

Parents, students and staff,

Ey Swayel - which is welcome in the Halkomelum language. And I say this because I want to acknowledge that Surrey is on the traditional territories of the Kwantlen, Semiahmoo and Katzie First Nations and on a glorious day, I acknowledge for these people and their ancestors. It's what we do to give thanks and to pay respect.

I wanted to bring you a message for week three during times of celebration for many people with Vaisakhi, Easter, and Passover. No matter who you are, you can feel spring is upon us with the warmth and the flowers. The warmth brings us together in many ways.

I have a couple things that I wanted to be able to say as we look ahead. Of course, as you know so well, we are in a pandemic response and it is our support of the health care system and our community that is driving our decisions for education. We know that it is a trying time for many people and as always, our hearts go out to the families who have lost loved ones or who have people infected.

First, to our parents and students. We have been asking for your patience as learning rolls out slowly from our teachers and schools. Thank you for your support and we also ask that you continue to communicate with your teachers. We are all new at this so your teachers need to know if you are overwhelmed or if you need additional supports. As a district, we are providing technology to our families who need it most so that they can access the materials teachers are providing.

Next, to our teachers. Please continue to go slow and be reminded that school is the great equalizer where all children have supports that we know and trust. We don't have our kids in school and in our enormously diverse community, many will not have technology, many will have language barriers, many will have significant learning needs and many parents are trying to juggle work, or recently will have lost their job or are in economic uncertainty. Getting food may be their priority and learning may be down the list. We are asking you to use your normal solid professional judgement on how fast to go and how to determine what families need.

To our support staff, we need you to continue your exceptional work in support of learning and our systems. From answering emails and calls to reaching out in partnership with teachers to our vulnerable families, your care and support is a critical part of our plans.

Principals and vice-principals, thank you for managing the complexity from providing daycare opportunities to our Essential Services Workers, to sending technologies to families in need, to providing meals for those who are going hungry all while you work with your staff to provide learning opportunities for all children.

Finally, to all, a reminder of where we are. This is not business as usual. We cannot expect that the same content will be covered, we cannot expect that assessment and grading will continue as normal, and we cannot place the same expectations on students and families when we don't have our students for our regular 4-5 hours a day. Online and remote learning will not replace the classroom teacher and our supports from educational assistants and numerous non-enrolling teachers. Online learning is a

response to a pandemic to keep people apart and to manage the best we can. We simply cannot take our routine practices and port them online as if our students were still in classes. It will look and feel different and we're all having to adjust and you can imagine what a challenge this is not only for our teachers of core subjects like social studies and science, but for teachers of drama, music, foods, woodwork, metalwork and so many others.

I have enormous faith that quality learning will continue and that there will be amazing things happening. Our staffs are professionals who have dedicated their careers in support of children and education. We just need to be reminded that this coming Tuesday is only our 10th day of completely turning our system on its head. In those 10 days, I have seen great care and dedication. I also see everyone missing schools.

So once again, please be patient, please communicate, please know that this too shall pass. There are encouraging signs but we are still a long way from the finish and as I said before, in this race, slow and steady, caring and connected is the way we need to be.

Take care,

Hychka

Jordan