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ELK RAPIDS HIGH SCHOOL



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WHERE EXCELLENCE IS A TRADITION!

Dear ERHS & Sunrise Academy Classes of 2020:

There are so many special events that encompass senior year as an Elk and so many things that we were looking forward to experiencing with you. We had an entire spring ahead of us. We had classes, field trips, sports, spring musical, awards ceremonies, and other special celebrations and events that were planned. Closure, culminating recognitions, and proper last goodbyes are what was supposed to happen. These are the things that you have been working toward for the last 13 years as an Elk and what we have been working with you on for the last four years.

Suddenly, without warning, and due to circumstances out of everyone's control, the traditional transition from high school senior to the next exciting chapter of your life has been taken from you and replaced with an alternate and unique reality. The end of your senior year, and all the wonderful celebrations, are now in limbo. As the father of a senior last year, I can imagine what this may feel like for the adults in your life, and we won't pretend to know what this must feel like for you. Now without a proper ending to your senior year how will we adapt? You have every right to experience feelings of anger, frustration, and grief regarding what you've lost. This was not how it was supposed to end.

We are writing this letter to share our grief, our frustration, as well as our pride in you. We will be working to address these feelings with you and to share new ideas and seek input from you. First and foremost, most of you have already earned your diploma and those that haven't quite hit the mark yet will get the opportunity to earn it over the next several weeks. Every senior will have the opportunity to graduate, receive their diploma, and be honored and recognized, but what exactly that looks like is yet to be determined. This pandemic will not stand in the way of receiving the diploma that you worked so hard to earn, however the format, date, style, and venue of commencement will be in part shaped by the duration of this health crisis and the local, state, and federal directives we must follow. In an ideal world, having commencement like we have always had it at New Hope Church would be what we all want, however having graduation ceremonies in a virtual format could be our reality this year. We expect to make this important decision by the first week of May and will keep everyone posted. Currently we are also working on plans to

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address other important events such as Senior Awards Night, and Senior Luncheon, etc. Sadly, I regret to inform you that we are canceling Prom which was scheduled for May 16th. What may be possible and realistic relative to having Prom at a later date and time is yet unknown. Even if it is not happy news, you can trust that I will not lie to you and I will not make any promises that I can't keep. We cannot fix it all, but we will try to fix as much as we can! There are things you have worked for that most likely will not happen in the format that was planned. However, we are making a commitment to fight as hard as we can to recognize and honor you for all of your great accomplishments individually and collectively as the Class of 2020. We will need your help and creativity; we will need your maturity, patience, flexibility, and understanding; and together we can find meaningful ways to provide recognition and closure. There are many events and milestones that may look different, feel different, or occur in a different way or time, but rest assured, we will still celebrate.

Your teachers, counselors, principals, secretaries, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, custodians, and paraprofessionals care about you and miss you greatly! They have been working together for the past four weeks to change how we deliver education and related services to you and all students in the Elk Herd. They are doing this so that they can continue delivering learning experiences to help you prepare for success in the next chapter of your life. They are working to address content, tests, and grades. They are designing solutions to problems none of us imagined we would be facing in order to help you prepare for your next steps. They are working hard to provide you with quality instruction and curriculum...something they've always done. Over the next few weeks, keep in contact with your teachers, counselors, and principals and look for some communication to come regarding a soon to be launched school wide ERHS Google Classroom where students and teachers can communicate, recognize and honor each other, and post pictures, videos, and other meaningful information.

Seniors, it is important for you to know that the grade that was recorded for you in PowerSchool for each course as of March 11th is considered to be the grade you have earned for the *entire* semester. If a grade is passing (60%+) you have earned full credit (.50) for this semester course. So between March 11th and the last day for seniors on May 20th, your grades can NOT go down. However, they can go up! For those of you that were not passing a course as of March 11th, or would like to improve your grade, you can redo, retake, and resubmit homework, quizzes, tests, and projects that were assigned prior to school closure. We want every senior to graduate, so please communicate directly, with your teachers regarding these details, and don't hesitate to reach out to me or Ms. Bueby regarding your credit status. Any seniors that were at risk of losing credit due to excessive absences and tardiness are receiving amnesty in making up seat time. Seniors with attendance appeals only need to address the academic obligations necessary to earn a passing grade and credit.

We are very proud of the Class of 2020. You have given so much to the school, your community, your peers, and your teachers....you are the Heart of the Herd! Now you have given up the treasured activities and celebrations of your senior year in order to ensure the safety of your families, friends, teachers, and community at large. This sacrifice is not something you wanted to make, but you have made it stoically and without complaint. The way that you carry yourself and bear this burden not only defines you as a class, but it defines you as a generation. In the years to come you will reflect upon this time and the lessons you learned and apply those to the rest of your life....the lessons of the heart that you are learning during these times are even more important than the academic lessons that you've received. You may just look back on these times fondly and with a sense of gratitude. You are a class and a generation that is incredibly bright, capable, and uniquely poised for greatness. Beyond your cognitive abilities, it will likely be your emotional intelligence that makes the biggest difference in this world and the generations that come hereafter. We are honored to have shared in a short leg of your journey.

It will be normal to feel some sadness and frustration yet in the days to come, however continue striving to be positive and embrace a growth mindset. As the reality and gravity of our situation has changed over the course of the last few weeks, we now realize that things are different--so we must think differently. Use this unique time to enjoy a slower and in some cases a simpler life. Get outside to enjoy nature, start a garden, read a book, get online to learn, play, and connect with family and friends, watch TV and movies, learn new skills, and embrace old hobbies. Most importantly, remember that we are living through a significant historic event, let's honor those that came before us and endured the Spanish Flu, the Great Depression, and the World Wars by being courageous, kind, and helping others just as they did.

The students of Elk Rapids High School understand and embrace the *Tradition of Excellence* for which we are known. We have complete confidence in the excellence of your skills and abilities which will be necessary in assisting us to creatively plan and implement important upcoming events. Please look for more information from me and your teachers and advisers over the next few weeks as we all continue to learn, think, prepare, and achieve. Do not hesitate to reach out to me, Mr. Johnson, or your counselors, and teachers regarding ideas or questions. Please take care of yourself and those around you.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Travis, Principal
Elk Rapids High School &
Sunrise Academy