

April 16, 2020

Hello Joliet Stakeholders,

We are fast realizing the unintended consequences of forced closures and “stay at home” orders. Most people intellectualize the importance of education, but our most recent and tangible realization is that we need school for its social benefits. As educators, we know that learning is maximized when alternate conceptions of an idea are offered within a group setting. We know that students learn through negotiating with peers and synthesizing ideas. The feedback peers and teachers give to one another is essential for effective learning. Likewise, the social advantages evolving from these relationships promote thinking, develop reasoning, and support educational activities like reading and writing. Furthermore, sound instructional strategies promote literacy across the curriculum and play a significant role in knowledge construction as well as the combination of whole class leadership, individual and group coaching, and independent learning. We need school for myriad and important reasons.

As physical isolation and quarantine are extended, the District has had to construct a completely new learning community in online forums, with online platforms, in digital chat rooms and through virtual meetings. We have developed distance learning techniques and shaped unique modes of collaboration. Though we have been involuntarily thrust into this situation and are missing the connections from daily interactions, we have a greater appreciation for the strong bonds that persist. District-wide, we have stepped back to re-examine the bonds shared between parents, students and teachers. With patience and elegance, the educational community in Joliet has somehow managed to pull off an unprecedented achievement. Though painstaking at times, this home and school innovation is a successful experience because all parties have exerted a lot of hard work. You are an incredibly supportive community, and we thank you for being graceful and patient throughout this crisis.

We are realizing that the elimination of the social component can hinder cognitive development, so Joliet administrators have encouraged teachers to sustain personalized, digital interaction with their students. We recently established two things: 1) a schedule that outlines the expectations for distance learning class time, and 2) a late work policy. Both administrators and many teachers shared these new developments on their virtual landing pages, which are linked to our website at [gojhawks.com](http://gojhawks.com) Please check them out when you get a chance.

The most recent directives from the State limit all gatherings, especially those of more than 50 people. It further states that all organizers should refrain from planning new gatherings and should cancel existing gatherings. For this reason, the 2020 commencement will not be held in the gymnasium. The Joliet District has established an advisory committee to drive decisions for an untraditional graduation celebration. The advisory committee is comprised of three class advisors, three board members, and three 12<sup>th</sup> grade parents. We do not know many details yet, but the Joliet District plans to send our senior class off with imaginative style. We have the opportunity to foster creativity and make something novel – pun intended!

## **Other Updates:**

Booster Club members, athletic directors and coaches are making plans for the activities banquet, also known as the Athletic Banquet. The FFA Advisor and officers are making plans for the FFA Banquet. These celebrations will also be unusual and quite different in their presentation.

The agricultural classes planted many flowers in the greenhouse in January, and the agricultural teacher has continued cultivation. The plants are strong and lush, so the agriculture classes will continue with its annual sales. The process for purchasing these flowers may be online or in-person, depending on statewide directives around Mother's Day.

The kitchen staff and administration wants to reiterate that the Grab-n-Go breakfasts and lunches are not for any one socioeconomic group, but for all students. No demographic group is excluded. Please call the main office between the hours of 7:00 and 9:00 AM to place your orders. We have a "more the merrier" mentality when it comes to serving the community, so please take advantage of this service.

The Joliet School District Action Plan for Distance Learning was submitted to the Governor's office and was approved on March 31st.

We have had great attendance at the last two virtual board meetings, and we had a lot of community participation during the elementary listening sessions. Thanks for using your voice and being participatory. We appreciate the feedback so that we can continue to improve our craft and better the service provided by District personnel.

And finally, there are four contenders for two seats on the Joliet School Board. These ballots were originally scheduled for delivery on April 17<sup>th</sup>. This election has been postponed by the Carbon County elections officer, and a new election date has not been established.

I miss our interactions and hope you stay safe and sane while we are apart.

Sincerely,  
Allison B. Evertz  
Superintendent of Joliet