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OKM's Graham Neilson-Welch and Shayla Hall get into character to perform the Cole Porter classic Friendship for the School Board.

Anything Goes for school's Triple Threat Theatre Company

By RYAN GRENIER
OKM Theatre Director

For two weeks in February, the Okanagan Mission Secondary School's theatre transformed into a 1930s cruise ship for a production of Cole Porter's Tony award-winning *Anything Goes!* The production ran a record 12 sold-out performances and was the largest success to date in the school's burgeoning theatre program. While mentorship in Triple Threat is facilitated by industry experts, the key to

the success of the program is the leadership opportunities for the company members. Students design sets, lighting, sound and props, all of which are borne from the school's technical theatre program. Students lead whole cast choreography and small groups in dance, vocal and acting rehearsals and take pride in ownership of the production. Once final rehearsals are complete, the production is completely performed, managed and produced by the students. Student stage managers call all the cues and students execute everything from

quick costume changes, set and prop placement as well as their acting, dancing and singing performances with only the confidence of their fellow company members. The goal of the program is to create a professional environment in which students learn and thrive within the context of a theatre production. Since the new theatre at OKM opened in 2014, more students have gone on to participate in local theatre, as well as university training in theatre, than ever before. These passionate artists are pursuing these opportunities as both technicians and performers alike, which is the mandate of the

program — to help students find their passion in a safe and nurturing environment which prepares student artists for future opportunities both locally and globally. *Hollywood Shakespeare*, (a 1930s version of *Much Ado About Nothing* set on a Golden Age Hollywood Film Set) the final OKM production of the year, will be performed at the OKM theatre in late April or early May. *Shrek!* The Musical will run in late 2017 or early 2018.

For tickets or more information, please contact Ryan Grenier at Ryan.Grenier@sd23.bc.ca

A peek behind the curtain of learning

By MOYRA BAXTER
Board Chairperson

At every public Board of Education meeting, trustees and others in attendance have an opportunity to learn more about what's going on in the school district and to recognize outstanding people and programs. Having attended Okanagan Mission Secondary's marvelous production of *Anything Goes*, it was a delight to have two talented young actors/dancers/singers perform "Friendship" at the last Board meeting. Throughout our district, talented stu-

dents participate in theatre productions, play in bands large and small, and are members of choirs. Encouraging these students and helping them to find ways to challenge themselves, are people like Ryan Grenier, teacher and Theatre Director at OKM. At the same Board meeting we heard from Leyton Schnellert, Assistant Professor UBCO, and Donna Kozak, our district's Early Learning and Literacy Coordinator, along with a group of teachers from elementary schools. Also present was a teacher candidate,



Baxter

Sally Wallick, who has written here about the collaborative program they described to us. There is no doubt that our school district benefits greatly from the partnership with UBCO. Every speaker was enthusiastic about the benefits to all concerned, but especially to our students. Last but not least, the Board was pleased to recognize District Health and Safety Manager Dave Cavezza who leads the district in meeting the safety standards which earned the District a Certificate of Recognition from WorkSafeBC.

Having a chance to hear about these outstanding programs and awards reminds trustees that there are many things occurring in the school district that we, and the public, often don't hear about. All of the people mentioned in this column, and countless others in the school district, go quietly about their business, providing opportunities for students, ensuring that those same students receive the best education possible, in a safe environment. They do this, not for recognition, but because it's what we do in public education — always look out for the students' best interests.



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District Health and Safety Manager Dave Cavezza speaks to delegates at the 5th Annual Claims Management Services conference.

Safe to the COR

By Justin Schneider

Central Okanagan Public Schools are among the safest school districts to work for in the province. For the second year in a row, and five out of the last six years, the District achieved a Certificate of Recognition (COR) from WorkSafeBC for meeting a set of safety audit standards. Central Okanagan Public Schools is one of only three school districts in the province to achieve COR through the annual voluntary safety audit. While the District Health and Safety Department manages the program, it is up to staff in individual schools to implement a system to manage safety and then meet the audit standards. "It's a lot of work and a yearlong process to

achieve this certification," says Health and Safety Manager Dave Cavezza. "We're extremely proud of the staff in individual schools, who make sure every little detail is addressed to make a safe workplace." By passing the COR audit, the District receives an incentive payment from WorkSafeBC, which goes back into health and safety programming. The Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) program keeps the organization in compliance with WorkSafeBC regulations and helps prevent workplace injuries, with 2016 showing a 12 per cent reduction in worker injuries from the five-year historical average. The School Board recognized the achievements of the District OHS program at a recent meeting.