



Vancouver Board of Education

School District No. 39

BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

1580 West Broadway

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Tuesday, October 27, 2009

Dear VSB Employee:

On behalf of the Vancouver Board of Education, I would like to welcome you to the 2009/10 school year.

Each fall brings a sense of renewal, optimism and promise in our schools — a time when we envision and plan for endless possibilities and successes for students. This fall carries with it that hope and enthusiasm despite our district's continued and considerable financial challenges.

Our focus in Vancouver schools this year is success for all students, including those with English as a second language, Aboriginal learners and students with special learning needs. We will also focus on literacy across the grade levels. We are confident that with that concentrated focus our schools will continue to be among the best in the world, preparing our students to be fully engaged citizens with the skills and knowledge they need to fulfill their individual potential.

Last June, the Vancouver School Board, the provincial government and local Aboriginal communities signed the district's Aboriginal Education Enhancement agreement. That historic agreement will ensure Aboriginal culture is integrated in public schools, and that Aboriginal communities are involved in the design of programs, services and curriculum delivery aimed at improving Aboriginal student learning outcomes.

The district continues to expand its early intervention programs, offering intensive one-to-one support for Grade 1 students who lag behind their peers in reading, as research supports that the vast majority of students who receive support early on goes on to succeed in later years. The district has also offered extensive autism spectrum disorder (ASD) training for staff, increasing our ability to meet the needs of our increasing population of students affected by ASD.

Our high-school students continue to succeed in earning admission and scholarships to some of the world's best universities. Recognizing, however, that university is not for every student, we've increased access to trades and apprenticeship courses and are enabling students to receive credit for the courses in both high school and post-secondary institutions.

We are also focused on becoming a greener school district. In recent months, we've created a partnership between our educational and operational services staff to identify ways to reduce our carbon footprint while our students and staff continue to develop innovative strategies to make our schools more environmentally sustainable.

Board of School Trustees:

Patti Bacchus - Chairperson

Jane Bouey - Vice-Chairperson

Allan Blakey Ken Clement Ken Denike

Carol Gibson Sharon Gregson Mike Lombardi

Allan Wong

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While there is much to celebrate, there is also a sense of uncertainty and apprehension about the school district's financial picture in the midst of government restraint. The toll of year-after-year funding shortfalls makes it increasingly difficult to provide the services and resources we believe students require for success.

Since the 2002-03 school year, the Vancouver School Board has cut more than \$40 million from its operating budget. In late August, the Ministry of Education advised us that a further \$11 million was being cut from our budget with the cancellation of our Annual Facilities Grant funding and a claw back of \$400,000 that we had been allocated in June.

As we look ahead, the financial picture does not improve, unless the provincial government changes direction to fund the rising, fixed costs of our district. We are currently predicting a shortfall between \$15 and \$25 million for 2010-11, followed by back-to-back shortfalls of \$6.5 million.

Trustees believe that investing in our children's education is the best economic stimulus and the way to build a strong and healthy economy and society. Trustees continue to advocate for funding to protect and strengthen our world-class public school system. I, along with my colleagues on the board, am committed to working tirelessly to ensure the resources are in place to meet our students' learning needs.

Despite the financial challenges that lay ahead, we are enthusiastic about the school year and continue to recognize the outstanding commitment of our teachers, administrators and staff to providing Vancouver's students with the best possible educational opportunities.

On behalf of the board, please accept our best wishes for a successful school year. And finally, thank you for your continued support for Vancouver public schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "P Bacchus".

Patti Bacchus
Chair, Vancouver Board of Education