

May 17, 2021

This Friday, the Class of 2021 will celebrate their milestone of graduation. We are very thankful for the flexibility afforded to us by the Lazy E Arena as the weather this week does not look favorable. Over the past fifteen months the word flexible has taken on a much greater meaning than ever anticipated. Think for a moment about the high school experience of this year's senior class.

As freshmen, they witnessed a two week teacher walkout where classes were cancelled. Classes for their sophomore year started after Labor Day due to construction delays on a school they would never attend. During their junior year, they left for Spring Break and would not return due to a world wide pandemic of proportions not seen for over one hundred years. Their senior year was riddled with COVID tests, quarantines, masks, social distancing, seating charts for every occasion, distance learning and ice storms. Despite all of this, they persevered to learn and find the best possible options to have a senior year experience. I found a definition of resilience as the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness. While the class of 2021 is undoubtedly flexible, I will always consider them the most resilient group of young people I've encountered.

Thankfully, we appear to be in a much better spot with regard to COVID infection numbers. Mask mandates around the state are expiring, anyone wanting the vaccine has now received both doses and we are gradually seeing visible signs of a return to normal. It is hard to imagine what the last fifteen months have brought us. I cannot thank our staff and community enough for their understanding and flexibility over these past few months. There have been times where we have all felt like MacGyver building a plane while it was flying at 40,000 feet. Despite the challenges, we remained open when many districts were completely distance learning or were on a split schedule where students attended two days per week.

We have much planned for the summer. For those students who are behind, we have a very robust offering of summer school during the month of June. This learning opportunity is open for any Kindergarten through 6th grade student residing in our district. Students who utilized a different learning platform such as virtual learning or homeschooling are also welcome. From a construction perspective, Guthrie Upper Elementary School will receive a complete overhaul of the 32 year old heating and air conditioning system and the Junior High Gymnasium will receive air conditioning for the first time.

When I reflect on the past 15 months, I hope some things don't go away. The idea that learning in common education could be virtual provides us a much greater ability to deliver instruction and it forced us to adapt. Possibly the greatest change I hope stays with us is the notion that we shouldn't take things for granted. I think about the families that couldn't visit their loved ones in nursing homes and the people who were afraid to leave their homes because they had a condition that would increase the severity of COVID. I also think about the healthcare workers who were stretched to the breaking point as they cared for the sick. Let us never take some of these things for granted again.

To the Class of 2021, you have my respect for your perseverance and resilience and toughness. I'll see you Friday night at the Lazy E!