



HARBOR BEACH
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
402 S 5TH ST HARBOR BEACH MI 48441 989 479 3261

April 16, 2020

Dear Harbor Beach Students, Parents, and Community:

As you are aware, in compliance with Michigan Executive Orders, Harbor Beach Community Schools have suspended face-to-face instruction for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. However, we will continue to provide exceptional learning opportunities to students at all levels, preschool through 12th grade.

The Harbor Beach Community Schools District staff have held several district-wide virtual meetings over the last 3 weeks. Collectively, we believe it is vital that ALL students continue to learn during this time. In order to be prepared for the next school year, students must continue to practice their skills. To this end, ALL Harbor Beach teachers are committed to provide support for students during this COVID-19 crisis, and all students must continue to put in effort in order to be prepared for next year. Additionally, all teachers will reach out to families of students who are in danger of failing. If for any reason you have concerns about your child's progress and don't hear from your student's teacher, please know you are encouraged to contact your child's teacher. Teachers continue to be accountable to you and their students during this time.

Without the possibility of face-to-face instruction, our district has transitioned to a combination of online learning whenever possible and hard copy packets when online supports are not available. It is our belief online resources can provide for more robust, individualized, and immediate interactions. Students who are able to work online should be checking their teachers' webpages regularly, checking their school email often, and communicating with their teachers. When absolutely needed, we will be sending packets home. For students who are not working online, packets should arrive in about a week.

Several major events are up in the air at this time. We have been considering various formats for graduation and have heard several intriguing ideas. We are not prepared to announce a specific decision for graduation at this time. We will hold off on detailing a specific decision on graduation until the beginning of May because we'd like to give ample time for the possibility of holding it as scheduled. It is fair to state, though, that we are heavily considering a full graduation when allowable. Specifically, every combination of virtual and/or distance graduation seems to continue to feel less than adequate. Plus, some well-intended ideas border too close on what's allowable legally. Instead of flirting with legal and safety issues with a result that is less than fulfilling, we are considering a delayed but full graduation. To be exact, we wish to still have a traditional, complete graduation: valedictorian speech, salutatorian speech, band playing, parents and grandparents in the stands, walking across the stage, shaking hands (or fist bumps), giving hugs.... the whole 9 yards. We feel our seniors have more than earned the right to have a traditional pomp and circumstance graduation. Therefore, we are heavily leaning toward holding this type of ceremony as soon as safety allows. If this type of true graduation can take place safely in June, so be it. If it has to be July or August, so be it. When allowable, we'll send our seniors off with the ceremony they deserve.

Traditionally, the Harbor Beach Community has been very generous in giving to seniors. As our graduates move toward college, trade school, military, or the workforce, they find enormous support from a variety of donors. Each year these community donors provide approximately \$150,000 worth of scholarships to our graduates. It is important to us not only to recognize our senior recipients of these awards, but also to provide timely thanks to our very generous donors. We are in the process of planning our senior scholarship and



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awards night. We hope to have this on the same night as scheduled (Wednesday, May 13) but in a live and online format. By keeping this date, we can allow seniors to plan financially and appropriately and give our donors public recognition.

Though we are not announcing the cancelation of Prom at this time, it is fair to say it seems very unlikely Prom will take place (at least as scheduled). The logistics involved in tickets, decorating, openings for venues, chaperones, DJ availability, background checks on guests, etc. make rescheduling a challenging undertaking. We are working on a back up date in July for Prom in case the original date is not possible, but if the stay-at-home order is extended well into summer, we may unfortunately have no choice but to cancel Prom for this year. More on this will come soon.

These are very difficult decisions, and they are compounded by a constantly changing environment. It is only human to be disappointed and/or frustrated. Those are natural feelings coming with the reality of the situation. Please know our school district is in the boat with you. Though we are not the cause of the storm, we will weather it together. Our only choice comes with how to handle things. It is our hope that everyone understands there are likely no answers that are preferred by all. We will continue moving forward, making decisions based on what is best for student safety and including as much tradition as we can.

Sincerely,

Dr. Shawn Patrick Bishop
Superintendent