

VSB Vancouver
School Board

2022-2023

CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT



With deep gratitude and respect, we are honoured to be learning and unlearning on the ancestral and unceded lands of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) & səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation).

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Message from the Chair



The Vancouver School Board believes an effective public education system will prepare students to be active, productive

and socially responsible citizens. To achieve this, we work to foster school communities where students can learn, see themselves, feel supported and connected so they develop a love of learning and become lifelong learners. It has been my honour to be elected by you, and a privilege to be elected by my colleagues to serve as Chair of the Board.

As the first year of our term draws to a close, I am deeply proud of our work serving students and our community. We made decisions that truly improve our school system, including:

- Approved a five-year capital plan prioritizing a new school in Olympic Village.
- Enhanced seismic safety for students through eight projects – one approved project, three ongoing and four completed.
- Adopted a balanced budget without surplus funds to address VSB's structural deficit.
- Created a partnership improving financial literacy for more than 1,200 students.
- Provided funds to expand hot lunches for Vancouver students.
- Reinstated a School Liaison Officer program to enhance school safety.
- Approved a new policy advancing child care services at schools.

- Advanced our reconciliation journey by aligning our policies and practices with the UN Declaration of Rights for Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls-to-action. Importantly, this includes inviting representatives from Host Nations to our committee tables

While this report details the work of the Board this past year, the achievements highlighted within are the result of hard work and thoughtful input by many. I would like to acknowledge the strong leadership provided by our superintendent and the senior team. Together, District staff work to ensure the operations of the school district are carried out efficiently and effectively. The guidance and wisdom of District staff has proved invaluable to the Board as we carried out our work.

The support, input and guidance of many others also proved equally important to me and my fellow trustees. I wish to express my gratitude to former trustees who offered perspectives and advice since this Board was inducted a little more than a year ago.

With the help of our formal stakeholder groups and Indigenous rights holders, we have learned the importance of collaboration and educating one another. We have relied heavily upon their input to help drive Board decisions.

I want to acknowledge the impact students and their families have had on us as a Board as we continue to work in service to them. We are continually inspired by students' leadership, enthusiasm and optimism.

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Victoria Jung".

Victoria Jung

WORK OF THE BOARD, JANUARY 2023 - SEPTEMBER 2023

9
elected
trustees



15
public board
meetings

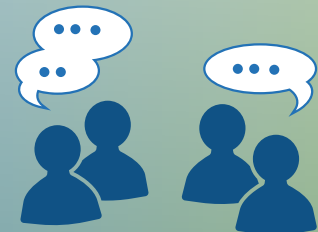
1
student
trustee



145
presenters at
13 delegation meetings



25
trustee
workshops



31
committee
meetings

Newly Elected Board Learning Together

In October 2022, Vancouver voters elected six new trustees and three returning trustees who served on the previous Board. The new Board, inducted November 7, 2022, quickly came together to chart a path to guide the school district to serve students' learning and well-being.

Trustees took time to get to know each other, to learn more about the school district and about its governance role as a Board. As outlined in the *School Act*, the duty of the Board is to lead the education system in the best interest of the students. Trustees not only tended to these duties during Board meetings, but also as members of standing committees, as liaisons to civic committees as well as to schools.

As a newly elected Board, trustees became members of the British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) and participated in its trustee academy. These sessions helped trustees gain a strong foundation in their role as trustees and as a Board. Curated under the banner "building a new board: elected, engaged and empowered," the academy provided a solid grounding in topics including provincial funding, board budgets, effective meeting strategies and delivering a mandate for the students and school communities served by school boards.

Trustees also attended workshops by VSB staff and other experts to learn more about the District's operations and activities.

Newly Elected Board and Student Trustee



Victoria Jung
Chair



Preeti Faridkot
Vice-Chair



Lois Chan-Pedley
Trustee



Alfred Chien
Trustee



Janet Fraser
Trustee



Suzie Mah
Trustee



Jennifer Reddy
Trustee



Christopher Richardson
Trustee



Joshua Zhang
Trustee



Mia Liu
Student Trustee

In addition to staff support, the Board is also advised by representatives of rights holders and VSB's stakeholder groups. Together, they provided invaluable advice and support to the Board.

The Board's learning and work extends beyond meeting rooms. Trustees participated in many activities, events and learning opportunities throughout Vancouver. These included visits to schools and taking part in District events including the student-led annual Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Conference and the Sustainability Conference. Seeing, hearing and engaging with students, their families and education teams provides valuable perspectives to the Board's work.

Many projects and initiatives under the Board's charge were initiated several years ago. To ensure seamless oversight of these projects, trustees took part in briefing sessions, workshops, reviewed project information and joined tours.

Trustees also visited three schools to learn more about the seismic mitigation program. The field trip included visits to Bayview, Cavell and Livingstone elementary schools.

Ensuring students attend safe learning environments is not limited to structural matters; it also includes the culture of the school district. The Board's strategic plan, known as the Education Plan, includes an equity statement that calls to actively fight systems of oppression through relationship building. To help ensure the Board's ability to do so, all trustees completed anti-racism and non-discrimination training in addition to participating in other professional development and learning opportunities by the school district and by the BCSTA.



“Schools are a place to learn new things, and that extends to trustees as well! While meeting with students and staff throughout Vancouver’s schools, we learn first-hand what matters most to them and see how their learning is supported.”

Trustee Chien

“As a Board, we make decisions that affect students, their families and staff. Thanks to the thoughtful input and perspectives of stakeholder group representatives and Indigenous rights holders, we are better able to make good decisions.”

Trustee Richardson



Our Roles as Stewards

Under the *School Act*, the Board has a duty to steward the Districts' resources. Important aspects of this work include adopting a balanced budget and deciding about facilities matters in alignment with the Education Plan.

At the June 2023 public meeting, the Board approved a five-year capital plan for submission to the Ministry of Education and Child Care (Ministry). That plan highlighted VSB's capital priorities particularly requesting Ministry approval for a new school in Olympic Village. The Board continues to work with the Ministry to address school facilities needs including school expansions, upgrades and most importantly, ensure every student learns in a seismically safe school.

In July 2023, the Ministry announced the approval of a seismic upgrade project at Sir Wilfred Grenfell Elementary School. The project will provide upgrades to the school's foundation and walls, new ceilings and floors. Under separate funding approval, the school will also get accessibility improvements, such as adding a ramp and elevator. Electrical systems will be replaced and new lighting will also be installed as part of the project. Construction is expected to begin in spring 2025 and with an expected completion by fall 2026. During construction, students and staff will be temporarily accommodated at the South Hill swing site.

Seismic projects at David Lloyd George Elementary, Hamber Secondary School, and Henry Hudson Elementary also continued. As

part of the work at the Henry Hudson site, a formal request was made by Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish) Nation to repurpose and relocate the Little Yellow Building on the school's grounds to their territory in North Vancouver. Together with the support of the City of Vancouver, the Park Board and others, the building was relocated in August 2023. It will be upgraded to help address the Nation's infrastructure needs and be used as a dedicated space to teach little ones Skwxwú7mesh sníchim, the Squamish language, and immerse future generations in the Nation's culture and heritage.



“Neighbourhood schools are the heart of our communities and news about another much-needed seismic upgrade project at Grenfell is most welcomed. We look forward to supporting more seismically safe schools.”

Trustee Reddy





Other accomplishments under the seismic mitigation program included the completion of projects at Weir, Livingstone and Bayview elementary schools as well as wəkw'aḥəs tə syaqwəm (formerly known as Begbie Elementary). In December 2022, the gift of the school's new name was celebrated by students, staff and members of Musqueam. The new həḥqəmiḥəm name gifted to the school means, "the sun rising over the horizon." wəkw'aḥəs tə syaqwəm was selected in collaboration with the Musqueam Language and Culture Department in recognition of Vancouver's Hastings-Sunrise neighbourhood where the school is located, and – like a sunrise – the new beginning for the school community.

The Board also decided other important facilities matters including declaration of Queen Elizabeth Annex (QEA) as surplus to the school district's educational needs. Under the previous Board's term, QEA was closed and ceased enrolling VSB students at the end of June 2022. The QEA site is now leased to the Conseil scolaire francophone (CSF), the province's publicly funded French-language school board. The site now serves the educational needs of French-language education rights holders.

In addition to these priority facilities decisions, the Board also passed a balanced budget for the 2023-2024 school year. This budget was developed without the use of surplus funds – a first in years and an important step to address the ongoing structural deficit at VSB.



"It's no small feat to establish and balance the budget for British Columbia's second largest school district. Together with a lot of hard work and diligence by the Board and staff, with input and feedback from stakeholder groups and the public, we are proud that we passed a balanced budget that focussed on support for students and school communities here in Vancouver."

Trustee Zhang



Advancing Outcomes for Students

As a governance body, the Board is charged with the responsibility of providing an education system that is organized and operated in the best interests of the students it serves. The Board took several steps to advance the Education Plan. This included supporting goals to improve student achievement, physical and mental well-being, and belonging, and to increase students' literacy, numeracy, and deep, critical and creative thinking skills.

More than 1,200 students gained valuable and life-essential knowledge through financial literacy courses offered by the Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia following the establishment of a partnership with the Board.

The Board also approved a Filipino Language and Culture Course Grades 10/11. A Board authorized course supports an equitable learning environment where every student can experience a deep sense of belonging and is free to pursue pathways of learning in ways that are authentic to themselves.

Additionally, in September 2023, the Board approved the school district's annual Framework for Enhanced Student Learning (FESL) report for submission to the Ministry of Education and Child Care. The report details the results of assessments to determine outcomes for students in areas of intellectual, human and social, and career

development. The FESL also charts a path to improve upon those outcomes. Based on the information detailed in VSB's 2022-2023 report, it is evident that advancements in students outcomes are taking hold. There remain inequities in outcomes of students who identify as Indigenous, who are learning English and who have diverse learning needs. While the outcome-gap is narrowing, the Board continues to support staff's efforts to refine pedagogical strategies and the removal of barriers to students' learning and personal development. Through intentional, specific and meaningful approaches, parity in academic achievement can be realized and overall well-being for students enhanced.



Improving school environments to ensure they are safe, caring, welcoming and inclusive places for students also means ensuring students are supported to be able to learn. A key component of that is nutrition. In addition to several programs providing meals to students supported by community partners, the Board approved a plan to allocate funding from the provincial government under its feeding futures grant. The Board approved using \$1.8 million of the fund to offset the District food program cost in the District's operating fund. The remaining \$3.8 million in funding will support five areas:

- \$1.0 million to expand the hot meal production at Britannia Secondary's commissary kitchen –serving students throughout Vancouver.
- \$1.1 million to partially offset school food program costs charged to CommunityLINK funding.
- \$0.25 million to replace elementary school kitchen equipment.
- \$0.20 million for programs with community partners.
- \$1.2 million to expand the hot meal production from Templeton Secondary's commissary kitchen and take over operations of seven third-party run cafeterias.



“Healthy, nutritious food is a fundamental right for every single student and necessary for their learning and well-being. Thanks to the efforts of many and funding, we are one step closer to ensuring food security for every learner in VSB schools.”

Trustee Chan-Pedley



Prioritizing Student Voice + Engaging with Students

Student voice, agency and leadership as well as engaging with students and the broader community are priorities for the Board. Spending time with students and facilitating their leadership is a pillar of the Board’s work.

The adopted 2023-2024 school year budget demonstrates the Board’s commitment to student voice and agency with the approval of funds for two \$100,000 student-led initiatives: student-led sustainability projects and student leadership. The VDSC is helping to shape the criteria used to allocate these funds.

Trustees also visited schools and attended student-led events including the District Science Fair as well as the annual Sustainability Conference and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion conferences. These opportunities, along with invitations to other school events were a highlight in trustees’ calendars. One highlight of this year’s schedule was the annual Vancouver Pride Parade during which several trustees marched alongside students, staff and their families. The day was a celebration of diversity and inclusion, showing support for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.



“Student leadership is about empowering the youth of today to take action on building brighter tomorrows. This vision is now becoming a reality – thanks to supports provided generously by the Board!”

Student trustee Liu





Setting Policies

A priority for the Board is ensuring the alignment among school, District and provincial education plans. In addition to establishing and amending policies previously detailed, the Board considered and adopted several others to foster school communities that meet the needs of students.

In November 2022, the Board passed a motion to implement a revised School Liaison Officer (SLO) program for the 2023-2024 school year. The reimagined program began in September 2023, with 15 officers assigned to secondary schools. Their work includes the delivery of safety and crime prevention programs, providing advice and guidance to staff, students and their families who seek support, as well as being a resource to students, administrators and staff.

The Board also approved amendments to Policy 17: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression. The policy's approval not only ensures it is relevant for today's learners, but also demonstrates the Board's commitment to ensure students, their families and staff who are members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities are seen, heard, feel valued and connected to Vancouver's public education system.

In May 2023, the Board also approved Policy 22: Child Care Services in District Facilities. While the funding and regulation of licensed child care is primarily a provincial government responsibility, the Board along with the community stakeholders, can play a significant role in planning and coordinating child care services.

This new policy

- Affirms the District's long-standing commitment to working with licenced non-profit societies and/or associations that deliver quality, inclusive, accessible and affordable child care within District facilities.
- Confirms the Board's commitment to continuing to expand access to child care programming offered on Board property.
- Provides guidance about how the Board will work with child care providers to support the provision of child care programs on Board property between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 6 p.m. on business days.
- Defines the process by which the Board may consider taking on the role of operating child care programs.

The Board also adopted Policy 23: Public Interest Disclosure that demonstrates its committed to honesty, integrity and accountability in its operations, programs and services as well its dedication to promote a culture of openness and transparency. The new policy was adopted to meet the provisions of the British Columbia *Public Interest Disclosure Act* (PIDA).

The Board's role to effectively govern the public education system in Vancouver requires strong, clear policy and working structures. As such, this year, several updates were made to the Board's standing committees. This included renaming of the student learning and well-being committee to the education



plan committee. At the October 2023 public Board meeting, amendments to Board Policy 8: Board Committees were approved following extensive consideration at the policy and governance committee. The Board now has four standing committees, through which member trustees forward matters for consideration to the Board. The update to this policy will see an invitation extended to Indigenous rights holders – x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) & səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation) – welcoming representatives to attend the standing committees and share perspectives from their communities. Together, with representatives of the Board’s formal stakeholder groups, as well of DPAC and VDSC, the input of attendees representing the Host Nations will broaden the input the Board considers as it carries out its duties.

Furthermore, to ensure appropriate oversight of the education system, the Board also approved an amended Appeal Policy and Procedures Bylaw in October 2023. The amendments align with updates from the Ministry of Education and Child Care issued in November 2022.



“We are pleased to see the return of the SLO program in VSB schools this school year. Thanks to the input and feedback by students, members of the public and others, this partnership with the VPD will help share safety advice for students, build community and support our school system.”

Trustee Faridkot

“Safe, reliable and affordable child care is good for families, children and society as a whole. Parents can rest assured that their children are well cared for and safe while they work, children can step into their lifelong learning journeys, and we know it helps address poverty and contributes to a more equitable society.”

Trustee Fraser



Continuing Our Reconciliation Journey

Advancing the reconciliation journey with First Nations, Métis and Inuit community members was also a key focus for the Board in the first year of its term. As outlined previously, several steps were made to align Board policies and practices in a manner consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the calls-to-action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. These advances were informed by building stronger relationships with the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) & səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation).

Equally beneficial to the Board's work to advance reconciliation are the ongoing efforts of trustees to learn truths about the impacts of colonialism as well as about Indigenous histories, traditions, cultures and contributions to BC's school system and

society at large. A great part of this learning by trustees took place during community events such as canoe races, where the teachings of canoe culture were shared. Several trustees also took part in the National Indigenous Peoples Day event held at the Education Centre that included storytelling, truth sharing, cultural performances and activities. Additionally, in September 2023, several trustees attended the unveiling of a Reconciliation Blanket and Cedar Panel in the Education Centre's boardroom. The blanket was designed, woven and gifted by Musqueam artist Debra Sparrow and is adorned under a cedar panel crafted by Chris Sparrow, also of Musqueam. During the ceremony, which was livestreamed to students throughout the District, Debra Sparrow shared that a replica blanket would be gifted to each school, so the teachings and representation of Musqueam weaving could be shared with all.



Advocacy

Advocacy plays a significant role in the Board's work and is fundamental to its duties in service of students and school communities across Vancouver. In addition to meeting with the Honourable Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care, about the urgency of beginning construction on a new school in Olympic Village, the Board's advocacy undertakings included additional efforts on the provincial front.

At the annual general meeting of the BCSTA, a motion presented by the Vancouver School Board was overwhelmingly adopted that supports the Centre for Family Equity (previously Single Mothers' Alliance) campaign

for the provision of free transit for youth ages 13 to 18. Transit access can be a barrier for students who experience financial challenges and supporting their campaign is one way to help remove barriers, address poverty and create a more equitable society.

The Board also played an active role in the advocacy work of the BCSTA provincial council which includes calls on the government to support youth mental health, to increase the pay equity supplement for school districts and requesting that the Minister of Education and Child Care amplify support for equity, diversity and inclusion to help address misinformation in the public commentary about SOGI 123.





Additionally, as part of the provincial government’s annual budget development engagement process, the Board submitted three recommendations:

- Improve accessibility for students by reinstating funding to provide better accessibility for students with complex needs.
- Additional funding support aligning with the Mental Health in Schools Strategy.
- Accelerate and expand the Seismic Mitigation Program, particularly in Vancouver.

Trustee-school liaisons were also active in sharing the education sector’s perspective with civic committees and other provincial councils, as well as ensuring information and activities from these bodies were fully shared with the Board.

Trustees also began to re-examine the Board’s own advocacy efforts by considering next steps to reimagine an advocacy committee that includes trustees working with education stakeholder representatives. The VSB advocacy committee will develop terms of reference and will provide advice through the Board’s policy and governance committee.



“As the local leaders of our public education system, school boards not only have a job to oversee that system, but to make it better. By effectively anticipating, identifying, communicating and addressing emerging educational needs and issues by collectively working with staff, parents, students and the community at large, our efforts and collective voices can raise awareness and marshal support for important steps that can truly impact students’ learning and their overall well-being.”

Trustee Mah



In closing

The Board's accomplishments in year one of its four-year term demonstrate a strong commitment by trustees – as individually elected officials and a collective governing body – to support and enhance the public education system. Work to update and advance governance structures will help enable efficient and effective decision-making moving forward. Learning together – from one another, from staff and students as well as their families – was a key focus for the Board as it assumed its responsibilities following the municipal election.

The Board formed relationships at the provincial and municipal levels, at schools, with rights holders, staff, students and their families. The Board continues to improve learning environments and opportunities for students. The Vancouver School Board remains dedicated to advancing equity and to making decisions informed by humility, integrity and accountability.