



Northfield
Community School
Children First



May 13, 2020

Virtual Graduation Ceremonies

On Monday, May 4, 2020, Governor Murphy closed all schools to in-person instruction. He directed students and educators to finish the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year through remote instruction. In addition, to closing schools for the remainder of this current school year, Governor Murphy and New Jersey Commissioner of Education Dr. Lamont Repollet indicated that guidance would be forthcoming regarding the end of the year activities including prom and graduation.

On Friday, May 8, 2020, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) issued guidance regarding graduation ceremonies that directs school districts to “**only plan virtual graduation ceremonies at this time.**” According to NJDOE guidance, Executive Order No. 107, signed on March 21, 2020, “prohibits gatherings of individuals for parties, celebrations and other social events, which include in-person graduation ceremonies.”

Furthermore, Colonel Patrick J. Callahan, State Director of Emergency Management issued Administrative Order No. 2020-12 and a letter to all schools on May 9, 2020, that reads,

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 canceled 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.

Colonel Callahan clarified his message in the Governor’s Press Conference on May 11, 2020, regarding “wave parades.” He indicated that groups of individuals driving by a graduate’s home to celebrate was permitted, as opposed to organizing a parade to celebrate the graduates, much like 4th of July parades, that would bring people out of their homes and into close contact.

The NJDOE’s guidance in conjunction with Executive Order No 107 and Administrative Order No. 2020-12 as well as the letter issued to schools by Colonel Patrick J. Callahan, require our districts to develop **virtual graduation ceremonies** as opposed to in-person gatherings of ten or more people, at this time. Each district will continue to plan unique ways and opportunities to recognize their graduates, which may include an in-person celebration in the upcoming months or in the fall, once we are permitted.

Like many of you, we are devastated by this guidance and direction, but understand that canceling in-person graduation ceremonies is required in the interest of the health, safety, and welfare of our students, their families, and our communities. With that said, we have always come together and rallied for our students in each of our Districts. Our school staffs are currently working to design virtual graduations and remote plans for honoring the accomplishments of our students and sharing this milestone with our soon-to-be graduates. These events may not look as they have in the past, but the new versions will recognize the success of our students and celebrate your children as individuals and as the Class of 2020 within our school communities.

Please stay in contact with your child’s school and look for more information from your individual children’s Districts regarding these events. We miss you and thank you for your support!

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