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September 15, 2020

Dear SD43 Families,

We are excited to welcome everyone back! Preparations for the return to class began in earnest over the summer as administrators, custodians, facilities and maintenance staff prepared schools. Cleaning protocols were developed and implemented, portable handwashing stations were installed, and supplies like masks, soap, hand sanitizer and disinfectants were ordered and distributed to schools. These combined efforts will help create and maintain a safe and controlled environment in all schools. The district has committed considerable financial support to schools well above normal funding levels for resources that are supportive of all health and safety guidelines.

A brief summary includes:

- Additional custodial staffing deployed, initiation of twice daily cleaning of high touch points and daily deep clean procedures.
- Health Canada approved janitorial cleaning products secured and put into use in addition to the purchase of two medical-grade impact cleaning machines and five hand-held medical-grade portable cleaners.
- Installation of MERV13 Air Filters in all schools as recommended by the Provincial Health Officer and BC Centre for Disease Control.
- Purchase of 180 portable handwashing stations, increased supplies of paper towels, 6,000 gallons of hand sanitizer, 90,000 reusable masks and face shields, 50,000 disposable masks.
- Ongoing installation of hands-free dryers and one-touch sink faucets (1,200 installations) to support more frequent hand hygiene demands.

In addition to the above, funding has been provided for additional technology for students, staffing supports for Distributed Learning (DL) and the Home to School Transition. Additional information may be found at www.sd43.bc.ca/faq.

By now your principal has communicated details as they relate to your specific school[s]. Old routines will have to change but, with the continued support and cooperation of school communities, we can keep children safe. It is important to monitor the health of each household member closely and commit to daily health checks before children are sent to school. Orientation week has provided students with guidance on the necessary health and safety measures including frequent handwashing, physical distancing, the use of masks, and following “traffic” control measures, as appropriate.

School plays a vital role in the personal, social and intellectual development of our children and it is important that their learning continues. Though aspects of school may not look the same as in the past, children in SD43 will be following the BC Curriculum and developing their core competencies.

The situation continues to be fluid and we must expect bumps in the road, but district and school staff are working feverishly to ensure a successful start up of the new school year. Thank you for your patience, flexibility, and cooperation as we work together to provide educational opportunities for your child[ren]. Participation in school surveys and your feedback have been instrumental in pulling together plans quickly in such a limited time frame. As new information or guidelines are provided from the Provincial Health Officer and the Ministry of Education, we are prepared to adapt as needed.

It will be important that we all continue to come together as a community in support of our children. Welcome to the 2020-2021 school year! I am confident that by working together we can provide a secure and inspiring learning environment for student success in SD43.

Sincerely,

Patricia Gartland
Superintendent & CEO