

SIR JAMES DOUGLAS SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

December 4, 2020

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SJD School Web Site: <http://www.sjd.sd61.bc.ca>

Principal: Murray Harris

Vice Principal: Cheryl Rolston

TWO EXCEPTIONAL PROGRAMS, ONE EXTRAORDINARY SCHOOL.

There are many opportunities in December to demonstrate the spirit of giving. We are collecting funds at the office to purchase **Thrifty Food Cards** for families in our school community. Please use the Cash Online system if you wish to make a donation. Here is the link to donate. <https://www.schoolcashionline.com/>



If you are experiencing financial hardship this year, please contact Jocelyn at the office or at jzumach@sd61.bc.ca as we'd like to help. This information will be kept confidential.



Our **1000 X 5 program** is especially important in the month of December as many children will receive few gifts and likely even fewer books. I encourage you to drop off **picture books** for babies and preschoolers that are still in good shape. They are shipped off to Rockheights Middle School for immediate distribution to children.

Report Cards will be coming home on Thursday, December 10th. It is a time to celebrate first term learning! If your child's teacher is in Primary and using FreshGrade, there will not be a formal report at this time. If your child is in grades 4 or 5 and their teacher is using FreshGrade, only letter grades will be provided at this time.

Meet the VP

Cheryl Rolston started in September as VP here at SJD. Since we cannot meet in person she has created this video to introduce herself. [Intro to Mme Rolston](#)

Changes in the Kindergarten registration process

All student registrations are being moved to an online process. The school district has been working on this change for a while but it has been moved forward due to the current health situation. This will be in place for all registrations including: Kindergarten, grade 1



French Immersion, grade 6 late immersion. I do not have more information at this time. I will send details to families as soon as I have it. The information will also be available on the district and school websites. The dates for registering are:

French Kindergarten & Grade 1 Registration - January 11th to 15th Only parents with children new to French Immersion, need register at this time. Click [here](#) for more information.

English Kindergarten Registration, Kindergarten Transfers and Late French Immersion (grade 6) Registration - January 25th to 29th

Click [here](#) for more information.

To review the student enrolment priorities and the proof of address requirements please visit:
[Priorities](#) [Proof of address](#)

The Gaga Court is now Installed!

Thank you to the PAC and particularly Laura Jones for making this happen. This is just the first installment of the playground enhancement plans. The improvements on the front playground are just waiting for final district approval and new equipment will be installed in the coming weeks.

You can donate to the Playground Enhancement Project by visiting the School Cash On Line system.
<https://www.schoolcashionline.com/>



Some observations about the new recess rules

As you know, we have had to change how we organize recesses this year due to COVID. These changes include the following:

- Half the classes go out for recess at a time. Primary students have their own recess times and intermediate classes have different times.
- Students play in their learning cohort. These are groups of two classes and contain 40 to 55 students.

- The school is divided into 5 zones each cohort plays in a different zone every day.
- One or two EAs supervise each cohort. The same EA's are with the same cohort throughout the week.

We maintain data of significant playground conflicts or behavioural incidents. I maintain that data for 6 years. These would be things such as unsafe play, significant verbal or physical aggression, bullying, and leaving school grounds. Supervisors would complete an incident report which would be submitted to me. The number of such incidents has decreased by about 90% this year from previous years. This is also leading to a much calmer learning environment throughout the day and a huge increase in efficiency in the office. It has been a startling and unexpected change. Similar observations are being shared by administrators in other schools across the district. I would like to share our theory of why recesses are going so much better.

1. With only half the students outside at a time there is more room for the students to play and less competition for limited resources and space. Students are now playing soccer, football and full court basketball. They never could have done that in the past with so much competition for the same space.
2. The cohorts have decreased recess anxiety for many of our students. Since they play with their own and one other class recess time is much more predictable. They know where they will be and who will be there.
3. The creation of zones and changing them every day means that as students move from zone to zone they play differently and one type of play no longer dominates and lead to conflict. Some students would obsess about Waterworks and now they only have access to it once a week, which forces them to make different play choices. The zones rule has made the introduction of the Gaga Court much easier. Can you imagine if 400+ students all wanted access to the court at once?
4. EA's supervising one group in one limited space is a much safer and effective situation. In the past a conflict could happen anywhere on the school grounds and then come to any supervisors for help. Students now know which supervisor is supporting them and the supervisors start to know the students and their particular dynamics.
5. We have extra gym time. With only half the student body out at recess at a time the gym can be used by other classes during recess time. This increases gym access by 5 hours per week. That is the equivalent to adding one full day of gym blocks.
6. Students eat with their teacher present. Frankly, lunch times can be the most challenging part of the day, both for students and our supervisors. Having teacher with the students has greatly decreased the chaos, classroom mess, and conflicts. Students still have time to eat and they are more closely monitored. This is particularly important for our youngest students or those with anaphylaxis.

Some challenges and disadvantages to the new structure.

1. It is harder to organize. If supervisors are absent it is challenging to reorganize. The VP and I are often supervising recesses because of this.

2. Some personal freedoms for students are lost. Students are limited in where they choose to play.
3. Students may struggle if their close friend or a majority of their friends are in another cohort.
4. It is expensive. Extra supervision time has to be purchased. If we do not increase staffing students will be losing needed EA supports in the classroom.

From our perspective the benefits greatly outweigh the disadvantages and challenges.