

SEPTEMBER 2025

SPARKS NOTES

Similkameen Elementary Secondary Monthly Bulletin

Principal's Message:

Dear SESS Families,

Welcome to the new school year at SESS! Our staff were very excited to see all of our students again last week. We've had a great start-up and everyone is anticipating a positive and memorable 2025-26 school year. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome parents, families and care givers back into our school. We are so appreciative of the support of our community and we look forward to more opportunities to share the wonderful things that our students and staff are doing. Additionally, we would also like to welcome all the new families who have settled into the community. Our enrollment for September is slightly bigger than last year...we are growing!

We have a few new additions to our SESS staff this year. I would like to welcome our new staff, including Holly Hamilton (gr. 5/6), Julia Kappeli (gr. 5/6), Jackson Pillipow (gr. 5/6), Melissa Jensen (gr. 7), Kelly Vesper (Learning Support), Jen Formo (Elementary counselor) and Terence Ferreira (custodian) to our staff this year!

The cafeteria is up and running with delicious food being prepared by our students under the guidance of Mr. Adolf (AKA Chef). Hot lunches will cost up to \$5. Money for lunches can be loaded onto student accounts using the Student Quick Pay link on our website. The Absence reporting system will be in place again this year. If your student has missed a block during the day and we have not been notified by you, the system will phone and email you. The system will not call if students are late to class, only for missed classes. That said, if a student is so late that they have missed the majority of the learning, they will be marked as absent. Please let the office know if your contact information has changed so we can update it in the system and please let the school know if your student is going to be absent.

Please take time to read the Guidelines for Positive Communication. It is important to remember that we all have the same goal of helping our students to thrive. Please keep that in mind when we are working together to support your learners.

We are looking forward to working together with our SESS families to support our students to have an exciting year of learning and growing.

Go SPARKS!

Stacey Smith

Principal: S. Smith

ssmith@sd53.bc.ca

Vice Principal: K. Anderson

kanderso@sd53.bc.ca

School Phone: (250) 499-2727

Website: www.sess.sd53.bc.ca

Important Dates:

September

- 11 Back to School BBQ
- 18 Grade 8's to Myra Canyon
- 19 School Photos
- 24 TIM Day (12:00 Dismissal)
- 25 Terry Fox Run
- 26 Orange Shirt Day @ SESS
- 29 Grade 8's to Yellow Lake
- 30 Nat'l Truth & Reconciliation Day - School Closed

October

- 3 District Cross Country Run
- 6-9 Kokanee Glacier Cabin Hike
- 13 Thanksgiving - School Closed
- 22 Family Conferences (half day)
- 23 Photo Retakes (half day)
- 25 Non-Instructional Day
- 29 TIM Day (12:00 Dismissal)
- 31 Hallowe'en





School Fees

School Fees can be paid by cash or cheque or online (please make any cheques payable to Similkameen Elementary Secondary).

Grades 5-7- \$40.00

This activity fee which helps with the costs of activities such as ice skating and swimming. The fees also help with costs like student planners and locks.

Grade 8 & any secondary students who are new to the school - \$40 and \$20.00 for a refundable textbook deposit.

Grade 9-11- \$40.00

Grade 12- \$200.00



This includes a \$40.00 school activity fee as well as an \$160.00 Grad Fee.



STARFISH PACK



The purpose of the Backpack Starfish Program is to help families in need. When it comes to the weekend, the Starfish Pack was designed to help. Starfish provides backpacks with 2 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners, and snacks for hungry students each weekend of the school year. Visit <https://starfishpack.com> for more information. See the office to sign up.



Welcome to New Staff

We have a number of new staff members at SESS this year. We would like to give a warm welcome to the following staff members:

Ms. M. Jensen - Grade 7 Teacher

Ms. J. Formo - Elementary Counselor

Mr. J. Pillipow - Grade 5/6 Teacher

Ms. H. Hamilton - Grade 5/6 Teacher

Ms. J. Kappeli - Grade 5/6 Teacher

Ms. B. Whitney - Elementary Indigenous Advocate

Ms. J. Johnson - Youth Support Worker

Mr. T. Ferreira - Custodian

Ms. K. Vesper - Learning Support

WELCOME

Peanut Free & Pet Free Space

Due to the fact that SESS is a space where both students and staff with allergies come to learn and work, it is imperative that we keep this space safe. Therefore, we ask that visitors and students avoid bringing pets and peanuts onto the premises whenever possible.



Back to School BBQ

September 11
5:00- 7:00

Elementary House Assembly

Monday, September 22 will be our first House Assembly. Returning students and staff will welcome our new Sparks into one of our four houses! Our upcoming Terry Fox Run will be our first event to earn House points.



Coaches needed!

If you are interested in volunteering some of your time to coach a sports team please contact our athletic director James Brown at jbrown@sd53.bc.ca. All community coaches must complete a criminal record check.

Office Staff and Office Hours

We are so fortunate to have a wonderful office team as the front line of communication for our school. Ms. Julie Rooney is our head secretary who is responsible for student records, reception, and attendance. We also welcomed Mr. Choayb Boulouf as our Accounting Clerk who will be responsible for finances. Our office hours are 8:00-3:00 Monday to Friday. If your child is going to be absent, please notify the office at 250-499-2727 so we know that they are safe.

Terry Fox Run

Our annual Terry Fox Run is taking place on Friday September 25th. The Terry Fox Run is an event held in commemoration of Terry Fox, a Canadian cancer activist who held a Marathon of Hope to raise money for cancer research. Our leadership class will be organizing the run for both elementary and secondary students. Every year our students make us proud with their participation in this important event.





National Truth and Reconciliation Day

September 30th is the National Day of Remembrance to recognize the lasting impact of the Indian Residential School System in Canada. Our goal is to continue to educate our school community about the impact that this system had and continues to have on Indigenous communities, as well as to recognize our responsibility as Canadians to engage in acts of reconciliation. On September 26th and 30th all students and staff are encouraged to wear orange. SESS will have focused educational activities throughout the week. Learn more about the purpose of [Orange Shirt Day here](#).

HONOURING EXPERIENCES. CELEBRATING RESILIENCE.

every child matters



Staff Contacts

Parents and guardians can contact any teacher by emailing them directly. All staff email information is available on our [school website](#). Parents can also call the school at 250-499-2727.

Bus Registration

A reminder that all students who take the bus must register this year. Here is the [link to the registration form](#) as well as information about bus routes and times.



Where to get SESS news!

The best way to access news and information about SESS is through our school website at sess.sd53.bc.ca which is continually updated. On the website you will find news items as well as our calendar of events. We also have links to various resources for parents and students and other practical information such as our timetable, code of conduct, bus routes and schedules.

SESS also has various social media accounts which we encourage you to check out!



Facebook: [@SimilkameenSchool](#)



Instagram: [@similkameensparks](#)



Grade 8s will be heading to Myra Canyon Adventure Park on September 18th and Yellow Lake on September 29th. Look out for those permission forms coming home!



Parent Portal

Please log in to your Parent Portal and double check your child's address and emergency contact information. If any changes need to be made, please email sessoffice@sd53.bc.ca. In the portal, you'll also be able to see your child's attendance, report cards, and assignments (high school only). Here is the [link to the login page](#).

Online Payment System

Our online payment system, [Student Quick Pay](#), is ready to go! You are able to add money to your child's lunch account, pay for student fees and field trips, all from the comfort of your own home! Please click this [link for instructions on how to set up your account](#) and this [link for Meal Manage](#), where you can manage your child's lunch money. If you have any questions or difficulties, please email sessoffice@sd53.bc.ca



Declaration of Indigenous Ancestry

If your child has First Nations, Metis, or Inuit heritage, they qualify for additional services through the Ministry of Education. The school district provides additional academic and cultural support for these students. Parents/guardians only need to self-identify to qualify for this support, and status is not a requirement. If your child has Indigenous ancestry and you have not previously contacted the school, please contact our school and we will provide the required forms to complete.



SESS Code of Conduct

Our [SESS Code of Conduct](#) is available for students and parents on our school website.

Extra-Curricular Activities

The following activities will be starting up in September and October :

- Volleyball (Gr. 8, Junior, Senior)
- Boys Soccer (Gr. 8-12)
- Cross-Country (Gr. 8-12)
- Chess Club (lunch)
- Elem Cross- Country
- Elem Soccer (after Cross-Country)





GRAD 2026

Welcome to the graduating class of 2026! We will start the year with an important Grad meeting for parents on September 11th at 6:30. Grads are also encouraged to attend with their care givers. We will discuss fun activities that will be held for the grads throughout the year as well as important grad responsibilities such as academic focus, graduation requirements, post secondary applications, and the process for completing the required Career Life Connections course. We are looking forward to a great year with the grads!



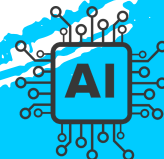
Outdoor Club Trip



Outdoor ed is planning our big fall backpacking trip to Kokanee Glacier National park. Twenty students will have the opportunity to hike nine kilometers into an alpine level lake and stay in the fabulous Kokanee Glacier cabin. After the two night at the cabin, students will take a quick soak in the caves of Ainsworth hot springs before our late return back to the school. A parent meeting with more details will be held on September 11 during the back to school BB in room 21 (Mr. Vinker's classroom) at 5:30 pm.

Copilot A.I.

We will be sending home a permission form with you students in grades 8-12 for Copilot A.I. - a closed AI tool. You should return the form to the school ONLY if you do not wish your child to use A.I.



BREAKFAST CLUB

This year we will again have a free breakfast available every morning for all students. The club is open at 8:10 in the cafeteria and provides a variety of options for students to have a great meal to start their day. Thank you in advance to the students, staff, and community volunteers who make this essential service possible at SESS!



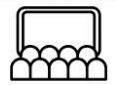
September Events



SEPT
2 
8:30 - 11:15
First Day of School

SEPT
 **11**
5:00 - 7:00
Welcome Back BBQ

SEPT
 **19**
Picture Day

SEPT
22 
Elementary Assembly

SEPT
25 
Terry Fox Run

SEPT
26 
Orange Shirt Day

SEPT
30 
NO SCHOOL
National Day for Truth & Reconciliation

Looking Ahead...

OCT
24
NO SCHOOL
Professional Development Day



Student Drop-Off (Front of School)

Parents please note that there is signage at the stop sign directly in front of SESS that prohibits dropping off students AT the stop sign. You are welcome to pull over to the side of the road (before the stop sign) or preferably use one of the parking spaces or the turnaround in front of the school on 2nd Ave. Dropping students off AT the stop sign is a safety hazard and also causes traffic congestion in the morning when we have a lot of students being dropped off. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation!



Elementary Expectations

A few reminders of key expectations for elementary students (grades 5-7):

- Cell phones are not permitted between 8:30 am and 2:30 pm. Students should leave their phones in their lockers or not bring them to school at all. Students who need to contact a parent will always be permitted to use the office phone. Parents can also contact students through the office and we will relay the message.
- Elementary students are not permitted to leave school property at any time unless they are accompanied by a staff member.
- Elementary morning supervision starts at 8:15 am. Please do not drop off your child or allow them to come to school before this time as we will be unable to provide supervision.

Why Join Pac?

It's an opportunity to contribute to your child's education.

Many school activities and events would not take place without the support of the PAC.

SESS PAC

First meeting of the year
is October 2 @ 5:30.

AGM October 14 @ 5:30

Hope to see you there!

Guidelines for Positive Communication



Dear Parents and Caregivers,

In the Okanagan Similkameen School District, we want schools to be safe, supportive, and welcoming places for students to learn and for staff to work. A key part of creating this environment is how we communicate and work together as a community.

We deeply value the partnership between home and school and ask for your support in the following areas:

Communication

- Please follow our process when concerns arise: Begin by making an appointment to speak with your child's teacher, and if more follow-up is needed, contact the school administration. Additional information can be found in Board Policy [F-10 Dispute Resolution Policy](#)
- Use respectful language in all communication, whether in person, on the phone, or through email.
- Please understand that responses may not always be immediate. Staff will do their best to communicate with you as soon as possible.
- Clarify your child's perspective with staff to better understand the full picture, and work toward calm, reasonable solutions.
- Avoid using social media to air complaints. It does not resolve concerns and often makes situations harder for everyone involved.

Partnership

- Support your child's regular attendance at school and reach out if you need help with this.
- Work with staff to find solutions when issues come up.
- Review and discuss the Student Code of Conduct with your child so they understand expectations.

Conduct

- When visiting the school, please remain calm and respectful. Swearing, inappropriate language, threats, or verbal abuse are not acceptable.

School Culture

- Please join us in treating all members of our school community with dignity and respect. This includes respecting diversity in identity, race, culture, beliefs, family status, abilities, gender, and age, as outlined by the BC Human Rights Code.

Together, we can build a school environment where all students and adults feel safe, respected, and supported in their learning. Thank you for your partnership in this important work.

Warm regards,

Marcus Toneatto
Superintendent of Schools
Okanagan Similkameen School District No. 53



Why Student Attendance Matters



Okanagan
Similkameen
SD53

In the Okanagan Similkameen School District, we all share the responsibility - educators, families, and community members - to help every student not only succeed but thrive. A key part of that success is **being at school every day.**

When students miss school they:

- Miss valuable learning that cannot be replaced with homework
- Fall behind in reading, especially by Grade 3
- Struggle more in later grades
- Are less likely to graduate from high school
- Absences also affect classmates and teachers. Group work, hands-on activities, and daily social experiences can't be recreated. Teachers must adjust plans and spend time helping absent students catch up, which impacts the whole class. Every missed day affects learning.

What is Chronic Absence?

- Missing **20% of the school year** (about 3-4 days per month)
- Includes **excused absences, unexcused absences, late arrivals, early pick-ups, and suspensions**

What Parents Can Do

You play a key role in building strong attendance habits. Here's how you can help:

- **Communicate** with the school about any lateness, early pick-ups, or absences
- **Schedule appointments** after school or on non-school days
- **Plan vacations** during school breaks
- **Have a backup plan** for getting your child to school if something unexpected happens
- **Build healthy routines:**
 - Create regular bedtimes to ensure enough sleep. Cell phone & electronic usage should end before bedtime.
 - Have clothes & backpacks ready the night before.
- **Address anxiety early**—if your child is worried about school, talk to their teacher or school counsellor

SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S SUCCESS

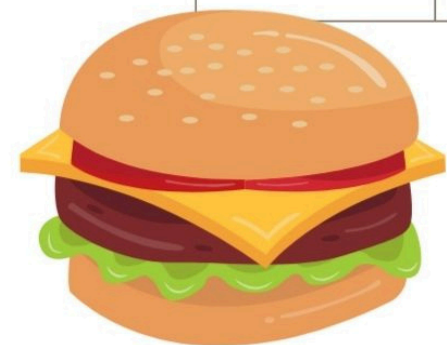
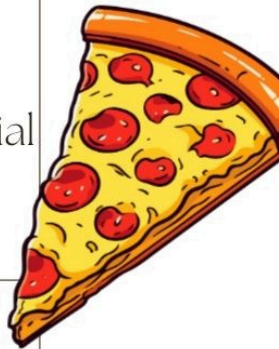
- Students are expected to **arrive on time and stay for the entire school day**
- If your child is absent, you **must notify the school office**
- Review school calendars as days off & breaks are posted on each school's website

🌟 **Every Day Matters – Together, we can help all students learn, grow, and succeed!** 🌟

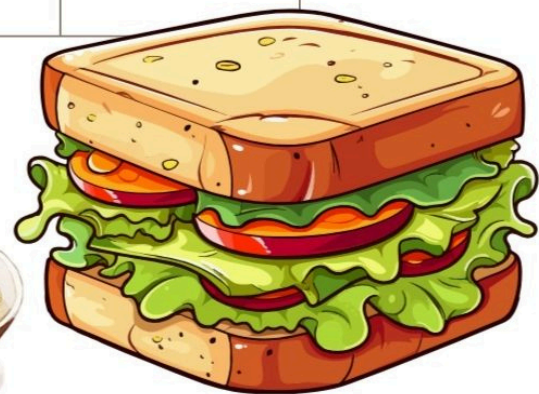
September 2025



	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
8 Club Sandwich	9 Tacos	10 Mac n Cheese	11 Chicken Chow Mein	12 Chef Special
15 Chicken Pita Plates	16 Butter Chicken	17 Meatball Subs	18 Pizza	19 Chef Special
22 Perogie Piles	23 Hamburgers	24 No Lunch	25 Chicken Teriyaki Rice Bowls	26 Chef Special
29 Fried Rice & Spring Rolls	30 No Lunch	1 Chicken Burgers	2 Pizza	3 Chef Special



Cafeteria



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SPAIN & PORTUGAL

★ **2027**



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THE WORLD**



SCAN THE QR CODE
OR CALL 1-800-263-2806

Join us for

Coffee, Connection, and Conversation

Exploring topics such as:

**Parenting Values
Emotional Regulation
Communication
Problem solving
Consequences**



PARENTING THROUGH THE CHAOS

Mark your calendars

Tuesday, September 23, 2025

9:30-11:00 am

Drop in or register

SIGNE 250-462-3234

TAMMY 250-499-6320

