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Rev. Steve Lopez
President, Board of Education

Dr. Edwin M. Quezada
Superintendent of Schools

May 29, 2020

RE: 2020 Virtual Commencement Exercises

Dear Members of the Class of 2020 and Families,

The year 2020 will forever be known for changing the world, our community, how we educate young people as well as each of our personal lives due to the COVID-19 health crisis. The occurrences over the past several months never could have been predicted. Yet, it has taught us how resourceful, resilient and determined we can and must be.

The Class of 2020 continues to persevere and is in the final steps of completing all of the requirements to earn their high school diploma. These magnificent young people earned \$124 million in scholarships and they plan to attend some of the most prestigious colleges and universities in the fall. Our high school learning community is working tirelessly to celebrate this extremely important rite of passage for our students and families despite the restrictions due to COVID-19. Please know that every decision made had input from our high school students, administrators, teachers and community members.

Based on the State requirements for social distancing and limiting gatherings, we were not able to celebrate our eight high school graduations in the traditional manner. The Class of 2020's virtual commencement exercises and senior activities were not something we ever expected. However, we are planning to honor the years of hard work by our students while we remain apart to protect lives.

In light of this, we have planned many school-based events to mirror our customary senior celebrations that culminate the week of June 22 with our virtual commencement exercises. High schools hosted virtual athletic awards ceremonies, honor society inductions and senior awards celebrations. The week of June 15 is *Let's Celebrate the Class of 2020 Senior Week!* Designed by representative of the Unified Yonkers Student Leadership Council, every day has a theme for our graduates to post on social media. In addition, every day high schools are hosting with grand fanfare Mementos Pick-Up while carefully maintaining social distancing. Graduates will receive their caps, gowns, tassels and sashes, diploma covers, awards and keepsakes. The City of Yonkers is honoring our graduates lighting the City Hall Clock Tower from June 15 to 24 with the colors of a different high school each night.

Our virtual commencement exercises will follow the enclosed schedule and will be available on the District's television station WDMC-TV and Facebook as well as on the high schools' websites and their Class of 2020 Instagram IG-TV. The ceremonies will honor all of our traditions, speeches and turning the tassel to exclaim their success. Most important, each graduate's name will be read as their picture and honors are individually displayed on screen.

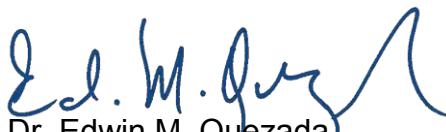
RE: 2020 Virtual Commencement Exercises continued

Monday, June 22		Tuesday, June 23		Wednesday, June 24	
1:00 PM	Yonkers Montessori Academy	1:00 PM	Palisade Preparatory School	1:00 PM	Roosevelt High School Early College Studies
3:00 PM	Saunders Trades & Technical High School	3:00 PM	Riverside High School	3:00 PM	Gorton High School
5:00 PM	Yonkers Middle High School	5:00 PM	Lincoln High School		

While we understand the desire for an in-person ceremony, through June it would not allowable under the requirements from the state. Education is in the last phase of the state's reopening plan. Although July celebrations have been suggested, there is no guarantee it can occur and social distancing would most likely still be necessary.

Let me conclude by thanking all of the Yonkers Public Schools administrators, staff, students, parents and community leaders for their contributions honoring the Class of 2020. This milestone will be different from the past, yet is clearly is a beacon to a bright future for our well deserving students. Thank you to everyone for your patience and support throughout the 2019-2020 school year. Stay well, be safe, and remember we are #YonkersStrong.

Sincerely,


Dr. Edwin M. Quezada
Superintendent of Schools


Rev. Steve Lopez
President

C: Judith Ramos Meier, Vice President and Members of the Board of Education