



SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 23
(CENTRAL OKANAGAN)

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"Together We Learn"

September 2, 2014

Dear Parents/Guardians and Community Members:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with current information as we enter the month of September.

It is with profound regret that we are unable to start the school year as we would normally expect to. Previous updates on our website have already shared that mediator Vince Ready declared an impasse in the exploratory talks that were happening between the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) and the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF). While we remain hopeful that an agreement can be reached in the near future, we have to be realistic in asking parents to continue to make alternate arrangements for their children until further notice.

Schools in our District remain open at the present time, however, Principals and Vice-Principals are the only staff assigned to these buildings. (Our support staff continue to honour the picket lines set up by teachers.) Our school administrators will try to respond to queries from parents and guardians, however, this communication may best be handled by sending them emails, as it may be impractical for them to answer their switchboards. (Contact information is available under the 'Schools' link on our website, or by searching the staff directory on our homepage – www.sd23.bc.ca.)

The Ministry of Education has established a website with parent information – <http://bcparentinfo.ca/>. This site contains the latest bargaining news and a link to register for the Ministry of Finance's 'Temporary Education Support for Parents'. The stipend of \$40 per day for parents of students 12 years of age or younger is being managed at the provincial level and the website contains all the details. Please note that the application form asks for the student's PEN number (Personal Education Number) which can typically be found on a recent report card. If this is not readily available to you, the PEN field is optional and may be left blank. For anyone without internet access, you can call 1-877-387-3332 (toll free) to apply for the daily stipend.

For those individuals who access community-based programs in our schools (i.e. Preschools, StrongStart Centres, after-school care programs and evening rentals), please note that these programs will not be operating for the duration of the strike. (School fields may still be accessed after normal school hours by user groups with rental agreements in place. However, this may have to change in the future if we are unable to dispatch staff from our Operations Department to maintain the grounds.)

We have also received inquiries from different individuals and groups requesting a refund of fees that have been paid for services or programs that aren't currently being offered. These include such areas as rental agreements, leases, specialty academies and transportation. The School District will be reviewing these items once the dispute is concluded, and will send out further communication in the future.

Finally, we look forward to the time when we can welcome all of our staff, students and parents back to our schools, as none of us want to see the current situation continue. We also thank our parents for their ongoing patience during such a difficult time.

For further updates, continue to check the School District website and the local media.

Sincerely,

Hugh Gloster
Superintendent of Schools