



Learning for a Lifetime

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April 2011

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

CHAIR:

Melissa Hyndes

VICE-CHAIR:

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TRUSTEES:

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Holly Butterfield

John J. Keryluk

Brian Robinson

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.

Last June, for example, 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 breaking into schools, damaging the school building in a variety of ways such as spilling paint or applying graffiti on school walls, breaching school security systems by breaking doors and damaging lock mechanisms, mistreatment of animals in pranks meant to disrupt the school environment and involvement in dangerous pranks after school hours on school property while under the influence of alcohol. Quite 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 and provides information to all graduating students and their families about the issue.

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 break-ins which was most troubling to the staff and the overall student population at many of our secondary schools. Last year, despite a 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 some grade 12 students in the final few days of the classes. Vandalism will never have an accepted place in our schools and, above all, we are committed to ensuring that our schools are safe and orderly places for all students and our school staffs.

The Board of Education expects that each of our graduating classes of 2011 will commit to year-end celebrations which truly reflect the positive accomplishments of the Grads of 2011. 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 2011 safe, enjoyable for all, and a true celebration of the talents and achievements of our 2011 grads.

Yours truly

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 43 (COQUITLAM)

Melissa Hyndes, Chair
Board of Education