



Learning for a Lifetime

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April 2013

Dear Grade 12 Students and Parent/Guardians of Grade 12 Students:

CHAIR:
Melissa Hyndes

VICE-CHAIR:
Holly Butterfield

TRUSTEES:

Gail Alty
John J. Keryluk
Brian Robinson
Judy Shirra
Diane Sowden
Gerri Wallis
Keith Watkins

Over the past few years, our secondary school principals and our RCMP police liaison officers /Port Moody Police liaison officers have noticed an increase in acts of vandalism carried out by some of our graduating students. I write this letter to our graduating students and families to bring further attention to this problem and ask for your assistance in changing the type of graduating student behavior that I describe below. I asked for the cooperation of graduating students and their families last year and was pleased that there was improvement in the conduct of our graduating students. Having said this, most high school principals and the high school staffs still had to be vigilant with regard to supervision of a few graduating students. We ask graduating students and their families to improve this situation – to ensure that the final few days of high school are safe, focused and productive school days for all students and staff.

Last June, many of our secondary school principals, along with the police liaison officers, were faced with resolving disciplinary situations after some grade 12 students committed offenses such as damaging the school building by applying graffiti on school walls, breaching school security systems by breaking doors and damaging lock mechanisms, mistreating animals in pranks meant to disrupt the school environment and undertaking dangerous pranks after school hours on school property while under the influence of alcohol. Frequently, secondary school principals have noted that the response of the students involved in these negative actions, and the comments of their parents/guardians in follow-up meetings, tended to minimize the impact of these actions on the overall school environment. Secondary school principals are concerned that some of our graduating students and their parents/guardians view the damage created during the last week of classes as a "rite of passage" for graduating students. We hope that this letter helps to change this attitude. The Board of Education has had to support the imposition of student discipline as a result of graduating student behavior over the past few years. This discipline is avoidable and, sadly, often impacts not only the graduating student, but also the involvement of that student and, subsequently, the family in year-end school and graduation related activities.

Additionally, while the cost of repairs as a result of the vandalism undertaken by graduating students last year in a time of dwindling resources was problematic, it was the lingering and highly negative effect of the acts of vandalism and misbehaviour which was most troubling to the staff and the overall student population at many of our secondary schools. Last year, despite the high level of vigilance by our school staffs and the police liaison officers both during the school day and throughout the evening hours, the staff and students in our secondary schools were unsettled and disrupted by the conduct of a few grade 12 students in the final days of the classes. Last year, some of the acts of vandalism, in particular those which involved the cruel treatment of animals, attracted very negative publicity for some schools – publicity which was neither typical nor representative of the very fine students graduating from our schools. Vandalism and cruelty to animals will never have an accepted place in our schools. The Board of Education is committed to ensuring that our schools are respectful, safe and orderly places for all students and our school staffs.

The Board of Education expects that each of our graduating classes of 2013 will commit to year-end celebrations which truly reflect the positive accomplishments of the Grads of 2013. We completely support secondary school principals and each school staff in their ongoing efforts to ensure that graduation celebrations are positive and that graduating students are respectful of the school environment. We are sure that we will have the support of graduating students and their families in making the Grad 2013 safe, enjoyable for all, and a true celebration of the talents and achievements of our 2013 grads.

Yours truly

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 43 (COQUITLAM)

Melissa Hyndes, Chair
Board of Education