

December 14, 2020

Dear Parents / Guardians:

Here we are in December for 2020, the year with the most unprecedented use of the word unprecedented in memory. I want to thank parents and guardians for your continuing support as we navigate the changing landscape in our schools and communities. I am writing to you today to provide you with an update on a number of district items:

Health & Safety

We continue to follow the recommendations from Dr. Bonnie Henry and her team at the Provincial Health Office (PHO) who work in conjunction with the BC Centre for Disease Control. Our schools have enhanced safety protocols in place that include extensive cleaning and other safety measures such as hand-washing stations, mask protocols, and student cohorts. You can find more information about the latest information and guidelines at the following websites:

- BC's Back to School Plan (updated Nov 30, 2020):
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/covid-19-return-to-school>
- Provincial Health Officer (Dr. Bonnie Henry) Orders:
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

Communication Protocols

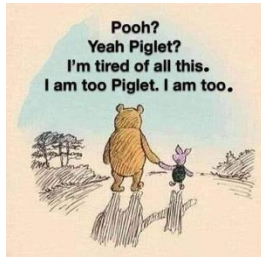
We will continue to keep parents and guardians informed in a timely manner on any significant updates with our school operations. This will include things such as school schedules, any operational changes that may be required, as well as any Fraser Health notifications that need to be sent home. A reminder that Fraser Health remains the regional authority on all medical issues related to COVID-19 and will direct the school district should there be an exposure in a school. Recently, Fraser Health adjusted the communications they send home, with additional letters to better clarify the extent of an exposure in a building. We will continue to ensure that this communication is efficient and transparent. I would also add that I appreciate everyone's continued vigilance with regards to COVID, as our schools reflect the success of the community in limiting exposures from COVID-19.

Winter Break (Dec 21st - Jan 4th)

At this time, there is no indication that the provincial government is planning to extend the upcoming Winter Break. This would be a provincial decision and not one controlled by the school district. The decision would come from either the PHO or the Ministry of Education. I would further add that the impression I receive from provincial authorities is that closing

schools is a situation that would occur after most other facilities and services have been closed. Also, a reminder that Mission schools re-open on Tuesday, January 5th.

Mental Health



I have been really pleased with how Mission Public Schools' staff, students, and parent community have dealt with the Covid pandemic. People have really stepped up to help one another. One observation from schools is the challenge of balancing children's fear; we need to respect the virus but not be overcome with fear from it. All of us (very tired) adults have difficult work ahead of us threading this needle with the children in our lives. Further, I hope each and every one of you is ensuring that your own mental health is being taken care of. I know this

year there is also the added struggle of being unable to see family members. There are lots of supports available out there if you need assistance including here:

<https://sd75curriculum.com/wellness/>.

The Holiday Season

This will be a very different holiday season for most families in our community. Christmas for my family is normally a time for gathering and celebrating, and while that may look quite different this year, it can also be a time of rejuvenation and renewal. I know from visiting schools and speaking with students, staff, and parents there is a need for some time to recharge. The winter solstice is traditionally a season of hope, as we pass our darkest hours and look forward to the growing light that is coming. With vaccines on the way, and a school system that has been resilient to the demands of 2020, I can see the light at the end of this dark time. I want to wish everyone a wonderful upcoming holiday season - one that is filled with love and reconnection, however that might look. Should you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to reach out to me at angus.wilson@mpsd.ca. Thank you and take care.

Season's Greetings,



Angus Wilson
Superintendent of Schools

