

BOARD OF EDUCATION
HIGH POINT REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

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May 13, 2020

Dear Students and Families:

It is with a heavy heart that I write to inform you that we have been directed by the State Director of Emergency Management to cancel any plans for an on-site traditional commencement ceremony. As of late last week, it remained our hope to plan for a summer graduation; however, as the attached memo indicates, as well as being informed through written and verbal advice from the New Jersey Department of Education, those plans must cease. We will proceed in earnest with plans for a virtual ceremony on a date that has yet to be determined during late June. The process of providing the best possible virtual ceremony in such a short amount of time, coupled with the rush of New Jersey school districts to utilize vendors for such ceremonies does not, yet, allow us to provide a definitive date.

Despite this setback to our plans for an in-person celebration, we remain connected as a school community. Although Google Meets and virtual messages can never replace the warmth of normal interactions, there is a great spirit of togetherness which persists. WE are a caring connected, vibrant school community; together, we will continue to lift up and celebrate the Class of 2020.

We recognize that this will be unwelcome news for our graduates and our families; we are deeply saddened by these events, but we also recognize that the health and safety of our community are of paramount importance. Graduation ceremonies are rights of passage in one's life, and we remain committed to providing a ceremony that will honor our graduates and their families. In the highly unlikely event that the state relaxes its current stance on large gatherings, at some point over the summer, we may pursue other options, but that remains to be seen.

Please know that we had every intention of pushing the graduation ceremony into summer, as our surveys suggested; as educators, our passion is to ensure a world-class educational and life experience for our students. Please accept our sincerest empathy and sympathy for our graduates and their families as we navigate this experience together. We will update all as soon as we have more information.

Sincerely,



Dr. Scott D. Ripley
Superintendent



State of New Jersey

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May 9, 2020

TO: Department of Education and all Public and Non-Public Schools

Recent events related to the COVID-19 Pandemic have resulted in questions and concerns regarding celebrations planned to recognize students, as well as ceremonies intended to honor New Jersey school graduates of the Class of 2020. While it is recognized that milestones such as graduations deserve the acknowledgement of the school and parent communities, it is critical to understand the need to acknowledge academic achievements in ways that do not compromise or endanger public health during the COVID-19 emergency.

Executive Order No.107, signed by Governor Murphy on March 21, 2020, directs New Jersey residents to remain at home except to obtain goods and services from identified essential businesses, to obtain takeout food/drink from dining establishments, to seek medical attention/law enforcement services, to visit family, report to work, exercise under specific guidelines, or leave home for educational, religious, or political reasons. It is also permissible to leave home for fear of health/safety concerns, or to leave home at the direction of law enforcement/government. But even when someone is leaving their home for a permissible reason, they are not allowed to participate in any gatherings. As my Administrative Order No. 2020-04 explains, any event, including a graduation that has more than 10 people in attendance, would be in violation of Executive Order No. 107.

Executive Order No. 107 and Administrative Order No. 2020-4 can be found here:

<https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-107.pdf>

<https://nj.gov/governor/news/ao/docs/AO%202020-4%20Gatherings.pdf>

In light of the components of Executive Order No. 107, and in the best interest of the health and safety of the public, in-person ceremonies, including graduations, all parades, including "wave parades," that invite people to gather at a certain location, proms, and other similar celebrations violate the enumerated conditions of the order, and should therefore be cancelled or postponed until such time as these restrictions are lifted. Until such time, virtual celebrations and other remote forms of recognition should take the place of any in-person or public ceremonies.

Sincerely,

Colonel Patrick J. Callahan

State Director of Emergency Management



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