

Dear parents and guardians:

I am reaching out today to share what I know will be disappointing news for many of you.

Elk Island Public Schools has made the difficult decision to cancel graduation ceremonies, banquets and school-based celebrations for the 2019-20 school year. While we know these events mark a significant achievement in the lives of our students and their families, it seems highly unlikely the restrictions on large gatherings put in place to preserve the health and safety of all Albertans will be lifted anytime soon.

It seems unfair those graduating this year won't have the opportunity to come together with their school community to honour the many years of hard work they've invested in their education. Graduation is a rite of passage for our students and as a Division, we share in your sadness at having to forego the events tied to this significant accomplishment. The COVID-19 situation remains uncertain, however, and it's imperative we adhere to requirements put in place by the local and national health authorities to prevent an acceleration or recurrence of the pandemic.

As disheartening as this news is, it's still important to acknowledge the effort, perseverance and passion demonstrated by the class of 2020 this spring. Despite untried circumstances and upheaval in their final academic year, these young people continue to work hard and stay focused on preparing for what's ahead. While they won't cross the stage and be recognized like those before them, a lack of ceremony in no way dims what I know will be a very bright future. The solid education they've received from kindergarten to Grade 12 will serve them well in the years to come.

Schools will reach out in the coming weeks to connect with graduates, and the Division will ensure those same students receive a formal acknowledgement of graduation before the end of June.

We thank you for your kind understanding during these difficult times and wish you and your loved ones good health and safe havens for the duration.

Respectfully,

Mark Liguori
Superintendent, Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS)