



WEST OTTAWA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ADMINISTRATION OFFICES

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June 1, 2020

Dear West Ottawa Families:

As we prepare for the final day of school on Friday, I wanted to take a moment to once again thank our students, families, teachers, staff, volunteers and community partners for their continued commitment to West Ottawa Public Schools. Though I may say it often, it is undeniably true: we simply could not drive student success without your critical support.

When the school year began last August, no one could have imagined the challenges we would face later in the year. Not only have we faced them, but through the hard work and dedication of our entire school community, we have become stronger. I am eternally grateful for how we have handled this difficult time together and am confident that we will be able to successfully meet the many challenges that still lie ahead.

Over the past several weeks, we have celebrated our Class of 2020 for reaching one of the most important milestones in their lives. It's important to note that among those graduating this year are West Ottawa Public Schools' first cohort of Spanish Immersion students—17 seniors who began at the program's inception at Lakeshore Elementary School 13 years ago. This group helped pioneer the program, paving the way for future students to follow in their footsteps. For those unfamiliar with Spanish Immersion, it is a program in which two languages are used for instruction in a variety of subjects, including math and science. Please join me in congratulating this group of students and all of our graduates.

While this Friday marks the official last day of school, the work for the team at West Ottawa Public Schools continues as we prepare for the 2020-21 school year and continue to plan to host a formal graduation ceremony for the Class of 2020—more details to come shortly. We are reviewing all potential options for the coming school year, as we await further guidance from Governor Whitmer and the state, and are committed to keeping you engaged throughout this process. As we await further guidance, I would encourage you to seek out learning opportunities for your children during the summer months. Whether it's reading together or using credible learning resources available on the internet, it is critical that our students remain active so that they are ready to hit the ground running when school is back in session.

On the subject of the 2020-21 school year, I know that many of you are eager for news regarding our athletic program. Having served as an athletic director for more than a decade, I truly understand the value of high school sports for our students and the urgency for information on the fall season. We are working closely with the state and the appropriate high school sports athletic associations to determine

Preparing Students to be College, Career and Life Ready!

how best to proceed safely on this matter and will keep our families apprised of updates moving forward. Like you, we are hopeful that our children are back on the playing fields—and in their classrooms—as soon as possible.

Since the start of the pandemic, I have been impressed by how our community has risen to meet the challenges before us. When schools first closed, volunteers stepped up to ensure our children and families received essential food supplies. As of May 29, West Ottawa Public Schools has provided 242,798 meals to our families. This would not have been possible without the support of our community.

The food delivery program during the COVID-19 school closure will continue through June 30. Starting July 1 and running through August 28, the summer Meet Up and Eat Up food distribution program will be available for children 18 and under, as well as any adult with special needs under age 26. For more information on this program, visit www.westottawa.net/wops-food-service. Thank you to all who assisted in the food distribution program over the past several months.

Given the events of the past week, I would be remiss if I did not mention the civil unrest in cities across the country. With the proliferation of coverage surrounding these events across social media, your children are likely aware of the protests and riots taking place, including those not far from our community. Our primary concern is and always will be the well-being of the children we are privileged to serve. As such, our school counselors are available this week should your children wish to speak with someone regarding this matter. If you'd like to schedule an appointment with a counselor, please contact your school principal via email. You can find your school's contact information at <https://www.westottawa.net/schools/>.

I know that it is hard to be optimistic in these deeply challenging times, but I also know that by working together we can overcome it all. For the future of our children and our community, we must continue to support one another through the uncertainty. We are family, we are friends and we are neighbors.

Thank you for your continued commitment to your child's education. I wish you and your family a safe and healthy summer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas K. Martin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas K. Martin
Superintendent of Schools