

Letter to Parents re: Change in Recess Schedule at Elementary Schools

Starting on Monday, October 31, recess at Nanaimo-Ladysmith elementary schools will be scheduled at the end of the school day and parents will be able to pick up their children 15 minutes early.

Superintendent Dave Hutchinson said that the change is being made to reduce some of the load on principals, vice-principals and district management staff as a result of the current B.C. Teachers Federation job action.

During the job action, teachers are not performing the duty of supervising students before and after school and during recess.

“Management staff members have been providing supervision for seven weeks, since September 7,” Mr. Hutchinson said. “It appears this job action will continue for some time, and principals, vice-principals and district management staff cannot sustain the current level of supervision without a serious impact on the operations of the district.”

A letter explaining the change is being sent home to elementary parents today.

Mr. Hutchinson said that some school districts in the province have cancelled recess altogether, but that is not possible in School District 68 because of a provision in the teachers’ collective agreement that gives teachers a 15-minute recess every day.

Instead, he said, the district has made the decision to schedule recess at the end of the day and allow parents to pick up their children 15 minutes early if they wish. There is already a precedent for this in the district at a number of elementary schools on Friday early dismissal days.

Mr. Hutchinson said that the afternoon school bus schedule will not change, and students who ride the bus will be supervised at school until such time as their buses arrive. In addition, if parents do not wish to pick their child up 15 minutes early, there will be supervision at the school until the normal dismissal time.

“Principals, vice-principals and district management staff will still be required to supervise before and after school, but changing the elementary recess to the end of the day will reduce the number of times that management staff members have to travel to schools to supervise students,” he said.

“We greatly appreciate the cooperation of parents as we make this temporary change,” Mr. Hutchinson said.

Background Information – Change in SD68 Elementary School Recess

- Normally, teachers at elementary schools share a rotation schedule to provide before- and after-school and recess supervision duties with the school principal (and vice-principal in schools that have a vice-principal).
- During the BCTF job action, teachers are not required to carry out these duties unless all management staff members have been deployed.
- School District 68 has 30 management staff members to deploy and 46 supervision assignments. This is in addition to principals and vice-principals taking on supervision duties before and after school and at recess.
- Every management staff member is leaving his or her work at least once during the day to travel to a school and provide supervision. More than half of them are travelling to schools twice a day and there are some occasions when an individual goes to three schools a day. Each of these assignments can take an hour or more to complete.
- Management staff members, principals and vice-principals have been carrying out this supervision schedule for seven weeks.
- The work of management staff members is being seriously affected by the supervision schedule, and staff find they are not able to respond in a timely manner to issues that arise in schools.
- With staff illnesses and other unavoidable absences, the district has the most difficulty finding a sufficient number of management staff to assign during the afternoon recess assignments.
- By moving the elementary recess to the end of the day, the number of supervision assignments for management staff will be reduced.
- Parents will be able to pick their children up 15 minutes earlier than the current schedule, if they wish.
- There will be supervision at the school until the normal dismissal time if parents are unable to pick students up 15 minutes early.
- Afternoon bus schedules will not change and students who ride the bus will be supervised at their schools until such time as they are picked up by their buses.
- This change is being made only at elementary schools. The secondary schedules will remain the same.
- Some other school districts in the province have cancelled recess altogether. In School District 68, teachers are entitled, through their collective agreement, to a 15-minute recess break. For this reason, the district is not able to cancel recess.