May 11, 2020

Dear Parents, Guardians, and Students:

I hope this letter finds each of you safe and healthy. The school administrative team and I have examined multiple scenarios to hold a commencement event where the Class of 2020 would feel honored and valued in a dignified program to celebrate their graduation. The active pursuit of ideas and critical input from different stakeholders, such as parents/guardians and students, guided our decision. It is with great thought that these ideas were considered with deliberate weight given to the structure and limitations demanded by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Class of 2020 Class Officers and Class Sponsors held several meetings with the Abington Senior High School Building Administrative Team to discuss commencement options. Concurrent to the meetings, the District elicited ideas for the Class of 2020’s commencement from stakeholders, via email. We received over 100 responses to the call for ideas. Commencement suggestions fell into three primary categories: postponing graduation until a later time, coordinating a “social distancing” graduation in Schwarzman Stadium, and conducting a drive-through/parade graduation.

**Postponing Graduation/Group Gathering at Schwarzman Stadium**

We believe that postponing the graduation ceremony to a later date will not occur as prohibition against large-scale gatherings continues. Similarly, the social distancing option is not a viable option given Governor Wolf’s order that gatherings the size of our graduating class are currently not permissible. Also, we have been told by government officials that it is highly unlikely that a ban on group gatherings would be lifted over the summer months. In short, although very disappointing, we will not be permitted to hold such a large event.
Drive-through/Parade on the ASHS Campus
Of the three options, more responses were in support of a drive-through/parade than the other options. To that end, we will hold a drive-through/parade graduation on June 10, 2020 (students with the last name A-L), and on June 11, 2020 (students with the last name M-Z). June 12, 2020, will serve as a make-up day for students/families unable to attend prior dates.

If the June 10th drive-through/parade is canceled due to inclement weather, we will continue with our plan on June 11th for students with the last name M-Z. Then, the ceremony for students with the last name A-L would be moved to June 12th. Under these circumstances, the make-up date for students/families who cannot attend any of the aforementioned dates will be Monday, June 15th.

Caps and gowns will be distributed during the first week of June. More detailed information regarding the drive-through/parade and cap and gown distribution is forthcoming.

The drive-through/parade will allow for a dignified event, and our intent is to emulate the feel of a ceremony. The drive-through/parade will offer students an opportunity to take a picture with an Abington back-drop, allowing parents/guardians to be a part of that moment while social distancing. Students will receive their diplomas and senior awards as part of this event.

Virtual Graduation Ceremony
In addition to the drive-through/parade, we will also hold a virtual graduation ceremony. Herff Jones, who provides our caps and gowns, will provide a service that creates a virtual graduation experience. This includes pre-recorded videos of our traditional graduation speeches as well as a roll-call of names of the graduates. Each student will have their photo and graduation message displayed during the event. The virtual ceremony will be published and posted for viewing on June 11, 2020. It will be viewable to parents/guardians, students, and community through a variety of social media outlets. We will also have a link to the virtual graduation on the school district website.
**Lawn Signs & Banner**
The Abington Educational Foundation has committed to purchasing the Class of 2020 lawn signs and a banner. The lawn signs will display each student’s photograph and their name. If given township permission, the banner will be displayed in the community in a show of support and gratitude for the Class of 2020. The Abington Alumni Association will award all Class of 2020 graduates with complimentary lifetime memberships in the Alumni Association. Membership cards will be distributed during the drive-through ceremony.

**Distribution of Essential Items**
We are in the process of planning for the distribution of several essential items. These key items are as follows: caps and gowns, diploma covers, lawn signs, and yearbooks. Plans for distribution have not been finalized but the components of planning will identify safe and precautionary measures to support a seamless distribution. In addition to the distribution, we will facilitate the collection of textbooks, Chromebooks, and the retrieval of personal items that were stored in lockers. The school team is examining distribution and collection sites. The school team is also considering one distribution event of all the key items to minimize student and staff contact.

**Class Council Funds**
We have received multiple inquiries regarding the status of the Class of 2020 Class Council fund. Historically speaking, monies raised by students are used to defray the cost of the senior prom. All residual funds have traditionally gone toward a class gift. Due to the unforeseen circumstances, we are facing, we have asked the Class Sponsors and Class Officers to brainstorm ideas for fund allocations. It is worthy to note that it is not the building administration’s prerogative to keep the funds.
Post-Graduation Event for the Class of 2020
We understand that this year has been particularly challenging for our seniors. They have not been able to participate in the typical traditions of ASHS seniors, especially the prom. We are committed to facilitating a post-graduation event, in the future, for the Class of 2020 to be reunited once the social distancing restrictions have been lifted.

Yearbook
Yearbook production was impacted by the pandemic; therefore, yearbooks will not be available for distribution until the end of June. More specifically, the yearbook plant was closed for 6 weeks thus curtailing production. We have made a request to have yearbooks mailed directly to seniors’ homes and this option is being explored by our vendor.

Look to the Skies...
It is worthy to note we have a surprise scheduled for the seniors scheduled for tomorrow, May 12, 2020 at noon. Please follow our posts on social media for the particulars. Also, a Class of 2020 banner has been mounted on our digital sign located on Highland Avenue.

In closing, we continue to ask for your patience as we plan commencement. We are working on all of the logistical details and will share information in a timely manner.

Thank you very much for your understanding.

All good wishes,

Angelo Berrios
Principal