August 26, 2014

Dear Parents and Guardians:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with an update on the provincial labour dispute and the potential for school opening.

As you are likely aware, the BC Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) and the BC Public School Employers’ Association (BCPSEA) has been unable to make any significant progress over the summer months so the possibility of schools opening as usual on September 2nd is uncertain. While we are hopeful that the two parties, with the help of external mediator Vince Ready, will find a way to reach a negotiated settlement before schools are due to open, a decision on school opening will likely not be made until this Friday, August 29th.

As a result, parents are encouraged to consult our website ([www.sd5.bc.ca](http://www.sd5.bc.ca/)) for further updates and keep up to date through the local news media – especially over the long weekend. Further information can be found on the sites listed at the bottom of this letter.

There are two possibilities:

1. If there is a settlement, our expectation is that all schools in Southeast Kootenay will be open on Tuesday, September 2. If this is the case, we anticipate that school will be open for a half day only as per the usual school opening procedure. We know there will be some uncertainty particularly at our high schools as scheduling may still need to be adjusted. However, it is our intention to return as quickly and smoothly as possible to normal school operations.
2. If there is no settlement, then some or all public schools in Southeast Kootenay will likely be behind picket lines. It is also possible that the BCPSEA imposed lockout of teachers, imposed in June and lifted over the summer, could be back in place. If that is the scenario, a withdrawal of service due to strike action and/or a lockout will again impact our ability to provide educational services and supervise students. Again we ask parents to NOT send their children to school.

It is unfortunate that this normally exciting beginning to the new school year has been reduced to this level of uncertainty. We know that this is a frustrating, disappointing and worrying time for everyone. We are concerned about the ongoing effect of this continued strike/lockout on our students. We have an outstanding public school system in British Columbia and I am proud of the hard work and support provided by ALL staff in our district.

As stated in previous letters, it remains our hope that the labour impasse is resolved quickly, that school can return to normal operation and begin on a positive note.

Thank you for your understanding during this difficult and uncertain time.

Sincerely,

Lynn Hauptman

Superintendent of Schools

Parents are encouraged to keep up to date through the news media and review information on the following websites:

* BC Public School Employers’ Association (BCPSEA): [www.bcpsea.bc.ca](http://www.bcpsea.bc.ca)
* BC School Trustees’ Association (BCSTA): [www.bcsta.org](http://www.bcsta.org)
* BC Teachers’ Federation (BCTF): [www.bctf.ca](http://www.bctf.ca)
* Ministry of Education: [www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/ministries/education](http://www.newsroom.gov.bc.ca/ministries/education) and <http://bcparentinfo.ca/>
* School District No. 5 (Southeast Kootenay): [www.sd5.bc.ca](http://www.sd5.bc.ca/)