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March 4, 2020

Dear students, parents and staff:

Each year there are opportunities for students to travel within North America or overseas as part of school programs. Travel provides unique and valuable cultural experiences as students explore their learning in settings outside of the regular classroom. Unfortunately, this year the global outbreak and spread of COVID-19 has become a challenge that must be addressed as it pertains to the safety of our entire community.

The COVID-19 situation is rapidly changing and complex but decisions must be made with the available information and in a timely fashion. As in previous years, there are a number of school trips planned over spring break. In light of the COVID-19 outbreak and corresponding travel advisories issued by many countries, including Canada, the district has had to take the necessary precaution of cancelling some of these trips.

After careful consideration, planned trips during spring break to Europe, Asia, Africa, Central America and New York are cancelled due to the risk of harm for students and staff travelling to these regions. For all other planned trips at later dates, the district will continue to monitor the situation and respond to any changes to Travel Health Notices prepared by the Government of Canada. Currently district staff is working with travel providers and individual schools to review insurance policies around claims and refunds. Affected families will be contacted directly by the school principal about next steps and details regarding this process.

In arriving at the decision to cancel spring break trips, a number of factors had to be considered, including Health Canada advisories, and the decision was not made lightly. There is also the very real consideration of the potential for students and staff to be quarantined either overseas or upon their return to Canada and the impacts that such a situation would have.

In addition to school-planned trips, the district is asking that parents and staff who are travelling overseas during spring break consider the possibility of a needed quarantine upon their return to Canada. Individuals should be cognizant of the Government of Canada travel advisories and the most recent bulletins from health authorities. There have already been instances in the region where those returning from overseas travel have been urged to self-quarantine and avoid areas with many people

for 14 days upon their return to Canada. Countries impacted may change as the scope of the situation continues to evolve.

The best advice and precautions people can take at home continue to be increased and thorough hand washing, use of hand-sanitizer and covering of your mouth while coughing to avoid the spread of germs. The decision to cancel school trips is a regrettable but necessary precaution as we all work together to prevent the spread of this virus.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia Gartland".

Patricia Gartland
Superintendent/CEO