



Vancouver Board of Education

School District No. 39

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

1580 West Broadway

Vancouver, B.C. V6J 5K8

Telephone: 604-713-5000

Fax: 604-713-5412

Friday, February 3, 2017

Dear Parents and VSB Staff,

The recent tragedy in Quebec City and changes to immigration law in the United States have caused me to give considerable thought as to how we, as a public school district, should respond. Understandably, many students, parents and staff have questions about what is happening both in our country and around the world. Although these events may seem far away to some, the reality is that they impact every one of us, either directly or indirectly.

In 1971, Canada was the first nation in the world to declare multiculturalism as official state policy. Similarly, the Vancouver School District has long prided itself on its inclusive approach, celebrating diversity and promoting equality and mutual respect. We place enormous value on the vast diversity that makes the Vancouver School District such a wonderful place to learn and work.

Given recent events, I feel it is my responsibility as Superintendent to ensure that everyone in our school district community is aware of the importance the Vancouver School District places on creating and maintaining a welcoming and inclusive environment for all students, families and staff members.

I am consistently proud of the way our students and staff look for similarities before differences, and reach out to include those who may appear to be different but ultimately are the same inside. This week, I have heard from a number of parents, students and staff and without exception each person has expressed care and concern for students and their families who have been impacted by these events. I thank those who have reached out to me. It is only through actions that demonstrate care and compassion that we ensure that all students feel safe, valued and respected. The prevailing message in our district is that we are all human beings, and as such, we are all responsible for treating those around us with kindness and respect.

As Superintendent, I want to reach out to the broader Vancouver School District community to request your assistance. As a twenty-five year educator, I have always looked for 'teachable moments', and I believe that we find ourselves in one of those moments today. As parents and educators, we have the ability to work together to foster values that grow our young people into respectful, kind and compassionate individuals who celebrate and protect our inclusive society. My hope would be that discussions both in schools and in homes will focus on those values that make Canada and our public school system so remarkable. As a school district, we are committed to continuing to provide reassurance and support to the students and their families who need it most at this time.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Scott Robinson'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Scott Robinson
Superintendent of Schools