



Pearl River School District

135 West Crooked Hill Road
Pearl River, New York 10965-2730

www.pearlriver.org

Phone: 845-620-3922 – Fax: 845-620-3927
pochintestam@pearlriver.org

Marco F. Pochintesta, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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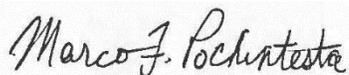
Dear Pearl River High School Class of 2020 and Families,

I am writing to address the request to have a graduation ceremony with the entire graduating class on our school field. The Board of Education, and I are very sorry that we are not able to hold a graduation with the entire senior class. We are very proud of our graduating class. They have endured a great deal and their unity and spirit are extraordinary. We all extend our congratulations and best wishes to the PRHS Class of 2020.

We are aware of the temporary restraining order issued by a U.S. District Court Judge, however, that decision did not alter the NYS Education Department's guidance of June 14, reiterated on July 1, that states: "While hosting graduation ceremonies please remember: **ceremonies must be conducted while adhering to public health precautions for COVID-19.**" (See Communication below) In addition, we received guidance from our legal counsel that we should follow all of the guidelines established by our local Department of Health, as well as the NYS Department of Health, and the New York State Education Department. The District's insurance provider gave the same opinion, with the addition of following the Governor's Executive Order, and applicable guidance from the Department of Labor for graduation as well as any other activities.

This pandemic has touched us all. In the months that have passed since the closing of school, we know that members of our community, staff, and family members, have become ill from the virus, and tragically, some have passed away. COVID-19 continues to pose a real threat to public health. The safety of our students, staff, and their families, remain our highest priority. This decision, although a very difficult one, reflects that belief.

Sincerely,



Communication from NYS Education Department

July 1, 2020

The Governor's Office and State Education Department join all of you in celebrating the extraordinary class of 2020—we share in your pride for their accomplishments in this unprecedented time. While hosting graduation ceremonies please remember: **ceremonies must be conducted while adhering to public health precautions for COVID-19.**

Presently, the NYS Department of Health is investigating the potential of COVID-19 exposure associated with a Horace Greeley High School drive-in graduation ceremony held on June 20 at Chappaqua Train Station in Westchester County. An individual who had recently traveled to Florida and attended the ceremony subsequently began showing symptoms and tested positive for COVID-19. Since then, 18 more individuals who attended the ceremony or had contact with individuals attending the ceremony have also tested positive.

On June 14, [New York State DOH issued guidance](#) to ensure any district that decides to host a graduation ceremony adheres to appropriate protective measures including social distancing, limitations on number of attendees, wearing face coverings, and other precautions. Part of the comprehensive public health response will be to determine whether the guidance had been followed.

While we have made significant progress in containing the COVID-19 pandemic, it is still very active throughout the country, including in New York State. We must continue to be diligent. Practice social distancing, wear a mask in public, and wash your hands frequently.

Thank you for your cooperation.