North Vancouver School District
SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

December 12, 2006

1. One Earth, One People Environmental Symposium

Four North Vancouver secondary students participated recently in the *One Earth, One People Symposium*, a week-long environmental symposium for high school students at the Woodleaf Outdoor School in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in northern California. The students, Sarah and Kate from Sutherland School, and Emma and Chelsea from Argyle School, were selected for the trip based on their outstanding evaluations as counsellors at the North Vancouver Outdoor School. Rob Harden, Co-Administrator of the Outdoor School, and Stephanie Perrins, Intern Counsellor, accompanied the students on the trip. Seventy students and twenty facilitators/teachers attended the *Symposium*.

The purpose of the symposium is to gather together an international group of young people to learn and consider ways to actively address global environmental challenges. The participants actively engaged in seminars presented by experts on resource management and economics, climate change and rainforests, field research on mega-fauna, the value of forests, and the environmental impact on migratory birds. The students participated in sensory night walks, skits, and guest presentations. They had opportunities to network with students from the U.S.A., Italy, Germany, and the Czech Republic.

Each of the students wrote a summary report of their observations and experiences at the *One Earth, One People Symposium*:

> "The knowledge about the environment and the world around us that I've learned is something that I want to share with others, so they too can pass it on."
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> I really enjoyed the multiculturalism of the kids who came to the Symposium. I made friends with people from Japan, Germany, Italy, and many more. That we all got along, found ways to communicate, problem-solve, and share an outlook on life and the environment was amazing."
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> "I learned so much about the environment and the oceans and global warming. There are so many little ways to prevent our world from falling apart that take nothing to do but make a huge impact on how we live."
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> "High school is a hard time for kids and when you take a group of teenagers from different schools, race, and countries usually you would have cliques. There was none of that; it was true to its name, "*One Earth, One People*."

I would like to extend a special thank you to the Outdoor School's Alumni Society for providing the funding for travel and symposium expenses and to Stephanie Perrins for her planning and attention to detail that ensured a successful experience for our students.

2. Briar Ballou : Teaching Excellence

Briar Ballou, a science teacher at Handsworth Secondary School, is the recipient of a 2006 Certificate of Achievement from the *Prime Minister's Awards*. Certificates of Achievement are issued to the top ranking nominees for teaching excellence. A financial award of $1000 is provided to the recipient's school to fund, under the recipient's direction, professional development, equipment (such as computers, software, and audio-visual and laboratory equipment), resource materials, website development, teaching aids, or other tools to improve teaching and student learning.

Ninety educators from across Canada were selected for the *Prime Minister's Awards*. The recipients represent Canadian teaching excellence in a wide-range of subjects at all grade levels—from preschool through high school. All are recognized as having developed innovative ways to teach—including groundbreaking uses of information and communication technologies to enhance their teaching practices.

Congratulations, Briar! We celebrate your teaching excellence.

3. Literacy and Books

When the Minister of Education visited North Vancouver School District yesterday, one of the major topics for discussion was literacy. School libraries enrich children's lives and promote literacy. Each year, schools in North Vancouver School District are nominated as recipients of the *Elementary Public School Library Grant Program*. For the 2006/07 school year, Westview and Plymouth Schools have each been nominated for a $1000 grant to help with the purchase of new library books. As part of the school's application, a student or class from the nominated school submits an essay or piece of artwork demonstrating "why my school needs more books." I would like to share two students' submissions.

Georgia, a Grade 7 student at Plymouth:

> "Can you imagine to yourself a world without books? A world where there is no individuality? A world where we all just go about our lives numbly, without feeling or meaning? We need books to give our lives a purpose. To reassure ourselves that there is more out there than what the eye sees. With books we can look at things in a whole new way. To be inspired! We can make our minds a work of art! We can perceive beyond the senses. We can see, touch, smell, hear, think things that we never even dream of in our lives! Books make us who we are. We can fulfill our dreams, accomplish our goals, and go where we want to! I am but 12 years old and have fought dragons, traveled the world and beyond, flown through time and space, and danced with the stars to a rhythm the moon played on his guitar. Books are best friends. We can explore a world of skies of shining sapphires, oceans of liquid crystal, worlds of fairies and witches and goblins and mermaids and good and bad! Whatever our minds feel like, it is our decision. We pick the book, we pick the adventure. Remove the boundaries, test the limits. Give us more books! We hunger, our mind-stomachs are growling! I wept for Juliet, I feared for Jem and Scout, I felt their pain and sorrow. Books make you compassionate and able to care about humanity and those who are less fortunate than we are. Those Without Books! Who can't feel the things that we can when we read. Books make you a better person. Why do we need more books? So we can see, hear, think, touch, love, dream, live in a whole different way. This report was written straight out of my head. No rough draft, no first plan. Thanks to books. Let us shake out some of the cobwebs from the back of our minds. Pick up a book."

Charlie, a Grade 3 student at Westview:

> "Westview School needs and wants more books. We all love books here, and it would be lovely to get more books. I once found a book that was last taken out in 1973! A lot of the books here are torn apart or ripped. We don't like that. I myself like books in series; e.g. *The Secrets of Droon* and *Geronimo Stilton*. If we could get more books I would be so happy. I read all the time at home, at school, and even at sleepovers! While I'm writing this I'm thinking about when I first learnt how to read but we don't need to get into that now.
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> Well I think that we do need more new books, I mean a lot of books here are tatty and practically dog-eared permanently! If we get more books we wouldn't do that to them again.
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> I would really love books on magic. I'm really into that sort of stuff. I've tried to look for books on that subject but there aren't any. I wish, I wish, I wish we had some magic books--a lot!"

4. Wishes for the Holiday Season

As the 2006 School year draws to a close and we take our winter break, this is an opportune time to express our sincerest wishes for each of our families to enjoy Hanukkah, Christmas, the New Year, and the pleasures that spending time together will bring.