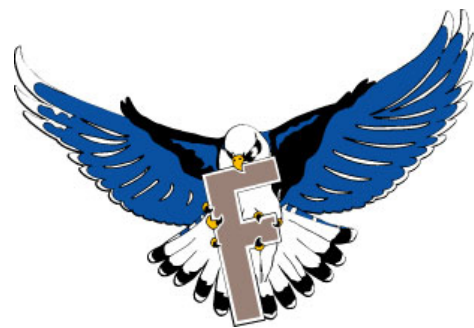


May 13, 2020

Dear FLHS Seniors and Families:



Last night, Warde Headmaster Paul Cavanna and I presented an outline of our graduation plan to the Board of Education. While not a “traditional” ceremony, our hope is that we can do as much for the Class of 2020 as possible under the circumstances and guidelines of what we will allowed under state and town guidelines. We agree that so much has been taken away from these amazing young women and men and our hearts go out to them.

We have been consulting with principals and organizations from around the State and participated in seminars with members from the Connecticut Association of Schools and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. We also took the feedback from the survey of parents and students from last month to heart. Weighing everyone’s “ideal” scenario with what we are *allowed* to do was no easy task.

In an attempt to capture the essence of a good graduation experience, we know that there are three important components: it should have a personal element, it should be memorable, and people like to feel a part of a collective experience. These are all present in a traditional ceremony, but since we are not able to have a traditional ceremony, we have tried to replicate these elements in a number of different events.

Phase One: Sometime in June prior to June 17, will invite students and family members in to the school—adhering to all social distancing standards – to have a personal moment. We will arrange a set up that will allow students to take pictures in caps and gowns along with their Ludlowe tie or bracelet. Students can greet key members of their house team (such as the housemaster, counselor, and dean). Students will receive their diplomas to ensure a safe transfer of this important document. We will be looking to hire a professional photographer as well as allow families to take their own pictures.

Phase Two: A professionally made video of a slideshow of each member of the Class of 2020. This would be a keepsake for students to remember all their classmates and allow us to televise all the student names from this great class of students. Speeches from the valedictorian and salutatorian will be included as one of the traditional elements of the graduation.

Phase 3: The biggest caravan / parade of cars that Fairfield has ever seen. All 365 graduating seniors can line the streets of Fairfield and pass through various neighborhoods where they grew up. Neighbors, friends, alumni, and future Falcons can line the streets in their lawn chairs and cheer on the Class of 2020. Instead of decorating mortarboards, students can decorate their cars in unique and fun ways. Students sitting the front seats will be able to see all their classmates as they pass by each other along the route. The caravan will end up on the school property where all the teachers and staff will be lined up to salute the graduates. The administration will be there to “confer” each graduate as she/he passes by a designated spot. These plans will be designed with and approved by town officials, the Health department, as well as the police and fire departments.

Please also understand that we are bounded by the State of Connecticut and Fairfield Health Department regarding gathering sizes. We also think it is important for our Seniors to have closure on

this school year and offer families a firm date to plan their summer accordingly. If we were to try to plan a pseudo-traditional, socially distanced in-person ceremony for later in the summer on the premise that restrictions will loosen in the future, it may only result in more disappointment, time lost, or an experience devoid of the emotion that comes from family and crowd participation.

We know we cannot replace the incredible experience of a traditional graduation ceremony. We do believe that with the town's support, we can make these events special – with a personal aspect, a memorable aspect, and a collective experience. We are trying to make the best of a challenging situation and show our Seniors how much we love and appreciate them.

I will be meeting with students and parents over the course of this week to gather input and ideas for how to make these phases special. Please look for the announcements if you would like to participate.

We also are planning a gathering of the Class of 2020 in the fall (call it "Phase 4"). This can be a time where they can have their yearbooks signed and greet each other in person. We obviously have to wait and see what the fall will bring in terms of allowing large gatherings, but the class officers and advisers are already making plans. We know many college freshmen come home around the Thanksgiving holiday, so that is our tentative target time frame. Fate may have picked this time and place for us to deal with this crisis, and the Class of 2020 bears the brunt of disappointment. They are resilient, they have endured a lot, and they will come through this. We will do everything we can to honor their contributions to Ludlowe and their time as Falcons.

Thank you,

Greg Hatzis, Headmaster

