



### **A Message of Gratitude as We Head into Winter Break**

As we approach the winter break, I want to take a moment to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our entire school community. It is truly a privilege to be part of such a caring, supportive, and connected group of families, staff, and students. Your trust, collaboration, and shared commitment to our children help make our school a welcoming place where everyone feels valued and supported.

Over the past weeks, our school has been filled with learning, growth, and many moments of joy. Our students have been working hard and continue to demonstrate resilience, curiosity, and kindness each day. In classrooms, hallways, and on the playground, we see students supporting one another, taking pride in their learning, and rising to new challenges. We are incredibly proud of their efforts, academically, socially, and emotionally, even during those long weeks when winter coats, boots, and mittens seemed determined to travel independently from their owners.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to our dedicated staff. Their care, professionalism, and commitment to student well-being and achievement are evident in everything they do. Through thoughtful planning, creativity, and collaboration, they create learning environments where students feel safe to take risks, grow, and succeed. Their patience, flexibility, and good humour (especially on busy days!) do not go unnoticed.

As we move into the winter break, we are mindful of the importance of balance and well-being for students, families, and staff alike. We hope this time offers opportunities to rest, reflect, and reconnect, whether that means enjoying time with loved ones, embracing traditions, or simply slowing down. We also hope it includes fewer alarms, less rushing, and perhaps a break from packing lunches and searching for missing homework.

I would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our parent volunteers, Home and School Association, and School Council. Your time, energy, and advocacy enrich our school in so many ways. From supporting events and initiatives to strengthening the home-school partnership, your contributions make a meaningful difference, and we truly could not do this work without you.

As we look ahead to the new year, we are excited about the learning, growth, and opportunities that lie ahead. We look forward to continuing our work together in support of student achievement, well-being, and a strong sense of belonging for every child. We hope the new year brings renewed energy, fresh goals, and a brief window when backpacks are organized, water bottles come home, and mornings run smoothly... at least for the first week back.

Thank you for being such an important part of our school community and for all that you do to support our students each and every day. We are grateful for the strong relationships that make Balaclava such a special place. We look forward to welcoming everyone back in the new year, refreshed, recharged, and ready to continue our learning journey together. Our first day back after winter break is Monday, January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Warmest wishes to you and your families for a safe, restful, and joyful winter break.

Anna Ricci

Principal, Balaclava School

