



BENCH ELEMENTARY

DECEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

Dear Bench Families,

What a joyful time of year it is here at Bench! We're embracing all the festive fun at school with holiday artwork, Kerry Park skates, bake sales, Spirit Week and the anticipation of our annual Winter Concerts!

We are looking forward to our fantastic holiday concerts and PAC bake sales! A heartfelt thank-you goes to Mrs. MacLean, Mrs. Stephen, and our amazing students for all their hard work in preparing for these concerts, as well as to all the staff who support this event. The students have a remarkable way of reminding us what truly matters this holiday season.

A big thank you to PAC for organizing the annual Christmas Emporium. We accepted donations from November 17th – December 5th and the students will have the opportunity to shop for their loved ones from December 9th – December 12th with allotted time slots in their classes. We are deeply grateful to the Bench PAC for their commitment to our school community in hosting this special event.

On behalf of the entire Bench staff, we wish you a joyful holiday break and look forward to a memorable 2026!

Warm regards,

Mike Martin
Principal

Bench Elementary School
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DATES TO REMEMBER

December 5, Friday – PAC Coffee Chat & Jingle Jog (whole school)
December 9, Tuesday – Christmas Emporium opens
December 10, Wednesday – Primary Winter Concerts (Divisions 9-17) 1pm & 6pm
December 11, Thursday – Intermediate Winter Concerts (Divisions 1-8) 1pm & 6pm
December 12, Friday – Popcorn Day
December 15, Monday – PAC Meeting @ 6:30 PM
December 16, Tuesday – Hot Lunch
December 22 to January 4 - Winter Break (Happy Holidays!)
January 5, Monday – First day back to school in 2026
January 26-30th – 2026 Kindergarten registration begins

PIZZA SALES

Cash pizza sales are available every Wednesday morning before the bell at Mr. Scargall's exterior door. Pizza is \$3 per slice and will be delivered to your child's classroom on THURSDAY at lunch. Thank you for supporting our Grade 7's with this fundraiser! If you have any questions please email gscargall@sd79.bc.ca



SKATING FIELD TRIPS

All our classes will be participating in skating at Kerry Park Recreation Center. Each class will have two skating sessions from November to February. A big thank you to our PAC for supporting half of the cost of the skating activity.



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ANGEL TREE

This year we are excited to introduce our Angel Tree – a new way to support families in our community during the Christmas season. You will find the Angel Tree just outside the office on December 1st adorned with tags that you can take to buy a special gift.

Simply:

1. Choose a tag from the tree
2. Purchase a child's gift
3. Return your UNWRAPPED gift to the tree (with the tag attached) by Friday, December 12th.



We will ensure your gift reaches a family in need. If your family could benefit from this initiative, please reach out privately to Mr. Martin. We are looking forward to spreading Holiday cheer.

VISION SCREENING

The optional vision screening for students in grades 1,3,5 & 7 has been postponed due to equipment issues. The December 5th date will be rescheduled once we get confirmation from the vision screening team that the vision scanners are up and running.

SPIRIT DAYS



The Spirit Squad is happy to present the following SPIRIT DAYS to lead us into the Break!

Monday, December 15th – Festive Hat & Crazy Hair Day

Tuesday, December 16th – Christmas Sweater Day

Wednesday, December 17th – Holiday Sock Day

Thursday, December 18th – Grinch Day

Friday, December 19th – Pyjama Day (Polar Express Day)



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WINTER CONCERTS



The Bench Christmas concerts will take place on Wednesday, December 10th for Primary students in Divisions 9-17 (Paziuk, Coleman, McDonald, Johnstone, Price, Wilson, Kurbis/Dougan, Boechler and Nielsen) and Thursday December 11th for Intermediate students in Divisions 1-8 (Gignac, Scargall, Dodd, Merrick/Tan, Koop/Clement, Uzzell, Barber and Ingram.)

The times are 1pm and 6pm for each day. For the evening concerts, your child is asked to meet in their teacher's classroom between 5:30-5:45pm.

There will be a fundraising Bake Sale at both the afternoon and evening Winter Concerts. Please sign up to bake or help sales by clicking this link:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0B4BA9A62DA4FB6-60688575-2025>

Thank you for your support!



KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION 2025-2026

Kindergarten Registration will begin January 26-30th, 2026.

School registration can be done online or in person IF you are in Bench's catchment. You can use the School District Locator to find out what school your catchment is.



Bench Kindergarten registration is for families who live full-time in our catchment. An address in our catchment area needs to be the place that you reside the majority of the time. If not, you will need to register at the school that corresponds with that address. Any proof of address other



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than a current Driver's License or BC Identification card will have to speak to the principal about their situation.

HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD AT SCHOOL

Below are some helpful strategies for understanding that going to school regularly is important and fun:

- Establish school as a non-negotiable daily routine
- Avoid sending the message that staying home from school is a fun alternative
- Create excitement around going to school (e.g., "I wonder what you will learn about today! Or "Do you think you will play with (insert friend's name) at recess today?"
- Connect attendance to their role as a learner (e.g., discuss that showing up means they are part of their classroom team, and helps them learn and grow, and they help others learn and grow).
- Remain calm and encouraging on tough mornings (e.g., validate feelings if they are tired, but explain they can be strong and still go to school by using phrases like, "I understand you are feeling tired this morning after our busy weekend. You can do this!")
- Praise consistency (e.g., "You've gone to school every day this week. I bet your friends and your teacher have been so happy to see you each day!")

Thank you for supporting regular attendance at school.

DOGS AND PETS ON SCHOOL PROPERTY

A reminder that dogs are not permitted on school property during school hours including drop off and pick up without prior, written permission from the principal. Many of our students experience anxiety and distress related to past interactions with dogs. Animals permitted include trained service or guide dogs, police dogs, or pets brought during the day for instructional purposes. Thank you for your cooperation.



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VISITORS

A reminder that all adults visiting the school must enter through the main doors only, sign in at the office and obtain a visitor's lanyard. All visitors walking in the hallways require a visitor lanyard. Our lanyard system is designed to ensure the safety of our students and staff. Thank you for your cooperation.

STUDENT CLOTHING

Fall and Winter will undoubtedly bring a number of cold and wet days. Please ensure that your child is dressed appropriately for the weather each morning. Unless there are extreme weather conditions, students will be outside every day during the 45-minute lunch break as well as an additional short break with their teachers at some point during the day. We recommend that students keep a spare change of clothing at school that can be used when needed.

PARKING LOT LOW DOWN

General Etiquette

1. **Follow the flow of traffic:** Drive in the direction indicated by signs and arrows to avoid confusion or accidents.
2. **Drive slowly:** be extra cautious of children and pedestrians.
3. **No idling in drop-off lanes:** If you need to stop for an extended period, park in a designated spot instead of holding up traffic.
4. **Use crosswalks:** Always cross at designated areas and encourage kids to do the same.
5. **Stay off your phone:** Avoid distractions while driving or walking in the parking lot.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up

1. **Stay in your car in the drop-off lane:** If you need to exit your car, use a parking space to avoid holding up the flow.
2. **Be ready:** Ensure kids have their belongings ready to exit the car quickly.
3. **Pull forward:** Move as far forward as possible in the drop-off line to make room for others.
4. **Load/unload curbside:** Always have children enter or exit the vehicle on the curbside to avoid stepping into traffic.



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Parking Tips

1. **Park only in designated areas:** Avoid parking in fire lanes, reserved spots, or blocking driveways. Please do not park behind cars already parked.
2. **Avoid double parking:** This creates unnecessary congestion and safety hazards.
3. **Be mindful of pedestrians:** Look carefully before backing out of a space.

Pedestrian Safety

1. **Hold your child's hand:** Especially in busy areas or near moving cars.
2. **Make eye contact with drivers:** Ensure they see you before crossing.
3. **Use the designated cross-walks to avoid pedestrian blind spots.**

Additional Considerations

- **Be Patient:** Parking lots can be frustrating but staying calm and courteous helps, everything run smoothly.
- **Arrive early:** Giving yourself extra time can reduce stress and prevent rushing.
- **Model good behavior:** Kids are watching and learning how to navigate these situations by observing adults.

SCHOOL SCHEDULE

Supervision begins at 8:00am

8:30am Morning Bell – Classes Begin

11:00am – 11:45am Outside Play Time

11:45am – 12:00pm Lunch Eating Time

2:13pm – Dismissal Bell

Supervision ends at 2:45pm





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PAC

Christmas Emporium

Our Christmas Emporium collection started on Monday November 17th and continued until Friday, December 5th. Thank you for all your generous donations to make this event a success! Students will get to shop between December 9th-December 12th with allotted times in their classrooms. All items are \$1-\$3 and all proceeds directly support programming and needs in our children's classrooms! Volunteers are needed for 3-hour shifts over Tuesday December 9th – Friday December 12th. Additionally, we need volunteers for set up on Monday, December 8th. Please join the “Elf Squad” here:



<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70A0B4BA9A62DA4FB6-60688602-2025>

Happy Shopping!

Purdy's Chocolatier Fundraiser

We're fundraising with Purdy's Chocolatier! The program gives 25% of the sales back to Bench Elementary School.

Pick up orders: December 5th in the GYM

Any questions, please contact our coordinator: Shannon Ralfs at seralfs@gmail.com or text 250-732-0305



Holiday Plant Sale

Pick up for the plant sale is **Friday, December 5th @ 2-3pm in the GYM**

Island Poultry Fundraiser

Pick up for the Island Poultry Chicken Fundraiser will be **Friday, December 5th in the GYM**



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Country Grocer Receipts Contest

Each class is challenged to collect as many Country Grocer receipts as they can over the course of November and December. The class that collects the most receipts will win a ***“Happy New Year Pizza Party”*** in January! Collection envelopes are in each class. Our PAC receives 10% back of total value of receipts in gift cards that support our events and class/community needs.



BENCH SPIRIT WEAR

Looking for a great gift idea for your Bench student? Don't forget to check out our ongoing PAC Spirit wear campaign! You choose the color and style and our awesome “Bench B” logo will shine with pride when your kiddo wears it! Please place your orders, by clicking the link below, by Friday, December 12th to receive in time for Christmas gifting.

<https://www.urbanvalleytees.com/bench>



DATES OF INTEREST

Nov. 17th – Dec. 5th Collection of Items for Christmas Emporium Event (drop box @ front entrance)

Dec. 5th – Coffee Chat outside the main entrance

Dec. 8th – 12th CHRISTMAS EMPORIUM EVENT

Dec. 10th and Dec. 11th WINTER CONCERTS & Bake Sale

Dec. 15th PAC MEETING @ 6:30pm



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Other ways to help our PAC:

Hot Lunch platform <https://benchpac.hotlunches.net>

Co-op Gas membership# 132941

Island Return it bottle depot (Fisher Rd.) acct: Bench PAC

Country Grocer receipts please retain & put them in the PAC box outside the office.

PAC email address benchpac@sd79.bc.ca

DIVERSE LEARNERS PARENT & CAREGIVER NETWORK

The Diverse Learners Parent & Caregiver Network is a supportive circle for Bench parents and caregivers to connect, share knowledge, and better understand how to support our kids to flourish at school. These meetings occur on the first Thursday of each month from 6:30-8:00pm in the school library.



COMMUNITY INFORMATION

FREE SKATING



Free Skating and free skates at the Cowichan Community Center arena EVERY Saturday from November 1st 2025 to February 28th 2026 between 1:00pm to 2:30pm. Ice skating trainers available for newbies. This is brought to you by your ***Duncan Lions Club***.



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CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA TREE LIGHT UP

Where: Cowichan Bay Maritime Center

When: Saturday, December 6 @ 6pm

What: Annual Christmas Tree Light up in Cowichan Bay



THE HUB HOLIDAY MARKET

The Hub Holiday Market is a festive gathering where local artisans and vendors showcase their unique crafts and products, creating a vibrant atmosphere filled with holiday cheer. Visitors can explore a wide array of handmade gifts, artisanal goods, and seasonal treats, making it the perfect destination for holiday shopping. Live music, delicious food and a warm community spirit, the HUB Holiday Market offers a memorable experience for all ages.

Date: Sunday, December 7th

Time: 10am-4pm

**Location: THE HUB @ 2375 Koksilah Rd,
Duncan**





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WINTER WONDERLAND SKATE

Bring the whole family to this fun, festive-themed FREE skate. The Cowichan Community Center arena will be filled with lights, decorations and holiday music. There will be arts and crafts for the kids and tons of activities on the ice, including the popular crazy carpet slide. Special guests will stop by to say hello and give out treats to the little ones. Please note: each skating session has limited capacity and will be on a first come, first serve basis.

Date: Sunday, December 14th

Time: 12:30-2:00pm & 3:00-4:30pm

Location: Cowichan Community Center

FREE ADMISSION



CHRISTMAS FAMILY SKATE

Another fun, magical skate, where holiday cheer and a winter wonderland come together to put you in the Christmas spirit. Santa will stop by for a special visit and bring treats for the little ones. Pre-registration for this is required, beginning December 1st on a first come, first serve basis. This even is generously sponsored by Thrifty Foods Mill Bay and Island Savings Credit Union.

Date: Sunday, December 14th

Times: 1:00-2:00pm, 2:30-3:30pm, 4:00-5:00pm, 5:30-6:30pm

Location: KERRY PARK

FREE ADMISSION



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NEW YEARS EVE FAMILY CELEBRATION

This FREE celebration will have something for the whole family, including face painting, a bouncy castle, a photo booth, and other new attractions. The early countdown will take place just before 4:00pm, complete with noise makers, prizes, and the always popular balloon drop!



Date: Wednesday, December 31st

Time: 12:00-4:00pm

Location: Cowichan Community Center

FREE ADMISSION





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FROM THE OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

October 20, 2025

INCLEMENT WEATHER INFORMATION

Dear Parents/Guardians:

With the winter season fast approaching, it is time to share the School District's procedures regarding inclement weather. There may be times when bus routes will not be operating as usual, or where schools in the district are closed.

BUS CANCELLATIONS

The most likely reason for cancellation of bus service will be for severe winter weather conditions, in which case one or more bus routes in the district may be cancelled. It will be determined by approximately 5:45 a.m. whether to cancel one or more bus routes. This is done in consultation with transportation staff who carefully assess local road conditions after severe weather warnings or events.

It is especially important that you take note of what route(s) your child(ren) ride on.

BUS OPERATIONS DURING INCLEMENT WEATHER

During inclement weather events, there are roadways that are part of regular routing that are initially less maintained. Some of these roadways may be considered unsafe to drive for district school buses. If this determination is made, following the careful assessment by transportation staff, communication will go out to district ridership. The messaging will include affected routes, and if applicable, will also outline alternate safe pick-up locations for affected routes. Communications will be provided through My Ride K-12 and will be posted to the district [Facebook](#) page.

If bus routes are running more than 15 minutes behind schedule, drivers will notify the transportation office. The transportation team will then advise the Principals and Vice-Principals of affected schools. Information regarding bus routes running more than 15 minutes behind schedule will also be found on My Ride K-12 and the district [Facebook](#) page.

It is recommended to download the My Ride K-12 app for timely updates.



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SCHOOL CLOSURES

The closure of schools in the district may occur when we are experiencing severe winter weather conditions, or when it is simply unsafe to drive. Again, it will be determined by approximately 5:45 a.m. whether to close schools in the district after assessing the situation.

Please note:

Schools may also be closed due to weather events after the school day has started. In these situations, parents and guardians will need to make arrangements for their children if buses are unable to operate.

WHERE TO FIND BUS ROUTE AND SCHOOL CANCELLATION NOTIFICATIONS

Any notice of official school closures due to weather will be posted to the district [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) accounts.

We will notify local radio and TV media outlets prior to 6 a.m. with information regarding bus or route cancellations and school closures. News announcements usually begin after 6 a.m. Media partners will not be notified about individual route changes.

The following local radio stations will be contacted about inclement weather notifications:

- The Q! (100.3 FM)
- The Zone (91.3 FM)
- CBC (90.5 FM)
- SUN-FM (89.7 FM)
- CFX (1070 AM)

The following TV stations will also be contacted:

- CTV Vancouver Island
- Global BC
- CHEK News

The school district website (www.sd79.bc.ca) will also be updated with a banner informing you of any closures.

In all cases, the safety of students will be the priority. Parents are equally encouraged to keep safety in mind when determining whether to take your child(ren) to school in the event the district is open during winter weather conditions. It is your prerogative to keep them at home if you feel it is the safest choice. When able, students and families should come to the school



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grounds in suitable winter footwear, use designated walkways, and only park in designated drop off locations.

Let us work together to ensure winter weather days can be safe for everyone. Yours

sincerely,

Tim Davie
Superintendent
Cowichan Valley School District

