

INSIDE BURNABY SCHOOLS



April 28, 2020

Building Community and Connection

Teachers, students and families have been finding new ways to build community and support each other in the midst of COVID-19. Throughout the District, signs can be seen in school windows saying “we miss you.” Several schools have also created videos and photo collages on social media to share how much they care. For example, staff at **École Cariboo Hill Secondary** brightened students’ days on social media with a series of TikTok videos.

Others, such as **Parkcrest, Taylor Park, Suncrest, Aubrey, Brentwood Park,** and **Gilmore** went straight to families. School staff – each in their own vehicle, with physical distancing in mind – paraded throughout the streets past students’ homes. Excited children went to their windows or ran to their doorsteps, with some greeting drivers on the sidewalk with homemade signs.

Supporting Health Care Workers

In addition to the direct support inside schools for children whose parents are essential service workers, students have also shown appreciation for those on the frontlines of COVID-19. In school projects at **Inman** and **Clinton Elementary** students wrote supportive messages, like: “thank you for helping everyone in need, you save lives.” A **Burnaby North Secondary** student is providing comfort for health care workers by mobilizing his 3D printer. Aaron Lu received widespread media coverage after producing plastic parts that attach to masks, making the long hours of wearing safety equipment easier on the ears. A teacher at **Burnaby Mountain Secondary** is joining in with support, also putting 3D printers to good use. Cassie Der is making ear savers for first responders and a prototype for part of a face shield.

Supporting Each Other

Second Street Community School students were also featured by news outlets for finding a way to continue their special relationship with a nearby seniors’ centre. With visits now restricted at the seniors’ home and students now learning in their own homes, together they came up with a heart-warming campaign: a “smile swap” where you give a smile and get a smile – something the elementary students affectionately named “Selfies for Seniors.” Coordinated through their teachers, the students submitted photos of their grinning faces, along with uplifting messages about what makes them smile. The images and messages were put on poster boards hanging in the care centre. The seniors are sharing their own pictures and messages, via teachers, to the students.

Providing a Helping Hand

As the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues, more people are facing food insecurity. Even in good times, for many students school meal programs are the difference between being hungry or fed. We've adapted and extended our school-based meal program during these extraordinary times. Staff are pitching in and distributing about 600 hot nutritious meals every school day.

We are proud of the many additional student-led and school-based initiatives. At **Burnaby South**, secondary students in the "We Council" are leading a drive to help with groceries. At **Byrne Creek Community School**, students, alumni, teachers, other school-based staff and district settlement workers – as well as community partners – worked together on a "food security drive." They were able to collect an entire room full of boxes overflowing with groceries, as well as gift cards for food. Education Assistants and others helped box up the groceries and make deliveries to families. A Grade 12 student from **Burnaby North Secondary** led efforts to raise \$300 in gift cards to support vulnerable families with food. Megan Wong and her friends earned the money by volunteering to bag groceries at a local store. She donated the cards to **Maywood Community School** for them to distribute.

Assignments Inspire Creativity and Positivity

In a matter of weeks, the learning experience for students has changed dramatically. What hasn't changed is the creativity and compassion of the Burnaby Schools community. There are lots of inspiring projects happening both in and outside of our virtual classrooms. At **Maywood Community School**, families were given an activity to create "affirmation bracelets," identifying ways their strengths can help them meet challenges. They created ones with words such as: "I am surrounded by love," "I am ready to learn," and "staying connected." **Stride Avenue, Lyndhurst, Lochdale** and **Chaffey-Burke** elementary students all enjoyed showcasing their heart-warming projects supporting positivity and connectedness with hearts in windows and rainbows. One of the earliest assignments for a class at **Taylor Park Elementary** was to rewrite the words to the song True Colors. One of the students, Mason, created something he called "My Quarantine Music Video." Similarly, a **Brentwood Park Elementary** assignment to "spread joy" led to a brother-sister duo rewriting lyrics to a Bruno Mars song to thank "Healthcare Heroes." Donovan – and Lili, his older sister who attends **Alpha Secondary** – did it beautifully with singing and a ukulele.

All of the videos and images from the stories mentioned earlier can be seen on the District's website or Twitter account.