

Oneonta City School District

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Tom Brindley
Superintendent

May 27th, 2020

Dear Oneonta City School District Students, Parents, Faculty, Staff, and Community,

Hoping that you and your families continue to be well. Not entirely sure where to begin a letter to you all that attempts to wrap up this school year. **Thank You** seems to be the most appropriate start. This has proven to be an interesting year for all of us as together we faced, and continue to face, many challenges. Through it all, and in the true fashion of this community, these challenges were all met in a truly amazing way as everyone simply did the very best they could for our community.

As you are well aware, there was nothing easy about how our students had to learn and participate in their education from mid-March on. There was nothing easy about how to best serve our students and there was nothing easy about families trying to juggle it all. A simple **Thank You** hardly seems enough to truly capture the contributions that you have all made during this period of home learning. At these developmental levels, being home and trying to sort through all of this could not be and was not ideal by a long shot. However, through a collective effort this community did what it could for our students.

End of the Year Important Dates:

[Follow this link for a one-page guide/resource wherein important dates and times are listed by building that are pertinent to the remainder of this school year.](#)

However, one important date to share with you all now is that the last day of “new” instruction will take place on Monday, June 15th and the last day of school will be Wednesday, June 17th. Graduation for the Class of 2020 continues to be a moving target for us. However, Governor Cuomo’s most recent Executive Order contained the below language, which is relevant for us:

“Executive Order 202.28, which extended the provisions of Executive Orders 202.3, 202.4, 202.5, 202.6, 202.7, 202.8, 202.10, 202.11, 202.13, and 202.14 which each closed or otherwise restricted public or private businesses or places of public accommodation, and which required postponement or cancellation of all non-essential gatherings of individuals of any size for any reason (e.g. parties, celebrations, games, meetings or other social events), which together constitute New York On PAUSE, is hereby continued until 11:59 p.m. on May 28, 2020, unless later amended or extended by a future Executive Order.”

We will continue to monitor this reality and await the Governor’s May 29th order. We have gone to great lengths to explore ways to recognize and honor students in a manner that prioritizes the health and safety of participants and complies with state and local social distancing orders and guidelines. Understanding the milestone that a high school graduation ceremony represents in the lives of our students and families, we will await New York State’s guidance on whether, or not, they will follow

New Jersey and allow outdoor ceremonies for schools taking place after July 6th. Elementary and Middle School moving up days are special events as well. As such, the district will recognize these milestones via ZOOM or through a recorded event.

School Budget Vote:

As you may be aware, the State has mandated that due to COVID-19, school budget votes and Board member elections will take place via absentee ballots on June 9th, 2020. The time constraints placed on school districts to put this in place have proven to be difficult and I want to share that: If you are a registered voter and have participated in an Oneonta City School District budget vote at some point over the last four (4) years, an absentee ballot should have been mailed to you. If you fall into this category and do not receive an absentee ballot by June 1st, please notify Mrs. Regina Ranieri McGuinness at the district office by dialing 607-433-8200 x-1300 or via email at: rmcguinness@oneontacsd.org to request your postage paid balloting materials.

If you are a registered voter but have not participated in a school budget vote at some point over the last four (4) years and wish to do so, please notify Mrs. Regina Ranieri McGuinness at the district office by dialing 607-433-8200 x-1300 or via email at: rmcguinness@oneontacsd.org to request your postage paid balloting materials.

Please visit our website: www.oneontacsd.org. Located in the orange banner at the top of the screen, you will find a host of budget, budget voting, and Board of Education member election information by clicking the "click here" link. As per New York State, your completed ballots must be received by our school district no later than 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday June 9th. If you feel as though your mailed absentee ballot will not reach us by June 9th, please consider dropping it in the wooden mailbox outside of the District offices near the Center Street playground and gymnasium. This box will be available between 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Monday - Friday. On June 9th, the box will be available until 5:00 p.m. **Thank you** for your continued support as we strive to lead this region in the opportunities that are provided to our students.

2020-2021 School Year:

As we look forward, we do not actually know the status of the start to the 2020-2021 school year. The Governor has indicated that he will make this decision sometime in June. As such, New York State has advised that they will be providing guidance once this decision is made. We will continue to plan for a safety-minded reopening of our schools and will pass all of that information along as we put a comprehensive plan together.

Transportation Update:

Lastly, I do want to share that when we do reopen, we will no longer be utilizing the current transportation company and will be utilizing the transportation services of Durham School Services, as they have been selected to transport our students to school safely, on time, and ready to learn. Durham is ready, willing, and able to take over all of our transportation needs beginning in July.

Everything that a school district does should enhance the educational product offered to their students. We are looking forward to Durham doing just that and I am looking forward to this change. A good transportation experience is critical to the start of an enjoyable and productive school day. We are confident that Durham can and will provide our students with the kind of start to their day that is conducive to learning.

Oneonta is unique in that this school district owns its buses and our bus terminal. Finding a transportation company that will respect and maintain these district assets as we would was important. It is apparent that Durham will do this as well. On top of it all, keeping our students safe is critical and Durham's safety-minded approach is evident as they incorporate a host of technology to monitor and improve bus safety. For example, with Durham a student or family member can simply look at their cell phone to see where their bus is and when best to go outside to meet the bus instead of waiting in the elements wondering when the bus will be arriving.

Durham is the selected transportation partner of choice for more than 340+ school districts. I am pleased to announce that we are one of them as well.

More updates to the above-mentioned items will follow as more information becomes available. For now, Thank You and stay well. As always, please call me if I can help in some way: Office - 607-433-8200 x1301; Cell - 607-267-6441, or email: tbrindley@oneontacsd.org. Please, if you are reading this and among this community's essential workers/first responders - Thank You for all that you have done and continue to do during this pandemic to keep us safe and healthy.

Sincerely...Tom Brindley