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Superintendent

March 16, 2021

To the HCS Class of 2021,

It was 365 days ago today that 43,000 students in Henry County Schools thought they were starting spring break early with a two-week hiatus from school and trying out this “thing” called remote learning. I bet for a lot of students, maybe even you, the excitement of an extra two weeks out of school quickly turned into the tough reality of never walking back into the school building for the rest of the 2019-20 school year. I am even guessing that at the end of last year you were actually thankful that it was not YOUR senior year. A lot of attention was given to the class of 2020 and the abrupt conclusion to their senior activities, but as we turned the calendar pages from June to July and then to August 2020 – Your Senior Year – I realize that the start for the Class of 2021 didn’t feel as grand as a senior year should. I am sure you felt that way, too. I know this year looks much different than you or even I imagined it, and for that I just want to say I’m so sorry.

I wanted to write this letter to you today because I have thought about the Class of 2021 – and Your Year – every single day since the delayed start to this, your final year in Henry County Schools. And I have continued to think about you through every adjustment to this extraordinary school year: the virtual start on August 17th, the on-campus option start on September 28th, the second semester virtual start on January 11th, the second semester on-campus option start on February 8th, and then the second semester Phase 4 start on March 8th. All of the adjustments that accompanied the dynamic nature of the pandemic simultaneously proves the point that the momentum of your senior year may still be really hard to find.

But as I sit here today grasping for adequate words to acknowledge what I see in the rearview mirror and only trying to imagine what you see in yours, I am reminded there is a reason that the rearview mirror is smaller than the windshield. It’s meant to remind us of the past, but the real view, the important view, is looking forward. You have persevered this year through all the ups and downs, and you’ve still accomplished incredible things through academics, athletics, art and music, and serving the community. What you have really proven is that through tough times, uncertain times, and unsettled times, you are leaders; you are community influencers; and you are the reason for hope in our future. You, the senior Class of 2021, may have had a slow and bumpy start to your senior year, but you are already embracing who you are called to be in this world.

You have roughly 6 more weeks of school until your graduation day, and you shouldn’t use the rearview mirror but to briefly glance at where you’ve been while keeping your eyes forward as you drive steadily into a bright and awaiting future. You have resilience, agility, and optimism. And with your eyes focused forward, you have a lifetime ahead of you of which I know your current experiences have prepared you for the chapters in your life that await. I am proud of you, your teachers and administrators are proud of you, and you should be proud of yourself. You are nearing the final stretch, Class of 2021. Keep looking out the windshield, finish strong, and know I am rooting for you every one of these days.

Sincerely,

Mary Elizabeth Davis