

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

September 25, 2019

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Re: **Climate Strike: September 27, 2019**

Climate change is one of the most significant challenges of our time, and an important priority for students, teachers, and staff of New Westminister Schools. On September 27, 2019, students around the world are organizing and participating in local climate strike events. Inspired by Swedish teenager, Greta Thunberg, climate strike rallies are being arranged around North America and are timed to coincide with the United Nations Climate Action Summit in New York. Our own local environment group named *SD40 for the Climate* is also inviting everyone to hear and amplify calls for urgent leadership action on climate justice, and to address the severity of the climate emergency we face. Many of our students are wanting to participate in local events, and seek support from parents, teachers, and school administrators. In support, the New Westminister Board of Education at its recent Operations Policy and Planning Committee meeting voiced their support for our students to safely participate by providing students, parents, and staff with an understanding of District support and expectations. The following recommendation was unanimously approved at the September 24 Board meeting:

Recommendation:

That the Board of Education for School District No. 40 (New Westminister) support students in New Westminister to work with others across British Columbia, Canada, and around the world, who have called on adults and peers to mobilize an international Climate Strike on September 27, 2019. In solidarity with student efforts to amplify climate concerns, and in recognition for the unique importance of the Climate Strike scheduled to take place in Vancouver on Friday, September 27, the New Westminister Board of Education will:

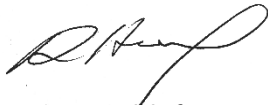
- a) *excuse attendance of any high school student that presents a permission slip, signed by their parent or guardian;*
- b) *excuse attendance of any elementary or middle-school student, if accompanied by their parent, guardian, or authorized adult;*
- c) *not penalize any student who chooses to miss classes on September 27 in order to participate in lawful Climate Strike activities.*

Furthermore, staff are encouraged to incorporate relevant climate strike information into educational programming, as appropriate, during the week of September 23rd.

Climate change and environmental issues are embedded in our curriculum and we as a school district care about environmental sustainability. The input received from our recent strategic planning consultation highlighted the importance of being “partnered in purpose” and “richly connected.” To that end, I encourage our students and staff to engage in ongoing dialogue as it is an issue which impacts us all.

Further, I encourage you to discuss this topic and global movement with your children and kindly follow our regular procedures if you plan on excusing your child to participate this Friday. Climate change is real and is a critical issue for our future. It is my hope this letter provides greater clarity as we work together to support our youth as responsible citizens.

Sincerely,



Karim Hachlaf
Superintendent of Schools/CEO

cc: Board of Education

