



SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT TO THE BOARD

JANUARY 26, 2022



Page 1 of 2



Together we faced continued unprecedented challenges during 2021 and we demonstrated our power of family and community. Thank you for your kindness, hard work and efforts, outstanding teamwork and heart-warming dedication during the past difficult and unprecedented two years.

I extend my belated best wishes to our students, staff, parents, caregivers and school communities within Coast Mountains School District 82 for a happy, safe and positive 2022! Here's to a New Year filled with new possibilities!

Janet Meyer, Superintendent of Schools

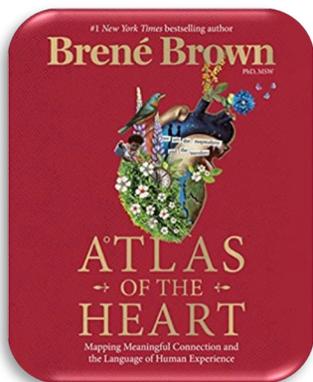
You Are Not Alone ... A Blog Post from Janet

I share this blog post with you with an intent to send the message that "you are not alone". My hope is that the story will leave you with a sense of optimism.

This blog post is not about students and learning directly. It's more about somebody standing up and saying, "What we are going through right now, in this world is, at times, unmanageable and can seem unbearable". The work we have been doing since the Spring of 2020, is work I could never have imagined doing in my career.

During my master's in educational leadership at the University of Victoria in the 2000's, I took courses like: concepts and theory in administration, education in the small community, philosophy of leadership and professional ethics and the law to name a few. I wrote a final thesis on the topic of residential schools. I didn't take courses like pandemic 101, the anatomy of a virus, preventing communicable diseases or the politics of vaccine mandates 101. I remember being in Mexico in early March 2020 and getting off the plane in YVR and seeing many people wearing masks. I had no idea at that very moment what was in store for us. None.

I have been in my house for two weeks with "an illness". During the course of this illness our District continued to operate as per usual because of teamwork and support. One person does not make a school district. A school district is made up of a series of parts that make a whole. I am grateful to the people with whom I work for stepping up and taking care of business when I was unable to do so. A special shout out to the people who salted my driveway so I could go for my "illness" test. Having said that, however, there are things that have to be done by the Superintendent, sick or not sick. As the saying goes, "the show must go on." I am not "being vulnerable" for your sympathy. I love my job, most of the time. I am "being vulnerable" to tell you, it is tough out there and that everyone in this organization likely feels that to one degree or another.



Brene Brown in the first chapter of her new book, "Atlas of the Heart" (2021) talks about being stressed (in the weeds) and overwhelmed (being blown) and the differences between the two. We feel stressed when we evaluate environmental demand as beyond our ability to cope successfully. Overwhelmed means an extreme level of stress, an emotion and/or cognitive intensity to the point of feeling unable to function.

I know that on any given day in our District and in school districts around the province there are people who feel stressed and/or overwhelmed. A Superintendent merely has to listen, when meeting with people to hear how they are doing. I hear the people who speak their truth at venues such as Teacher-Trustee Meetings. They speak for themselves as well as their colleagues.

Late in my illness, I will tell you that I was feeling frustrated, sick, and overwhelmed. Thursday, January 15 at 4:30 p.m. I was just done. I had a text I was going to send to a person saying "I'm done. I'm waving the white towel." I didn't send it. I don't know why, but after that, two things happened: a call from someone and a Facebook post from our good friend, Monique Gray-Smith. I used her post and the telephone call to re-focus my attention.

**IF YOU HAVE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS RELATED TO COVID-19, PLEASE FORWARD YOUR QUESTIONS TO:
"COVID@CMSD.BC.CA" WHICH COMES DIRECTLY TO THE SUPERINTENDENT'S EMAIL INBOX.**



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Page 2 of 2

As a means of a deeper understanding, I will share a portion of an email that I sent the next day to Principals and Vice Principals:

Good morning,

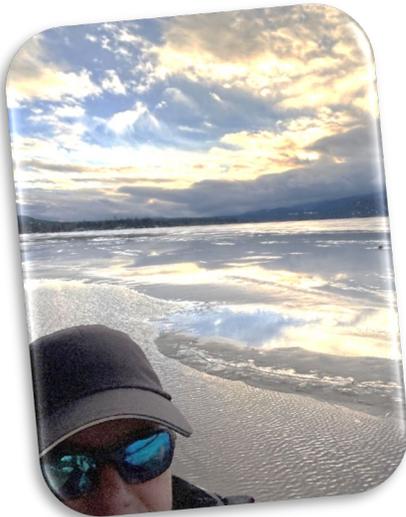
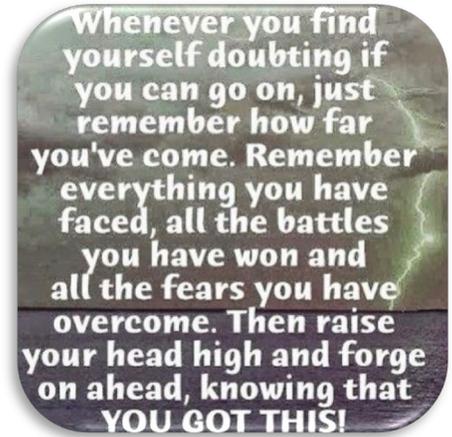
As this week draws to a conclusion, I wanted to send an email acknowledging some facts:

1. We have been going non-stop since December 30 when the Ministry announced the delayed school start to 2022.
2. Although attempts are made by District Staff to minimize impact on Principals and Vice Principals, more and more is getting added to your plate and there doesn't appear to be items taken off the plate.
3. Regardless of the fact that we just had an alleged two-week holiday, people are exhausted.
4. Omicron is impacting Principals and Vice Principals.
5. Our collective morale may not be a high as any of us might like it to be.

Here is the most important fact:

- Regardless of what COVID-19 throws at us, there are committed people across this District working tremendously hard so that schools remain safe, positive, caring and engaging places for students. That's you. That's your staff. That's Maintenance, IT, Finance, Human Resources, and the District Education Team. Quite frankly, we are in the most challenging time I have ever experienced in my short time in education. We are doing remarkably well considering what is being thrown at us. Sit back for a minute and reflect on what we have accomplished during this pandemic. I'm proud of the work we have done and will continue to do in CMSD82. Do we have challenges? You bet we do. We are facing our challenges head on.

So, as you head into the weekend and have a chance to recharge your batteries, know that your calm and confident leadership does not go unnoticed and that your tremendously hard work is appreciated. That acknowledgement goes to all the people with whom we work as well.



Quite frankly, these are tough times and while we might not always feel like we are doing okay, we are doing well. Sometimes it may be hard to see the forest for the trees. I read a Facebook post from Monique Gray-Smith and it couldn't have come at a better time. Here is a bit of what she said publicly on Facebook:

It's been a long 10 days in bed with Covid. I had a couple masked walks around the block, but today I had enough energy to get out of my pj's, actually put on pants and go for a walk in the forest. My energy and cognitive abilities are slowly starting to return. It's been humbling for sure! I am grateful for all the ways my family has taken care of me, my returning health and vibrancy and for living so close to the forest 🍓🍓🍓.

And here is part of what she said to me privately, that I want to share and offer to you as well (I am gifting her love, strength, recovery and rejuvenation to you – I am going to hold a bit back for self):

*Sending you much love & strength in recovery & rejuvenation 🍓🍓🍓
I look forward to seeing real humans next week. Have a great weekend Janet!*

So why would I share all that with you in a Superintendent's Report? I share it with you not for your sympathy that I had an illness, but rather as a means of saying: we're all living the same insanity and we need to find ways to cope with the stress and feelings of being overwhelmed in positive and healthy ways. For me, I chase the sun, I walk in the forest, I hang out with my girls and my grandson, and I read. In Brene Brown's book she references the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn who describes the antidote to being overwhelmed as no-agenda or non-doing. Maybe those antidotes might work for a few people out there. I hope this leaves you with a sense of optimism.

Author's Note: I don't have a blog ☹️. I made that up because what I wrote was something that could be on a blog.

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