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June 12, 2020

Greetings Graduating Class of 2020 and Families,

We know that you have been anxiously awaiting updates regarding your senior activities and graduation ceremony plans to properly round out your school year and appropriately celebrate the incredible accomplishment of graduating high school in the most unprecedented of times. As it was shared back in March by Superintendent Davis and relayed over the course of our closure, we were going to work tirelessly to do everything we could to uphold the traditions of our senior class, most importantly graduation. We are pleased to share that we believe we have done just that, and here is the latest update.

After close consideration of the evolving guidance related to COVID-19, regular collaboration with local public health officials, and review of the Governor’s current executive order which allows for large-crowd gatherings if social distancing can be ensured, we are pleased to present all graduates the opportunity to make a choice between one of two options to commemorate and celebrate their graduation: either participate in a traditional graduation ceremony or participate in an arranged private, individual ceremony.

Additionally, Henry County Schools has been and will continue to work directly with the District 4 Public Health Department to assess community health risks, mitigate and manage large-crowd risks, and to plan every detail of the commencement events.

Option 1: Traditional Graduation Ceremony at Atlanta Motor Speedway with 8 Guest Tickets

For any graduate who wishes to participate in a traditional ceremony, we are pleased to announce that Henry County Schools is planning to proceed with traditional ceremonies the week of June 22 – 26. In order to ensure social distancing practices, large-group gathering protocols, enhanced hygiene and sanitization practices, and to offer a live-stream option, the decision has been made to relocate all traditional ceremonies for each high school to Atlanta Motor Speedway (AMS) on the same commencement date previously communicated by your school. This means each school can have its own class graduation event at specific, adjusted ceremony times. Please note the graduation schedule dates and adjusted times below.

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| June 22 | Luella High School – 9 a.m.
Stockbridge High School – 8 p.m. |
| June 23 | McDonough High School – 9 a.m.
Locust Grove High School – 8 p.m. |
| June 24 | Hampton High School – 9 a.m.
Eagle’s Landing High School – 8 p.m. |
| June 25 | Dutchtown High School – 9 a.m.
Union Grove High School – 8 p.m. |
| June 26 | EXCEL Academy – 1 p.m. (Location TBD)
Woodland High School – 9 a.m.
Ola High School – 8 p.m. |

Thanks to the incredible partnership with AMS officials, we will shift all graduation ceremonies to the AMS venue so that we can better support parking, entrance and exit processes, and follow current safety measures aligned with large-crowd gatherings. The following measures will be in place and strictly monitored:

Class of 2020 Graduates

- Graduates will wear graduation regalia, be seated 6 feet apart on the infield, and follow strict social distancing expectations when lining up, during the processional, and during the recessional.
- Graduates will participate in a contactless awarding of the diploma that will include an on-stage announcement of graduate name and honors, a formal picture receiving the diploma, and the traditional pomp and circumstance of the graduation ceremony, speeches, and certification of the diploma.
- Face masks for graduates are strongly encouraged.
- Graduates will be issued 8 tickets for guests (an increase from the 4 tickets originally planned).

Class of 2020 Guests

- Guests will enter the venue allowing for and honoring social distancing.
- Temperatures will be taken upon entrance by public health officials. Guests at or over 100 degrees will not be admitted.
- Face masks for guests are strongly encouraged.
- Guest seating will be separated and marked in the stands to honor social distancing.
- Guests will be prohibited from congregating.
- Clear bags or handheld clutches will be required for personal items and must be used in lieu of handbags, backpacks, and totes.
- Health professionals will be onsite to aid in any medical emergency.

Graduates will receive additional information and details related to the specifics of the ceremony, tickets, and expectations from the local administration at your school.

According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) and state health officials, if you or a household member are sick or if you or a household member fall into a high-risk category for those susceptible to contracting COVID-19, you should not attend these large-crowd ceremonies. This goes for graduates and members of their families. We want this to be a safe and celebratory event for everyone.

Option 2: Private, Individual Graduation Ceremony at School Campus

For any graduate who does not wish to participate in a traditional ceremony at AMS or has concerns with a traditional ceremony due to their own health or the health of a guest, that graduate will have the option for a private, individual ceremony at a separate time on the school campus. Your school will provide additional details on how to select this option. The following measures will be in place for private ceremonies:

Class of 2020 Graduates

- Graduates will wear graduation regalia, be assigned a private ceremony time, and be ushered through a processional, announcement, and recessional without contact with any other graduate.
- Graduates will participate in a contactless awarding of the diploma that will include an announcement of graduate name and honors, a formal picture receiving the diploma, and certification of the diploma.
- Face masks for graduates are strongly encouraged.

Class of 2020 Guests

- Graduates are welcome to invite family and guests to witness the private ceremony.
- Any guests present will follow school procedures and honor social distancing.
- Face masks for guests are strongly encouraged.

Like the many other events and attractions that are slowly opening across the state of Georgia, the plan to celebrate the Class of 2020 has been designed with adjustments and accommodations so as to limit contact and minimize risk for graduates and guests. We also must ask that participants in HCS graduation ceremonies do their part to limit contact and congregating with other participants onsite at the time of the event. Additionally, it is advised by our public health partners that graduates limit post-graduation ceremonies to your family and household members or encourage social distancing practices to continue into other activities.

As the reality of 2020 sets in and the realization that many of the traditions and celebrations that typically coincide with this chapter of one's education have not taken its typical course, it has remained the priority of your school leadership, your teachers and school staff, and the entire Henry County community to honor you, celebrate you, and recognize this unprecedented season you have experienced as graduates. Although great priority has been placed on doing what is reasonably possible to host a graduation ceremony for our HCS Class of 2020, we have also made the difficult decisions around other senior activities.

Prom and Senior Activities

The Governor's most recent Executive Order issued on June 11 requires social distancing to be ensured for large-crowd gatherings over 50 in capacity. As a result, Henry County Schools cannot proceed with prom or other associated senior activities on school campuses at this time. We know this is disappointing news to many of our graduates, and we share your concern and frustration, too. We had remained hopeful that the direction provided by state officials would allow for the opportunity to proceed as mid-June approached, but sadly, that has just not been the case.

While there may be disappointment in the cancelation of some events, we hope that the plans to have graduation ceremonies gives you and your family a grand conclusion to your successful time in Henry County Schools. A chance to be around classmates and participate in our ceremony options will hopefully provide you with many positive memories as you move into the next stages of your life. We look forward to seeing you and your family soon!

Regards,

Henry County Schools