

School District 72 Board News

MEETING OF
OCT. 11, 2022

October 13, 2022
INFORMATION RELEASE

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Trustees and Former Board Chairs Not Seeking Re-Election Reflect on their Time on the School Board

Susan Wilson

"It was interesting times. There had been quite a few things going on provincially and in our own school district. The previous board had just brought in a 10-year facility plan and so one of the first things that we got to do as a new board was to look at the recommendation to close two schools. Here we were with a new board and several new members having to delve into a huge issue like this. It was very difficult. I think the process was as professional and consultative and as open and transparent as we could make it, but it was still a very, very challenging and painful time. However, the schools were closed and within months the Supreme Court changed their ruling on the previous class size considerations and it kind of threw us for a little bit of a loop because suddenly that changed how we could use the schools.

So that was a pretty exciting time diving into district necessities that needed to be taken care of.

Another facet of the 10-year plan was having to do assessments of some of the rural and remote schools and that was really fascinating because we got to talk with them and got a better understanding of the difference between a city school and the rural and remote considerations that we combine – and most districts don't have that kind of combination. They will be either totally urban or they might be totally remote, but we have quite an unusual situation to deal with both of those factors.

We also had several issues come up that were controversial, and we had some members of the public dealing with certain issues that they had concerns about that they misunderstood or misinterpreted, so that always led an element of a bit of a

challenge to get through but also really helped to clarify values and information about what the real background story was.

Towards the end of that first term, we did an employee engagement survey and that was really interesting and excellent because a lot of times you think you know what is going on and you do to a certain point, but then there are always a lot of undercurrents and information that isn't readily available. So, this engagement survey helped give us a lot of information from a lot of people and gave us a lot of information about how we could move forward as a district.

At the end of those four years, we had our superintendent leave us for another position in another district, and I believe that was very close to the end of the school year. We had to scramble and find a new superintendent. Luckily, we had an amazing coach or guide who helped us through the process and the wonderful result of that was that we have our current superintendent who was able to take some of the information from that employee engagement survey and move us along as a district in the right direction. It was a very interesting time, and it was never boring. I felt really fortunate to have such a thoughtful board that gave such wonderful input and worked through all these challenging issues together. I enjoyed and appreciated the experience and enjoyed the support of everyone on the team."

Richard Franklin

"Despite my youthful appearance I first came to Campbell River School District in 1978 to teach at Pinecrest School so it has been a long association with the district. In my final few words as an elected trustee, I just wanted to thank my fellow trustees, the administration, and the over 900 employees of School District 72 for the work they do every day to make this district a wonderful place for all the children to be welcomed as learners. And thanks go out to the electorate



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who granted me the opportunity to serve as a trustee for the last 8 years. I also thank the students and parents, the parents who entrusted us with their children to give them an education. Also, I thank the Indigenous people upon whose land our school district operates.

On the other hand, I do not thank our provincial government for the chronic underfunding of public education – for not taking into account the costs of inflation; by not appropriately funding excluded staff; for not accounting for the increased costs of sick pay and cleaning of schools during a pandemic; and I do not thank them for ignoring our repeated and well-founded requests to provide the students of Cedar Elementary School with a safe and culturally appropriate building.

I had some other words for those on the extreme right, but I will save them for later, another time. But I will say that the years ahead will provide the board with many challenges, but by electing people with open minds and honest intentions the students of this district will be well served. So, I wish you all the best and a bright future. Ġilakasla.”

Unfortunately, due to technical difficulties this portion of the meeting was not captured on video.

Chairperson Remarks

Chairperson John Kerr in his opening comments addressed what he said were erroneous comments by two trustee candidates during last week’s trustee forum at the Tidemark Theatre and on social media.

He said that the claim by one candidate that the book, “It’s Perfectly Normal”, is child pornography readily available to students in school libraries and being read to children by teachers is false. He said that there are four copies of this provincially approved resource in SD72 schools, two in Campbell River schools and two copies on Cortes Island. All four books are available to teachers and parents as a resource to help answer questions that may be asked by a student, but they are not in general circulation in the library, nor are they being read to students. Chairperson Kerr added that in his 35 years as a teacher and administrator in schools in Prince George and Campbell River he never once had a student bring a question of this nature to him. He ended by saying that he felt that having the presence of this book in three schools brought forward as though it is a major problem was disingenuous.

Next, he addressed the charge made by another trustee candidate that the current Board of Education is leaving a structural deficit for the new board to deal with and that the outgoing board has been financially irresponsible. He acknowledged that the district does have a structural deficit, but that it is due to the following factors: the board’s choice to use reserves accumulated over previous years to make up for government funding shortfalls in order to maintain services to students (the Ministry of Education has also directed school boards to spend those reserves); the chronic underfunding of public education for at least two decades, including unfunded, extraordinary costs from the pandemic such as extra cleaning costs, personal protective equipment (both unfunded after the first year of the pandemic), an increase in sick leave by staff, and the unfunded requirement to provide five sick days to teachers-teaching on call (substitute teachers); as well as an increase in annual expenses of approximately \$700,000 because of inflation, which the government does not fund.

Chairperson Kerr said that over the course of his eight years as a trustee, the board has always decided to use accumulated reserves rather than resort to staffing reductions and has still managed to deliver a balanced budget.

He pointed out that this year’s budget is also a balanced budget, and that the deficit was addressed by making staff reductions away from the classroom, using money that was surplus to healthcare premiums, reducing school supply budgets because funds that had been allocated for field trips had not been used because of the pandemic, and not replacing district administrative staff that had retired or resigned.

He spoke passionately about how the board believes in accountability both within the system and for itself and cited the strategic plan’s measures of success in graduation rates, literacy and numeracy and requirement of the superintendent to publicly report on these areas, as well as the board’s annual performance review as evidence of this commitment.

In closing, Chairperson Kerr highlighted the board’s creation and implementation of the strategic plan; financial transparency and board oversight policies; new logo created in collaboration with the late Curtis Wilson; support and funding for the Kwakwala and Likwala bilingual program; receipt of seven before- and after-school childcare facilities;



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and hiring of a new superintendent and two associate superintendents as some of the board's many accomplishments over the last term. He stated that his only regret was that they weren't successful in convincing the Ministry to fund a replacement for Cedar Elementary School and hoped that it would be a continued priority for the next board.

Watch this segment: 0:00:51

Superintendent Remarks

Superintendent Jeremy Morrow started his remarks by sharing that district enrolment numbers are showing the district at approximately 80 students over last year's enrollment for a total student enrolment of approximately 5,600 students. Within that 5,600 approximately 22 percent self-identify as Indigenous, five percent are English language or second dialect learners, and approximately 14 percent of our student population are designated as having unique or diverse needs.

Superintendent Morrow continued by sharing an observation that he had from a recent school visit. He described witnessing a situation in which a student with diverse needs was quite elevated and watching as the staff were able to compassionately de-escalate the situation and later, as he was leaving the school, seeing the principal sitting with the student. He spoke of how it is often these more day-to-day moments that are really remarkable and inspiring as they speak to the true nature of the work that is done in schools.

He highlighted that World Teachers' Day was at the beginning of the month and spoke of how the role of educators continues to get more and more complex each year. The week of October 17-21 is National School Bus Safety Week and Superintendent Morrow also acknowledged the school bus drivers who are the first and last impression of school each day for approximately 1,500 students. He spoke of SD72 bus drivers' dedication to safety, as well as how that includes the way in which students experience their bus ride and thanked them for the tremendous work they do.

To end his remarks, Superintendent Morrow thanked the outgoing board for their dedicated service and advocacy and expressed his appreciation for the incumbent and new candidates that have put their name forward in service of children in our community.

Watch this segment: 0:10:12

School District Joins Community Agencies at 'Situation Table' to Help Those in Crisis

School District 72 is one of several community organizations and agencies to come together at a weekly 'Situation Table' to help those in crisis within the community. Individuals in crisis may be at an elevated risk of harm to themselves, others, or the community at large.

Led and supported by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, situation tables in communities throughout the province help front line staff from public safety, health and social service sectors identify vulnerable people and quickly and collaboratively connect them to services before they experience a negative or traumatic event.

According to SD72 Learning Support Services Director, Brenna Ewing who sits on the weekly Situation Table meetings, the group considers individuals of all ages who may be in crisis within the community. Situations are brought forward in a confidential meeting and organizations that are connected with the individual or who may be appropriate to help in that particular instance come together to provide a "wrap around approach" to supports. Supports are usually extended to the individual within 24-hours, providing a prompt response.

The Campbell River Situation Table consists of groups like John Howard Society, Sasamans Society, and Victim Services, and is one of 20 situation tables around the province.

The intent of the Situation Table is to reduce the long-term demand on emergency and police resources, increase vulnerable peoples' use of services, and proactively connect people to services.

More information about community Situation Tables can be found [here](#).

Watch this segment: 0:18:16



Literacy Continues to Be an Area of Focus

Student results shows some improvement but still has some opportunities for continued growth and focus, according to Superintendent Morrow.

Presenting this year's Framework for Enhanced Student Learning, Superintendent Morrow acknowledged that there is still disparity of outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and that until this is resolved and all students are successful, the district needs to be relentless in improving outcomes for each student. He also stressed that any time student data is considered each number stands for the outcomes of a person and not just a bottom line.

Campbell River School District's demographic data in comparison to the overall provincial school system still shows a higher-than-average unemployment rate, number of lone parent families, and vulnerability in language and cognitive development for children entering kindergarten.

In considering literacy results, this was the first year of the implementation of a new literacy framework that saw every student from kindergarten to grade 5 screened in fall, winter, and spring. Through these three screeners, the district will be able to see whether literacy interventions are moving students forward not just as a year-over-year comparison, but also within the school year.

According to the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA), district results for grade 4 literacy are towards the lower end of the provincial average and results for grade 7 literacy are below the provincial average. The literacy FSA was revised this year, so it does not show where we are in comparison to previous year district results.

Results on the literacy graduation assessment is also towards the lower end of the provincial average for all students and below the provincial average for Indigenous students, as well as an overall decline from the district's results last year.

Considering report card data, students in K-5 continue to have higher writing outcomes than comprehension and reading outcomes. Students will now be screened three times a year using the DIBELS screener, and this will allow for a more detailed comparison and analysis of our data and to find which schools need added supports. This year's

report includes the final composite marks as a baseline data to be compared next year.

With regards to numeracy results, the district is within the provincial average for grade 4 numeracy results, towards the high end of the provincial average for grade 7 numeracy, and within the provincial average for the numeracy 10 graduation assessment.

There has been significant improvement in completion rates over the last five years, particularly for Indigenous students. The disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous graduation rates also significantly lessened last year.

Superintendent Morrow also shared that the difference between male and female graduation rates in our district is six percent lower for male rates in comparison to female rates, and this is slightly higher than the provincial average of four percent.

He also broke out the school district's Indigenous graduation rate sharing that last year it was 68.9 percent and that the graduation rate for Indigenous females was 79.6 percent compared to 59.6 percent for Indigenous males. A key area of further investigation in the district will be how to further engage and improve these graduation results for male Indigenous students.

The Framework for Enhanced Student Learning Report is available on the district's website at www.sd72.bc.ca under 'What's Happening', 'Reports & Publications'.

Watch this segment: 0:30:40

