May 21, 2020

Dear Grade 12 Students and Families:

We understand how challenging these times have been for our students and families and we are especially aware of how disappointing this pandemic has been for our graduating students. As the Superintendent of Schools described in his letter to all Grades 12s across the district on May 5, the Provincial Ministry of Health and Vancouver Coastal Health have established clear physical distancing guidelines and restrictions on gatherings of people for all activities. Unfortunately, these guidelines impact graduation celebrations we had planned for the Grads of 2020.

We have met with our Grad committee and other Grade 12 students and our adapted plan to recognize our 2020 graduates is outlined below:

A) The school is organizing a “Video Valedictory” celebration. This will involve each graduate being recorded in their grad gown and cap, walking across the stage. Each grad will receive their graduation certificate and also be photographed. The video will include traditional speeches, including the valedictorian’s and historian’s addresses to the class. The final product will be of a professional quality and published at a specific date and time in June, to be determined.

B) Each graduate will be assigned two specific appointment times, one to receive their gown, and another one to be video recorded.

C) Grade 12s will receive their appointment times via email, as soon as they are confirmed. With 250 graduates, the video will take several days to complete. It is very important that grads arrive at their scheduled time.

D) Grade 12 families will receive a full refund for the Dinner and Dance and the Dry After Grad.

E) Grade 12 families will receive a partial refund for the Valedictory Ceremony. The school will use $25 to offset part of the costs of the gowns, grad program, photographs, and professional videographers.

F) Students can “opt out” of the Video Valedictory by contacting the principal, and the $25 fee will be refunded.

It is important to note that the safe and structured recording of each graduate is our priority. The video will take several days to record and edit, with a small number of students scheduled every hour. Students will keep their cap and gown and parents can take photos later at a time and place that works well for each family.

Some parents have asked whether they will be permitted to be physically present while their child is recorded crossing the stage. Although the district understands that watching a child cross the stage in ‘normal’ times is of enormous importance to parents, it is clear that public health officials do not endorse the presence of parents in these circumstances. The current public health order is designed to minimize the number of contacts that students and staff are exposed to, and bringing additional adults into the school is not in the spirit of the current public health order. With that being said, if parents feel very strongly that they would still like to watch their child cross the stage, they may do so by contacting me by Wednesday, May 27 and appropriate arrangements will be made for a maximum of two parents to watch from a designated location. Strict health protocols will be communicated and are expected to be adhered to at all times. Parents of students who may be immunocompromised are asked to contact me to make suitable arrangements.

Additionally, some have asked if we could host grad events later in the fall, or in 2021. Our school remains open to creative ideas but this will depend on several key factors including any public health orders in place at the time and the availability of members of the class of 2020 months from now; however, we are open to exploring this option in the future.

While a video valedictory will never replace ceremonies and celebrations held in beautiful venues with friends and family, we hope that it will be a unique and special way to celebrate our graduating class. Indeed, surviving and thriving in a global pandemic makes the graduates of 2020 an extraordinary class in the proud history of our school. We will do our very best to recognize each graduate in a thoughtful, inclusive, and classy way.

If you have any questions, please contact me directly.

Thank you,

Anita Kwon
Principal