



# SCHOOL DISTRICT 5

S O U T H E A S T K O O T E N A Y

## **Thank you from the SD5 Board of Education to the SD5 Staff and School Community.**

*“We are now expected to provide education, the epicentre of our social fabric in a climate of a new and poorly understood health risk to our society. This health risk has generated ever changing protocols, principle guidelines, directions, and orders that have created anxiety, fear and uncertainty among students, employees and families in our communities.”*

*--Frank Lento, SD5 Board Chair  
Public Board Meeting, May 2020*

June 17, 2020

For staff, students and parents alike, spring break is a chance to get away from the doldrums of a long winter and the stresses of study and work. While many in SD5 began spring break with such intentions, the novel coronavirus, Covid-19, put an abrupt end to those plans.

The following is a thank you to everyone who came together during the Covid crisis. While this message is jointly from our wonderful leadership team, Superintendent Silke Yardley and Secretary-Treasurer Alan Rice, it is also *for* Silke and Alan, without whose steady leadership none of the following could have possibly been so successful. Thank you!

Amid the uncertainty of whether or not schools would open following spring break, district and school administrators were called back from vacation to begin planning. Unfortunately no one, not even government, knew exactly for what or for how long the planning would be required. Nonetheless, preparations began.

The superintendent and secretary-treasurer leadership along with the district and school administrators adjusted that plan again and again as a steady stream of directives, outlining new regulations and protocols, began flowing from government. Regulations and protocols that seemed to change almost daily as more was learned about this deadly virus. All the while leadership kept Trustees apprised of the ever-changing educational landscape. Thank you!

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The one thing Trustees and leadership were absolutely certain about was that our students would continue their education and that if they were on track to graduate before Covid, they would graduate in June.

The first order of business was to ensure that the children of our essential service workers, whether school-aged or younger, had professional care. Our teaching and CUPE staff did not hesitate to volunteer for this assignment, despite what little was known about the potential risk to their own health and well-being. For over two months, these brave individuals cared for up to fifty children of essential service workers so their parents could work. Thank you!

Despite having no students on buses and few children in schools, our CUPE staff - bus drivers, mechanics, custodians and maintenance workers - continued to work. They super-cleaned, repaired, painted, landscaped, cooked and delivered food to those who needed it. Some even volunteered, along with teachers, for the Grade Two Reading Program, so that young readers would continue to receive the support they needed. For many, these tasks lay far outside of their usual work reality. Thank you!

Our technology, teaching and education support staff worked equally hard to ensure that on-line learning could replace bricks and mortar learning as soon as possible. For educators and support staff, this meant adapting lesson plans and support systems. It also meant contacting each of their students every week to ensure *every child had a personal learning connection* and to identify those students in need of additional supports. Thank you!

None of the above would have been possible without the partnership and cooperation of our Unions, whose understanding of the unique circumstances of Covid, proved both creative and flexible when working with management on procedures and protocols to ensure that students and staff remained safe and supported while learning continued. Working quietly in the background, our Board office and school clerical staff ensured that day-to-day operations were maintained; communications went out, websites were updated, Zoom meetings were staffed and staff was paid. Thank you!

Parents rose up to this new challenge, taking ownership of their children's learning and students did likewise, adapting quickly to the on-line format and creating unique formats of their own to demonstrate and self-report on their individual learning.

When schools opened in June, school and district administrators organized instruction and care schedules for those returning to the classroom. Currently, administrators and teachers are working on year-end report cards.

Administrators and teachers, along with the assistance of education support staff, are also working on transition plans for students graduating from elementary to middle, and

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middle to secondary schools. This is an especially important step for our most vulnerable learners. Thank you!

Secondary principals and parents of graduating students also had the daunting task of re-visioning what graduation would look like this year since gatherings of more than fifty were disallowed. But they did. Each celebration is unique to its community and is the result of school, parent and student ingenuity. Thank you!

Working together, educators, parents and students embodied the adaptability, creativity and resilience that this uncertain moment in history demanded. Thank you!

Know that, while the dedication to public education and our nation's youth displayed through your actions over these past few months can never be adequately measured, it is absolutely appreciated! Your long hours and sacrifice is an investment you have made in our students and the country's future.

With Genuine Thanks & Best Wishes,

Frank Lento, Chair, SD5  
Trina Ayling, Trustee  
Bev Bellina, Trustee  
Krista Damstrom, Trustee  
Chris Johns, Trustee  
Kathryn Kitt, Trustee  
Doug McPhee, Trustee  
Wendy Turner, Trustee  
Patricia Whalen, Trustee

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