



## Letter to Secondary families of Grade 12 students

September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians and Grade 12 Students,

With schools opening in the days ahead, we are calling on your leadership and compassion and your highest judgement.

Already, we are hearing rumours of a grade 12 Hell Night to mark the beginnings of the new school year. In North Delta, Hell Night has traditionally happened the night before school starts, while in South Delta, it is a tradition reserved for after the first day of school.

In a 'normal' year, we already have serious concerns about this negative tradition in our community as alcohol, drugs and vandalism are invariably associated with this student-initiated event. Frequently, Hell Night creates significant conflict with community members, as large noisy gatherings occur in public spaces, forcing encounters with Delta Police and the City of Delta, and putting a significant drain on their time and resources. This year, with the global pandemic we are very concerned that this unsanctioned activity will heighten the feelings of fear, uncertainty and risk that many in our community are already struggling with right now. The latest public health data shows that cases of COVID-19 are on the increase in the lower mainland, particularly among younger people as a direct result of socializing and partying. Clearly this is not the time for large groups of young people to be gathering in their local communities for such an unwelcome and unhealthy tradition. Instead, we should be doing our part to reduce our exposure to COVID-19 to help prevent it from spreading further. Let's make sure that we do not add to our communities' stress at this already difficult time.

In addition to dividing the community, what you might not appreciate is how Hell Night divides grad classes. It fuels division and distrust by needlessly creating conflict between class members, who become angry, embarrassed, and resentful towards those who damage the reputation of their school.

Hell Night also damages the relationships between students and teachers and school administration. The ramifications of Hell Night create an ill-timed and unnecessary conflict at the beginning of the school year that impacts relationships, feelings of trust and future good will.

And finally, Hell Night creates conflict between students and their parents. In the aftermath of Hell Night, parents are judged in the community. There is an expectation that parents will control their kids and that we all have a responsibility to be a good neighbour. We know that statements made by teens such as "It's a tradition" and "Everyone else is allowed" make it difficult to have the conversation of why they should not take part. But it's time to push back on this.

This year, let's not have a Hell Night. This is a tradition we can and should live without.

Please remind your child that actions have consequences, even as a bystander: vandalizing property, setting fires, fighting, underage drinking, and more, can have serious and potentially lifelong consequences. These consequences could include criminal charges, a criminal record, and injury, not to mention the financial cost for those who are forced to clean up.

As a community we need to look out for each other and practice respect in ways that we have not considered before. Right now, helping to maintain our vibrant and healthy communities should be our priority. Let's start this school year by strengthening relationships, building trust, and being examples of responsibility.

We know kids are worried about the year ahead. There are many uncertainties about how the year will unfold. Let's assure them that we understand and we will do our best to get things close to normal but it's going to take everyone working together.

I hope that in the days and hours ahead that you will take the time to talk with your child about these concerns, and to encourage safe and responsible choices. We are all part of this amazing community of Delta, and we all share a responsibility in keeping property and each other safe.

We are looking forward to seeing all of our Grade 12 students as they begin their most exciting and, likely, most challenging year of high school. Grade 12 is a special year and we will do all we can to support you throughout the year in preparing your student to successfully embark on the path he/she chooses to pursue upon leaving high school. We are excited to help all of our graduates to reach their full potential and contribute their personal best to the future. As well, over the coming weeks and months, we are committed to finding ways to celebrate our 2021 grads in a meaningful way while making sure that they remain safe in their activities.

Many thanks for your support with this important matter.

*R. Mesich*

Rick Mesich  
Principal  
Seaquam Secondary School