

WHITNALL SCHOOL DISTRICT



May 8, 2020

Dear Whitnall Seniors:

On March 25, I wrote an email to you sharing that I was thinking of you the most during this time of uncertainty. There has not been a day that has gone by since then in which I haven't thought about you, our Class of 2020. The end to your time at Whitnall is not what any of us envisioned. And yet, there is much to recognize and celebrate.

With regulations changing daily, it is challenging to plan events for a month from now (or even for a week from now). But we must move forward with plans for the end-of-year celebrations for our seniors. We are doing our best to develop plans that adhere to the current guidelines, but also allow for flexibility. While Mr. Tollefsen will be sharing additional celebrations planned for seniors in a separate letter, I wanted to communicate our plans for graduation. Although we know that an in-person ceremony is everybody's preference, we must move forward with the information we have at this time. We cannot risk waiting until it's too late to celebrate our seniors. Our decisions have been made with the following considerations:

- Current and anticipated directives and guidelines regarding stay-at-home orders, social distancing requirements, school buildings and grounds closures, and restrictions on large gatherings
- Collaboration with local public safety and health officials
- Dates when seniors may transition to military, work, or post-secondary education

We are planning for two major celebrations to acknowledge your graduation from Whitnall. On **Sunday, June 14**, starting at 1 PM, we will hold our Senior SUCCESSION. Dressed in caps and gowns, seniors will ride in the car (one car per household) and follow a route through the parking lot of the elementary school they attended, the middle school parking lot, and then the high school parking lot. We are inviting all K-12 teachers to be in their school's parking lot to wave and congratulate seniors. At the end of the high school route, seniors will be greeted by the high school administration and school board. We will read names and provide diploma covers, just like during a traditional graduation ceremony. Diplomas will be mailed at a later date. There will be a stage and backdrop available. You will be able to exit your vehicle, walk across a stage, and have someone in your vehicle take a photo, if you wish. As always, the district will take and share photos of the event. The second event will be a virtual graduation ceremony on **Saturday, July 25 at 6 PM**. With this ceremony, we will try to replicate as many components of an in-person graduation ceremony as possible (student speeches, honors, and student recognition). The ceremony will be streamed for families and the public to view.

We will continue to monitor any changes to regulations related to COVID-19. In the event that significant changes are made and restrictions are lifted, we will be open to revising the July 25 event.

We felt it was important to secure dates at this time, so that plans can be made and you can save the dates. We will continue to communicate with you, as we move forward with planning and finalizing details for both events.

I am so proud of your resolve, problem-solving, resiliency, gratitude, and empathy for others in the face of so many disappointments and challenges. I look forward to celebrating each of you, not only for your graduation from high school, but also for your strength of character.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa L. Olson".

Lisa L. Olson, Ph.D.
Superintendent