



April 02, 2020

Dear MBHS Seniors and Parents,

I'm sorry that your senior year is ending this way. Just two and a half weeks ago, many of you were preparing for musicals, participating in athletic events, and planning for a fun and eventful finale to your high school career. Then, in an instant, all of it came to a sudden halt. If you have felt down or shed tears or even found yourself in a bit of despair, you have every right to feel that way. You have experienced what no other senior class ever has. First and foremost, I would like you to know that I hurt for you and with you.

Many of your parents have commented on your behalf that we don't need to stop caring for you, our seniors, during this unparalleled time. They've told us we should consider developing alternatives to prom, graduation, and other events that you're supposed to remember your whole lives. We agree. We don't need to just look at you, the class of 2020, and tell you that you're done. Writing that on a piece of paper makes my heart sad.

As you may have read, State Superintendent Dr. Eric Mackey announced that seniors in Alabama have met graduation requirements if they are in good standing at the end of the third 9-week grading period. We completely respect and will honor that decision. But as I've said, it is not our intention to give up on our seniors so soon. In conversations with many of your teachers, one phrase continues to be said about you: This is a special group of students, and we hate for them to leave this way.

So I'm asking that you continue your learning with Mountain Brook High School until the school year ends on May 21. While so much has been beyond our control in this situation, we are able and eager to teach you. Grades are secondary. This decision is about helping you thrive together, remain engaged as a class, and prepare you for what's ahead. You have received a letter concerning our grading practices through the end of the school year. There will be no final exams and your grade as of the third 9 weeks will be your baseline grade. If you have an 85 in a

class, your grade will not go below the 85, but you will have the opportunity to improve your grade. Yes, class will look a lot different in an online format, but you have nothing to lose and much to gain.

Many of you will be enrolling in a university this August where you will be involved in online classes. In fact, there's a possibility that you will start your college experience participating in online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. That's why this is such an excellent opportunity to experience online learning with a teacher that you know and in a structure that prevents your grade from dropping.

All grades and learning aside, we are at an unprecedented time in history. You've been asked to stay at home and distance yourselves from others during a season in which you would typically spend most of your time away from home and with your friends, celebrating the years that have gone by. We believe the social aspect of the eLearning format can help you during these two months. While it's not the same as sitting around with your best friends on a Friday night, it is a structured time that gives you something to focus on alongside your classmates. To be really frank, I think it would be good for you to participate in these activities.

As a school system, we believe it's our obligation to offer learning opportunities for you through the end of the school year. If you choose not to participate, we will not hold it against you, or think less of you. But please know we would like the chance to cross the academic finish line together. If you don't plan to participate in these learning activities, they will be available to you at any time throughout the spring. If you choose to opt out of the coursework, your teacher will contact you and your parents to confirm your decision to not participate.

As soon as we get this online platform in place, the administration, faculty, and community as a whole will consider how to best celebrate your senior year. Many options are being considered for graduation and other festivities. Again, I'm so terribly sorry for how this year is ending for you. But please know we desire to do all that we can to salvage these last two months and help you extend your learning and relationships as a Mountain Brook Spartan senior.

With love and respect,

Dicky Barlow  
Superintendent  
Mountain Brook Schools