



LOUDOUN COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

21000 Education Court
Ashburn, Virginia 20148
(571) 252-1020

Eric Williams, Ed.D.
Superintendent

April 13, 2020

Dear Members of the Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) Class of 2020,

I know graduation is top of mind for you, and it is heartbreaking that your graduation ceremonies will not be held on the dates originally scheduled. Let me start with the most important news: Each LCPS high school with a graduating class will hold an in-person graduation ceremony, when it is safe to do so. We do not know yet when the ceremonies will be held, but each high school with a graduating class WILL hold a graduation ceremony. You have our word.

Student School Board representatives from throughout Loudoun County reflected with me via video conference last week regarding the importance of in-person graduation ceremonies. The following observations were informed by their insight.

We are committing to in-person graduation ceremonies because you have waited for your graduation ceremony for many years. You have anticipated walking the stage, receiving your diploma, and turning the tassel on your cap. These moments should be a part of YOUR experience.

You have earned a joyous celebration. Your family, your teachers, your friends, and your community look forward to gathering to celebrate YOUR accomplishments. “At this point in time, everyone is searching for human connections, and the Class of 2020 is especially hopeful to reconnect before we go our separate ways . . . It will give us a chance to rejoice in our accomplishments and feel like one unified class again,” observed Catherine Lynch, Broad Run High School Class of ‘20.

The in-person celebrations will provide closure for many people. As Jacob Conway, Rock Ridge High School Class of ‘20, noted, “every student deserves the closure of saying goodbye to high school.” This closure involves seeing your classmates and teachers again: being with them, talking with them, and connecting with them. This closure will support your transition to the next stage in your life, whatever that might be.

The in-person graduation ceremonies will be as traditional as possible. The ceremonies will incorporate traditions, such as caps and gowns, as well as the customs and practices unique to your school’s graduations.

Rather than announcing new dates for graduation ceremonies now, we want to wait for better information regarding when it will be safe to hold the celebrations. We recognize that sufficient notice will help people plan to attend.

As an initial step -- not as a substitute -- each high school with a graduating class will hold a virtual celebration of the Class of ‘20 in June. At this time, the virtual celebrations in June are not envisioned as graduation ceremonies. Each virtual celebration will be an opportunity for class unity and connection even as we look forward to face-to-face celebrations. Principals will engage students in planning these virtual celebrations.

I want to acknowledge the sadness connected with a delayed ceremony. The timing and details will be imperfect. While acknowledging the sadness, let's move forward with the excitement of creating something new. Your principal wants and needs your input and leadership in planning the in-person graduation ceremonies and the virtual celebrations.

I close with a reference to a graduation tradition -- the tassel students wear with their cap and gown. Some seniors at every graduation ceremony don't remember which side of the graduation cap the tassel goes on. They initially forget that graduation tassels go on the right side of the cap before you graduate, and that you then turn it over to the left near the end of the ceremony. My advice today is not to worry about remembering that detail. You'll be able to ask a classmate in the processional for a friendly reminder!

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Eric Williams, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Loudoun County Public Schools

A special thanks to the following student School Board representatives who met with me last week via video conference on very short notice. I know other School Board representatives would have wanted to join me if we'd been able to provide more notice.

Sunya Qamar- Briar Woods High School
Catherine Lynch - Broad Run High School
Kaylie Halsey- John Champe High School
Evelyn Campos - Dominion High school
Austin Roberts - Freedom High School
Alexander Luong - Heritage High School
Ainsley Hathaway- Independence High School
Naomi Fraser - Loudoun Valley High School
Matthew Chesnutt- Park View High School
Alexis Legan- Riverside High School
Jacob Conway - Rock Ridge High School
Aili Hou - Stone Bridge High School