

January 4, 2010

## Superintendent's Message ~ *Hope Springs Eternal*



**Job one for our schools must be instilling hope in our children.**

*"Education," said Irish Poet William Butler Yeats, "is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." It is our job – all of us: teachers, schools, parents, politicians and bureaucrats – not only to light that fire, but also to keep it burning brightly. It is education that allows our children to hope and dream for something better. We must not let them down.*

***Vancouver Sun. Sept. 5<sup>th</sup> 2008. p. A14.***

Good day!

This is just a short message to wish everyone a "Happy New Year" as the dawn to a new decade brings with it great promise, hope and inspiration. I am looking forward to working with you to ensure that *all* students within the Vancouver School District realize this sense of optimism for the present and for the future.

I have officially moved into the VSB. People have been terrific in making me feel welcome and in helping with the first days of the move into Vancouver. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the good work of Laurie Anderson, who as *Interim Superintendent* has enabled the district to continue along a strong pathway throughout this past school year. Laurie has been instrumental in enabling a smooth transition for me and I know I will be able to depend on his continued good leadership in the coming months.

During the break, I had the opportunity to tour around Vancouver and drive by *all* of the secondary schools. This helped, in part, to give me an idea of the scope, size, geography and lay of the land. Vancouver is a *big* district with great opportunities and significant challenges. It is a place that is supported and guided by outstanding workers in all aspects of the organization. You do an incredible job. Sometimes, we do not properly acknowledge the fine work that you do. Every individual in this school district contributes in his or her own way on behalf of our students. Thank you for your efforts on behalf of teaching and learning in whatever capacity you might hold within the school district. I look forward to supporting your efforts.

I also attended the IUOE sponsored *United Way* breakfast the other day and got the same friendly feeling. I saw the good humour, camaraderie and collective good will at the breakfast and appreciated the warm "Hello."

Even though we all know that there are some difficult times ahead, it is even more important for us to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of all and to continue to build relationships and good communications. While I am new to this community, I do recognize this to be a cornerstone of any highly functioning culture.

I know that in every part of the district, our students continue to excel in their own ways, and demonstrate their community spirit, strong leadership, and sense of character and civility. Over the past year or so, Vancouver students have been joining with their counterparts from other neighbouring school districts to discuss *School Completion and Beyond*. The nature of schooling in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the need to build strong positive relationships among staff and students, technology for teaching and learning, student engagement, learner voice, problem/project-based learning and system redesign have consistently emerged as themes. The challenge is to put these ideas into practice. These are topics and directions I will revisit with everyone through this year... and beyond. I want to hear more about your views and ideas so that together we can extend and build upon the *great* work going on in Vancouver. I will continue to write to you on occasion and offer thoughts about the road ahead.

It is with a great sense of enthusiasm and anticipation that I start out tomorrow at the place where I began my career on my first and second practicum experiences – at Sir Charles Tupper. Some of you may recall the highly regarded educator, Jim Killeen. He was my Principal at the time and I believe he was one of many who set the pathway that has led to where I am most humbly and thankfully now placed. I will then visit Nightingale Elementary and Templeton Secondary to meet with staff and students and to learn. Today will be a great day!

I opened this message with a quote about instilling hope in our children and leave it with the thought that our children instill hope in us for a better future. To quote Alexander Pope (1733), "*Hope Springs Eternal.*" I find optimism in this sentiment, and join with you – our parent community, and our hard working teachers, support staff, school and district administration in sharing our collective commitment to ensuring the very best educational experience for the children in our care.

It is with this appreciation for the dedicated people we have in our school district working with our supportive parents on behalf of our students that I wish *everyone* a wonderful, successful and memorable 2010 - full of hope, optimism and inspiration.

My very best wishes for the year ahead.

Steve.

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