

Superintendent's Report to the Board

January 2024



@CoastMountainsSchoolDistrict



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A Message from the Superintendent

Ama sii K'uuhl / 'iks 'álułc 'esénx̄ / Happy New Year,

Welcome to 2024! I hope the holiday break provided opportunities for both rest and relaxation, but also time for those hobbies and passions you hold dear. I appreciated the time I was able to spend with family on the East Coast, and will keep those memories close to my heart during the months to come.

At this time we are fortunate to be welcoming to our schools several international students from Brazil in the communities of Terrace and Kitimat. These high school students have chosen to come to the Northwest to experience Canadian culture and all the outdoor opportunities the region has to offer. Along the way, they too will develop close friendships, receive a quality education and continue to hone their English language skills. And because of the reciprocal relationship, there will be many benefits to our local students, host families and communities, as they collectively learn more about Brazilian culture without ever leaving home!

January of course represents the mid-point of the school year, with second semester beginning next week in our secondary schools. At this time however, planning is well underway for the 2024-25 school year. Our school district team is actively recruiting for K-12 teachers for September, and conversations are already happening for next steps with the implementation of the Board's Strategic Plan. Also, registration is now open for new learners at grades K-12 and StrongStart, and for those families applying for out-of-catchment Cross Boundary consideration. Learn more about all types of registration for 2024-25 by accessing <https://bit.ly/CMSD-registration>.

Finally, Coast Mountains School District is pleased to be working alongside local First Nations on a number of fronts with a focus on improving outcomes for Indigenous learners. Discussions are taking place related to Bill 40 and recent amendments to the *School Act*, including actioning 'Schools of Choice', the negotiation of a 'Local Education Agreement', and the future launch of a local 'Indigenous Education Council'. At the school level, important changes are taking shape related to the work of Indigenous Support Workers and select secondary school administrators have taken on responsibilities related to graduation success of Indigenous learners. These are truly exciting times and I look forward to realizing the impact of these initiatives in the months and years ahead.

Sincerely,

Aaron Callaghan
Superintendent



Coast Mountains School District is in service to diverse First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners and their caregivers who live, learn, and play on the traditional lands of the Gitksan, Haisla, Nisga'a and Ts'msyen peoples.



Coast Mountains School District welcomes learners from Brazil as part of the International Student Program.

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Strategic Plan – Teacher Recruitment & Retention

Goal - All students will realize their full potential.

Action - In collaboration with provincial partners, engage in a robust teacher recruitment and retention strategy to secure a full complement of outstanding educators for anticipated 2024-25 teaching vacancies.

Like school districts throughout Northern BC, Coast Mountains School District has been experiencing significant workforce challenges, especially pertaining to qualified enrolling and non-enrolling teachers. The school district continues to participate in the Northern Inquiry Project in partnership with the Ministry of Education in support of both teacher recruitment and retention.

Teacher Recruitment: Several members of the Coast Mountains district team are supporting recruiting efforts with participation in both virtual and in person presentations and job fairs. Key messages for 'The Mountains Are Calling' recruiting initiatives include job opportunities in welcoming communities that are culturally diverse, especially pertaining to Indigenous Peoples; abundant outdoor experiences; visually stunning landscapes; professional mentorship; assistance finding housing; competitive salaries; and financial incentives for specific teaching positions.

There has been a great deal of interest by new teacher candidates in the possibility of relocating to Northwest British Columbia, especially from candidates outside of the province, and our team is working hard to build relationships with interested applicants.

Teacher Retention: We all have a role to play in teacher retention. When new hires are made to feel welcome and supported in their schools and communities in general, they are more likely to be satisfied with their surroundings and experience success professionally, increasing the chance they will remain in the school district. Many school and district team members are working intentionally to do just that, with reach outs and check-ins, optional professional learning opportunities, and more.



*New teacher **Justin Brown** hails from Halifax, Nova Scotia. A graduate of Acadia University, Justin launched his teaching career with Coast Mountains School District in September 2023. Justin is enjoying his assignment this year teaching grade 6 French Immersion at Ecole Mountainview in Terrace.*

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How Are We Doing? Report

With a focus on the success of Indigenous learners at K-12, the Ministry of Education and Child Care has recently shared the **How Are We Doing? Report** for the Coast Mountains School District. The report identifies multiple metrics across achievement and well-being, including assessment evidence, graduation rates, student perspectives and more. In 2022-23, Indigenous learners represented 48.1% of the overall enrolment in Coast Mountains schools, compared to 11.4% provincially.

The 2022-23 How Are We Doing Report is now available on the school district's website at <https://bit.ly/IndigenousSuccess> and will be the focus of the district's Education Committee meeting in April.

School Act Amendments: Schools of Choice

In November, amendments to the British Columbia *School Act* were made to fulfil commitments in the *Declaration Act* Action Plan in support of improving outcomes for Indigenous learners at K-12. One such amendment granted First Nations around the province the ability to identify a 'School of Choice' for their learners. This chance allows First Nations to designate their home school regardless of school district defined catchment areas.

Earlier this month, communications were shared with the ten First Nations served by Coast Mountains School District describing the process by which 'Schools of Choice' may be identified. The school district looks forward to receiving feedback from local First Nations regarding 'Schools of Choice' and will work to prioritize space for learners in our schools should there be a need.

Distinctions-Based Approach Primer Released

The Government of British Columbia has just released a document titled **Distinctions-Based Approach Primer** to support public servants in their understanding of a distinctions-based approach, assisting with government's dealings and relations with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. With legal foundations connected to the *Constitution Act* and the more recent *Declaration Act* in BC, a distinctions-based approach means that the scope of rights enjoyed by Indigenous People is contextual, and that provincial dealings with First Nations, Metis and Inuit are conducted in a manner that is appropriate to the context, respecting the distinct rights, laws, and systems of governance of each.

Access the Distinctions-Based Approach Primer online at: <https://bit.ly/Distinctions-based>



Upcoming Dates

February 7 – Education Committee Meeting

February 14 – Business Committee Meeting

February 19 – Family Day (No Classes)

February 21 – Board Meeting (Kitimat / Hybrid Meeting)

February 23 – All Our Relations Equity Scan Meeting

March 13-14 – Early Dismissal Days



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This Month On Social Media...

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Renovations of the kitchen at Skeena Middle School in Terrace are now complete. Thank you to the CMSD Facilities team for a job well done.



A teacher recruitment promotional video for Make A Future BC features teacher Kristen Mailhot of Skeena Middle School.



Coast Mountains School District Pre-School programs are engaging 3- & 4-year-olds in STEM, Arts, Dramatic Play, Games, Songs and more.



Staff at Hazelton Secondary School worked into the evening to prepare the school's Christmas Lunch for 400 participants.