

**January 25, 2022**

Good evening and welcome. As I reflect on the first month of 2022, I think about three things: challenges, change and compassion.

The challenges are, no doubt, self-evident to everyone here. As the impact of the highly transmissible Omicron variant of COVID-19 became clear, the year started off with a delayed start to school start up, following Winter Break. During that time, school and district staff began preparing plans, as they strategized about how to maintain continuity of learning with the potential of significant employee absences that would come with widespread illness in the community. As they have again, and again, they met the challenges head on – while the pandemic that had already brought us phrases such as “social distancing” and “flatten the curve” added another to our lexicon with “functional closures.”

That brings me to change. There was a lot of it last week as the Public Health Officer shared more about the shift to a self-management approach. The sheer volume of cases has changed the way public health manages everything from testing and contact tracing to how long someone who is positive for COVID-19 needs to isolate.

Despite all of this, my heart is full of gratitude. While that may sound strange, as a parent of two-school age children, I am grateful for all that’s been done to make schools as safe as possible, to keep them open, and to provide a place that my children and others can count on for, among other things, routine and a semblance of normalcy.

The last two years have not been easy for anyone – not for students, not for staff, and not for families. That brings me to compassion. Despite what everyone has gone through – in a world that seems intent on putting all our lives on a continuous spin cycle – students, staff and families have responded with care and compassion. On behalf of the Burnaby Board of Education, I extend our deepest gratitude to staff, students and families. Thank you for everything you’ve done and continue to do to help us get through these ongoing challenges.

**Bill Brassington, Vice-Chair**  
**Burnaby Board of Education**