

PWS UPDATE

Park West School Newsletter

Phone: (902) 457-7800 E-mail: parkwest@hrce.ca Website: pws.hrce.ca
Principal: Mr. D. Carter Vice Principals: Mr. B. Melanson and Ms. D. Olsen

May 14, 2021

How Are You Doing? We acknowledge this may be a stressful time for our staff, students, and their families, as we continue to live through a global health pandemic. We know at-home/online learning may be difficult to accomplish in some homes. We are sensitive to that, and attempting to keep our expectations of students reasonable and realistic. Our teachers, and support staff, are committed to doing their very best to support our students, and you. The provincial government recently announced that **all schools in Nova Scotia will remain closed until, at least, the end of May**. We continue to take direction from Public Health, and HRCE (Halifax Regional Centre for Education), to guide us through this, and beyond. I want to recognize our amazing staff (classroom teachers, specialist teachers, and support staff) for their professionalism, dedication, compassion, and support. They are pulling together as a team to provide the best possible learning experiences for our students in the face of challenging circumstances. I am proud of them and our school. I encourage you to take the opportunity to express to them your gratitude. If you have any questions, or require support, please contact your child's teacher(s), one of our vice principals, or me. Our school counselors and HRCE school navigators are also available to support students, and their families. Most teachers and school staff are working from home during this school closure; keeping regular school hours. In most cases it will not be possible to reach them by phone. A complete staff directory (with email addresses) is available on our school website (www.pws.hrce.ca). We will do our best to reply to your emails as quickly as possible (most within 48 hours). We know this pandemic is impacting everyone in our school community. I am confident we are going to get through this. We are a strong and proud community. Let's stick together and support one another. I encourage you to continue to be kind, thoughtful and compassionate. Please continue to diligently practice all COVID safety protocols, and remind your children to do so when at home, at school, and out in the community.

– Derek Carter, Principal

Mr. Carter Retiring: Mr. Carter, our current principal, will be retiring on June 30, 2021. He has been a teacher and administrator for 36 years; the last 10 years as principal of Park West School. HRCE has recently announced that **Benedette Anyanwu** will be the new principal, as of July 1, 2021. Ms. Anyanwu has vast experience as an educator and school administrator. She was previously vice principal at Herring Cove Junior High, Fairview Junior High, C.P. Allen High School, and here at Park West. Most recently she was the principal of Leslie Thomas Junior High.

Congratulations Ms. Olsen: We wish to announce the appointment of Donna Olsen (one of our vice principals) to a new administrative position for the 2021-2022 school year. Ms. Olsen will be the new vice principal (acting) at Harold T. Barrett Junior High School in Beaver Bank. Ms. Olsen has been a vice principal on our admin team here at PWS (along with Mr. Carter and Mr. Melanson) for the past three years. She has been an outstanding asset to our school. We are extremely grateful for her ongoing support, expertise, commitment, professionalism, and impeccable leadership. She will be missed here at PWS. Congratulations Ms. Olsen!

About Learning and Teaching Online: Our teachers, and support staff, are working extremely hard under challenging circumstances during a global pandemic to provide meaningful online educational experiences for our students while schools are closed. Most teachers are using Google Meet to virtually connect with their students and conduct teaching and learning sessions. We have expectations and responsibilities for our students as they participate in at-home/online learning on Google Meet. Most students (and families) are appreciative, and striving to be engaged in learning during these challenging times. Teachers deserve our respect, admiration, gratitude and support for their efforts and dedication. Students who want to continue to learn deserve respect and consideration too. Unfortunately, *some* junior high students, including some of our own here at PWS, have chosen to cause problems for some teachers and students engaged in at-home/online learning. A few students are finding it amusing to try to sabotage these efforts. They gain unauthorized access to online Google classes happening in our school and other schools, by obtaining access codes from friends and acquaintances. Once

access is gained, and they appear on-screen anonymously, they thoughtlessly disrupt the teaching and learning with their behaviour. Many have been insulting, disrespectful to students and teachers, verbally assaulting, using inappropriate, vulgar, and discriminatory language, threatening teachers, etc. We are all struggling through a global pandemic. We don't need this added challenge and stress! This is unnecessary, inappropriate, and inconsiderate. Students choosing to do this (and their parents) should know that the HRCE Information Technology Dept. is able to trace and identify the offending students. If students are caught doing this they will be dealt with accordingly, using the provincial Code of Conduct for schools. They also risk having their GNSPES accounts suspended. These accounts are needed to participate in at-home learning. They would also lose the privilege of using school-owned Chromebooks. Let's all work together to get through this pandemic, and make learning at home successful for all. We appreciate our students and families doing their part to make this successful and respectful. Parents and students (at all grades) should know our expectations and their responsibilities. Please be kind and responsible.

Google Meet Expectations for Students: Tips for being a good classmate in an eLearning environment (online learning)...

- Be on time. Show up at the correct time and stay in the Meet for the entire time.
- Find a quiet place away from distractions such as siblings, TV, pets, etc.
- Ensure you dress appropriately to be seen on camera. Remind those in your household when the camera is live.
- Mute your microphone until you are called upon to speak.
- Identify yourself using your real name when in Meet.
- Do not allow access to others who should not be participating in the Meet (i.e. students from other classes or other schools).

This is disruptive to learning.

- If you are called upon to speak, unmute your microphone, so you can be heard.
- If you have a question, put it in the chat.
- Keep the sidebar chat on topic.
- If you are responding to another student in the chat, write their name before your response.
- Refrain from chewing gum or eating food in front of the camera.
- Hang up at the end of the meet.
- Come prepared to each online class.
- Be respectful to ALL.
- Appropriate student behaviour is expected at all times (just as it would be for in-person learning at school).

Responsible Use of School-owned Chromebooks: If a student is using a borrowed Chromebook from Park West School they must ensure the information and technology will be used in a legal, safe and responsible manner, as outlined in the Nova Scotia School Access and Use Policy. The student must refrain from accessing inappropriate websites. The Chromebook is intended for school-related purposes. Use of the Chromebook will be terminated, and it will be required to be returned to the school immediately, if there is failure to comply with these expectations.

Expectations for Student Behaviour: The Nova Scotia Schools **Code of Conduct** (used at school to address student behaviour) is in effect during the school day when students are participating in at-home learning with teachers and classmates. Inappropriate behaviour is discouraged, and will be subject to consequences, as prescribed in the Code of Conduct. Students have rights, but they also have responsibilities.

Extra Help with Math Available: The Homework Hub for Mathematics is available to support students in grades 4 – 12. Homework Hub is an online platform that offers mathematics resources and free tutoring for students in grades 4 – 12. It is available to students who need extra help, or simply have a question or two. Students can have a one-on-one session with a tutor, in French or English, via an online whiteboard, or by calling in on the phone. Students can also access additional learning resources that include video lessons, practice exercises with instant feedback, vocabulary, digital versions of the mathematics textbooks, where available, and a graphing calculator. Call toll free 1-888-444-6607 to speak to a live tutor or access it via your GNSPES account (gnspes.ca) by clicking on the Nova Scotia Homework Hub icon in “supports”.

Tid-Bits of Information:

- Report cards will be issued to families *electronically* at the end of this school year.
- Teacher evaluation and assessment of student learning will continue during online at-home learning. Student are expected to complete assignments on time and submit to their teachers for evaluation. If assignments are not completed then third term, and possibly final, marks may be negatively impacted.
- Students are *expected* to participate in online learning. We are aware that some students (especially at the junior high level) are not choosing to be as engaged as expected. They are logging into their Google classes (without using cameras), “appearing” to be in attendance for the class, and then disappearing, choosing to do ‘other things’. They should be aware this may impact their learning, their progress, and their report card marks.
- Keep checking EECE, HRCE and PWS websites for current information and announcements during the COVID closure of schools.
- Schools will be closed for online / at-home learning on May 21 (PD day for staff) and May 24 (Victoria Day holiday).

