

BOARD OF EDUCATION

June 1, 2023

June launches the start of what is considered “Pride Season” in Canada – with cities and regions all across our country celebrating throughout the summer months.

Here at New Westminister Schools, Pride flags will be going up at each school and site today, and they will remain up for the full month of June.

As a Board of Education, it feels especially important and timely today to reaffirm our support for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community here in New Westminister – as we see the rights and well-being of the community impacted by issues like the so-called “Don’t say gay” law that was introduced in Florida last year, or the rise of protests that public libraries in Canada have recently faced around drag queen storytimes. These actions, of a limited group of people, are specifically targeting educational efforts to build on human rights, diversity and the efforts to develop the core values of kindness, understanding and empathy in kids.

Let’s not forget that historically, Pride parades started as protests ... groups of activists taking to the streets to demand their civil rights be respected and honoured. Those initial events were vastly different experiences than the celebrations of community we see now, but they come from the same values we share and support today.

Our district is deeply committed to removing barriers and building on diversity, equity and inclusion, in all its forms.

Every student should feel fully supported to be whoever they are. Every family should feel equally welcome to walk into our schools. And every staff member should feel that same level of support.

Over the course of this month schools will celebrate Pride in many ways – with our youngest learners “celebrating rainbows” as a representation of diversity, while our older learners will be having meaningful conversations surrounding equity and inclusion. At all levels, these respectful and important conversations are being scaled to the age of the students, led by our district’s skilled and experienced staff that know how to connect to students in ways that support diversity and inclusion, meaningfully.

Over this last year, we’ve heard in some questions and comments about the SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) curriculum. We encourage questions and greater understanding of the important lessons that are helping make our classrooms more inclusive for all. You can find out more about the scaled curriculum here: <https://www.sogieducation.org/parents>

Our district stands firmly behind this work and behind the curriculum that was developed and is directed by the Ministry of Education and Child Care. We hope over the course of Pride Month that you will join

us in honouring the distance we've come together and in recognizing the work that still needs to be done, while we celebrate the rich contributions of New Westminster's 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

It's a full and very busy month for all of us and we send additional appreciation to the classroom and school-based staff who create dynamic and multi-faceted learning opportunities for students each day.

In proud celebration,

- The Board of Education

