



"Together We Learn"
CENTRAL OKANAGAN
SCHOOL DISTRICT

News and Information

Open Letter to Parents and Guardians of Central Okanagan Students

August 26, 2014

The Central Okanagan Board of Education is extremely disappointed that there has not been a resolution to the labour dispute between the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) and the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA), and that it now appears that schools may not reopen on September 2nd.

Regarding the current impasse, your trustees have written several times to the provincial parties involved in negotiations asking that bargaining resume and that a mediator be appointed. The agreement by the BCTF and the BCPSEA to invite Mr. Vince Ready to mediate the dispute was received with some optimism. However, Mr. Ready has said that he will not begin the mediation process unless the sides are closer together and, at the time of writing, it appears that they are still significantly apart.

The Board of Education has endorsed the BC School Trustees Association's *Back to School Action Plan*, and has asked both parties to implement the recommendations within that plan. The plan can be found on the BCSTA website. Specifically, it asks the parties to return to the bargaining table and:

- to work towards a negotiated settlement that falls within the economic mandate set by the provincial government and makes improvements to class size and composition; and,
- that any savings resulting from the strike and lockout stay within the public school system to benefit students.

Your Board has expressed many times to the Ministry of Education, and to our local MLAs, that the budget cuts we have had to make over the years have resulted in reductions to our education programs and our operations. The funds we receive from Government have simply not kept up with inflation nor the extra costs downloaded by Government to school districts. We have requested that funding for public education be stable and sustainable. We will continue to advocate on behalf of our students for adequate funding for public education.

We wish to acknowledge the difficult situation that all our district partners in education find themselves. This time of year is usually exciting for students, parents, guardians, teachers, all staff members, and Trustees, filled with anticipation, optimism and expectations. It is our profound hope that the uncertain times in which we all find ourselves will be over this week, and that our teachers, support staff, administrators and parents can get back to working together on behalf of all the students in our school system.

Updates to the current situation will be provided on the School District website and through the media. The most recent letters sent to the Ministry of Education and to the parties involved in provincial bargaining can also be found on the website.

In these uncertain times, your Board of Education continues to strongly encourage the BCTF and the BCPSEA to come together to resolve this impasse for the benefit of our students. We believe that where there is a will there is a way. It is still not too late for an agreement to be reached before September 2nd.

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions, do not hesitate to contact any one of your school trustees.

Yours sincerely,

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