



Rev. Anthony Anderson, President District A
Louise Winters, Vice-President District B
Earsie Simpson, Secretary District C
Elder William Dean, Jr., Member District D
Rayford Horton, Member District E

James L. Henderson, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

Connecting for Success: Every Child, Every Classroom, Every Day

April 30, 2020

Dear Class of 2020:

Parents and Seniors, we know the interruption to your Senior year and senior activities by the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 global pandemic has been painful. We share your disappointment over the cancellations or modifications of cherished long-held traditions and celebrations such as Prom, Class Day, Senior Superlatives and the concluding Commencement Ceremony in which your family, friends and community commemorate the milestone of high school graduation.

As of 1:00 pm today, 460 responses have come in answer to the *Seniors: Graduation Survey* posted online last night. When offered the choice between an online virtual graduation and an in-person event, the message is loud and clear: 90% of you distinctly want to have an outdoor graduation.

As a graduate of the schools of Holmes County, I understand your desire to hold a public event where you can celebrate—and be recognized by your family and friends for your achievement. The leadership and staff of the district also want this for you, but we must be mindful of the safety precautions recommended to help slow the spread of the coronavirus flu.

For this reason, we will hold an outdoor graduation ceremony, but it will look quite different from the traditional ceremonies of the past. We will divide the graduating class into three groups in order to manage the number of people gathering in a public venue and spread the celebration over three days: May 20, 21 and 22. We will be outdoors, but all attendees will remain in their cars as they observe their graduate cross the stage to receive their diploma. The Valedictorian and Salutatorian speeches will be recorded and included in the video of the ceremonies. The ceremonies will be streamed live and uploaded to the District's website so that you can have a copy. A photographer will document each student's moment on stage as they collect their diploma.

The high school leaders will contact you soon with more details as we near May 20, 21 and 22. Remember, we are celebrating your triumph while consciously protecting our family and friends' health during this uncertain time of COVID-19.

Sincerely,

