



Cowichan Valley School District

BRIEFING NOTE

Date of Report: May 29, 2020 – Amended June 1, 2020

Prepared for: The Board of Education for **Action** for the June 2, 2020 Open Board Meeting

Subject: **Grade 12 Commencement Ceremonies**

Background:

The Grade 12 Commencement Ceremony is a long-standing tradition that honours and recognizes the academic achievements and celebrates the thirteen years that our graduates have committed to their K-12 student education. In early April, secondary principals/vice principals began collaborating with their staff to begin generating ideas on how the Grade 12 Commencement Ceremonies could be shaped during a time that restricts large in-person gatherings.

In order to ensure that the planning of the Grade 12 Commencement Ceremonies would meet the Health and Safety standards required by our Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Waters, Cowichan Valley Region's Medical Health Officer was consulted. On two separate occasions, Dr. Waters and staff, met with district representatives and secondary school principals to finalize Grade 12 Commencement Ceremony plans.

In addition, the Superintendent and the Director of Instruction-Secondary have been collaborating with a group of Grade 12 students from Frances Kelsey. These students have been advocating on behalf of all graduates in the Cowichan Valley in order to ensure that their graduation has all the elements that make Grade 12 Graduation Ceremonies special. The district will continue to meet with this group and share their ideas with all secondary school principals/vice principals and graduation committees.

Summary:

All district secondary schools are all at different stages in their planning. However, secondary schools will follow the Provincial Health Officer guidelines while finalizing their plans for the ceremonies. There is still much planning to do and will be completed over the coming weeks to ensure that all gatherings will not exceed 50 person maximum and that all participants will be safe before, during and after the ceremonies.

Below are the preliminary plans of the Grade 12 Commencement Ceremonies:

Chemainus Secondary

All graduates of Chemainus Secondary will be in the school distributed in classrooms viewing the livestreaming of the ceremony. Approximately 5 family members will join their graduate in the multipurpose room with a small group of their fellow graduates and families for the ceremony. The maximum capacity of 50 people will be strictly adhered to. Chemainus Secondary is tentatively planning for their commencement ceremony to occur on June 19th.

Cowichan Secondary

On June 25th, Cowichan Secondary School staff are planning a "drive to" cap and gown celebration. A staff member will be visiting homes of approximately 6-8 graduates and meeting them outside. Each student will be in their cap and gown and receive their graduation diploma folder from a staff member. Each student's family will be present and can invite extended family if appropriate. When the staff member arrives with the diploma folder, the student will move the tassel from right to left. Photographs will be taken by family and posted online with the hashtag #schoolxgrad2020 – to allow all students can follow the hashtag and see their classmates' pictures. At 8:00 pm the Valedictorian Speech will be livestreamed for all to see. All graduates will throw their caps in the air while families capture the moment and share on social media. For students who do not wish to have staff come to their home, they will be given an alternate opportunity at the school site.

Open Learning

All CVOLC and satellite Open Learning graduates will be invited to celebrate in one of 5-6 separate ceremonies over 2 days – June 24/25th. Plans will include 10-12 graduates per ceremony with 3 guests each and up to 7-8 staff members. The ceremony will be held in the parking lot (weather permitting). Certificates will be presented on the front steps of CVOLC.

Frances Kelsey Secondary

Frances Kelsey graduates will have the opportunity to come to school to receive and wear their cap and gown, collect their graduate folder and have a photo taken on an individual basis. Plans will be to use these photos to create a video montage of the graduating class of 2020. As this is a brief recognition rather than the usual graduation celebration, a minimal number of family members, yet to be determined, will be invited to accompany graduates into the gym. Small groups of graduates with their parents will be together in the gym at one time. Students and families will transition to the multipurpose room to see displays of pictures from their years at school and collect their graduate gift bag, exiting before the next group enters. The ceremony will be spread out over 3 days to accommodate physical distancing: June 15-17th.

Lake Cowichan School

All graduates will be invited to the school to participate in an adapted version of Lake Cowichan School's traditional Grade 12 Commencement. The graduating class of 30 will be divided into groups of 5. As they arrive at the school they will be ushered into one of six different rooms. Parents and family of each small group of graduates will be in the gym to witness their child's group do their traditional walk through gym, walk across stage, receive scholarships, receive Indigenous Education graduate recognition, and hear a story of each graduate from the school's counselor. The graduates will then move backstage to remove their graduate gowns in preparation for the candlelight walk. After the candlelight walk, the 5 graduates will walk out the front doors on the red carpet with parents for photographs by a professional photographer. Lake Cowichan School is hoping to livestream the ceremony into each classroom and to the community. During the red carpet, the chairs in the gym will all be replaced with new chairs in preparation for the next group. June 20th is the date of the Lake Cowichan School commencement.

Recommendations:

“That the Board of Education of School District No. 79 (Cowichan Valley) approves the planned Grade 12 Commencement Ceremonies as presented.”

Prepared by:

Larry Mattin, Director of Instruction – Secondary

Reviewed by:

Robyn Gray, Superintendent

Date signed: May 29, 2020