

Graduation Ceremonies

I. Purpose

Graduation from high school is an important event in the lives of students, parents, and families. It is an opportunity to celebrate the educational accomplishments of students. The graduation ceremony is designed to provide memories and impressions that will last a lifetime.

II. Required Graduate and Guest Behavior

Principals and staff have spent significant time planning and organizing graduation ceremonies. It is very important that all graduation participants and attendees conduct themselves in a polite and courteous fashion. The graduation ceremony is a dignified event and requires that all attendees be on their best behavior. To ensure graduation is conducted in a dignified fashion, we expect students, parents, and other guests to adhere to the following principles of behavior:

Unacceptable Items/Behavior

- It is recommended that guests leave cell phones in the car to increase the speed at which they get through the metal detectors. Students are not allowed to bring cell phones and are expected to make pick-up arrangements beforehand.
- Personal use of cameras without flash and hand held video cameras are permitted as long as one remains in their seat and respects the viewing rights of graduation attendees. Flash photography and standup videotaping are not permitted during the graduation ceremony.
- The use of tripods is prohibited.
- Noisemakers (including air horns or whistles) and signs (including posters and banners), are not permitted in the graduation venue and their use is strictly prohibited.
- The throwing and/or the possession of beach balls, balloons, or other related items at the graduation ceremony are strictly prohibited.
- Throwing of confetti is not permitted.

Parents and Guests

- Appropriate dress is recommended.
- Follow the school principal's instructions for applause and recognition during the ceremony. Unsolicited shouting, whistling, and applauding will not be tolerated.
- The graduation program will designate those individuals who are authorized to address the audience and graduates. No individual may speak to the audience without the specific permission and authorization of the school principal.
- At the conclusion of the graduation ceremony, in an effort to ensure the safety of all attendees, the audience will remain seated until all the graduates have exited the auditorium/arena.
- Graduation ceremonies start promptly at the designated time, all parents and guests should arrive at the graduation venue prior to the start of the graduation ceremony. To lessen the distraction, a special section will be designated for late arrivals. However, once schools begin to issue diplomas, late arrivals will not be allowed to enter the arena. Please recognize there are thousands of guests attending graduation ceremonies. Any guests requiring special assistance or accommodations are encouraged to arrive early (recommend at least 45 minutes prior) to make sure they have time to get seated before graduation.

Students

- Students are reminded that their conduct at graduation ceremonies and rehearsals is governed by the Pitt County Schools Student Code of Conduct.
- Students will follow the protocol procedures and schedule of events as established and reviewed in the graduation rehearsal.
- Students need to recognize the importance of the graduation ceremony and dress appropriately.
- When crossing the stage, students will shake the hands of the stage guests, receive their diploma, and immediately return to their seats.

- The graduation program will designate those students who are authorized to address the graduates and class. No student may speak to the audience without the specific permission and authorization of the school principal.

We request that all students, parents, and guests conduct themselves in a respectful manner. Students and attendees may be removed from the graduation ceremony if their behavior or conduct is inappropriate and disruptive.

III. Staff, Safety, & Crowd Control

A. Staff and Coordination

1. Staff members will work in groups of two and be strategically placed throughout the auditorium to ensure proper coverage of the graduation ceremony.
2. All salaried central office administrators will be present at graduation to assist, unless otherwise excused by the Superintendent and/or his/her designee.
3. Special clothing and/or identification badges will be worn by all staff and administrators so they are easily recognized.
4. An annual special meeting will be held with ECU police, assigned school staff members, and the central office to coordinate efforts, establish mutually beneficial expectations, and feel comfortable carrying out responsibilities.
5. Staff will ensure that graduates and their guests comply with the requirements of this Procedure.

B. Entrance and Exit Procedures

1. Prior to each graduation ceremony, the appropriate length of time needed for gates to be open will be established with the ECU police in order to ensure guests can be moved through in adequate time.
2. Floor stands/signs will be ordered and appropriately placed at the entrances of the events asking guests to have cell phones and

keys out to speed up metal detector process.

3. Bags/purses can be no larger than 10 x 10 x 10 inches.
4. Communication will go out in advance letting guests know that metal detectors will be used and to arrive early.

IV. Communication

A. Ticket process

1. Perforated tickets will be ordered for graduation to help reduce the use of counterfeit tickets.
2. Expected proper behavior will be placed on the back of graduation tickets so that guests in attendance have a copy.
3. Graduation tickets also will include a disclaimer that if guests do not comply, they may be asked to leave.

B. Letter/pledge to go home with Seniors

1. Letter/pledge will go home with students each March explaining expected graduation ceremony behavior.
2. Graduates **must** return the signed pledge before graduation tickets are issued to them. No pledge, no ticket.
3. Letters will be mailed directly to home addresses AND sent home with students.
4. The PCS Alert Now System will be utilized to reemphasize the importance of returning the signed pledge in order to obtain graduation tickets.

C. Media and Other Means of Dissemination

1. A promotional video will be developed and circulated of graduates asking graduation audiences:
 - a. To follow established behavioral requirements outlined in the sections above and ask guests to turn off all cell phones during ceremonies.
 - b. Request that guests remain seated until all graduates exit the arena.

Video will play at the beginning of each ceremony prior to graduates entering the arena.

2. Proper graduation behavior will be publicized widely through use of television, radio, Alert Now, Face book, website, etc.
3. Signs will be posted throughout the graduation arenas concerning proper behavior.
4. Graduation proper behavior will be placed in the graduation programs.

Cross References: None