Dear Seniors and Families of the Class of 2020,

We are committed to celebrating our seniors in the safest and most personalized manner possible. We share the disappointment that the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent school closure placed on our senior class. We also understand that our senior class and community have been anxiously awaiting the decision regarding the Class of 2020 celebrations.

I brought before the School Board my recommendations to celebrate the Class of 2020 and the Board agreed on the following approach:

* High schools will schedule individual graduate photo opportunities beginning in June, with each graduate wearing their cap and gown along with appropriate cords and medals. Seniors will be able to receive their diploma at this photo event. A limited number of family members will be permitted to join the graduate.
* A Class of 2020 celebration video will be produced. Seniors will be contacted this month to submit information and photos for the video. The video will be professionally produced and distributed at no cost to all members of the Class of 2020.
* An in-person ceremony will be scheduled in the fall at each school if conditions are such that the event would not pose a health risk to students or staff. A decision about a fall ceremony will be announced around Labor Day. If a fall in-person ceremony cannot be held for health and safety reasons, then we will consider scheduling the face to face ceremony in the winter or next spring.

We appreciate and understand the interest and overwhelming sentiment of our students, parents, and schools to have a face to face graduation opportunity for the Class of 2020. Based on data from the Fairfax County Health Department, a summer in-person ceremony poses too many health risks and too much uncertainty with regard to social distancing requirements and restrictions on large gatherings that could still be in effect at that time. Health Department data indicates that Fairfax is still experiencing community spread of the virus with increasing infection rates and a University of Virginia model predicts the number of cases will remain elevated in Fairfax in the summer.

We will continue to monitor health conditions and guidelines in the fall. If it is possible to gather safely in large groups, we will plan to do so at each of our high schools during the fall months. If conditions have not improved by then, we will monitor conditions through the winter and spring to see if an in-person ceremony is possible.

We believe the individual photo opportunity, the celebration video, and the possibility of an in-person ceremony in the fall or some later date are the best options considering the unprecedented circumstances. We look forward to celebrating the accomplishments of the Class of 2020 in the weeks ahead. Please know that the Class of 2020 will forever remain in the hearts and thoughts of all of us at FCPS.

Sincerely,

Scott Brabrand, Superintendent

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