

June 27, 2011

Poised for renewal: a Message from the Chairperson and the Superintendent

Approaching the conclusion of the 2010/11 school year, we have an opportunity to reflect upon many advances we have made over the past ten months. This past year launched a new phase of revitalization and renewal in our School District and we are pleased to share some of our successes with you. The [*Directions 2010/11 Update*](#), presented at the June 21 Public Board Meeting, provides highlights of the year, including progress and accomplishments.

Instructional Practice

In 2010, the North Vancouver School District recorded its highest rate of graduating students in the past five years—87%. This is an important indicator of student success that places our school district in the top ten for completion rates in the Province.

In September of 2010, we introduced full day Kindergarten classes at most of our elementary schools to support the development of young learners through quality play-based programs. This September, the full day program will be available in our schools for all Kindergarten students. Timely professional development to encourage the successful implementation of Full Day Kindergarten was provided this year, as well as extended supports to Kindergarten teachers in developing curriculum based on interactive play experiences.

We continue to pursue research, and provide professional development, to improve understanding of the principles of personalized learning in the 21st Century. Encouraging curriculum design that promotes deep learning received emphasis this year, and teaching strategies to promote personalized learning are at the forefront of our upcoming Summer Institute for educators.

Our instructional practice and resources continue to attract attention and appreciation from educators around the world. In April, several schools hosted delegations of educators from Hong Kong and Mainland China. "I think the teachers here in North Vancouver really know how to engage students in learning," observed one visitor. "They care about children, make learning exciting, and teach with their heart."

Program Diversity

In April, the International Baccalaureate Organization confirmed Capilano Elementary as fully authorized to teach the Primary Years Program. With the Middle Years Program and Diploma Program previously authorized at Carson Graham Secondary, we now offer the full K-12 continuum of IB programs in our school district. This June, our first group of students from the Diploma Program graduated from Carson Graham, many having already achieved early acceptance at their preferred colleges and universities.

French Immersion, the Hockey Academy, the Artists for Kids Visual Arts Academy, the Digital Media Academy and many other programs continue to thrive in our School District as we work to meet the broad-ranging needs of our students.

Through many consultation and feedback channels over the past several years, we have heard from the community the importance of balancing growth in program diversity with delivering the core curriculum exceptionally well. This awareness will continue to guide us in prioritizing and decision-making around program diversity.

Community Connections

Student outreach activities continue to exemplify the local and global awareness being fostered in our schools. The earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan in March resulted in an outpouring of concern and fundraising by our students and staff. Other school-based initiatives focused on the health and welfare of individuals. Blood donations, conquering cancer drives and making wishes come true for children with debilitating illnesses were just some of the heartfelt initiatives led by our students and teachers over the course of the year.

Some of our students traveled to distant places this year, witnessing and working alongside some of the world's poorest citizens. Others Skyped to far away regions, building connections and understanding of how we can all learn from each other.

Our schools continue to welcome the insights and expertise of talented individuals and groups to enrich student learning. Professional musicians, actors, and inspirational speakers from all walks of life visited students and shared their life experiences with compelling candour and honesty. As well, our second annual School District-wide "Green Fair" brought local leaders in sustainability together to promote awareness of current environmental concerns and sustainable solutions.

In May, the Board of Education, the City of North Vancouver, and the District of North Vancouver signed the North Vancouver Bi-Municipally Funded Youth Outreach Program protocol agreement to formalize the supports and guidance for 12 full time Youth Outreach Workers within the North Vancouver School District. Agreements of this kind exemplify the supportive partnerships that are necessary in a community that cares about its young people.

Integrated Communities

Several of our school communities experienced significant growth in their student populations this year. New, larger school communities at Seymour Heights and Lynn Valley Elementary focused on creating welcoming environments for students and their families. Meanwhile, the combined school populations of Carson Graham and Balmoral Secondary will continue to operate as "one school/two campuses" during the final year of construction of the new Carson Graham.

In May, former students and teachers of Ridgeway Annex were welcomed by the present school community to a final closure event that combined reunion with celebration. Students from the Annex will attend the newly rebuilt Ridgeway Elementary in September, and we anticipate yet another flourishing school community will develop in this remarkable new facility.

We are pleased with the progress of the Community Learning Program implementation team that is designing the consolidation of the School District's alternate programs into one consolidated program. This work will continue in the coming year. We are confident that through careful planning, we can create a new framework involving localized in-school supports for students in need of specialized attention, while incorporating the best practices learned from the previous alternate programs service delivery model.

Communications

Our schools, PACs and the School District all continue to actively share stories of their accomplishments and community contributions with the local media and through our own communications channels. Every week, “good news” reflecting the achievements of our students, the outreach of our schools and the overall advancement of our School District appear in the media and help to build our reputation as “the natural place to learn”.

The Board of Education continues to advocate for adequate funding for public education in the Province, with emphasis this year on supporting early childhood learning, personalized learning for the 21st Century and sustainable infrastructure. All these elements have been expressed by the Province as priorities for the school system, and we believe, should be carefully planned and funded to ensure they succeed.

Sharing & Celebrating Success

In May, the Board of Education approved a \$139.5 million balanced budget for the coming school year featuring an additional \$1.6 million in funding to provide improved supports for students and schools. The “add back” budget reflects an ability to manage our assets to realize their full potential and improve our resiliency and stability, regardless of financial limitations, in order to best serve student needs.

Information & Communications Technology

As a key resource in the promotion of personalized learning in the 21st Century, we continue to broaden the use of technology in our schools. By way of example, a number of our schools are working with interactive white boards, particularly Montroyal Elementary, where earlier this year, the PAC raised funds to purchase “Smart Boards” for every classroom in the school. We’re also piloting the use of iPads as learning devices in several schools, and developing professional expertise through the experience.

Teachers now have two new online tools to assist with their reporting and assessment; Rubric Central and ESL Central. Effective assessment is essential to developing instructional strategies that promote personalize learning and we continue to strengthen our expertise in this area.

The mindful and appropriate use of technology is something we cannot underestimate in today’s society. In March, our Student Leadership Council (secondary student representatives from across the School District) gathered to consider the ethical implications of technology, and contribute their perspective to the Province’s collective “Student Voice”. Having reviewed their input, we found the depth and sensitivity of their insights to be encouraging.

Facilities

Exceptional progress has been made this year in the construction of new facilities throughout the School District. The new artificial turf field, six-lane asphalt track and “bubble” indoor training facility adjacent to Windsor Secondary (the first of its kind in the area) are now in use, coinciding with the celebration of the school’s 50th anniversary this year.

In September, the heritage restoration of Ridgeway Elementary will be complete, and the “new” school, built to current seismic standards will re-open to staff and students. The heritage façade is now being restored and landscaping is being established. The heritage restoration of Queen Mary Elementary begins in earnest in September, and the school’s staff and students will be relocated to Cloverley Elementary for the next two years.



2012 will feature three major capital project completions. The North Shore Credit Union Environmental Learning Centre on the Outdoor School Campus is scheduled for completion in early 2012. Both the new Education Services Centre and Artists for Kids Gallery on Lonsdale and the rebuilt Carson Graham Secondary will be ready to occupy in the Summer of 2012.

When carefully managed, the property assets of the North Vancouver School District can strengthen our position as a world-class provider of educational programs and services. Recognizing this, in February of 2011, the Board of Education approved a formal [land asset strategy](#) to guide decision-making that considers both the long-term needs of the community and the School District.

Over the course of the year, the Board of Education led a consultative process to develop a Strategic Plan that outlines our high-level goals and objectives for the next ten years. The Plan reflects balanced attention and commitment to our core purpose as well as the choices and expectations of our community. The Plan is both a guide to reaching above and beyond our mandate, and a framework for reporting our progress, aligned with six key goals, over the next 10 years. As such, The Plan supports our efforts to be transparent and accountable in all areas of our operations. The Plan is now in the final stages of publication, and will be formally introduced in September.

Looking ahead, we see many reasons to celebrate the revitalization and renewal of our School District. In the meantime, we wish all our hardworking students and staff time to rest and rejuvenate over the summer. We have much to look forward to in 2011/12.

Sincerely,

NORTH VANCOUVER
BOARD OF EDUCATION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Franci Stratton'.

Franci Stratton
Chairperson

NORTH VANCOUVER
SCHOOL DISTRICT

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Lewis'.

John Lewis
Superintendent of Schools