



We Build Futures!

Neshaminy School District

Neshaminy High School • 2001 Old Lincoln Highway • Langhorne, PA 19047

Good Morning Neshaminy,

Initially, I thought my first email to the community on July 1 would be an introduction and a vision for the Neshaminy Educational Community. Then it became clear that the first email would need to be about COVID-19 and the start of school in the Fall; then it was very clear such an email would need to be about a vision and actionable path forward for our Neshaminy Community addressing the reason behind the civil unrest in the Nation. While all the aforementioned topics remain extremely important, it is now clear my first email will be prior to July 1 and about the Graduation of the Class of 2020.

So here it is.

To Seniors in the NHS Class of 2020, we hurt for you. Your parents hurt for you. Your teachers and principals hurt for you. We can only try to understand your disappointment at the end of your final year at Neshaminy. We are committed to giving you the opportunity to have a traditional graduation. Unfortunately, it is not clear when we will be able to have such an event. However, what is clear is that it will not be on Saturday, June 27 as all had hoped. Any graduation date other than the original date of June 10 or June 27, ultimately leaves some unable to attend. And sadly, we adults trying to help get you the graduation you deserve, have only worsened the disappointment and communicated poorly.

How did we get here?

In March, we moved Graduation to as late in June as possible (Saturday, June 27), in the hope that the extra two weeks would potentially change the circumstances under which we were permitted to hold a traditional Neshaminy Commencement at Harry E. Franks stadium as we have for nearly three-quarters of a century. We also heard an overwhelming desire to hold an in-person ceremony at some point instead of a virtual/altered ceremony. So we planned Saturday, August 1 or Saturday, September 5 of Labor Day Weekend as backup dates for an in-person ceremony. Given the available information at the time, it seemed like a viable plan. The thinking being, "If the Class of 2020 wants to have a traditional graduation, we will have one for them if we have to wait until the Fall."

As May came to an end, it was clear a June 27 traditional Graduation Ceremony was not going to be possible. The plan was to announce on Friday, June 5 the postponement until Saturday, August 1. Along with the postponement announcement was to be a communication of a series of June events for Seniors and families to help celebrate as best as possible. The list included Cap & Gown Pick-up, Family Photo opportunities in the Stadium, the distribution of yearbooks and diplomas coordinated with a release of "Tribute to the Class of 2020" Graduation video.

Prior to the District's June 5 postponement announcement, there was a new effort and hope that a June 27 Graduation Ceremony might be possible after all. As those efforts continued through late last week, the postponement announcement of the June 27 ceremony was repeatedly postponed itself. An unintended result was delayed communication and an unclear rationale for the series of June events intended to help ease the disappointment of the June 27 postponement.

That said, we cannot go back and undo things. We can't solve the problem on Social Media. We only can decide where to go from here given the fluidity of our societal conditions at the moment.

So what is the plan?

The Class of 2020 Commencement Ceremony is postponed until Saturday, August 1. Prior to that date, we hope to have sufficient information from the Commonwealth to determine if a full Neshaminy Graduation is possible. If not, we will divide the ceremony into acceptable sizes on August 1 for multiple commencement events.

It is also our hope that conditions are such in August that we can provide the Class of 2020 the potential to gather for some type of Senior Picnic and/or Yearbook Signing Party on the front lawn of NHS.

What's planned in the meantime?

Again, most of the June Plan upon postponement has been ready for some time now, unfortunately, we failed to get it out. The possibility of Bucks County being Green for the last few days of June potentially adds some new opportunities to the existing plan as we wait for the August 1 date.

Hopefully, seniors have picked up Caps & Gowns and have taken the opportunity to visit the Graduation Stage at the stadium for family pictures. If not, there is still plenty of time.

On Saturday, June 27, Seniors will again come to NHS to pick up their Diplomas during the day (and maybe Yearbooks but they haven't shipped yet...sigh). More details coming next Saturday. Again, it is rumored that Bucks County will be "Green" on June 27. This new information, if true, opens up more possibilities on June 27 short of the actual ceremony. But our seniors number nearly 700...

At 6 PM on June 27, Neshaminy will release the "Tribute to the Class of 2020" Graduation Ceremony on the Internet and the NNTV for family watch parties. The Tribute including graduation speeches, the confirmation of diplomas by Mr. Pirritano, School Board President, the traditional roll call of graduates by Mrs. Sammartino and Mr. Deal and more.

The video presentation will be continuously available on the internet throughout the summer.

While none of the above is close to ideal, the postponement of the June 27 Ceremony permits us to get to the details of the next plan with the continued hope of getting our seniors together in some way to celebrate. Most importantly, what can Saturday June 27 look like if Bucks is Green? People are working on it as I type this letter. Beyond simply picking up a diploma on June 27, we still need a few more days to clarify what "Green" means for that day. The Commonwealth appears to make decisions weekly with announcements on Fridays, so we will provide Seniors and their families more details next Saturday about Diploma Pick-up on June 27. (Yes, we are doing it again....in the attempt to have an even better plan for our Seniors, we lack details at the moment...)

The past three months have been difficult on so many levels for so many people. I worry that the discussion above continues to set up the potential for more disappointment as some of it is "what might happen if..." topics. That being said, I've always found it best to discuss the uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity of things openly and honestly.

I hope we can continue to work together to ensure the NHS Class of 2020 has some meaningful moments to smile in the midst of it all.

With Neshaminy Pride,

On behalf of Mr. Staub, Mr. Magdelinkas, Mr. Mueller, Mrs. Pennington, Mr. Meehan and Mr. Pirritano,

Rob

Rob McGee, Ph.D.
Director of Secondary Education
Neshaminy School District
rmcgee@neshaminy.org
215-809-6512