

The Pandemic Practice

We learned, we grew, we changed



**First Year VP
Kasha Kikkert Duff**
shares her learning adventure

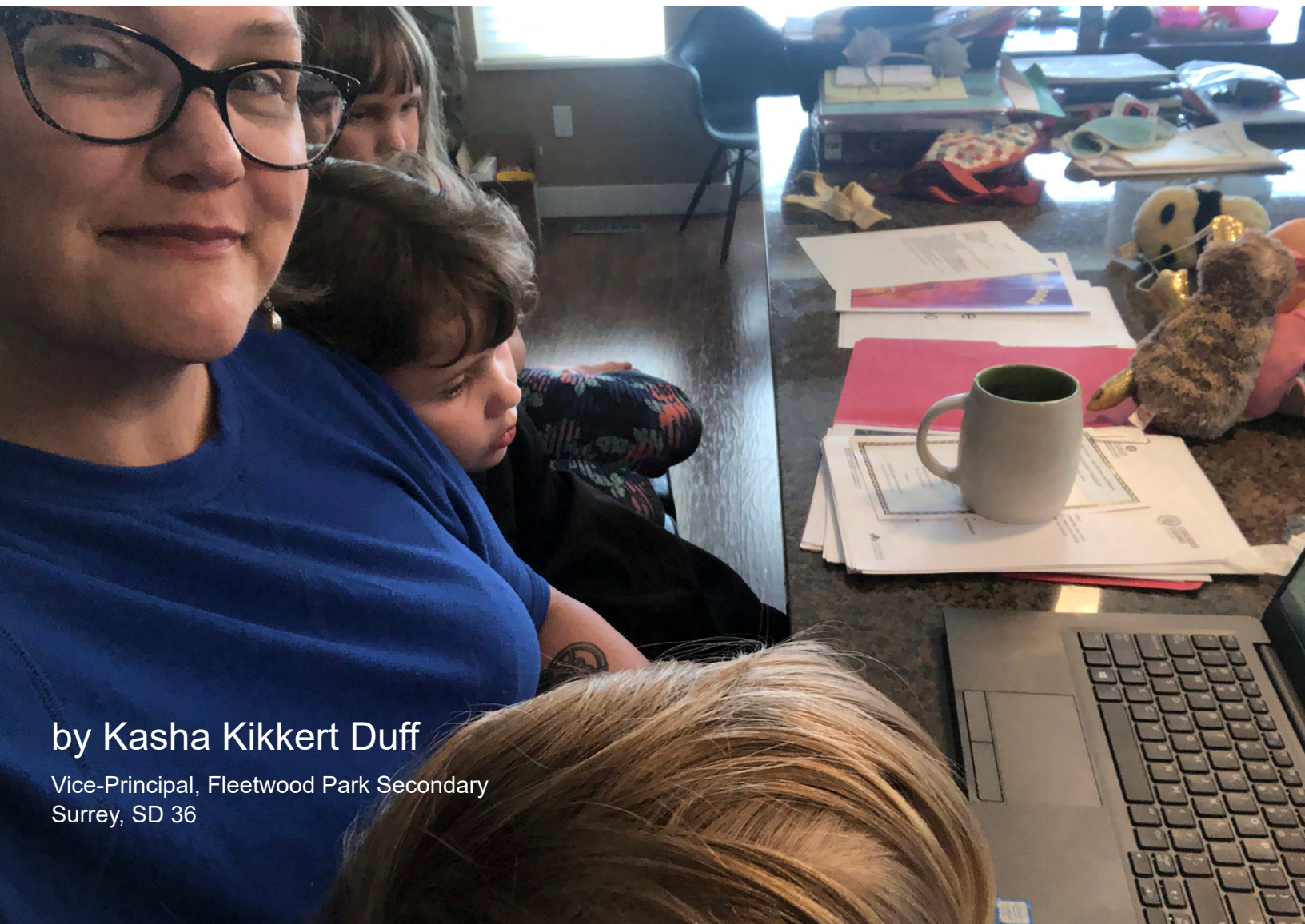
“Mom! Are you in a call?”

These words came regularly out of the mouths of my three children – aged 9, 7 and 4 – as I attempted to move my Vice-Principal work home in March. Having spent almost twenty years in classrooms all over the Surrey School District, it was exciting to have a new position for the 2019-2020 school year as Vice-Principal at Fleetwood Park Secondary, but I never guessed how my first year would end!

This year as a VP had been filled with new challenges and the steep learning curve that goes with the move from classroom to administration. Nothing could have prepared me though, for the changes and challenges of COVID-19. My husband started a new job in early March and needed to be in the office regularly, so I took over the childcare full-time. Luckily, we were encouraged to remain at home and the kids and I quickly developed a schedule that worked as well as it could. We kept our regular waking

time and did their schoolwork first thing, with my husband and I working together to support completion of our kids' school assignments. When he left for work, I tried to get through emails while my kids played, usually with their LEGO. We always got out of the house around noon for a walk or scoot around the neighbourhood, and then I was in online meetings and making and receiving calls in the afternoon, while my kids got tech and more learning time. We would get out as a family in the evenings again, and when our kids went to bed it was time to get caught up on the emails I had been receiving during the day.

As it is the 25th year since my own grad, I was excited to take on grad preparations. My Admin team had many discussions with PAC, Dry Grad Committee, students and staff, as we planned for a special COVID-19 Grad. We heard 'loud and clear' that parents wanted to be part of whatever we planned. All three Admins at our school are parents, and we knew it was imperative that parents



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be there to watch their children walk the stage at the commencement. So, we planned an event for our 330 Grads that would involve both them and their parents.

Our commencement took place over June 10-12 from 2:00 – 8:00pm daily and included 20 mini ceremonies, each in a 45-minute time slot. We set up a stage in the gym and had it decorated. We recruited staff volunteers – all eager to assist – to hand out gowns and caps earlier in the week, and then manage the parking lot and ‘waiting area’ during the ceremonies. Allowing Grads to pick their own commencement time made each ceremony more fun and personal, as groups of close friends chose times together.

There was an incredible energy in the school when each group arrived for their ceremony. We allowed 15 Grads per time slot, and each Grad could bring two guests. Grads entered the cafeteria area where volunteers from our staff checked names and numbers. We set up a photo area with 2020 balloons for photo ops. When it was time to get started, Grads lined up – socially distanced as groups – entered the gym, and sat up front as their guests sat in the bleachers.

We pre-recorded the speeches from our Assistant Superintendent, Trustee and Principal. Our MC did our land acknowledgement and introduced our Grad anthem singer, who was also pre-recorded. Students then lined up and walked the stage as our MC read a prewritten statement about each of them, and they received their scholarships and awards. No handshaking, but our

Principal was on the stage to pose for photos with the students. We also organized videotaping of each of the three days, and sent out the digital download of the edited ceremony the week after.

Our Valedictorian did a remarkable speech that he filmed over two days in the school. It highlighted all of the classes and extra-curricular activities we have. This entertaining speech was played at the end of each ceremony. Then Grads and guests left out the backdoor of the gym and we cleaned for the next group.

As each group left the gym, they expressed their sincere thanks to us for the ceremony. As an Admin team, we were exhausted by the end of the week but felt the wonderful positive energy and warmth from our school community.

My first year in administration has been an exciting learning adventure. There have been many challenges – both personally and professionally – but as I sit here on my last day before holidays, I am thankful for all of the experiences. I learned daily, and grew more confident in my leadership capabilities. I appreciated the extra time with my children during lockdown, and also enjoyed getting closer with my Admin team. Coming back to the school in June was invigorating: I realized how much I had missed the staff and our students, and I am very hopeful there will be many more students back to school in September. We have a fabulous community of caring and committed learners at Fleetwood Park, and I am proud to be a contributing member!

