

Dear parents, students, staff and community members,

Our educational lives took an unexpected turn on March 17th when the province announced the suspension of in-class instruction. It was one week later, on March 23rd when I created a “Week 1” message to our grade 12’s. Since that time, I have created 14 videos in all and I have appreciated the opportunity to update you as we all moved through the pandemic together. The regular school year is now officially over and I wanted to take this last chance to say thank you and to look ahead.

There are more thanks to pass around than I can fully cover off but I will try my best. From those such as our CUPE colleagues who lead and support our StrongStart programs for our very youngest learners from birth to 5 years old, to those who teach and provide support our Adult learners, Surrey Schools are home to about 75,000 very unique and diverse learners who do, in fact, represent our global community. We have now educated the community through the early stages of a global pandemic that has taken lives, shaken our economy, and changed almost every aspect of our daily routines. We are also acutely aware that the pandemic is far from over.

We have continued to put out comprehensive messaging about plans for September and you can find all those videos and transcripts including translations on our Surrey Schools homepage. We want to extend a huge thank you to all those in our schools who have also, during this complex time, laid the foundations for September no matter what decisions are communicated. We are ready, we are prepared to adjust, and we feel confident that we are in a good place as we head toward summer.

Now, it is time for the vast majority of our system to take the summer break that you need and deserve. For students, parents and our community, we now have a break to take a collective breath. We also know that the school district itself does not sleep over summer. Grounds and maintenance, construction projects, financial planning, summer school and more, the business of Surrey Schools shall continue and we thank all those for whom summer is actually a very busy time as work can be done without schools in regular session.

Particularly to our students and our parents, I want to extend our appreciation. To have your learning interrupted and redesigned twice in a span of only about two months has required your patience, your support and your acceptance of a whole range of new routines. We know that in many cases, these changes have been difficult for you. To our support staff and our teachers, you have allowed us to provide a continuity of learning in new and innovative ways, and have pivoted on a dime. Learning new ways, new tools, new routines, and yes, it has been a big ask and you have responded. To our Principals and Vice-Principals – leadership is a challenge any time and your leadership and commitment has been extraordinary. Our district staff who have continued to find a way to lead and provide the supports necessary to keep the system responsive and prepared have shown enormous support. Finally, to our Board of Education, not able to engage with the public in our usual ways, governing online while still fulfilling all your duties as normal, it’s been a whole new learning curve for you as well and you are to be congratulated.

As we look toward the first week of July and the time ahead, please know that we are ready for whatever comes and we likely will again require your patience and support as we head into a fall at a time when COVID-19 is reminding us almost daily that it’s still out there. On behalf of the district, please have a great and restful summer and we look forward to seeing you back in school in September.