



# VANCOUVER BOARD OF EDUCATION

School District No. 39

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

1580 West Broadway

Vancouver, B.C. V6J 5K8

Telephone: 604-713-5000

August 20, 2014

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with an update on the provincial labour dispute.

As you are aware, the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) and the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) reached an impasse with regard to negotiating a new contract and, as a result, on June 17, 2014 the BCTF escalated to a full-scale strike. Unfortunately, the two parties have not been able to make significant progress over the summer months and so the possibility of schools opening as usual following *Labour Day* is uncertain.

At this time, we are hopeful that the two parties, with the help of external mediation, will find a way to adjust their positions and reach a negotiated settlement before schools are due to open.

A decision on school opening will likely not be made until next Friday August 29 to provide both parties with the maximum amount of time to reach a negotiated settlement. As a result, parents are encouraged to consult our website ([www.vsb.bc.ca](http://www.vsb.bc.ca)) and follow the local media for any changes over the long weekend. There are two main possibilities:

1. If there is a settlement, our expectation is that all public schools in the Vancouver School District will open on **Tuesday September 2**

In this scenario if schools do open on time, we anticipate that there will be disruptions in regular instruction as course scheduling for students and timetables, particularly at the secondary level, may need to be changed. However, we will work hard to maintain as much stability as possible in the system and to return to good teaching and learning that is the hallmark of our public school system. Our intention is that we return as quickly and smoothly as possible to normal school operations.

2. If there is **no** settlement, some or all public schools in the Vancouver School District could be behind picket lines. It is possible that the BCPSEA imposed lockout of teachers, imposed in June and lifted over the summer, could be back in place.

In this scenario, a withdrawal of service due to strike action or a lockout will again impact the school district's ability to provide educational services and supervise students. While schools will remain open we will not be able to offer our regular instruction as we do not anticipate that unionized staff will cross picket lines. As a result we will again encourage parents to not send their children to school and to seek alternate childcare arrangements as needed.

The safety and security of our students is our highest priority. Should any students arrive at school while picket lines are in place, our school administrators will ensure that they are cared for until they can be safely returned to their homes under the supervision of a parent or guardian.

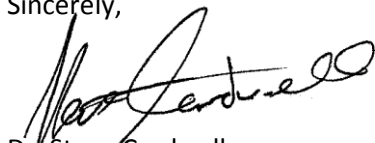
We are hopeful that this labour dispute can be resolved before Tuesday September 2. We encourage all parents to visit the Vancouver School Board website at [www.vsb.bc.ca](http://www.vsb.bc.ca) for further updates regarding the job action and keep up to date through the news media.

I am sorry that the normally exciting beginning to a new school year has been reduced to this high level of uncertainty. This is a frustrating, disappointing and worrying time for everyone. I am most concerned about the effect that this continued strike/lockout has on our students. We have an outstanding public school system in British Columbia and I am proud of the hard work and support provided by *all* staff in this complex school district.

It is my hope that the labour impasse is resolved quickly at the bargaining table and that our school district can soon return to normal operations and begin the school year on a more positive note.

Thank you for your understanding during this difficult time.

Sincerely,



Dr. Steve Cardwell  
Superintendent of Schools

c. Vancouver Board of Education

Parents are encouraged to keep up to date through the news media and review information on the following websites:

- BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA): <http://www.bcpsea.bc.ca/>
- BC School Trustees' Association (BCSTA): <http://www.bcsta.org/>
- BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF): <http://www.bctf.ca>
- Vancouver Teachers' Federation - local (VTF): <http://vesta.ca>, <http://vsta.ca>
- Ministry of Education: <http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/ministries/education/>
- Vancouver School District: <http://www.vsb.bc.ca>