

December 19, 2014

Wishing You a Safe and Happy Holiday

Fall 2014 has been an exciting time for our school district. We've welcomed thousands of children to Full-Day Kindergarten and the Extended Day Program. Our principals, teachers, and support staff continue their focused attention to providing great instructional and assessment practices in all our classrooms. Our students have made great efforts in their learning; secondary students are heading into summative assignments and exams in January. We said farewell to several trustees and gave a warm welcome to our newly elected Board with six returning and six new trustees.

This is a stark contrast to the news we received from Peshawar Pakistan this week. Our thoughts are with the families of the 141 people, 132 children who were killed in a horrific school massacre. Another 100 children and adults were injured. We read about heroic gestures by staff trying to protect their students. Imagine the emotional trauma for all the students, staff and families. And yet, Malala Yousafzai and others in Pakistan and around the world continue their fight to ensure education for all children, boys and girls.

Over the past number of years, our school district has demonstrated our commitment to education internationally in a variety of ways, from welcoming international students to sharing our expertise in public education with countries from around the world. We will continue this important work in honour of those in Pakistan and in other countries where public education is at risk.

Closer to home, we are working on the development of our next [strategic plan](#). The strategic plan is the document that will outline our priorities for the next four years, 2015-2019. In order to ensure our priorities are based on the needs of our community, we have asked for your input.

Students (grades 8-12), parents, employees and community partners were invited to share their thoughts on the things they appreciate about our schools, what challenges might exist and where we should focus our future priorities. In early December, we began a public consultation using an on-line platform called Thoughtexchange. This is an interactive process encouraging participants to share thoughts and ideas and providing us with a broad range of perspectives. I am thrilled to report that 9170 participants submitted a total of 41,127 thoughts. In the new year, we will launch the second phase of our consultation. You will receive an e-mail inviting you to help set our priorities by starring the thoughts that are important to you.. Everyone is welcome to participate – whether or not you shared thoughts in December. If we don't reach you by email, feel free to self-register. We want to hear from #EverySchool_EveryVoice.

As 2014 draws to an end, I would like to take this opportunity to wish our students, staff, parents and community members the very best of the holiday season.

Wishing you the best in the new year.

Sincerely,
Jennifer