

April 24, 2020

Dear Grads and Grad Parents,

In an earlier communication to parents, I acknowledged how the current disruption due to COVID-19 has impacted our students, particularly our Grade 12s. I want to acknowledge the frustration, anger, regret and grief you are likely feeling right now – it is real, normal and completely understandable. Your final year of secondary school has been profoundly changed by something that is out of your control. The opportunity to share the excitement of the final three months of school and anticipation about plans for next year, in person with your friends at school, is gone. And, taking in your last memories of the place that has been ‘home’ for the past five years is no longer an option. For many of you, the final season of sports, year-end choir/band concert, drama production and art show have been postponed or cancelled. As I hear often in my own house, “this sucks!” To complicate matters, you are also wondering about the impacts on graduation requirements, final marks and transcripts, and, of course, your graduation ceremonies. I would like to take this opportunity to provide you and your families with some updates about your graduation program and ceremonies.

**Graduation Program:**

We have prepared the attached Graduation Program document that provides important information about this year’s graduation program. It also clarifies information published in the [Ministry of Education’s Continuity of Learning FAQ](#).

Please take some time to read through this document as it contains information that you need to know right now. If you have further questions, please contact your school Principal.

**Graduation Ceremonies:**

On Monday, April 20, Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry reiterated there is still a ban on gatherings of more than 50 people and we are not confident that this will change before the end of June. Concerning large celebrations, Dr. Henry stated:

*“It’s not going to be a big party where everybody gets together because that’s too risky. It means that you might spread this. And if you have all of those contacts, they’re going to bring it home to their families and their loved ones. We need to look at how we do it in a much smaller scale, with those who are close to us, and bring people in remotely to celebrate with us.”*

We know this news is frustrating for our graduates and their families but these measures are put in place by the Provincial Health Officer with our collective health and safety in mind. With this ban in place, it is not possible for us to hold a grad ceremony as we have in the past, in front of an audience, with all of your graduating class on stage.

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We also know that High School Graduation is a rite of passage that carries with it much significance for our students and also for families and loved ones. The act of 'walking across the stage', through that virtual threshold of childhood and moving into the adult world is something we don't want you to miss. We want you to have your moment, for yourself, and also to share with others.

We have placed a tentative hold on theatre space for late August and also in December. However, there is no certainty about changes to the ban on large gatherings and we could be waiting to celebrate indefinitely. It would be unfortunate to have to wait months and months for our graduates to have their ceremonies when some may be unavailable to attend, and the moment will have passed.

With this in mind, we are working with your school Principal, Vice-Principal and grad ceremony planning committees to create a virtual graduation celebration for each of our secondary schools that will be unique to Grad 2020 in the North Vancouver School District. This will need to be quite different than what we have done in the past but *you will walk across the graduation stage in a cap and gown and you will have a photograph in your formal outfit*. We know this is important. You will also be able to celebrate with your friends and loved ones online while watching a video of your graduation ceremony at the same time (release date to be announced). To make this happen we will need to be creative, innovative and adaptable – exactly the attributes the graduates of 2020 are made of! Your schools will be providing you with further details in the next week. Please watch for communications from your school as there will be information from you they require in a short timeframe, in order to make this a success!

My commitment to you, is that you will be celebrated, and it will be special. This is an important time for you and all those in your lives who have contributed to you getting to this point ...your family, friends and school staff. We are extremely proud of you and are looking forward to commemorating each and every one of our graduates in the best way possible!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Pearmain".

Mark Pearmain  
Superintendent of Schools