

News and Information

August 25, 2014

Dear Parents/Guardians:

At this stage of the summer most of us look forward with great anticipation to the start of a new school year. The following is an update with regard to the ongoing provincial labour dispute.

Unfortunately, the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) and the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) have yet to make significant progress at the bargaining table, and as a result, we are uncertain as to whether schools will be able to open following the Labour Day weekend. There is still a chance that the two sides may be able to reach a settlement in the next few days, however, parents and guardians are encouraged to consider alternate arrangements for their children should this not happen.

During this final week of the traditional summer break, schools would normally be open with a full complement of staff to handle new student registrations as well as to respond to queries from parents and students. As many of you will have seen already, picket lines have gone up in front of most of our schools. Our understanding is that there will be picket lines in place, in one form or another, until there is a resolve to the dispute. The impact of this is that Principals and Vice-Principals may be the only staff on-site to respond to requests from parents and students. We appreciate your patience and understanding as they may be delayed in responding to you.

This week would also normally be the time when new families who have moved into a school's attendance area over the summer, would go to the school to complete the registration process and hand in the necessary paperwork (birth certificate, proof of residency and latest report card). Parents in this situation are reminded that they may complete the registration process online, using the link from our website – www.sd23.bc.ca. Supporting documents for new students may either be dropped off, emailed or faxed to each child's school (contact information is available on the School District's website under the link for 'Schools'). Parents will also be able to bring this information to the school following the conclusion of the labour dispute.

It is also important to recognize that there are students and families who are on wait-lists to get into specific schools. Requests of this nature will be processed as soon as normal operations resume and administrators are able to complete accurate student counts to determine available space.

A final decision on school opening may not be made until the Labour Day weekend, giving both parties the maximum amount of time to reach a settlement. Because of this, we encourage parents to follow the local media and consult our website for any changes that may take place. If there is a settlement over the weekend, schools will open on Tuesday, September 2nd following the normal school-opening procedures that have been communicated by individual schools. If there is no settlement, it is anticipated that schools will remain behind picket lines with only school administrators on-site. In this scenario, parents would be asked to make alternate arrangements for their children, as it would be impossible to offer an educational program.

The Ministry of Education has also established a website with parent information - <http://bcparentinfo.ca/>. This site contains information about the announcement by the Ministry of Finance of a stipend of \$40 per day for parents of students under the age of 13 if the dispute continues. Additionally all parties in this dispute maintain their own websites, which are available to parents.

Thank you for your understanding during this difficult and uncertain time. It is my hope that the labour impasse is resolved quickly at the bargaining table and that our schools can return to normal operations.

Sincerely,

Hugh Gloster
Superintendent of Schools

For comments, please contact:

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