

## *Every Child, Every Chance, Every Day*

Welcome back to another exciting year at James Park. Hold onto your hats, because this will be our best year ever!

We are going to start things off with a real bang the first week of school! Our theme is “Up through the Atmosphere”, and students will be taking part in a number of multi-age activities aimed at working together throughout the school. The week will culminate with an assembly on Friday, followed by a kite making workshop, a picnic style lunch hour and then we’ll all go fly a kite. We anticipate high engagement and lots of excitement. We hope all students attend through the week, as it is generally agreed by everyone on staff that this activity-based start to the year is highly effective in creating a safe and secure environment, based on real caring among all members of the school community.

For most educators, I included, the summer is a time for reflection and goal setting – the true year end! This summer, my thinking has been along three broad lines:

- ✓ Full engagement of each learner in their learning & at their personal level
- ✓ Social responsibility: the environment, service, community
- ✓ Technology: let’s connect digitally with as many families as possible (goal 85%)

### **Learning**

Research tells us that we learn when we are engaged in the process of learning. When we design our own learning, when we teach others what we have learned, when we are permitted to assess what we have learned, and when we are challenged to improve our output before being evaluated. This research is very clear, and it tells us that we can all learn under the right conditions. Learning, therefore, is a personal/individual process which takes place when we are interested and actively involved. Every child should be working at their level to create their own meaning within the broader context of their classroom community.

This sounds easy, right? We say, “Well of course – it’s a total no-brainer” ... I know that’s what you’re thinking. But, is it easy? Is it how we have traditionally worked in schools? Is it how we were taught in school? No, no and no! Is it how we learn as toddlers, when we wander fearlessly through our environment ... touching, exclaiming, pulling apart, questioning? YES, if we’re allowed to do that.

So, how do we morph our methods into the methods of the safe and secure toddler under the watchful eye of the caregiver? That, my friends, is not easy but it is something we are working on and will continue to work on at James Park and elsewhere. It’s exciting and just a little scary (as most change is) but we are doing it.

### **Social Responsibility**

Strong community is an important component of a safe and caring learning environment. Besides that, it’s also more fun for everyone! So, we will be working on that community and

emphasizing service to one another within the school. We will have a leadership group for grade 5 students who are interested in getting more actively involved in good works in the school, and outside as well. All students, staff and parents will also be involved in a process of examining our values at James Park, to create a school motto and an appropriate symbol to which we can all respond proudly.

All of us will begin to examine our practices to reduce waste, especially with paper. We will encourage less photocopying, and more creative ways of expressing our learning than through photocopied material. Similarly, lamination will be discouraged as it is not only harmful to the landfill; the machine itself causes harmful fumes and uses a lot of power. Laminated paper cannot be recycled. These things are also very expensive and that money can be more effectively redistributed.

### **Technology**

The District recently upgraded our computer lab with reconditioned computers and updated applications. We have installed a Smart Board and wireless router in the library, with many thanks to our fabulous parent community, through the equally fabulous PAC! Teachers have been upgraded to a laptop for their professional use, which frees up a computer for the students in their classroom. The District has also subscribed to a new website application, which has been used to create beautiful websites for our schools, including virtual classrooms for teachers. For my part, I hope to keep up with important announcements to the extent that the newsletter becomes almost obsolete. The calendar on the website is “live” so if a date changes, it will immediately change in the calendar. Check us out every day at <http://www.sd43.bc.ca/elementary/jamespark/Pages/default.aspx>

The virtual classrooms are not yet up and running for everyone, though one or two will be soon. Your child’s teacher will let you know. I very much hope to have at least 85% of our parents accessing the newsletter and daily announcements through the website. This will eliminate enormous photocopying costs. Please provide us with your email address (print very clearly) on the verification form that comes home the second week. That way, we can gauge our ability to correspond with you digitally.

This message has become long, and I hope you’ve been able to make it to the end. I am very excited, as always, about the new year and what we can accomplish together. I am so happy to be part of this community, and it is an honour to work with the teachers at James Park. All work very hard to provide your child/ren with the best education possible and I happen to know; they are all as excited as I am to begin.

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