

My name is Kaethe (pronounced KAY-teh) Jones. I was born in Paraguay, South America to refugee parents from the Ukraine, to Germany and then to Paraguay, the land of "milk and honey". NOT. My family was finally given permission to immigrate to Canada in 1956. I grew up in Vancouver and attended public elementary school and high school. My post-secondary schooling was done at UBC in the field of Education. I have always had a passion for teaching especially for children with special needs because I had a profoundly deaf sister (passed away 2021) and later a deaf brother-in-law as well. My sister was the reason my education major was special education. While my parents did not have a high education they knew the value of education and encouraged us to always do our best and go as far as we could educationally. This is the value I have instilled in the students I have taught over the 30 years.

During my 30 years of teaching Kindergarten to grade 3 I have had the privilege of teaching many children with special needs. I say privilege because I have a personal understanding of the concerns and emotions that parents have when they entrust their vulnerable child to the school setting. For several children with various special needs the parents have requested me as the teacher for their child 2 consecutive years. This is humbling and also a great responsibility on my part to create the best learning environment possible for them.

As a child of refugee parents who could speak no English when we arrived in Canada I have the utmost compassion for the children who have arrived from war-torn countries in Chilliwack. They must learn a new language, complete schooling, understand the customs and values of a new country and try to fit in with new friends. This is not easy for them. Our current system does much for them although some would say not enough. There is always more we can tweak to make things better. In my time there was no support. I came to grade 1 with no knowledge of what even the alphabet was. Self-motivation, determination and perseverance are the characteristics I developed and we need to instill in children as much as possible to succeed in school and in life.

I have had teaching assignments in numerous communities. Initially I was a teacher on call in Vancouver in the regular primary grades and in special education classes. Then later on I lived and taught on reservations in the Northwest Territories and North-eastern British Columbia and a Mennonite rural community in NE British Columbia. These children were all English language learners (ELL). After many years we finally moved to Chilliwack. I taught in a private school for 4 years and then came into the Chilliwack School District which incidentally was my initial plan when we moved here. Interestingly I did two teaching practicums in Chilliwack. I have always loved Chilliwack. My first teaching practicum was in the old Robertson Elementary School and the second teaching practicum was in the original Strathcona Elementary School under the supervision of Mrs. Lucille Dyer who just recently passed away.

My teaching assignments have included many years of teaching Kindergarten, primary grades - some were just grades 1, 2 or 3 but I have taught split grades 1/2, and 2/3 as well. While still in North-eastern BC I went to UBC to be trained as a learning assistance teacher. As a learning assistance teacher in NE British Columbia I was also trained as an enrichment teacher to go into classrooms and teach creative thinking and critical thinking skills to students in intermediate grades.

As a parent of three (3) adult children and seven (7) grandchildren who are still school age I expect the public school system to provide the best healthy environment for them to learn in and give them the most well-rounded classical education possible.

I believe that with the broad range of personal life experiences, educational qualifications and the wisdom of age I would be an asset on the School Board as a Trustee. I am a voice of reason, common sense and collaboration with others.