

PWS UPDATE

Park West School Newsletter

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Principal: Mr. D. Carter Vice Principals: Mr. B. Melanson and Ms. D. Olson

September 18, 2018

Back-to-School Report to the Park West Community

Dear Parents, Guardians and Friends of Park West:

On Wednesday, September 5, we opened our doors for another new school year. We welcomed almost 800 students in 32 classes in grades primary to nine. The floors were sparkling, bulletin boards were waiting to be adorned with student masterpieces, and our teachers and support staff were enthusiastic and feeling revived after summer vacation.

Now that we've had some time to settle into the new year I'd like to take this opportunity to share with you some information about our students, school facility, events and opportunities, our goals, and some plans for the future.

We now have 830 students attending on a daily basis. They are in grades primary to nine, in 32 classes (22 elementary, and 10 junior high). We have two combined-grade classes this year. We have about 90 people (teachers, specialists, and support staff) working in our building. Although we remain over capacity, the impact on our school has been alleviated this year due to decreased enrollment and the addition of another brand new portable classroom ("*chalet*").

Currently, all class sizes are within the class cap guidelines prescribed by the EECD (Dept. of Education and Early Childhood Development), except the nine classes at grades primary to two. They are slightly over the maximum class sizes. Recently, the HRCE (Halifax Regional Centre for Education) assigned two new "*classroom support teachers*" to co-teach with teachers in classes over the class cap guidelines. These teachers will provide in-class support to these classes. All other classes at grades 3 – 9 are under, or at cap.

We are fortunate to have many dedicated, skilled and knowledgeable staff members here at Park West, including:

- We received some additional staffing (classroom and specialist teachers) this year: resource (we now have 3 full-time resource teachers supporting students in grades P - 9); more EPA's; more teachers for physical education; and more guidance counsellors (we now have two guidance counsellors: one for grades P – 4 and another for grades 5 – 9, both located in our new guidance office).
- Again this year we maintain two full-time administrative assistants in our school office. Ms. Landers and Ms. Johnston know "just about everything about our school", and are happy to help you if you call, email, or drop by.
- We have some additional teachers (2 full-time positions) to support our youngest students with early literacy (reading and writing): one for Reading Recovery, and another for Early Literacy.
- Our administrative team includes two full-time vice principals, who work closely with me to provide leadership to our school (i.e. operations, and supporting students, teachers, support staff, parents and guardians). It is not common for an elementary or junior high school to have two vice principals. For greater efficiency we have streamlined some of our administrative responsibilities. Mr. Melanson is responsible for supporting and addressing issues for grades primary to 4. Ms. Olsen is responsible for grades 5 – 9.
- Additional cleaning staff have been hired (by Scotia Cleaning) to keep our busy school clean. All areas of our school (including washrooms and hallways) are monitored throughout the day to ensure they meet our standards.
- We are fortunate to have a full-time librarian to operate our library and maintain our outstanding collection of books. It is not common for a school to have a full-time librarian.
- New this year! Park West will be supported by two new fine arts specialist teachers: one for drama/dance/movement, and the other for visual arts. Arts enhancement is a priority for our school and the HRCE.

Some changes at Park West this year include:

- We have our music room back for elementary music classes and choir. Formerly, our music room was used as a regular classroom.
- Strings and band classes take place on our sound-proofed stage. This means our library is now free all day for students and teachers to use.
- Our former guidance office is now used as an alternative learning space for resource, our learning centre, or other unique learning needs of our students.

- We are not requesting any student fees or band fees from parents and guardians this year.

I am happy to report the Address Verification Process for our school has been successfully completed to ensure all students attending Park West live within our school boundaries. I want to thank you, our parents and guardians, for participating in this process, and for being so understanding and patient.

Teachers and support staff here at Park West are being very generous with their time and talents to provide lots of extra-curricular experiences for our students. These include: various sports teams (for our junior high students, and in some case, senior elementary students)...including a new sport this year: co-ed touch football; spring musical (for grades 4 - 6); elementary choir; strings; band; lunch time intramurals; art, lego, and knitting clubs; reading café; grade 9 spring trip; and junior high dances. More opportunities will be offered throughout the year. We are appreciative of our staff for offering these enhancements to our students.

Some other things happening here at Park West include:

- Our Late Student Protocol came into effect again on September 17 to assist our students to get to school on time (8:25 am and 12:35 pm).
- We're being proactive by practicing emergency procedures. We do this to ensure our students are safe, and prepared for any unforeseen emergencies. These include fire drills, hold & secure drills, lockdown drills, school bus evacuation drills, and building evacuation drills.
- In the fall we will be inviting all newcomers (to our school, community, and country) to a welcome and orientation meeting here at Park West. We want everyone to feel 'right at home'.
- We have booked some special performances and presentations to enhance the educational experiences of our students. In October *Symphony Nova Scotia* will be performing a concert here at Park West for our students. *Goatworks African Drumming* will be here in November to conduct assemblies and workshops for our students.
- Elementary Christmas concerts (for grade P – 3) will be presented on December 11 and 12.
- Our SAC (School Advisory Committee) will be hosting a community meeting on October 17 at 6:30 pm to consider the overcrowding issue here at PWS.

Park West School is a “*home for the heart and the mind*”. We care about our students. We want them to succeed. As we strive to ensure their success the following priorities will continue to guide our daily practice this school year:

- **Our people** – We don't just teach subjects and outcomes.....we teach kids! Our people are important (students, families, staff, community).
- **Connecting with each other, students, and their parents** – “No significant learning can occur without a significant relationship.” “Human connection is the key.” We want to build positive relationships.
- **School Success Planning (SSP)** – We are developing a new five-year School Success Plan this year. Our new SPP will consist of goals and strategies for improving literacy and mathematics.
- **Quality Teaching** - We recognize that high-performing educators and leaders make a difference in student success.
- **Student Engagement** – We will strive to capture the attention and interest of our students, and encourage them to make an investment in their learning, so they try hard to learn and take advantage of what school offers.
- **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy** – Instructional strategies that build on the lived experiences and strengths of our students.
- **Creating consistency** – We want to work cooperatively and collaboratively so we are effective and efficient.
- **Ensuring student success** – “The result of teaching should be learning”...and success.
- **Technology** – We recognize the value of technology in learning and teaching...and want to grow with it.
- **Supporting our teachers and support staff** – Appreciating, valuing, and supporting them as they strive to meet the needs of all students. We promise to do our best, but may make a few mistakes along the way. Please be forgiving.
- **Innovation:** Encouraging creativity, vision, imagination, resourcefulness, and thinking “outside the box”. We want to develop skills and talents.
- **Our diversity** – Diversity presents itself in many forms. We accept, embrace and celebrate it. Our diversity is our pride and strength. At Park West we thrive in a “*culture of acceptance and inclusion*”.

We depend on you (parents, guardians, family, friends, and community) to assist us in this daunting task of ensuring **every** student succeeds. Your engagement and support are vital. **We are all in this together!** Amazing things are happening here at Park West School.

Sincerely,

Mr. D. Carter,
Principal

