



March 18, 2020

Dear School District of Janesville Class of 2020:

Congratulations! You've made it to the final stretch, rounded the last corner, and you are about to become the School District of Janesville's graduating class of 2020. Despite the COVID-19 madness that swirls around us, forcing us to close schools for an undetermined amount of time, I can promise that you will be given the opportunity to become graduates from Janesville's high schools as the class of 2020.

I know, and your parents and families know; you are disappointed, upset, confused, and sad—this is not how the last three months of your senior year was supposed to go. You're potentially missing out on being able to enjoy the final months of your senior year – hanging out with your friends, dreaming about one last summer before you all head in different directions. You may lose experiences like competing with your classmates on spring sports teams, the chance to attend senior Prom, the chance to 'cram' with your friends for your AP exam. It is natural that you may be feeling sad—this situation has certainly created a sense of loss.

You are no strangers to adversity. Nineteen years ago, you entered the world at another tumultuous time – when the world, post 9-11, was forced to adjust and change our way of life as a result of the worst terrorist attack our country had ever experienced. You were our first students who've always had to go through security checks when going to a Packers game at Lambeau, or have always had to take off your shoes when going through airport security. You came into the world during a time of chaos, and chaos is now ushering you out of high school and pushing you into adulthood. You are used to uncertainty, and you know how to handle unpredictable times.

Maya Angelou once said, "You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeats, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it."

There is wisdom in her words. You see, life is not an endless series of pleasant experiences—we all learn from adversity. We learn about our character, our resolve, and we develop plans to move us forward.

With what you have experienced over the years, and especially now, you are not rookies in the game of life. You are veterans, with a lot of playing time left, and plenty more to learn and share with others. One of our School District of Janesville's Promises is that our students will graduate from high school, ready for career, college, and life. You're ready, and everyone in the School District of Janesville is going to do everything in our power to help you get to the finish line.

A century ago, the world was struggling to rebuild from the devastation of World War I and a worldwide pandemic. What they learned then is guiding our actions and response to the current

pandemic of COVID-19. Guess what? How you react and act now will certainly guide our community in the future when the next crisis reveals itself.

I am proud of your dedication and resolve. I admire your ability to face adversity and keep moving forward. While it may not be the senior year ending that you had dreamed of, it will be your senior year, unique among your peers, and you will reap the rewards. Stay flexible, stay patient, and be ready for your next chapter. When we return from spring break, we will be scaling up online learning opportunities for all students. Learning will go on, granted in a different format, but we will help you meet graduation requirements.

Remember, you won't only become members of Janesville's graduating Class of 2020, you also become members of the greater Janesville community. This is your home, regardless of where you end up living, studying, working. We enjoy watching you learn and grow, and look forward to seeing you succeed in all you choose to do.

Good luck, and remember that you are always welcome here!

With anticipated congratulations,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Pophal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "S".

Steve Pophal, Superintendent