Hello Superintendents and Charter School Leaders,

Thank you all for joining us on yesterday's COVID-19 Update call. As we discussed, teams at MDE and the Office of Higher Education have been working closely with the experts at the Minnesota Department of Health to develop guidelines for graduation ceremonies. As you know, the health and safety of all Minnesotans is our top priority. Every determination we have made is first and foremost a public health decision.

It will come as no surprise that this year's ceremonies must look different than they traditionally do. Our top recommendation is for schools to hold celebrations that can be conducted remotely and ensures attendees to not need to leave their homes, like virtual graduation ceremonies. While the guidelines do not allow for a gymnasium or football field gathering, it does provide public health guidance on what schools, colleges or universities would need to consider when contemplating a safe celebration outside of the home, such as a car parade or a parking lot ceremony.

Many of you have been developing plans for a variety of scenarios and have shared your ideas with us, and I have appreciated each and every conversation because they reflect your care for your students and your school community. It is both helpful and inspiring to see the creativity with which you are honoring your graduating students. Some other ways you may want to consider to recognize students include providing banners, posters or lawn signs for students, highlighting graduates on social channels or working with local media outlets to recognize the graduating students in your communities.

Thank you all for your continued leadership in meeting the needs of our students and their families, and particularly for your work to make this a memorable milestone for the Class of 2020.

Together,

Mary Cathryn Ricker, NBCT
Commissioner of Education

View the graduation guidance.