

The Highlighter

March 7, 2023

Recognition: Rotary Readers and Organizer Elly Ruge

The Board of Education recognized organizer Elly Ruge and the 12 Rotary Readers who read to children in many of our elementary schools. Rotary Readers and District staff met to discuss strategies to incorporate important components of literacy development including rich vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The Rotary Readers are supporting literacy in our schools by modeling and sharing a love of reading. Teachers and school administrators have expressed great appreciation for this partnership. Thank you Elly and the Rotary Readers for the gift of time you are sharing with our learners.

Delegation: Cowichan Valley Arts Council

President Janet Magdanz and Education Coordinator Elke Cole provided information on the Cowichan Valley Arts Council's shows, rental space, outreach events, and online workshops. Activities for youth include after-school workshops, Youth Fine Arts Show, teens open studio and mentoring, and camps during spring break and summer. "In My Head," featuring work from artists aged 13-21, is running through April 1, 2023 at the gallery space in the Cowichan Community Centre.

Delegation: Cowichan Valley International Women's Day Festival - Founder Gayle Hurmuses

International Women's Day was first recognized in 1909. The purpose of the Cowichan Valley International Women's Day Festival is to create a physical platform once a year to showcase women. In 2020 the Festival's theme was leadership, after they discovered that 50% of politicians elected locally are women. The 2021 festival featured guest speaker Audrey George, Manager of the Ts'i'ts'uwatul' Lelum Assisted Living Facility. Poems of support for essential workers were commissioned and read to Audrey. Postcards featuring poems, and postcards listing local reproductive health resources were shared with Trustees. A goal for future events is to connect with schools and have students create and perform content for the festival.

Education

Introduction of Associate Secretary-Treasurer Claudia McMahon – Claudia, who began her role on February 27, was welcomed to the District. She brings wealth of experience from her previous roles including Manager of Financial Services and Utilities at the City of Duncan, and Senior Regulatory Specialist at the BC Utilities Commission, among others.



COWICHAN VALLEY
School District

Introduction of Human Resources & Accounting Coordinator Kerrie Bainbridge – The Board was introduced to Kerrie Bainbridge, who was the successful applicant for the District's new Human Resources & Accounting Coordinator position. Kerrie has worked as a member of the District's Accounting Department for over a decade.

Principal/Vice-Principal Transfer Process Update – Discussions are taking place regarding moves and new assignments for Principals and Vice-Principals. An announcement of administrator assignments for the 2023/2024 school year will take place at the end of April, prior to the teacher staffing process.

School Calendar 2023-2024 – In accordance with local contract language and to align with provincial and federal governments, the District will observe the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on Monday, October 2, 2023. The dates of the 2023-2024 teacher professional development days are still subject to confirmation by our local unions at their spring annual general meetings. Our 2023-2024 school calendar will be finalized once those dates are confirmed in May.

International Women's Day March 8, 2023 - March 8 is International Women's Day, a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality. The Government of Canada's theme for International Women's Day 2023 is "Every Woman Counts", a reminder that all women, from all ages and walks of life, have a place in every aspect of Canadian society. The United Nations Observance of International Women's Day 2023 under the theme "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality" recognizes and celebrates the women and girls who are championing the advancement of transformative technology and digital education. The observance will explore the impact of digital gender gap on widening economic and social inequalities, and it will also spotlight the importance of protecting rights of women and girls in digital spaces and addressing online and gender-based violence.

Superintendent's Update:

Acknowledgments/Appreciation:

- Thank you to District Principal of Instruction and Innovation, Glen Posey and District Tech Support Teacher Lisa Read for their outstanding leadership in the multi-year Vancouver Island Learning Network. Recently over 130 educators from school districts across BC, including 40 educators from our District, were able to gather in Nanaimo for the return of this event. This year's gathering featured fantastic keynote speeches from Dr. Shawn Lennie and Susan Crichton, as well as a desert-themed Digital Escape Room, and ample time to learn and explore the Applied Design, Skills and Technology curriculum as a collective.
- Thanks to Transportation and Operations staff for their work during the recent winter weather. Our bus drivers did a great job transporting students to and from school safely during the icy mornings and afternoons. Operations staff worked to prepare schools for staff and students following the February 28 closure day due to snow and inclement weather.

Skills Regionals Update: Over 30 District students competed at the Skills Canada Regionals on February 22 at VIU Nanaimo, with many bringing home awards and prizes. The medal winners were as follows:

- Carpentry: Gold - Tayden Ross (Cowichan Sec./VIU Dual Credit); Silver - Tobin McLarty (Chemainus Sec./VIU Dual Credit);
- Culinary: Gold - Cynthia Barry (Cowichan Sec./VIU Dual Credit); Silver - Florencia Duchesne Brand (Frances Kelsey Sec./VIU Dual Credit);
- Cabinet Making: Gold - Haruki Ikemura (Cowichan Sec.);
- Hair Stylist: Silver - Taya Clark (Cowichan Sec./VIU Dual Credit);
- Welding: Bronze - Jackson Manuel-Mills (Cowichan Sec./VIU Dual Credit).

The gold medal winners from Regionals advance to the Provincials in Abbotsford on April 19, 2023. The Provincial gold medal winners advance to Nationals in Winnipeg, Manitoba, May 25-26. The gold medal winners at Nationals advance to the 2024 World Skills competition in Leon, France.

Catalyst Update:

- The District Chess Tournament on March 8 at George Bonner Elementary will include categories for students from Grades 2-12. It will be a whole day event with schools eligible to bring two students per category.
- The 18th biannual Young Authors' Conference will be held at Vancouver Island University on May 3 this year. The conference is open to approximately 100 students in the District from Grades 5-12. Students in Grades 5-9 will have an opportunity to attend two sessions with two published authors. In these sessions the authors will comment on the student's writing and also lead some writing activities. The Grade 10-12 students will attend an in-depth full-day seminar with one author.

Pink Shirt Day: Photos from Drinkwater Elementary and Ecole Mt. Prevost on anti-bullying day February 22 were shared with Trustees.

Cowichan Music Festival – Bench and Tansor Choirs: Eighty-three students from Bench Elementary's Grade 3 and Intermediate Choir, led by Ms. Angela MacLean, performed at the Cowichan Music Festival. The adjudicators had overwhelmingly positive comments about the performance, and they won the choir award at the Festival. The Tansor Intermediate Choir consists of students in Grades 4-7, and is led by Christina Taylor. It was an incredible experience for the students to sing on the stage in the Cowichan Theatre as, for quite a few of them, it was their first time in the theatre. The adjudicator was supportive, encouraging, kind, and constructive. At the Festival Gala Concert they were awarded the Duncan Volunteer Fire Department Award for School Choirs.

Ecole Mount Prevost – Le Carnaval: During the week of January 30 - February 3 the children, parents, and staff of Ecole Mount Prevost celebrated the spirit of Carnaval at the school. Highlights included a floor hockey tournament, relay races, a waffle and maple syrup breakfast compliments of Nourish Cowichan, festive mask making, a visit from the Cowichan Valley Capitals Jr. A Hockey Club who played a match versus the grade 7s, daily visits from

Bonhomme, a day of snow, and it all culminated with a Mask and Moustache Parade with festive attire.

Ecole Cobble Hill – Carnaval: Carnaval was celebrated at Ecole Cobble Hill during the week of February 6-10. From the crowning of the Carnaval king and queen on Monday to the Carnaval Parade on Friday, the entire week was filled with fun events to help celebrate French Canadian culture. Highlights included the opening ceremonies, crowning of the king and the queen of Carnaval with mascot, Le Bonhomme Carnaval in attendance, an ArtStarts Bilingual Production, a French film festival, Carnaval-themed races in the gym, canoe races (benches on rolling carts), Métis dancers from the Métis Society teaching students traditional dances, closing ceremonies, and a parade.

Bouldering Competition: Students from Quamichan, Chemanius Secondary, and Cowichan Secondary recently competed in the Vancouver Island Choc and Chalk 1 bouldering (climbing) competition in Victoria (with chocolate and chalk as prizes). Numerous District students found their place on the podium in various categories.

Master's Research Project Approved: Rhonda Cizeron, Vice-Principal with the Cowichan Valley School District, received approval to conduct research entitled "Building a Sense of Belonging: A Vancouver Island High School Study". The research is being conducted to gain an understanding of what elements high school administrators in Vancouver Island School Districts consider effective in developing a sense of belonging amongst staff. The hope is that the research will help develop a better understanding of how to foster a sense of belonging amongst staff as a means to improve student achievement. The research will hopefully help to inform the practices within the community of colleagues in administration on Vancouver Island and beyond.

Spelling of the New Cowichan Secondary Name – Cowichan Tribes has been a major partner during the Cowichan Secondary Replacement School project. Cowichan Tribes and Elders worked with the architects and builder to have prominent theme of Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Cowichan themes incorporated into the school. Cowichan Secondary School has been an anchor in the Valley for over 70 years and has special place in the hearts of graduates across the community. However, the school was built when we had an educational system in our country that was used to destroy Indigenous knowledge and culture rather than empower it as we do today. The spelling of Cowichan is an anglicized version of the Hul'q'umi'num' name of Quw'utsun, the Nation on whose territory the school is built. Cowichan Tribes has indicated that changing the spelling for the new school would be of interest to them. After sharing their opinions, Trustees voted unanimously to name the new school Quw'utsun Secondary School.

Secretary-Treasurer

Year-End Projection: The District's amended budget filed with the Ministry did not include wage increases for teachers, USW, CUPE, exempt staff or Principals/Vice-Principals because funding for these increases hadn't yet been received. The amended version of the amended budget included wage increases for Principals/Vice-Principals, excluded staff and teachers and the funding for the increases. The increases for USW or CUPE aren't reflected even

though the increases have already been implemented as the funding has not yet been received. Overall projections are for a surplus of \$444,483 on a \$100M operating budget.

2023-2024 Enrolment Estimate: The District is required to submit its projected number of students for the following September to the Ministry by February 15 each year. Projections are made based on data from demographers Baragar, rolling over enrolment as at January 31, looking at historical retention rates, and utilizing Ministry data. The District has predicted a net increase of 77 students in September 2023, with a decrease in Distributed Learning student numbers resulting in a net increase of 55 full time equivalent students. The projections also included adjustments to the numbers of level 2 and level 3 special needs students, English Language Learners (ELL) and Indigenous Education students. The District's grant funding will be based upon these projected enrolment numbers.

2023-2024 Budget Preview: The Board has actively started the 2023/2024 budget process. While the Ministry requires the budget to be adopted by bylaw on or before June 30, the Board plans to consider the budget bylaw on May 2 to accommodate the teacher staffing process. Considerations include student enrolment, staffing, inflation, capital expenditures (e.g. portable purchases/moves), increasing child care offerings, supporting early learning and literacy initiatives, International Student Program tuition, interest rates, and feedback from partner groups, local First Nations and the Metis Nation.

Identity, Belonging and Connection Policy: The Board adopted Policy 25 – Identity, Belonging and Connection. The Policy was co-developed by a working group that came out of the Board's Ad-Hoc Anti-Racism Committee. The Policy can be viewed at:
<https://sd79.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Policy-25-Identity-Belonging-and-Connection-Policy.pdf>.

Schedule of Upcoming Meetings and Events

MEETING	DATE/TIME	LOCATION
All Nations Indigenous Council re Budget	March 8, 11:30 – 1:00	Ramada Inn, Duncan
DSAC Meeting (Trustee Thorne)	March 9, 10:00 a.m.	Frances Kelsey Secondary
District Closure/Spring Break	March 13 - 24	
BEBC Meeting	March 28, 4:00 p.m.	Yuxwule' Eagle Room
Climate Action Committee	March 31, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Yuxwule' Eagle Room
Closed/Open Board Meetings	April 4, 3:30/4:30 p.m.	Yuxwule' Eagle Room
Early Learning and Child Care Committee	April 6, 1:00 p.m.	Yuxwule' Eagle Room
Board Planning	April 11, 4:00 p.m.	Yuxwule' Eagle Room
DSAC Meeting (Trustee Sousa)	April 13, 10:00 a.m.	CVOLC
Special BEBC Meeting	April 13, 4:00 p.m.	Yuxwule' Eagle Room
Advisory Committee	April 18, 4:30 p.m.	Inspire Room
Special BEBC Meeting	April 20, 4:00 p.m.	Yuxwule' Eagle Room
DPAC Meeting (Trustee Schmidt)	April 20, 7:00 p.m.	Yuxwule' Eagle Room/Zoom
BEBC Meeting	April 25, 4:00 p.m.	Yuxwule' Eagle Room
BCSTA Annual General Meeting	April 27 – 30	Westin Bayshore

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