



## *Rexton Elementary School*

*19 School St., Rexton NB, E4W 2E4  
Principal: Diane Wilson*

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Vice-Principal: Virginia Richard*

Saturday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

Hi there,

My name is Mrs. Diane Wilson and I am the Principal of Rexton Elementary School. I am writing to you today to provide you with an overview and update after last Thursday's lockdown.

Although Rexton Elementary School was re-opened on Friday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, many parents chose to keep their children at home. I want to tell you that I totally understand. Any RES student who was absent from school on Friday, October 18th will not be recorded as absent. Our District School Psychologist and Guidance Councillors were at Rexton Elementary School on Friday and the team will be available for students during the upcoming week as well.

I want you to know that the number one priority at our school is, and will always be, to ensure the safety of our students and staff. That being said, you should know that all of RES' exterior doors are kept locked at all times; in fact, the only door that is not locked during our instructional day is RES' front door. We are able to contact the RCMP by pushing an emergency button and the RCMP will come to our school immediately (no questions asked). We require all visitors (new & very familiar friends) to check in and out of our school. RES' student/teacher supervision ratio is second to none! All teachers and support staff received or updated their First Aid training as recent as August 2013. Our teaching staff members have extensive educational backgrounds in early childhood development and child psychology. Your child's teachers and support staff are parents, aunts or uncles who proudly and protectively take-on the role of being parent to your child when he/she is in our care!

Last Thursday, October 17<sup>th</sup> was likely the most surreal school day that any of us have ever witnessed! As RES' opening bell rang at 8:00 a.m. my Administrative Assistant, Connie Agnew, was inundated with phone calls from many of my teaching staff who were unable to come to work due to the Shale Gas Blockade and RCMP presence in Rexton. Many of these staff members reported that they were in gridlock traffic in

Richibucto along with many teaching staff members from EGMS & BLMS and scores of students who were waiting on their buses with their bus drivers.

Throughout the morning, my teaching staff and bus drivers who were in Richibucto were in constant contact with RES administrators as they worked with our children on their buses. These teaching staff members organized our students and ensured that our little ones were comforted. Teachers used their cell phones to contact these children's parents and/or taking children to use the washrooms at the Cartier Co-op Mall. The retailers at the Cartier Co-op Mall also assisted our students and staff by offering beverages and food. Many parents were able to come to the buses to retrieve their children and the other students were driven home by our bus drivers who had to take alternate routes such as driving to St. Charles, Aldouane, and utilizing Route 116.

Back at RES, we were labouring to keep-up with the phone calls from hundreds of parents/guardians, the RCMP, the District and our staff members. By 8:20 a.m. last Thursday, approximately 150 of our 270 students were seated in our school cafeteria. However twelve (12) of our teaching staff and 120 of our students were unable to reach the school. In addition to our own students, fifteen (15) students from the Francophone School District were brought into the safety of RES' cafeteria because their transfer-buses could not reach Rexton Elementary.

In order to keep things as normal and calm as possible for our students, we lined our students up in the cafeteria as is our regular procedure, according to their grade levels and led our children to their classes w/ at least one teacher and one support staff member. The children realized that many of their friends and teachers had not arrived at school but they happily went with their teacher and class-mates.

As the morning progressed and as tensions escalated outside in our village I made the decision to lock RES' front door and I notified my staff that we would not be going outside for recess. By mid-morning our District directed all Rexton-area schools to go into a lockdown. Eight (8) minutes later, RES' lockdown directive was lifted. The teachers kept their students in their classes, reading stories and talking with them to keep them calm & happy. The children coloured, played w/ table top toys, and ate their recess snacks.

Meanwhile, the District had devised a plan that would enable our school buses to come for the children who were at the schools in Rexton.

Students who were at our school went to the cafeteria for lunch at 11:55 a.m. and by this time, many of our parents were able to pick-up their children at our school and take them home. At approximately 12:45 p.m. buses began arriving at RES. By 1:30 p.m. the

buses left our Bus Loading Zone and by 2:15 p.m. the last two children were picked up at our fine, fine school by a very relieved parent who had raced home from Moncton.

Despite the frightening, chaotic ordeal that took place in Rexton on Thursday, October 17<sup>th</sup> I have never been more proud to be a member of the Rexton community! I am so very proud of my students, their teachers and support staff (in our building and in the traffic grid in Richibucto), my bus drivers, my custodial staff, my Vice-Principal, and of course my Administrative Assistant, Connie Agnew ~ God bless you all!

Finally, to the parents of our little ones ~ you were absolutely AMAZING last Thursday!! You were understanding, patient, and willing to lend-us-a-hand throughout the day. As I looked into your eyes as I opened our locked front door for you last Thursday, I felt your support and our combined strength & commitment in protecting our children.

Were there things we could have done better last week, absolutely! That day was definitely a day-of-learning for all of us. You should know that RES' staff will be meeting to debrief AND update our emergency procedures early this week.

As shocking as the day was last Thursday, we are all very happy and eager to move on, resuming our regular school day and procedures. Please join us in helping your child to know that things are back-to-normal at our fine, fine school. If you feel that your child would benefit from meeting with our Guidance Councillor or if you want to speak with me regarding last Thursday's lockdown, please contact the school by phoning 523-7152; our Administrative Assistant, Connie Agnew, will take your name and number and we will call you back as soon as possible.

Here's hoping that you and your family enjoy a restful weekend,

Yours Sincerely,

Diane Wilson  
Principal of Rexton Elementary

