

September 24, 2019

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Many of you will be aware that youth activists around the globe have been taking part in a movement to address the global climate crisis. Inspired by Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, rallies referred to as *Global Climate Strikes* have been planned around the world to coincide with the *United Nations Climate Action Summit* this week in New York. Advocates around the planet are asking for people to participate in rallies on Friday, September 27, and many students have indicated that they would like to attend the rally in Vancouver, which will occur during the school day.

As Superintendent of Schools, I believe it is important to communicate directly with parents about this important issue. There is ample evidence to support the argument that climate change is real and must be taken seriously. As a public school district, we play a crucial role in educating students about global warming and its potential impacts on our planet. In many classrooms across the District, climate change will be a topic of discussion this week as teachers engage students in a variety of lessons and activities. I also encourage you, as parents, to discuss this topic and the global advocacy movement with your children. I have included links to [the NASA climate change website](#) which is one of several sites I believe provides credible evidence about global warming as well as to the [NASA Climate Kids website](#) which may provide useful information for talking to younger children about climate change.

Although recently there has been more attention paid to the issue of climate change, the Richmond Board of Education has been a provincial leader in environmental sustainability for many years. The Board's Environmental Stewardship Policy guides board initiatives relating to environment sustainability, which includes a robust energy management program with aggressive targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reach carbon neutrality.

In addition to the Board's commitment to protecting the environment, the District also places significant value on student voice and engagement. 'Green teams' have been established at many schools and maintain a strong focus on sustainability in our schools and classrooms. As such, the District views the events unfolding around us this week as an important opportunity for the youth of Richmond to make their voices heard both in and outside of the classroom.

There have been some questions about whether or not students will be 'allowed' by the District to attend the rally on September 27. Ultimately, this decision rests with each individual parent and not the school or the District. If you wish to excuse your child from school to attend the rally, we ask that you contact your child's school in advance to provide your permission. Students who choose to attend the rally with their parents' permission will be marked '*absent-excused*' and will be considered under the supervision of their parent. We will be asking schools to ensure that if any students are excused by their parents for the day, that they be provided the opportunity to make up any missed work without penalty. Students will be encouraged to take responsibility for speaking with their teachers about this.

Thank you for considering how you, as a family, wish to handle this important matter. Should you have any questions, I would ask that you contact your child's school principal directly.

Sincerely,

Scott Robinson
Superintendent of Schools