

# Office of the Superintendent

*Shelley Green - Superintendent*

Thursday, March 26, 2020

## **ON THE HORIZON – THE FUTURE OF LEARNING FOR OUR STUDENTS**

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As spring break comes to an end, we want to keep our families informed with what is on the horizon for our students, staff, parents and guardians. This year, our return from the break will look much different than in previous years.

Due to COVID-19, the provincial government has suspended all in-class instruction until further notice meaning **students will not be returning to the classroom on March 30<sup>th</sup>**. Given this direction, our District has been working diligently over the past two weeks to develop plans that allow students to continue with their studies.

Our District has been exploring delivering educational programming online. While we may already offer distance learning for some grade levels, there are many factors we have to take into consideration for providing K-12 instruction online, including the following:

- Instructional requirements vary for elementary, middle and secondary grade levels
- Vulnerable students or learners with complex needs may require additional supports
- Staff will require time to redesign their lessons to be shared online
- Some staff may require training to be able to teach remotely
- Not all students have internet access or computers and devices that allow them to connect from home so alternatives will need to be available for these students

We also realize that many families are already balancing working from home and taking care of their families so ensuring that their child or children complete online courses can cause additional stress.

These are all very important considerations, so please note that instructional decisions are not made lightly, and we are still working towards providing solutions. We will continue to operate through a lens of equity, where we will strive to provide an optimal learning experience for all of our learners during this unprecedented time.

*The Greater Victoria School District wishes to recognize and acknowledge the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, on whose traditional territories, we live, we learn, and we do our work.*

Moving forward, we also understand the role our schools play in the community will evolve. As public servants, we have a responsibility to provide essential services. To help focus our important work in the current context of today, we are sharing the Ministry of Education's guiding principles that will help focus our priorities.

### **Guiding Principles**

1. Maintain a healthy and safe environment for all students and families and all employees
2. Provide services to support children of essential workers (e.g., childcare for medical professionals)
3. Support vulnerable students who may need special assistance
4. Provide continuity of education for all of our students

### **Planning and Preparing**

The Ministry of Education has been informing School Districts that there is no expectation to have a solution in place at the end of spring break. We need to plan carefully while continually considering the health and safety in our schools and throughout the District. In addition, we need to develop a sustainable plan and learning model in case the status quo continues for many weeks.

To best prepare for the coming weeks, our Information Technology for Learning Department has already started with ensuring our staff from our District Departments (IT, Human Resources, Payroll, and Finance) can work remotely.

Our district staff will work with our schools to develop plans for delivering courses, learning activities, and resources for students online in the coming weeks. We will be providing regular updates for parents and guardians and ask for your continued support as we take this week by week.

Again, we understand there are many questions and concerns about working and learning remotely. To forecast what can be expected in the coming weeks, please review the following.

### **What will happen on Monday, March 30<sup>th</sup>?**

On Monday, only our Principals, Vice-Principals, Custodians and Administrative Assistant III staff will physically be in our schools. While in the buildings they will be following the recommendations of our Public Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry. The Principals and Vice-Principals will be connecting with their staff to help further plan and map out our next steps.

### **What can families expect over the next two weeks?**

Schools will be planning in the first two weeks back from break. Principals and Vice-Principals will be connecting with their school community to discuss the next steps and how students can pick up their personal belongings.

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### *Picking up personal belongings*

We are asking Principals and Vice-Principals to connect with their families about students picking up their personal belongings and learning materials from their school. This will look different at each school level (elementary, middle and secondary) and may take some time given the number of students in one building. Your School Principal or Vice-Principal will be in communication with you on how and when students will be able to pick up items and clean out their desks or lockers in the safest possible manner.

We anticipate that this will take most, if not all, of weeks one and two to complete to ensure the health and safety of everyone.

School Principals will control the number of people in the buildings, maintain physical safe distances, and ensure products are available for hand washing and for sanitizing. Custodial staff will regularly clean touch points and clean surface areas.

### *Learning Plans*

In regards to continuity to learning, for the first two weeks we will provide general learning activities that parents and students can access around mental health and well-being, literacy, numeracy, physical health and passion projects on the District website. They will be accessible through the District's homepage: [www.sd61.bc.ca](http://www.sd61.bc.ca)

### **Does the public have access to District Facilities?**

#### *School buildings*

We are monitoring access to all of our facilities. If a member of the public wishes to enter a school building, they will need to coordinate their visit with the School's Principal. Safety being our first priority, we need to know how many individuals are in our buildings at all times and schedule visits with our special cleaning protocols.

#### *Playgrounds*

Our school playgrounds remain closed. Signage has been installed to remind the community.

#### *Sports courts*

In addition, our school's hardtop courts (tennis and basketball courts) are now closed.

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## *Childcare*

In the next day or two, families will receive a survey asking families about essential service workers' childcare needs.

### **How can parents/guardians stay informed about the latest developments?**

We know there will be additional questions and concerns in the coming weeks. We will be providing regular updates via email and on our District website: [www.sd61.bc.ca/covid-19](http://www.sd61.bc.ca/covid-19)

As you know, we are all in this together. It will take all of us to navigate this new landscape and we need to be flexible and fully support each other. We plan to take this one week at a time with the knowledge that anything can and may change as we move forward.

Sincerely,



Shelley Green  
Superintendent of Schools

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One *Learning* Community

