

June 26, 2020

*(To read this letter in a language other than English, follow this link and use the Google Translation option <https://newwestschools.ca/a-year-of-adaptation-and-community-spirit/>)*

Dear students, staff and parents,

Thank you. Thank you for all you have done in this unprecedented year. It's not what anyone imagined in September, and it was not easy ... but through the challenges we also managed to achieve some very remarkable things together.

COVID notwithstanding, we celebrated important big projects this year, including: conducting an extensive consultation and a full review of our Inclusive Education offerings (which is providing us a road map to build on over the next few years), we broke ground on the new Richard McBride Elementary, and we collaborated with the City of New Westminister to launch new child care spaces in Queensborough. There will be more highlights shared in our annual "Good things are happening" document in August.

Our students and staff celebrated moments they'll always carry with them. They were honoured for their athletics achievements, their artistic contributions and their digital savvy. They made and reinforced personal connections that held them together, through their time apart. And approximately 500 students had the opportunity to walk a modified stage, in front of a small group of family and friends, to celebrate the hard work they had done for years in earning their unforgettable grade 12 graduation.

And then there was COVID-19. The pandemic that touched and changed the lives of every single student, family and staff member in the district.

Our staff shone through this crisis: collaborating and supporting each other as they were pushed to implement and learn new systems of working, diligently following health and safety recommendations to keep peers and students safe, seeking new ways to support families and our greater community, and showcasing creativity and innovation in how they adapted. But most remarkably, they showed up with their hearts full of caring and commitment as they channelled true community spirit in all they did.

And the families. You turned kitchen tables into classrooms. And you welcomed teachers and other staff virtually into your homes, all while you did your best to manage the juggle of work, life and school. You participated in supporting your kids' education likely in ways you never anticipated. Certainly in ways you'll never forget.

As a dad of three myself, I think I can say: none of us did all of that perfectly, but on the whole, we did the very best we could and each learned something along the way.

As we look forward, we will continue in that spirit as we plan for many possibilities in the Fall and the year to follow. And while we await direction from the Provincial Health Officer and the

Ministry of Education, we're doing so with anticipation that in September we will be increasing our face-to-face instruction time.

*To our parents and students:* we encourage you to continue to share your thoughts about both what worked and what needed improving. Please login, participate for the first time or come back and respond to what's recently been shared by others in our ThoughtExchange:

<https://my.thoughtexchange.com/#490091176/>

The exchange will be open until Monday June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020, noon.

*To our staff:* thank you for sharing your feedback in meetings, emails and the survey that closes for you today.

*To everyone:* I am filled with gratitude for all that we managed to achieve together this year. I am driven to see what more we can do. And I'm optimistic that as we learn, innovate and collaborate, the results will be both powerful and beautiful.

So, as we head into summer, I wish you and your families all the best. May the sunshine and the break bring you rest, rejuvenation and continued good health.

As always, in this together,



Karim Hachlaf  
Superintendent of Schools / CEO

