

# Empty/Feeling

## Schools closed March 16 due to coronavirus pandemic

It started out as a joke to most high school students, something that everyone thought was going to pass by in a couple of days and that would be the end of it.

But when Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced at 11 p.m. on Thursday, March 12, that all K-12 schools would be closed for three weeks (March 16-April 6), the jokes stopped as reality set in.

"School closing definitely threw me for a loop. I had a feeling it was going to be closed for a short period of time in order to thoroughly clean the building, but I was not expecting this long of a closing," senior Katelyn Zaagman said. "It's funny because if we were younger or in a different grade, I'm sure we would think this is a blessing. However, being a senior, this is frustrating and concerning. I, and I'm sure many others, are fearing that the end-of-the-year senior events are going to get canceled. It's scary since we've been looking forward to these things for 14 years."

Since Gov. Whitmer's first announcement, she declared all schools closed for the remainder of the school year on April 2. Eventually, spring sports were canceled too.

In the absence of face-to-face education, students and teachers were facing uncharted territory.

Teachers were expected to communicate with students during the closure, providing assignments via Google Classroom and meeting with students through social platforms, such as Zoom or Google Meet.

"To be clear, this shutdown is very different from our 'snow day closures,'" principal Jennifer Bustard said in a March 20 email to the community. "Students are expected to be learning and working each day. This will look different depending upon the grade level and the access to online resources that each family has."

Additionally, the Federal Government announced on March 20 that all state assessments were waived for the 2019-2020 school year.

One group that Shores administrators are paying special attention to is the Class of 2020.

"Our seniors have our full attention to ensure that steps are taken so that students will have the ability to earn their MSHS diploma," Bustard and Superintendent Bill O'Brien wrote in a joint email on March 20. "We are working on plans to honor and celebrate the Class of 2020 with the many traditions we have in place."

The two leaders said Prom, Honors Convocation, Graduation will take place regardless of the end of school date even if it may mean that these celebrations are moved to a later time frame.

"For now, we must stay patient as frustrating as that is," the joint email said. "Schedules and plans will be shared as soon as possible."

Both stressed that it is not a matter of "if" seniors will graduate; it is a matter of "when."

"For now, we will stay hopeful and optimistic that we will return soon," the joint email said. "As of today [March 20], we still plan on the original graduation date. (All students should) keep in contact and stay engaged with your teachers as they are working very hard to provide you with the best of learning opportunities."

Through it all, Shores Schools provided breakfast and lunch for all students during this shutdown. In the first week, a large corps of volunteers helped pack 6,000 meals in bags to hand out to families.

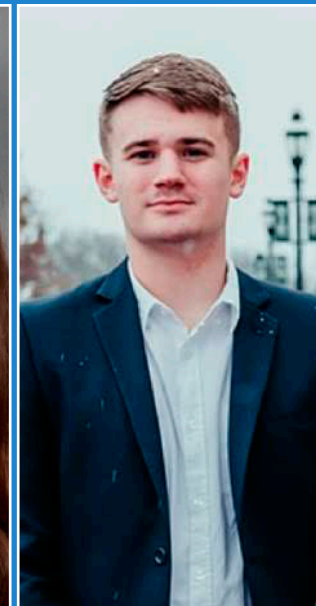
O'Brien and Bustard have continued to keep students, teachers and the community informed, and they know the impact this has on everyone.

"It is frustrating for all of us," the two leaders wrote in a joint email on March 20, "much of which we cannot control. But there are things we can control and that is with our efforts to commit to the containment procedures that begin with practicing Social Distancing, adhering to the Governor's orders on unnecessary travel, hygiene and staying home. Sacrifice today will be critical for all." – by Gabby Lopez, executive editor for the school paper, *The Sailors' Log*



On a normal school day, the student parking lot on the west side of the high school would be packed with cars; however, on Wednesday, March 18, not a vehicle could be found as the school year was first postponed until after Spring Break and then canceled altogether.

## Quotable/ When school was closed initially from March 16-April 6, what were your thoughts?



"I was initially shocked when I first heard about the four-week school closure. I was worried about what the homework would look like for the next four weeks and missing out on things like seeing friends and teachers." – Mia Dickson, sophomore

"My initial feelings were a bit of being in denial about the circumstance and feeling scared of not returning at the same time. I felt this way because I kind of knew it was going to escalate, and I didn't want to believe it though. I didn't want to think of not seeing my teachers every morning, or not being able to give (principal Jen) Bustard a fistbump every morning to start my day off strong." – Alex Breuker, senior

"At the time I was mostly thinking about the SAT. I didn't know how to prepare for it since we would be taking it right when we got back." – Vaughn Lakatos, junior