

Hi Parents and Guardians,

Feb. 10, 2015

I would like to take this opportunity to share a couple information items with you.

Parking and Traffic at Busy Times: I know that this has been an ongoing issue in our community and we did discuss it at School Council last night. There is not a good solution to the traffic congestion around the school at entry and dismissal, other than a reduction of vehicles. This can only be achieved by more car pooling, more walking, or dropping students a little earlier (our playgrounds are supervised at 8:45). Our school parking lot is not an option. The congestion that exists on the streets now, was extended into our parking lot for the past 2 years, creating an unsafe situation for our students and staff. There were 10-12 fender benders, daily laneway blockages by inconsiderate drivers, the handicap spaces were always taken so that our wheelchair users couldn't access them and more problems. I also know that our neighbours are unhappy when laneways and driveways get blocked and they often call Markham Traffic Control. I would estimate that more than 10 parking tickets have been issued over the past few weeks including several \$200.00 tickets for parking in our bus zone (Fire Route) while dropping off students. I'm not sure what we can do to help other than urge you to reduce traffic by: 1) walking 2) car pooling 3) drop off a bit earlier. I can re-iterate the expectations around traffic on school property at this time so that you know what to expect:

- 1) Our school now has 64 (daily) staff members and the Before & After School Program staff occupy an additional 5-6 spaces at peak times also. We will often have additional YRDSB staff in our building (Psychologist, Speech & Language Pathologist, Curriculum support, Plant/Caretaking Personnel...). Our school parking lot has 59 spaces (not including the handicap spaces) so staff are parking where the old Kiss and Ride was, and sometimes on the street (6+ spaces covered with snow today). Opening our parking lot to traffic is not an option. We have school staff monitoring the entrance of the parking lot from 8:45 -9:00 and 3:15-3:45, so please do not drop off in the parking lot. Most schools that have 700+ students like BWPS have had to block access to their parking.
- 2) The Fire Route (bus loop) is open throughout the day but there are signs posted that it is a fire route and a no parking area. If you are parking here to bring students into the school after an appointment or if late, you park at the risk of getting a \$200.00 ticket.
- 3) At 8:40 until the last bus leaves, our bus loop is blocked for all traffic. The same happens from 3:15 until the last bus leaves at the end of the day. During these times students are loading and disembarking so do not drive through, and please be courteous when our staff re-direct you to another area.
- 4) There are "No Parking" signs posted on some of the streets around the school. Violations in these areas are the responsibility of the City of Markham so you are subject to parking tickets if parking in a "No Parking" zone.
- 5) We do have a crossing guard (Peter Lam is his name) at the corner of Shady Oaks and John Allan Cameron and there is now also a crossing guard at the corner of White's Hill and Cornell Centre Blvd. to support our students and families who are walking.

Extreme Cold Weather Procedures: Our goal is to get all students some free time outdoors every day, but sometimes extreme cold weather is a danger to students, especially younger students. We generally go by the following procedure:

- 1) If -20 degrees (including wind chill) or colder, we have indoor recess.
- 2) If -15 to -20 degrees (including wind chill) we will shorten the recess to 20 minutes.
- 3) Anything else (including snow) and they go out.

We do use a little discretion with the wind because a wind coming from the north is like a wind tunnel and makes it feel much colder, whereas wind coming from the east is blocked by the building and doesn't feel as cold. Students should always be dressed for cold weather. Sometimes adults will suggest that being in the cold will cause them to get sick, but colds and flu are caused by the spreading of germs (virus) which is much more likely to happen inside a classroom. We also know that a fresh air break is great for the learning process.

Move-a-thon: On February 20 we will have our annual Move-a-thon. The concept is simple – grades of students rotate through the gym in 30 minute blocks and engage in physical movement for 20-30 minutes to celebrate active, healthy living. This is the main fundraiser where all the funds are used to support our students' learning and wellness. Most of our fundraisers are for charitable purposes, but this one is for us and will be used to further enhance our technology which is for all grades. I was at a conference last week and the keynote speaker suggested that School Boards should not spend another penny (I guess a nickel in Canada) on text books because our students will never be going into a book to find information when they become part of the workforce. I am not sure about that prognostication, but I do know that we need as much technology as we can get. We are already replacing the netbooks that were recommended to us when we opened only 3 years ago.

Participation in all fundraisers is always optional. All students will participate in the move-a-thon so whether you get pledges, send in a loonie or toonie, or aren't able to contribute at this time, we will have fun and certainly appreciate your support in all ways!

Doug Wilton, Principal  
Black Walnut P.S.