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September 24, 2019

Dear School District 43 Families,

As you are likely aware, a global climate strike has been planned for Friday, September 27<sup>th</sup>, in many cities around the world, including Vancouver. School District 43 remains committed to conservation efforts and delivery of the BC Curriculum with its emphasis on climate change and environmental issues, however, SD43 schools will remain open Friday and students are encouraged to attend their scheduled classes.

On Friday, administrators and teachers in schools are being prompted to discuss environmental issues and incorporate current events including the global climate strike and the UN Climate Action Summit being held in New York City. As always, parents and guardians of students may choose to excuse their children from school, though it is the District's responsibility to remain open and to welcome students on a scheduled school day. As such, schools will be open and staff and students are expected to attend. Parents and guardians may choose to participate in climate strike events with their children but are reminded to please inform schools that their child will be absent. Students with parent or guardian excused absences are encouraged to discuss with their teacher class work that may be missed.

The BC Curriculum addresses study of the Earth and how its climate has changed over time in addition to how human actions have had an impact. These concepts are addressed at age-appropriate levels and the content of these lessons becomes more complex as students move into higher grades. SD43 schools engage students in many environmental study opportunities in addition to clubs and activities that focus on environmental stewardship and education of the school community. Recent examples include the introduction of a district-wide recycling initiative that was largely spear-headed by the District Student Leadership Council and supported by many school 'Green Teams' and leadership groups. Students participated in awareness campaigns that involved the creation of videos and support materials to educate the greater school community on how to participate in recycling programs and 'know before you throw' sorting of recyclables. Water bottle filling stations have been added to many schools to reduce waste and promote refillable bottle use by staff and students, as well.

From an organizational perspective, SD43 has achieved carbon neutrality for the ninth consecutive year (2010-2018). In doing so, the District systematically measures and works towards reducing its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change. Highlights of these efforts include:

- Implemented more than 100 GHG reduction projects across its schools. These facilities-related initiatives include -among others- lighting, boilers, and building automation upgrades. Currently, more than 50 schools have been retrofitted with LED lighting and we continue to perform these upgrades on a regular basis

- Incorporated energy-conscious design elements in new schools as part the commitment to follow Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Gold Standards. These include LED lighting, high-efficiency HVAC systems, etc.
- Delivered staff awareness programs to promote climate sustainability in the workplace. Some of these initiatives include: print-wise campaigns to reduce our reliance on paper printing, Turn-it-Off campaigns to encourage light and monitor shut-downs, and Sweater Day to bring awareness around wearing weather appropriate clothing
- Facilitated (in partnership with BC Hydro and FortisBC) the Energy Green Grants Program, which empowered teachers and students to pursue climate action initiatives related to water, energy and waste management at their schools
- Delivered a multitude of educational campaigns in schools, such as Energy Leaders, Coquitlam Green, Energy Champions, and Lights-off programs, to raise awareness around climate conscious practices inside and outside the classroom
- As a result of this comprehensive approach, the District has successfully reduced its GHG emissions by approximately 40% or 4,500 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, which is equivalent to reducing the GHG emissions of approximately 1,000 Canadian homes for one year.

Most recently, the Board of Education has begun its campaign to build the 'Greenest School in Canada' as part of its advocacy for a new middle/secondary school on Burke Mountain. Capital Planning documentation has been submitted to the Ministry of Education to request funding for a new school for Burke Mountain and the Board has passed a motion to rally support from other levels of government and the community at large for this important green initiative. The Board is committed to raising the funding required to move beyond the LEED Gold standard currently provided by the Ministry of Education and raise the bar to a new environmental standard for school construction. The 'Greenest School in Canada' initiative is being undertaken by the Board because it is simply the right thing to do. As educational leaders, the school district can best drive real change through leading by example and educating children on why such initiatives are so important. To learn more about or contribute to the 'Greenest School in Canada' initiative please visit [www.sd43.bc.ca/CapitalProjects/Pages/BurkeMountain.aspx](http://www.sd43.bc.ca/CapitalProjects/Pages/BurkeMountain.aspx).

Supporting students to explore and learn about their passions is a priority for the school district and the district would never discourage students from exercising their freedom of expression and opinion whether it be in the area of climate change or any other topic of importance to today's youth. Our mission though is to ensure quality learning opportunities for all students of all ages and it is therefore imperative that the district be open and available to those families and students that wish to attend school on Friday, September 27<sup>th</sup>.

Sincerely,



Patricia Gartland  
 Superintendent of Schools/CEO  
 School District No. 43 (Coquitlam)