

# The Highlighter

## January 5, 2021

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### Board Chair

**Safety Audit** – Staff's safety audit report and the Municipality of North Cowichan's management review of homelessness/addiction in the York Road Corridor should both be completed by the February Board meeting, at which time Trustees can bring the motion to consider the closure of Quamichan campus back to the table.

**BCSTA** –Trustee Spilsbury shared highlights of a recent Zoom call with Deputy Public Health Officer Dr Gustafson. A fall review of the COVID cases indicated that because schools are controlled spaces with protocols in place for access/cleaning, they are four times safer than the community. A reduction in cases is anticipated after spring break due to the availability of vaccines and the end of winter conditions. The new Minister of Education, The Honourable Jennifer Whiteside, joined the call to introduce herself.

### Education

**Introduction of Wayne Smiley** – The Superintendent introduced Wayne Smiley, a long-term member of the Technical Services Department, who took over the role of Manager of Student Information Systems on December 19, 2020.

**Introduction of Chris Baker** – The Superintendent welcomed and introduced Chris Baker, who assumed the role of Capital Coordinator on January 4, 2021, following the retirement of Lonnie Schermerhorn. Chris previously held a similar role with the Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District.

**International Student Program Update** – Liz Hollands-Gamble, the District Principal of International Student Programs, provided an update on the Program to Trustees. The Program started the year with 64 students, and will welcome another 30+ students in January, who will spend two weeks at quarantine camp in Lake Cowichan. In April, 20+ students will arrive and be primarily hosted by Cowichan Secondary and Frances Kelsey Secondary Schools before staying for a summer program. It is anticipated that by the end of summer vaccines will be required for incoming students, but likely a small part of the quarantine process will continue. Plans have been built to cater to these requirements and to ensure that students will continue to land and have a safe and healthy entry for September.



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Mrs. Hollands-Gamble finished her report by thanking Superintendent Robyn Gray and Secretary-Treasurer Jason Sandquist for their support of the program and for always keeping it a priority, and thanking Trustees for believing in what the program brings to our community as a whole and trusting in her and the staff to be great providers of a strong program with great results for kids. The Secretary-Treasurer noted that when Mrs. Hollands-Gamble took over the Program it had only 12 students, but under her leadership it grew to over 280 students plus summer programs. Trustees congratulated Mrs. Hollands-Gamble on her upcoming retirement and thanked her for her exceptional skills and passion which led to the success of the program. She built an amazing program that was lauded in BC and beyond. She is amazingly talented and will be greatly missed.

**Personnel Updates** – Recent personnel updates were announced:

- District Principal of International Education (12-month temporary position) - Alison Keple, effective February 1, 2021
- Principal Open Learning - Alternate, CVOLC, Careers, DL (6-month temporary position) - Kevin van der Linden, effective February 1, 2021
- Vice-Principal DL Virtual Classroom (6-month temporary position) - Camila Bhandari, effective January 1, 2021
- District Coordinator Inclusion Support (6-month temporary position) - Lindy Thompson, effective January 1, 2021

**Kindergarten Registration** - Staff have been working hard to create an online registration process. Registration for the District's French Immersion and Mill Bay Nature School programs will take place between January 18 – 22, 2021. As in the past, if there are wait lists for these programs a lottery process will be held. Registration for catchment schools will take place January 25 – 29, 2021.

**Distance Learning Virtual Classroom Program (DLVC)** – This Program was developed in December. Teachers in the Program have received inservice and are focusing on fine tuning communication with families, schools, the administration in those schools, and the District Vice-Principal overseeing the Program. In addition, technology is being increased to improve the virtual classroom pedagogical approach.

**Superintendent's Update:**

Acknowledgements: The Superintendent thanked staff in Payroll, Accounting and Operations who were hard at work during the winter break.

Foundation Skills Assessment: Students in Grades 4 and 7 will write the assessment between January 18 and February 26, 2021.

Ignite Sans Bite: The District Learning Team continues to work on professional learning opportunities for staff, with events in this series taking place on February 11 and May 13, 2021.

## Business

**Funding Announcement** – The Secretary-Treasurer provided an overview of the funding announcement which was released during the winter break. The standard enrollment and special needs enrollment funding remained consistent. Salary differential funding, which is dynamic as it's based on the Province's average teacher salary, decreased by \$127K. This reduction, combined with a previously predicted shortfall of \$94K, drops the projected remaining surplus to just over \$1.5M. During the break it was confirmed that the District will receive \$9.2M in Classroom Enhancement Funds to cover costs associated with the restored collective agreement. The holdback from the federal Safe Return to School Grant has been allocated and the Board will receive an additional \$127,814. This hadn't been budgeted for, and could be used to offset reductions in the Operating Budget.

**Year-End Financial Projection** – As of November 30, 2020 the District had approximately \$35K higher revenue than originally projected, mainly due to high interest rates on investments. Current salary projections have Principals/Vice-Principals coming in very close to budget, and teachers about \$73K over budget. Casual replacements were lower than anticipated in September and October, but November rates were about 30% higher than normal. The overall salary projection is \$437K under budget on a \$66M budget. The overall year-end projection is for a \$473K surplus.

## Schedule of Upcoming Meetings and Events

MEETING	DATE/TIME	LOCATION
Board Ad Hoc COVID Transition Team Meeting	January 7, 9:30 a.m.	Via Zoom
Board Planning Meeting	January 12, 4:00 p.m.	Via Zoom
DSAC (Trustee Hutchins)	January 14, 10:00 a.m.	Via Zoom
Advisory Committee Meeting	January 19, 4:30 p.m.	Via Zoom
DPAC (Trustee Thorne)	January 21, 7:00 p.m.	Via Zoom
BEBC Meeting	January 26, 4:00 p.m.	Via Zoom
Early Learning Committee Meeting	January 29, 2:30 p.m.	Via Zoom

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