



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

May 8, 2020

Dear Pearl River School Community,

Today I learned of the passing of a parent of children in our schools. My thoughts and prayers are with them, as they must confront the unthinkable, and endure the unimaginable. I know that the Pearl River community, like other communities in our country, and in other countries, is struggling with pain and suffering, that is both physical and emotional. We all face a crisis that is continuing and multifaceted. COVID-19 has created loss. The loss of loved ones, the loss of the ability to gather and mourn together, or to be together for happy occasions that are part of the fabric of our lives. As a district, we are working to do all that we can to support all of our students, in their learning, and the difficult journey that they find themselves on.

In this letter I want to give a brief update on what we know about the rest of the year, from graduation, to the budget vote, and other milestone events for students. Our work in recreating student events and experiences that mark the end of the year, is ongoing, and we are committed to doing our best for our students. The information is limited, not from a desire to withhold information, but because our plans are contingent on guidance from the Department of Health, the State Education Department, or the Governor. We should know more after May 19 when Interim Commissioner Tahoe and Assistant Commissioners, will have met with district superintendents from the different BOCES regions in the State. Certainly, if more is known before then, it will be reported.

High School Graduation and Senior Recognition

A survey was administered by our HS administration to seek feedback from 12th graders. This survey closes today at 3 PM. We are grateful for the participation of students and families and value their feedback. The high school administration will review the results of the survey and use it to inform their planning as they continue to work on graduation plans.

If social distancing requirements and prohibitions on large gatherings remain imposed, we want to be prepared with alternatives, such as a virtual ceremony.

The high school's morale committee is working with seniors on a slide show presentation that celebrates college decisions. Seniors are currently designing individual slides to announce their college decision to the school community. The morale committee will continue this project through the end of the month, and they will announce the senior college decisions on June 1st.

The high school administration is working on plans for the remote Grades 8-11 Academic Awards and Senior Academic Awards. Our Athletic Director is working on plans for a remote Senior Athletic Awards. Our

Middle School and Elementary Schools are working on plans to recognize the students who will be “Moving Up” as well. Please expect more information on these events as they become available from the school principals.

Grading Protocols and School Year End 2020

These two important issues have our attention and we expect to hear from the State Education Department on both. We have drafted grading protocols for the elementary, middle and high school levels that are reflective of the realities of remote learning, and are sensitive to the impact of our transition to virtual schools. The grading protocols have been drafted with input from our teachers, school leaders, and at the high school level, have also been informed by what our high school students have shared. Principals will be sharing more information with you once they receive guidance that is expected from the State Education Department.

Parents and students should expect to hear more about an end date for the school year in the next couple of weeks. We know that remote learning comes with challenges, and terms like “zoom fatigue” are becoming part of the lexicon. Not having had a break, we understand that we may be reaching a fatigue point. Stress and fatigue are issues for everyone, albeit, at different times and in different ways. We want to be able to at least inform you as soon as possible when the year will end.

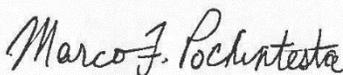
Budget and Bond Vote and School Board Elections

Last Friday evening, the Governor issued Executive Order 202.26 outlining the process and requirements for the School Budget and Bond Vote and BOE Elections. All voting will be done via absentee ballot. We have been working this week to plan for this and prepare communication about the budget vote and board election process for the Pearl River community. One new aspect of this Executive Order is the ability for public libraries to be part of a school district’s budget vote. The Pearl River Public Library has chosen this option. Community members will receive more information on the entire process over the next several weeks.

We have added a Board Meeting next Tuesday, May 12th, for the purpose of adopting the Budget for next school year. The meeting will be broadcasted live on our YouTube channel. The Public Hearing for the School Budget will be held on Monday, June 1st, also live streamed on our YouTube channel.

I am hopeful for the future, not just the distant future, but the future that is near to us. I believe that with each day we will begin to see and hear more encouraging news. I don’t make it a regular practice to share quotes, but the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer has always been an inspiration for his indomitable courage. He was a German theologian, and an outspoken anti-Nazi dissident. He was imprisoned and later put to death for his views. “The essence of optimism is that it takes no account of the present, but it is a source of inspiration, of vitality and hope where others have resigned; it enables a man to hold his head high, to claim the future for himself and not to abandon it to his enemy”. -Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Marco J. Pochintesta in black ink.