



NEW WESTMINSTER SECONDARY SCHOOL

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June 14, 2021

To our school community.

Today I am reaching out to offer a full-hearted apology to those students and families who were impacted by mistakes made over the course of our three days of graduation ceremonies last week. Through a series of errors, a handful of our hard-working grads were inadvertently deadnamed or misgendered – either in the lead up to their congratulatory moment, or in two cases we currently know of, while actually crossing the stage.

On behalf of our whole team: I'm so sorry. We are sickened and heartbroken today that our actions have impacted you in this way.

We owe it to all of our students to have done better, and we recognize that this is not just a matter of inconvenience, or even about negatively impacting what should have been a celebratory moment: it is these sorts of errors that can put transgender and non-binary youth at risk, both physically and emotionally. And as educators, this kind of error is in steep contrast to the efforts we're trying to achieve, as we work toward making schools safer and more welcoming for all.

It has not gone unnoticed to us that this happened during Pride Month, just as SOGI and diversity leads across the district were getting ready to honour the history, challenges and contributions of LGBTQIA2S+ community. And it shows us clearly that we have more work to do.

To any student impacted by the errors to their names or pronouns: please reach out to Vice-Principal John Lekakis as soon as possible (jlekakis@sd40.bc.ca), as we will be offering you and your families the opportunity to walk the stage again this Wednesday, June 16. The corrected moment will be edited into the final ceremony that will be compiled and later shared with the wider community.

To all: as we move forward, please know that we will be working as a full school community, along with the District and our SOGI committee, to look at the [established SOGI policies](#) that exist at New Westminster Schools. We will do so with the goal of collectively working to more deliberately implement practices that support transgender and non-binary people in our community, so this kind of error does not happen again.

Any student who needs support is encouraged to speak to a counsellor or another staff ally in the school. If there are students who feel safe enough to share similar experiences with us, we encourage you to do so, so that we can better address and remove barriers that may be impacting you.

We're so proud of all our students who have worked additionally hard to graduate in this challenging year. As we all continue to learn and grow, we hope what you carry forward from our time with us, and that it empowers you to believe in and build on the strength of who you are and what you can do.

With great respect,

Principal Murray McLeod