



We are the Arbutus Avalanche!

École Arbutus Global Middle School

Celebrating Diversity. Seeking Sustainability.

July 2, 2019

Dear Parents,

Welcome to École Arbutus Global Middle School! We are looking forward to a great 2019-2020 school year starting in September. It will be an exciting year for all our new students as they experience a wide range of activities that we feature at Arbutus Global. We will kick things off on September 3rd with *Avalanche Week* where students will be in temporary grade-level groups (English and French) for the first few days while we finalize our permanent class lists. The activities in Avalanche Week are meant to build a sense of belonging and allow students to meet new friends while taking part in some fun, culture-building activities.

Middle School Pillars: In the Greater Victoria School District we use the exemplary middle school model that features four key pillars: advisory class (one main teacher to connect with), exploratory classes (at Arbutus next year we have Art, Drama, Music, Foods, Technology Education/Woodshop, Foods, Global Action, and Outdoor Education), flexible scheduling (teachers determine most of their class's schedule), and interdisciplinary teaming (teachers are placed on small teams with common planning time).

Our Key Beliefs:

We believe that:

- students need a wide range of opportunities to develop *passions*,
- students should be appropriately and rigorously *challenged* in their learning,
- strong *connections* with adults are essential for student success, and
- every student must get the *support* they need to be successful.

Global Education: As a global school, we focus on teaching students about sustainability, diversity, and community. We have a Global Action exploratory course that features projects related to the above areas, as well as an Outdoor Education exploratory course for students to sample.

Core Competencies: The effective global citizen of today needs to be innovative, a team player and an effective problem solver. Like all schools in BC now, we help our students develop strengths in three key areas: **creative and critical thinking, competent communication, and personal and social development** (see curriculum.gov.bc.ca for more information).

Leadership Opportunities: An important aspect of middle schools is new experiences, and students will have a variety of leadership opportunities this year. Times to join will be announced at our September assembly and on morning announcements:

Team APEX - these students will meet with various staff to plan activities and assemblies to promote our Avalanche school spirit. APEX stands for Achieving Positive Experiences and this was a very active team helping at assemblies last year.

Athletic Leadership – Grade 7 and 8 students can apply to be an athletic leader in our school. Mr. Lemon will work with the students to set up PE equipment, help to organize lunch-time intramurals and help to run after-school games.

Media Team – this group is responsible for making daily announcements, organizing the TV monitor displays at the front entrance, presenting at assemblies and special events and assisting with the yearbook. If your student likes to write and/or enjoys public speaking, this is the group to join.

Clubs – Arbutus offers a variety of clubs to give students a chance to explore specific global and environmental areas. Clubs vary from year to year depending on available sponsors; in the past, we have had clubs in Lego Robotics, Yoga, Drama, Debating, Technology, Drawing and Cartoons, and Dance. If you are a parent who would like to sponsor a club or help with an existing club, please email me at rgparker@sd61.bc.ca. Students will have the chance to join clubs in October, but are welcome to drop into a club at any time.

Athletic Teams – Before each season starts, students are invited to sign up for a team. The inter-school league is organized with competitive levels and recreation levels. Coaches will decide which level to enter once students come out to the first practices. Co-Ed Touch Rugby and Cross Country season are both in September, Basketball season starts in October, Volleyball season is in January, Rugby in March, and Badminton, Field Hockey and Track & Field are in the spring. Students interested in joining a team will be called to an initial sign-up meeting and then called to a second meeting where they will be given a letter listing practice and game times. Students are expected to take this letter home and have it signed by a parent so that they are informed about games and practice times, and commit to attend all practices and games. We would love to have your child join as many teams as they wish, regardless of their prior sports experience. We need parents to help with the organization of drivers and we need drivers for most team games; you can list on the return letter the games you are able to drive for and if you are able to help with the driver organization. We thank parents in advance for helping us with the organization and transportation of our many teams. If you think you will be helping with driving students to games it is a good idea to have your paperwork updated in the office at the start of the year as it can take up to ten business days for Criminal Record Check clearances to go through.

Device Use at School -

We are a 'bring your own device' school, which means students may use their phones or tablets in class for educational purposes, if their teacher approves. However, devices are not to be used for social or entertainment purposes. We want our students to be physically active and interacting socially, with limited screen time while at school. We ask that students put their phones/tablets in their locker at the breaks (devices are not allowed outside), and that they do not have phones out in the hallways, or while walking about. We also ask parents to avoid texting or calling students on their phones during the school day to minimize disruptions, unless it is urgent.

Major School-Wide Events in September:

| | |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sept. 3 | First Day Back: 9:30 am-11:30 am (2 hours only) PAC Welcome Back Café for new parents - 9:30 am in Cafeteria |
| Sept. 5 | Instrument Rental Night: 4 - 6 pm in Cafeteria |
| Sept. 6 | Whole school goes to Gyro Park for beach clean-up and picnic |
| Sept.17 | PAC BBQ 6 - 7 pm, followed by <i>Meet the Teacher Night</i> for all Arbutus families at 7 pm in Gym, then classrooms |
| Sept. 18 | Individual Photo Day |
| Sept. 23 | Professional Development Day (<i>no school for students</i>) |

We have regular monthly assemblies, which are on the last Wednesday of each month, at 2:00 pm. Parents are always welcome to attend our assemblies. If your child is performing or presenting at the assembly, we would especially love to have you join us.

There are many ways that you can help your child to have a positive experience at Arbutus Global Middle School:

- Ensure that your child comes to school each day prepared to learn – that their homework is done, they have had a good night's sleep, they have eaten a healthy breakfast and they have their school supplies on hand ready to learn. Being prepared to learn is the first step to success.

- Help your child develop organizational skills by checking their planner, teacher blog/website, or other organizational tool, with them daily. This is a key skill in our very busy school!
- If your child is having trouble with something, contact their advisory (homeroom) teacher. We are here to help your child have a wonderful year academically, socially and emotionally.
- **Pack it in – Pack it out:** We ask all families to send a ‘green lunch’ to school by using recyclable containers and packaging. Through our school-wide recycling program, students are able to compost organics but we ask students to take any lunch/snack wrappers home with them. Healthy lunches are encouraged. There is also a hot lunch program that usually begins in October. More information will follow. Orders can be made online.
- We are striving to reduce our paper usage. Students may find that their teachers post assignments electronically (see links on our school’s website), so be prepared to help your child learn how to access print materials from a variety of sources. We want to reduce our global footprint by reducing our school-wide paper usage.
- To help reduce our carbon footprint, we encourage our middle school students to walk, bike, skate-board or scooter to school whenever possible. **Riders must always wear a helmet.** Skateboards must be carried on school property before and after school. If you do drive your child, we are an idle-free zone, so please turn off your cars for drop-offs and pick-ups. Drivers driving west on Edgelow St. towards Gordon Head Road should drop off children in the drop-off bays by the sidewalk in front of the school; drivers going east towards Finnerty Road should drop off in the school parking lot to avoid students having to cross Edgelow St.. Please be patient as there is usually a long line for drop-off. To help decrease congestion, please use drop-off points in the neighbourhood such as Lexington Ave., Graduation Place, or farther away on Edgelow St. Parent drop-off is not allowed on the side service road leading to the bike racks on the west side of the school.

We are a vibrant school community in part because of our enthusiastic parents! You can be a more active member of our school’s community by coming to PAC meetings, usually held at Arbutus on the second Tuesday of each month at 7 pm in the library. We encourage you to check exact dates in our ***AGMS Week at a Glance*** newsletter, which is sent home electronically each Friday afternoon. Upcoming events and activities at the school and parent information, is often communicated through our newsletter.

Everyone is invited to join us for our September 17th PAC BBQ at 6 pm, followed by our ‘Meet the Teacher Night’ at 7 pm. For the BBQ, please BYOM (bring-your-own-mug). They will be placed on large tables so that we can all sample a dessert and get to know one another. Your child will then take you on a tour of the school which will include meeting their advisory teacher, seeing their classroom, checking out their locker and receiving information about your child’s upcoming year. We will have displays on signing up for teams, how to join clubs and clothing orders. This is a great chance for families and the entire school community to begin to connect.

We look forward to you becoming part of our school community. If you ever have any questions, please contact me or the Vice Principal, Aaron Maxwell, at 250-477-1878. We want this to be an amazing year for your child at Arbutus Global Middle School!

Sincerely,

Rob Parker
Principal

Aaron Maxwell
Vice-Principal