



## **Peekskill City School District**

*Our mission is to educate and empower all students to strive for excellence as life-long learners who embrace diversity and are contributing members of a global society.*

**Dr. David Mauricio**  
Superintendent of Schools

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June 3, 2020

Dear Peekskill Families,

The Peekskill City School District has become aware of misinformation circulating on social media regarding graduation celebrations planned for the Class of 2020. I would like to take this opportunity to provide more insight as to what our 2020 graduation celebrations will look like, as well share with you the voices that were heard when planning these events. Our graduation celebration will include in-person and virtual opportunities for the District and families to recognize our seniors.

The Peekskill City School District understands that a student's graduation from high school is a monumental moment for seniors and their families. Once we knew that we could not hold a traditional graduation at the Paramount, we considered alternative options that would comply with the Governor's executive orders. In early May, administrators from the central office and Peekskill High School researched multiple potential graduation locations. We then examined several options and visited numerous sites (*JV Mall, FDR Park, Croton Point Park, Mercy College in Yorktown, PNW BOCES, Cortlandt Town Center and others*) that could accommodate a possible "car graduation".

Throughout our planning, our high school administration worked closely with the members of the PHS Student Council, the Senior Class President, the 2020 Class Valedictorian and Salutatorian, and the Senior Class Advisors to assess their interests and hear their various ideas for graduation. Based on the feedback received from these meetings, a survey was then created by the Senior Class Advisors to survey our graduates seeking their input on two proposals:

1. *A car graduation outside of the City of Peekskill to accommodate our Class of 2020*
2. *A drive through graduation celebration on the grounds of Peekskill High School for students and their families*

The class advisors reported that 86 students responded in favor of hosting the drive through ceremony on school grounds. Only 8 students selected the off-campus car graduation. Our students repeatedly expressed that they wanted to remain in Peekskill for this special occasion. Additionally, we also took into consideration that some families might struggle with getting to another location by car. Therefore, we adapted our plans based on our student's input and in the best interest of accommodating all Peekskill families.

Throughout this planning process, Peekskill leadership strived to hear our students' voices and honor their opinions, as these celebrations are for them. While we are forced to make difficult decisions, our current national climate is a clear indication that it is important that adults and people in positions of authority listen to and act upon the input of our students. I know that no matter what decision we

make, we will not be able to satisfy everyone. I hope that you can see that we have worked tirelessly planning multi-day graduation events and special tokens of recognition for our class of 2020. Please see below for additional details for events and mementos to celebrate the PHS Class of 2020:

Each member of the Class of 2020 will receive the following items to commemorate their senior year:

- *Lawn Signs*
- *T-Shirts*
- *Water bottles*
- *Pens*
- *Car magnet*
- *Individual Graduation Photos*

While we have already hosted school ground decorating events, and hung banners in our District and in the City of Peekskill, we still have additional upcoming events scheduled to honor our students:

- **Thursday, June 4-** lawn sign and t-shirt distribution to our seniors
- **Thursday, June 25-** Senior Pizza Day (drive-up pizza giveaway)
- **Friday, June 26-** Senior Community Parade\*

\*Parents / guardians will drive their seniors from Woodside Elementary to the High School in a parade where staff and the community will line the streets to recognize them (more details to follow).

- **Friday, June 26th-** Virtual Senior Award Ceremony

Graduation weekend events:

- **On Saturday, June 27**, there will be a Graduation Celebration at Peekskill High School campus. The high school grounds will be transformed into an outdoor celebration area where students and families can arrive at their assigned times in their cap and gown. Our graduates will be greeted by administrators and Board members and will receive their diploma jackets at this time. After being awarded their diploma jackets, students and their immediate family members will be ushered to one of three decorated stages for pictures. There will be music played to add to the pomp and circumstance of the occasion. The event will also feature large screens broadcasting a special senior class tribute video. The graduation celebration will be professionally photographed and filmed.
- **On Sunday, June 28**, a virtual graduation video will be broadcasted live on our District's website for the entire family to enjoy. This video will include the speeches given at our traditional graduation celebration.

You can hear more details about our graduation plans in the replay of our PHS Senior Town Hall, which was aired on our district website on June 1. Watch here: <https://bit.ly/3dsZtBh>

Please know that we at Peekskill City School understand the significance of making this event special for the Class of 2020. We hope that the students and family members recognize the vast energy and commitment that we have employed to provide a series of events for our Class of 2020 graduates. I want to say thank you to our administrators, staff and student leaders for all of their diligence and hard work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Ma" followed by a horizontal line.

Dr. David Mauricio  
Superintendent of Schools