

School District 72 Board News

MEETING OF
DEC. 13, 2022

December 14, 2022
INFORMATION RELEASE

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Minutes are available from the school district website at www.sd72.bc.ca.

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<https://youtu.be/1tBQidABY8c>

Chairperson Remarks

In her opening remarks, Chairperson Kat Eddy shared that the board's term started with trustees attending their first BC School Trustees' Association (BCSTA) conference entitled, "Better Boards, Brighter Futures." Chairperson Eddy spoke to the importance of BCSTA, and the professional development offered through those sessions given the number of newly elected trustees around the province in both the 2018 and 2022 elections.

She said that facilitators challenged trustees to look to create spaces where children feel safe, seek and lean into Indigenous ways of knowing, being and learning, examine the measurements of success in the education system, and reflect on whether what we teach really translates into real world skills for tomorrow's necessities.

Chairperson Eddy continued by stating that the board was pleased with the successful negotiations and ratifications of the provincial and local teacher contracts and were happy that, as we head into the holidays, labour contracts do not need to weigh on teachers' minds.

In closing, she acknowledged all district staff for the extra sacrifices they made to carry the children under our care through the extraordinary times of the last two years and wished everyone a safe and relaxing holiday season.

Watch: 0:00:54

Superintendent Remarks

Superintendent Jeremy Morrow started his remarks by thanking district staff and the community for taking time to respond to the board's request for feedback as they consider the next strategic plan. The district received 896 responses to the online survey that closed on December 9, of which 566 responses were from parents, 77 from interested community

members and the rest from district staff and students. He shared that there are plans to gather more feedback from students early in the new year.

He continued by acknowledging that December is a busy time for schools with learning, spirit days and winter celebrations and thanked parents for their support with these school activities, as well as their patience and understanding on the two recent snow days. Superintendent Morrow shared some examples of the winter cheer happening throughout the district and highlighted that several schools have also been heavily involved in fundraising and contributing to charitable causes including some friendly competition between schools.

He also shared that as part of the distribution of the \$607,000 student and family affordability funding that the district received \$45,000 is being used to continue to provide food support to students and families through the winter break.

In January, consultations will begin with the district's calendar committee to develop the district's calendars for the next three years. The calendars are required by the Ministry of Education and Child Care before the end of March. In speaking about the calendar development, Superintendent Morrow shared a letter that he recently received from a student at Ocean Grove and his fellow classmates, advocating for a four-day school week. He spoke about how he visited the class to field Zachary and his classmates' tough questions and thoughts on what the best parts about are being in school.

Lastly, Superintendent Morrow also wished all students, staff, and community a safe and wonderful winter break.

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Update on Health Guidance

As requested by the board at their last public meeting, Associate Superintendent Morgan Kyle provided an update that the district recently received information from the North Island Medical Health Officer Dr. Charmaine Enns that influenza was the respiratory illness most circulating within the community. Health guidance continues to be for regular handwashing, staying home when not feeling well, and for all ages to get their COVID vaccine and flu shot.

The Vancouver Island medical health officers asked the district to forward a letter to families about the availability of flu clinics and that was distributed to schools last week.

Watch this segment: [0:10:40](#)

Quadra Wetland Project Restores School Field and Provides Environmental Learning

Quadra Elementary had long had a marshy school field that just seemed to hold the water and it was this problem that inspired teacher Sheldon Ethridge combine his passion for outdoor learning and ultimately champion the restoration of what used to be wetland at the end of the school's field.

In a presentation to the board, Ethridge and Quadra Elementary Principal Lorill Vining shared how the wetland is now well on its way to restoring important habitat for species at risk, climate change adaptation and resilience, and providing a rich nature-based learning environment for students and staff.

The wetland restoration was also a natural extension of the school's Habitat Conservation and Trust's Wild School designation and way to build upon the students' previous learning about Quadra Island watersheds.

In September 2021, Quadra Elementary's wetland project was selected for priority funding from the BC Wildlife Federation's Wetlands Education Program. With support from the school principal, superintendent, operations manager, First Nations, Strathcona Regional District and Ministry of Transportation, Ethridge had contacted the Wetlands Education Program as they work to restore, enhance, and conserve wetlands across the province.

The Wetlands Education Program provided local restoration specialist Miranda Cross to design and help with project management of the wetland construction and over the next year, there were consultations and collaboration with the We Wai Kai, Wei Wai Kum, Homalco and Klahoose First Nations, as well as permitting from the Province of BC and Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

The project was very focused on including traditional ecological knowledge and We Wai Kai elders and guardians culturally monitored the project and assisted with planting. A traditional blessing ceremony was also held in the spring of 2022.

The project to restore the wetland and associated planted area of close to 25,000 square feet broke ground on August 15, 2022. Over 500 indigenous trees, shrubs and plants were added back into the area and 130 students planted, watered, and mulched the new wetland.

With thanks to the efforts of staff and community members, including the Quadra Fire Department, the plantings were able to survive the dry summer and according to Principal Lorill Vining the wetland is doing its job as the school field has already started to heal and is no longer marshy.

The restoration obviously has important environmental significance as it will help to mitigate the impacts of wildfire, floods, and extreme weather events by capturing, cleaning, and storing water and capturing and storing carbon, but it also has important educational significance.

School greening projects like these provide easy, daily hands-on access to nature, the opportunity to foster a sense of wonder and care for the environment in students. Ethridge also shared his hope that the wetland could be used as a space for learning across the entire school district for K-12 science, math, and social studies lessons in monitoring the growth and health of the wetland.

The school is hoping to work with the We Wai Kai First Nation on a traditional name for the wetland and will be looking to have students create interpretive signs with thanks to some additional funding from the Quadra Literacy and Wild School Program.



Other funding partners included Environment and Climate Change Canada, Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia, the provincial government, Wildlife Habitat Canada, Watersheds BC and the Healthy Watersheds Initiative.

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District Launches New Parent Portal and App to Further Engage Families

The school district has launched a new parent portal website and mobile app as an additional way to communicate with families and help them stay on top of all the information they need about their child's school.

Communications Manager Jennifer Patrick and District Educational Technology Coordinator Shannon Hagen gave the board an overview of the new portal and app, which were rolled out district-wide in the middle of November after being tested with École des Deux Mondes Elementary, Quadra Elementary and several middle and secondary classrooms.

The new parent portal is a website that can be accessed through any internet browser and the mobile app is available for download from the App Store or Google Play for IOS and Android devices.

Both the parent portal and the app pull news, events, and emergency notifications posted on the school district and schools' websites. It also shares student specific information such as emergency contact information on file at the school, their child's absences, and final report card grades. It may also include assignment and class information if the teacher chooses.

With the app installed on a cell phone and notifications enabled, parents can now get real-time emergency notifications, like bus notices and school closures, directly on their cell phone.

Parents create an account using the email address they have on file at their child's school. As part of that account creation, the district uses a multi-factor authentication process where parents are then emailed a verification code to the email address that the school district has on file, and they must enter that code to verify their account. The portal and app then matches their email address to their children's school file.

Staff and other interested community members can also download and log into the mobile app using the guest login and select any of the district and school websites that they would like to follow to receive general news and events.

The district will be reaching out to parents in February to seek feedback on the app, as well as more information about how they like to receive information to further inform how the district and schools communicate with families.

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School Boards Across the Province Seek Emergency Funding for Inflationary Cost Pressures

Vice-Chair Craig Gillis shared that at the BC School Trustee Association's Provincial Council meeting all 60 school districts unanimously passed a motion to urge the Ministry of Education and Child Care to provide emergency funding adjustments to the February budgets to address inflationary cost pressures on school districts.

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