



SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 48

◆ Squamish ◆ Whistler ◆ Pemberton

March 18, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope this message finds you and your family very well during these unusual and uncertain times. As you are no doubt aware, the BC Government has issued a medical state of emergency for the Province of British Columbia. They are taking action to “flatten the curve” related to the spreading of the COVID-19 virus in order to support public health and safety. Some current measures being taken include asking citizens to engage in social distancing efforts, closing many public and private establishments where people gather, finding ways to support essential service employees to do their important work, and suspending in-class learning for all K to 12 students, until further notice. All things are changing rapidly and we ask that you stay attuned to the evolving nature of all related information, including the information provided here.

Initial Planning

We began initial planning for future student learning last week in anticipation of a possible decision to have students remain home from school after the spring break. District staff pre-planned teleconferences with other school districts, the Ministry of Education, and our own leadership team. Our Board Chairperson and myself attended a teleconference with the Minister of Education yesterday. This morning, members of the school district senior team and I attended a teleconference with the Deputy Minister of Education. I am writing to you now to do my best to summarize the most critical pieces of information we have in order to keep you aware of where we are at and what next steps might look like for your child.

Ongoing Student Learning

In-class instruction for student learning will be suspended until further notice. Your child will, however, be provided with ongoing learning. While the learning your child will experience may not be a perfect replacement for their usual in-class instruction, it will provide the opportunity for ongoing learning likely involving a variety of online learning opportunities. Supports will be provided, where possible, for students with special needs. As per the Ministerial direction provided, all students will receive a final mark, will continue to develop in their learning, will advance to their next grade level, and all students eligible to graduate will graduate. The Ministry of Education is currently looking into the graduation requirement of the Provincial Graduation Numeracy Assessment and will get back to principals about this soon. The Ministry of Education is also working with post-secondary partners to ensure continued access for graduating student applications and flexibility during our current situation. Our teachers and support staff will continue to play a key role in supporting student learning in a variety of ways. Our principals will endeavour to maintain ongoing communication with you and your student. Your patience is appreciated in advance as we will need some planning and organizing time before being fully activated with your child and their ongoing learning after the spring break. We also ask that you call your school principal if your child does not have access to wifi or a device.

While all planning for student learning is being done simultaneously by various educator teams, we have established an order of focus to ensure the students' and teachers' most significant resource needs are met. Our first priority for extensive planning will begin with students in Grade 12 to ensure immediate attention to their on time successful graduation. Planning efforts and access to resources will then prioritize those students in Grades 11 and 10, who make up the rest of the Graduation Program. Our focus will then turn to our Middle Years students, the younger intermediate students (Grades 4-9), and ways to support K to 3 students with ongoing literacy and numeracy development.

Other Educational Programming

In-class instruction for student learning is suspended until further notice, but schools are not entirely closed. Some current child care services may remain open. Some additional onsite student programming may be provided for children of families working in provincially identified essential services such as health care, police, fire, utilities, etc. Some student counselling and mental health support may be provided. Some opportunities for students to pick up and drop off materials will be arranged. All of these things are uncertain at this point in time but we will keep you posted as we learn more.

Child Stress or Anxiety

We also know that in uncertain times such as these, your child may experience stress or be anxious about what is ahead. It is very important that, as adults and advocates, we keep our messaging calm and supportive. Things will all be okay and students will return to their usual school experiences and friendships in the future. Your student is deeply cared about by our staff and we will be connecting with them shortly after the spring break. We have also attached a supportive document with talking points for working with children through uncertain situations.

Acknowledgement

I would like to take the opportunity to thank our amazing staff at SD48 who have been responsive to the rapidly evolving situation in the context of COVID-19. Custodial and maintenance staff have been keeping our schools safe and continue efforts to ensure they are ready for staff and students. All of the educators and support staff had already been working with our students to teach universal approaches to health and wellness and support the ongoing cleanliness of our schools. Our online learning teachers have been proactively initiating plans to support students ahead of these recent announcements. School administrators and district support staff have continued to meet and plan. As always, our many community partners have also provided critical collaboration over the past few weeks.

In Closing

Thank you for taking the time to read all of this information. We will continue to take direction from the Ministry of Education and the Public Medical Health Officers as developments transpire and new information is made available. Our initial plans for student learning will no doubt evolve and extend as we learn more. We will continue to connect with you in the near future to keep you up to date with what we know and with our planning for your student's learning and other educational programming in our schools.

Thank you in advance to everyone for your support and your ongoing patience moving forward. Stay well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa McCullough', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Lisa McCullough
Superintendent of Schools