**ROCHESTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL Week of 2 September, 2014**

The ongoing labour dispute has made for a September like no other in my 25 year school experience. As the first week of September comes to an end, we all wonder when schools will reopen and classrooms will return to being their usual centres of activity. We are ready for your children once those doors do open! Depending on when we begin, there may be some alterations to our September “business as usual.”

**Kindergarten Gradual Entry and Welcoming Conversations with Teachers**

Parents of incoming Kindergarten children were sent information packages in July. Included in these packages were specific dates and times for children, parents and kindergarten teachers to conduct “welcoming conversations.” Also included were timelines for gradual entry, partial days etc. Our delayed opening will result in changes to these timelines and possibly to the format of conversations and gradual entry if the strike continues into September. Once the strike is over, decisions will be made quickly at the District level and communicated to all parents. There will be a common school district wide approach to the beginning of kindergarten. I know these are anxious times for eager young K students and their parents but we will keep you informed once we know more. In the meantime, we are here if you have any questions or need help with any matter.

**When school opens…**

Returning children in grades 1-5 will go to their former classroom for the first and second day (this period may be extended if class reorganization is necessitated by any major changes in our school population since last June). Regardless of when the first day is determined, children in grades 1 - 5 will be in attendance from 9:00 to 9:30 only. The second day will return to our usual 9 - 3 full day.

As noted, Kindergarten children will have a different format for their first days but this will be determined when the strike is settled. Regardless, K children will come for the first day for ½ hour as well but their start time is different from the rest of the school. The first day start time remains the same as indicated in your K packages.

**Hang In there**

I know this is a difficult time for many in the Rochester School community. One way or another, this will end and when it does, there is much hard and meaningful work to do in our school. We started a new chapter in the school’s climate and culture last spring. Re-rooting our school in a value based culture will remain a significant aspect of the next few years at the school. We will need the energy and input of all of our students, parents, and staff to create the kind of school we all desire. I look forward to the day when we can get back to this important endeavour.