be immediate, education is one of the most important components to economic stimulus.

On September 19th, the District of North Vancouver will be holding a by-election for the school trustee position that became available following the vacancy created by Jane Thornthwaite's resignation. The new trustee will restore our board complement to seven, and bring additional community representation to the table. I encourage every eligible voter in the District to consider the candidates and vote in the by-election.

We begin the school year with a renewed awareness from health authorities of the H1N1 and the importance of practicing good hygiene to reduce the spread of the virus in school environments. We will be posting and maintaining links to H1N1 information on our website, and encourage you to review the information should you have any concerns.

The 2010 Olympics have already created many learning opportunities for our students and staff. North Vancouver schools will be open during the Olympics next February, and we anticipate diverse and growing connections between our schools and the Olympic experience in the months to come. As a reflection, the "Connecting with 2010" blog on our website will continue to be an exciting source of stories, photos and useful links for educators and families in our District.

To new students, families and staff in the North Vancouver School District I extend, on behalf of all trustees, a sincere welcome -- we are glad to have you with us! And to everyone I wish great success in the 2009/10 year!

Sincerely,

NORTH VANCOUVER
BOARD OF EDUCATION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Skinner", written over a faint horizontal line.

Susan Skinner
Chairperson