

SD68 NEWS ³/₄ Report from the Board Meeting December 19, 2007

TODAY'S TOPICS: Facilities Renewal To Be Discussed in January
Superintendent's Report
Reports from Standing Committees

FACILITIES RENEWAL – At the regular December meeting of the Board of Education on Wednesday evening, facilities renewal was a major topic of discussion.

The Board will receive a report from staff in January about a possible consultation process for school closures. At Wednesday's meeting, a large audience of parents, students and staff members from several schools were in attendance to lend support to presentations being made by representatives of their schools.

Trustees said that until the Board considers the report from staff in January, no decisions have been made about whether there will be a consultation process on any school closures. If the Board decides to hold a consultation process, it would be at least 60 days in length, would be well advertised and provide a number of opportunities for input.

The parent and staff representatives making presentations to the Board about the facilities renewal plan on Wednesday included:

- David Murchie of the Mount Benson Parent Advisory Council made a presentation about school facility utilization. He said that the current utilization rate of most Nanaimo schools allows them to function efficiently and respond to the needs of their students. He asked trustees to reject plans to create over-utilized schools.
- Tina Bray and Carol Ory, representing the Rutherford Parent Advisory Council, asked the Board to indicate that at this time it does not intend to pursue the closure of Rutherford Elementary. The parents said that their school does not meet the criteria that should be used when considering schools for closure and the area does not have declining enrolment. They made a number of recommendations which they said would be preferable to considering Rutherford for closure.
- Bill Boyd and Bev Feather represented the NDSS staff. Mr. Boyd outlined the positive attributes of NDSS and the school site. Ms. Feather urged the Board to maintain both the NDSS and Woodlands sites as valuable resources to students.
- Carl McIvor, of the NDSS Parent Advisory Council, said that NDSS is a unique facility and urged the Board to consider the NDSS site for a new secondary school. He cited traffic safety concerns in the Woodlands-Dufferin area.
- Wendy DeGroot, of the Rutherford Staff Committee, said that Rutherford staff stands firmly beside its PAC in the belief that the school should not be

considered for closure. She said the staff at Rutherford challenge the trustees to be creative in dealing with facilities issues.

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SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT – On Wednesday evening, Michael Munro presented to the Board of Education the Superintendent’s Annual Report on Student Achievement. The report is a new requirement of the Ministry of Education this year.

The report provides data that highlights areas in which student achievement has improved and areas where the district has challenges and the district’s plans to address those concerns.

Mr. Munro said that the district continues to see students performing at or slightly below the provincial average on most measures of student achievement. “We continue to see improvement in performance in our Aboriginal student population, which is very promising,” he said. “Although our district serves many families and students who are deemed vulnerable and living in poverty, we continue to have high expectations for all of our students. We have much work ahead of us, but we do see some positive gains in our levels of student achievement in the past three to four years.”

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REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

Education Committee

- The Board has asked staff to develop a message to parents outlining the benefits of positive play and express concerns about toys and games that promote violence. Superintendent Michael Munro presented some background information on this topic to the Board, and that information will be placed on the district website this week.
- The Board will write to the Minister of Education and the B.C. School Trustees Association to raise concerns about the planned requirements for daily physical education. Trustees said that while they support the concept of daily physical education, the current Ministry of Education plan does not seem to be very well thought-out.

Business Committee

- The Board of Education has given its support to the DRIVE 08 program for Grade 12 students.
- The Board has asked district staff to bring back a report on the renewal of the school district’s facilities in Ladysmith. The Board will hold its February meeting at Ladysmith Secondary, at which time the parameters of the report will be discussed.
- The Board has approved the recommendation of the Special Business Committee that the Board proceed with a plan for the development of a sustainability plan and the 2008-09 district budget.

Policy Committee

- The Board has approved changes to the Procedure 3560 - Parent/Student Appeals in order to bring the procedure in line with recent legislative changes. The Board also adopted a bylaw establishing the appeal process.

Audit Committee

- The Board has received the annual management letter from the district's auditor, the Auditor General's Department, and has referred the letter to staff.

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