

Greetings Britannia Community

In seven weeks we will be breaking for the Winter holidays; when we return in January I will have been Principal of our fine school for one year. What have we achieved and where are we going? What is my vision for our school?

The closure debate and “Save Britannia” campaign took us away from a careful consideration on how best to improve the educational opportunities for our students. I want to keep this conversation open and invite discussion on how to improve Public Education in our part of the city. I observed at several of the VSB committee and Trustee’s meetings and listened to various points of view but still feel that I do not have any answers. So, please don’t hesitate to contact me with your thoughts, opinions, insights, and experiences. What’s absolutely essential is for our schools to be centers of Reconciliation and Innovation.

One of the most important developments in our school district last year was the signing of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (AEEA), a document to which we are committed. Our school plan’s third goal- *To design and implement specific strategies which will enhance learning and success for Aboriginal students, as well as deepen overall understanding and appreciation of students’ diverse cultural backgrounds-* flows towards this agreement and we must, in the Spirit of Reconciliation, continue as a community to work on various initiatives underway. For example,

- We have two teacher inquiry groups that are examining how our students learn and connect at school- one of these focused specifically on First Nations and Aboriginal ways of learning in the classroom;
- We connect with community partners in Reconciliation in Action events;
- We have a fantastic Aboriginal enhancement team at the school and district levels that mentors us regarding learning, belonging and our Aboriginal learners;
- Our teachers are working to improve our understanding of our shared history and geography in this ancestral land of the Coast Salish, Tsleil Waututh and Musqueam peoples. And we need to do more.

Learning is central to us at Britannia: We have 5 Professional Development days, and 10 BIP (Britannia Instructional Planning) late start days, and two Provincial (new curriculum) planning days (one held on Thursday 9 November). This time is very important to us to meet, plan, discuss, and collaborate to enhance the learning of every child at our school. On Wednesday 19th October, for example, Ms. Coffin, our Vice Principal, led an excellent session with our Learning Support teachers and support workers (grade 8 and 9), and the rest of the staff joined me to examine the International Baccalaureate (IB) student profile, the First Nations Circle of Courage, and the BRIT

way. In addition to these important professional conversations, Ms. Coflin also arranges a monthly drop in soup club at lunch for teachers and support staff to casually meet and discuss a topic that is affecting us in the school world. So please rest assured- our ProD time is not used to catch up on marking but are important opportunities for us to reflect and deepen our professional learning in order to support all of our students.

These professional conversations and the new curriculum can only go so far without a library or learning commons right in our school. Our students don't use the current Learning Resource Centre (LRC) or Public Library, for various reasons. So it is really urgent that we move our LRC up into the (current) staffroom but still keep a link with the Public Library. Then we will deepen our vision of what a Learning Commons is, and how it can support teachers and learners at Brit. Our next BIP (late start) day will focus on "Learning and the Learning Commons" and will shape a timeline for action in this regard. However, we have decided that as of 3 January (school reopening after the winter break) the current 3rd floor staffroom will be our Learning Resource Centre: a larger space, a far better facility with new resources, our great teachers and your kids ... what else do we need? Well, that would be you ...

So thanks to the many parents who attended our first-in-many-years "Meet the teacher night" held on 29 September. At this event parents experienced a 'speed dating' version of your child's day quickly following their two day rotation schedule from class to class all compacted into 90 minutes! Many of you have already signed up for Parent/Teacher conferences this Tuesday, November 15th. Students will be dismissed at 2:00pm and the Conferences will occur in the Cafeteria from 6:00-9:00pm. Please book appointments online at: <https://britanniasecondary.schoolappointments.com/> And of course we have PAC meetings as an opportunity to be engaged in our school's life (PAC meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month in the current staffroom (soon to be LRC), room 304 at 7:00pm) But most importantly, there is us the teaching community: please do not hesitate to contact your child's teachers, counsellors, or administrator (Mrs. Coflin for grades 8, 9 and 10; me for grades 11 & 12 ... 778.228.8783 is my cell, aschofield@vsb.bc.ca is my email) if you have any queries, concerns or suggestions.

Earlier, I mentioned Innovation as a central component of your child's experience at Britannia. With the new curriculum we are beginning to realize the opportunities for some really fantastic collaboration among teachers to deliver more exciting teaching and learning opportunities. To a huge degree we are building on the tradition of excellence that is the Brit Way- but we want to do more: in Theatre with Mrs. Boulet for example (check out her link on our Staff pages), in Business education, in Rockets and Robotics, in integrating technology, in a skateboarding/design/literacy unit in the Pacific Storm program, in our Remembrance Day ceremony, in everything we do ... I will focus more on this in my next posting!

Lastly, some stats: in June 2016 we had a grad class of 110. 105 students got a full grad, the remaining 5 are one or two courses short and will have completed by this December: a 100% pass rate. Of our aboriginal graduating students, 22 of 24 students graduated. No school in BC, private or public, comes close! These are beautiful results that come from five years of sustained support by our dedicated teachers, support workers, coaches, and community education teams ... and your trust in us as being a school that puts your child's learning at the heart of our thinking.

If we don't get the opportunity to talk in person, best wishes over the Winter Break!

Respectfully

Andrew