

May 30, 2023

Welcome to our guests here with us and a special welcome to our special student guests.

Do a Google search of school boards and you will find many articles and videos of school board meetings. To many people this may be their only view into what a school board does. School boards in the United States appear to be hyper partisan environments that unfortunately put ideologies ahead of children.

In some provinces in this country, there seems to be a feeling that school boards do nothing, and in fact, some provinces are trying to eliminate school boards entirely. In 2018, Nova Scotia eliminated all publicly elected school boards and just weeks ago, Manitoba decided to replace their boards of education with a new Provincial Education Authority.

School boards do important work, and what gets lost in hyper partisan environments, and in environments where senior levels of government are looking to centralize authority over schools, is local issues. Local issues and local context, and the needs of students and their families.

Local context matters now more than ever.

Having a locally democratically, elected school board is essential to the health of any public education system in Canada. In Burnaby, we are Burnaby elected to support all students with our policies and our governance. All seven trustees live in Burnaby and our children, grandchildren, and other loved ones attend or have attended Burnaby schools. This allows us, as a group, to be embedded in Burnaby local issues and Burnaby local context. This understanding, informs and augments our advocacy.

As I mentioned in the February Board Chair Report, this Board has been advocating on emergent issues. Issues for the Burnaby School District that need attention and action from other levels of government.

Over the span of last few months, as a Board, we have met face-to-face with Burnaby Mayor and Council, Burnaby MPs, and Burnaby MLAs along with the Minister of Education and Child Care. The Board would like to thank staff and educational leaders throughout the Burnaby School District for supporting this Board in our advocacy efforts.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to publicly acknowledge and thank our elected colleagues at the city, the province, and federally for taking their time to listen to the Burnaby School District, and we thank you for the future energy required to take action.

Actions that we will take together, and that will result in better supporting learning environments in Burnaby and that allow every Burnaby student to feel included and to succeed.

Bill Brassington, Chair
Burnaby Board of Education