All Roads Lead Home
Celebrating the Class of 2021
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Summary

Background
Our journey began in May 2020—during the middle of the COVID-19 shutdown. By order of the Harris County judge, public arenas were placed under strict restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID. In order to ensure adherence to county guidelines, NRG stadium, where Klein ISD has held its graduation ceremonies for decades, stringently reduced the allotted time for each Klein ISD high school ceremony, spread out the events over several days, and limited the number of attendees so severely that holding graduation ceremonies became untenable.

Although COVID cases were surging and the safety of our community was a top priority, the 2019-2020 school year ended with many people in our community disheartened and frustrated with the cancellation of graduation ceremonies for the Class of 2020. The communications team created a virtual event to celebrate graduating seniors as well as a roll call. Despite these efforts, many families were disappointed, and some participated in parent-sponsored graduation ceremonies.

In many districts, the communications team is an ancillary part of graduation. However, Klein ISD's communications team was charged with coordinating the ENTIRE event. From traffic and parking, to staging and chairs, walkthroughs and parent communication, videos and livestreams, the entire team would spend several months planning an event for 35,000 family and community members and 4,500 graduates. In hopes of reclaiming their trust and pride in Klein ISD, the communications team began planning the Class of 2021’s graduation in August 2020.

Research and Analysis
We approached the 2020-2021 year using guidance from local and state authorities to begin school operations, including health and safety protocols. In light of COVID protocols, we considered Klein Memorial Stadium in addition to our traditional graduation venue of NRG stadium. In soliciting feedback, we sent a survey to families regarding their preference for an in-person Class of 2021 graduation venue. We wanted to ensure that families understood the benefits and risks of each location and gather their feedback. After reviewing the survey results, 75% of participants indicated that Klein Memorial Stadium was their preferred choice of venue.

In conjunction with seniors and their families' input, Klein ISD leadership and communications team worked with high school campus administrators to determine that all Klein ISD Class of 2021 graduation ceremonies would be held at Klein Memorial Stadium.

Implementation
Unlike years past, we would not be walking into a “turn-key” event location and had to determine how to build a graduation venue from the ground up. In planning for Graduation 2021, we created the “Grad Squad,” a collaborative team consisting of representatives from various departments, including campus administrators, maintenance, police department, athletic director, and fine arts. We planned out the logistics of distributing tickets and parking passes, program design, socially distancing chairs on the field, cleaning the stadium and parking lot, providing music, weather delay plans, special education accommodations, and deciding what kind of stage setup would be used for graduates to receive their diplomas.

An unforeseen issue that we ran into was how to provide music for the playing of the “National Anthem” and “Pomp and Circumstance.” These songs have usually been played live by the juniors in the orchestra in a climate-controlled environment that protects the instruments. An outdoor venue could damage the instruments, so we began...
reimagining how to provide these musical accompaniments. We decided to form an all-senior orchestra and record seniors from every high school in high-quality audio while playing a final time for their classmates and families. This recording was seen and heard as part of the graduation ceremony.

To involve our community in the process of preparing for graduation, we ran a mini social media campaign to build anticipation and excitement called #kleinisdbackstagepass. These posts gave our community a look into the preparation.

Additionally, we used Taggbox to engage the audience before each of the ceremonies began. We encouraged students and families to tweet and share pictures using their school’s unique hashtag so that they could be displayed on the jumbotron screens.

**Evaluation & Monitoring Success**
The graduation events held at Klein Memorial Stadium had an overwhelmingly positive response from our community. We received a small amount of feedback regarding concerns about weather as well as masking and social distancing; however, most of the feedback came from those who were grateful that we were able to have an in-person graduation event.

The stadium accommodated 35,000 guests over the course of 5 ceremonies, and nearly 40,000 more accessed the live streams. We also ensured that EVERY graduate had at least one photo from the processions in our Flickr albums, and we had over 57,000 album views. Additionally, school board members commented that they enjoyed the ceremonies at Klein Memorial Stadium, and in a survey for the Class of 2022, over 67% of families wanted graduation to stay at our stadium rather than at NRG.

**What We’ve Learned**
We chose 8:00 am and 8:00 pm for graduation to take advantage of cooler weather during June, but we found out that it was very beneficial for families to not have to rush out after each ceremony. We did not need to hurry to set up the next ceremony, and this gave families time to enjoy making memories by taking pictures around the stadium and spending time together.

**Research and Analysis**
In light of the disappointment our community faced as a result of the cancellation of in-person graduation ceremonies for the Class of 2020, we solicited feedback from the Class of 2021 and their families through Qualtrics.
Dear Class of 2021 Students and Families,

Klein ISD is committed to holding in-person graduation ceremonies, and we need your feedback about the venue options that are available for the Class of 2021.

Graduation ceremonies have traditionally been held at NRG Stadium; however, NRG has informed us that due to COVID-19 restrictions they will be modifying our previously determined graduation date and times. As a result, we are also considering the use of Klein Memorial Stadium.

Harris County has restricted NRG to allowing a maximum of three graduation ceremonies per day, and Houston Rodeo has announced event dates that extend until late May 2021 at NRG Stadium. With this in mind, we are proactively planning to ensure our graduation ceremonies do indeed occur in person and offer graduates and their families the best experience possible.

To assist us in planning in-person graduation ceremonies that will be best for our students and families, please review the following chart for a comparison of the two venues that include benefits and risks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Dates/Times</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Risks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NRG Stadium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Cannot guarantee makeup days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| NRG Pkwy Houston, TX 77054 | **June 4** (two schools) 3:00 PM - Klein Collins | - Indoor ceremonies  
- Seating not limited for guests  
- Live Streaming will be available for family members who cannot attend in person. | - Bound by Harris County guidelines that could shut down NRG to large gatherings, which is what occurred for the Class of 2020  
- NRG Stadium regulates the guidelines for all events at the venue, and they are subject to change without notification.  
- Potential for time/date changes or cancellation out of Klein ISD control, which is what occurred for the Class of 2020  
- Possibility of multiple events hosted at NRG venue simultaneously of graduation  
- Traveling downtown  
- Parking cost: $20 per vehicle                                                                 |
|                            | 8:00 PM - Klein High                             |                                                                          |                                                                                       |
|                            | **June 5** (three schools) 9:00 AM - Klein Forest|                                                                          |                                                                                       |
|                            | 2:00 PM - Klein Cain                             |                                                                          |                                                                                       |
|                            | 7:00 PM - Klein Oak                              |                                                                          |                                                                                       |
| Klein Memorial Stadium     | **June 3** (one school) 8:00 PM - Klein Collins  | - Klein ISD maintains control of all event planning for using Klein Memorial Stadium.  
- Guarantee of all five high school ceremonies  
- Local to all KISD students and families, minimizing travel time  
- Live Streaming of entirety of each ceremony for family | - Outdoor ceremonies and possibility of makeup days for inclement weather  
- Limit 5 guest seats per graduate                                                                 |
| 16607 Stuebner Airline Rd  |                                                  |                                                                          |                                                                                       |
| Spring, TX 77379           | **June 4** (two schools) 8:00 AM - Klein High    |                                                                          |                                                                                       |
|                            | 8:00 PM - Klein Forest                           |                                                                          |                                                                                       |
|                            | **June 5** (two schools) 8:00 AM - Klein Cain    |                                                                          |                                                                                       |
|                            | 8:00 PM - Klein Oak                              |                                                                          |                                                                                       |
Inclement weather makeup days/time (June 7-11) 8:00 PM

who cannot attend in person
- Video and pictures complimentary for each graduate
- No cost for parking

Please take a moment to complete the following survey to share your input from January 13 - January 20. After a review of the survey results, a decision regarding the graduation venue will be made no later than February 3 and will be shared with students and families. All classified seniors and first parent contacts in Skyward/Family Access will receive this email to complete the survey. Thank you for your input, and we look forward to celebrating the Class of 2021!
Communication

The communications team communicated with campuses, families, and graduating seniors. Graduating seniors and families received communication about graduation from the district newsroom and social media as well as from campuses who shared information on their websites, direct emails, and text messages from their administrators. Based on additional feedback from families who were concerned about the number of guests who were able to attend and less restrictive COVID protocols, we were able to provide two additional tickets for each graduating senior.

The communications team created a Graduation Communication Toolkit for campuses to share with families of graduating seniors. It contained letters, schedules, maps, tips for attending graduation, links to the Facebook events, and more for ease of use by campuses.

Campus Letterhead

Date:

Dear Senior Families:

The faculty and staff of Klein ________ School commend you for your positive support that will be publicly rewarded when your senior graduates. The class of 2021 has attained a high standard of excellence in academics, athletics, career and technical programs, and fine arts. Many of these accomplishments will be acknowledged in our Senior Awards Program on ____________________ . Each of our seniors can feel a sense of pride in attaining a high school diploma from Klein ___________ School.

The highlight of a student's senior year is the commencement ceremony. This is a time of joy and excitement. Many students will have friends, relatives, and their immediate families as honored guests. All participants and the audience will want to display respect for the Class of 2021 by remembering that commencement is a special occasion and a dignified end to a student's public education. Complete instructions for the commencement ceremony to be held at Klein Memorial Stadium will be given to all seniors.

We are so pleased to inform you that every graduate is being provided a total of 7 tickets for family members and your guests as well as 2 parking passes for the graduation ceremony at Klein Memorial Stadium.

We have detailed information for you regarding graduation on our website at __________________. On this website you will find information about (also put links in here)

- Parking Map
- Ticket information and gate information
- Arrival Times for graduates
- Klein Memorial Stadium Dos and Don’ts
- FAQs and how to make graduation a great experience

The faculty and staff join me in offering congratulations to the graduating seniors of 2021 and to their parents.

Sincerely,

Principal
A parking map for everyone attending the ceremony was included in the Graduation Toolkit.

We created an interactive map using ThingLink to help students and families navigate their way around the graduation venue highlighting where students would be located prior to and during the ceremony. It even gave families suggestions for where to sit to get the best view of their graduate.

https://www.thinglink.com/card/1439701744807313411

The communications team worked with the vendor, LD Systems, to secure a stage, video screens, lighting, and audio for the ceremonies. These renderings were shared with campuses so that they could organize students.
Because a graduation ceremony had not been held at Klein Memorial Stadium in over 40 years, the communications team launched #kleinisdbackstagepass, a mini social media campaign, to keep graduating seniors and their families informed about and engaged with the process of preparing for the events. It featured time lapse videos of the football field being transformed into a graduation venue.
#KleinISDBackstagePass - Even our website is getting ready for graduation. Live stream video links have just been posted to the front page, and the graduation page just received an update with driving directions & more! Lots more to do over the next few days!

#KleinISDBackstagePass - Did someone order some graduation chairs?!?

#KleinISDBackstagePass - Two screens are up! Our graduation stage area is taking shape!

#KleinISDBackstagePass - Supports are going up on the home side for 2 of our 4 Jumbotron screens! These things are huge!
Tips to Ease Graduation Day Stress

Graduation day will probably be one of the most important days of your life, so it’s important to ensure that the day is as stress-free as possible. By preparing for your big day, you can eliminate some of the stress associated with graduation ceremonies. Below are some tips to ease graduation day stress and guarantee a memorable experience.

Make sure you have a game plan

You'll want to have a game plan of the day's events beforehand, such as: Where everyone is going to meet? Who's car will they all be carpooling in? What area will you all meet after the ceremony? A good plan that considers possible pitfalls (do we meet by the car if we can't find each other? Do we want to just regroup at a specific time somewhere outside of the premises?) will help to make the day run smoother. **Please note:** Graduates will be dismissed after the ceremony from the field through gates that lead underneath each side of the stadium. Only graduates and KISD graduation staff will be allowed on the field.

Get a full night's rest

Being well-rested means you won't sleep through your alarm and have to scramble to the ceremony, only to then suffer through the day in a groggy daze. In order to look well, you must FEEL well. That involves plenty of sleep and preparation.

Make sure your phone is charged

Make sure your phone is fully-charged before you leave the house because your phone will allow you to contact family and loved ones should you become separated before or after the ceremony. And you can take ALL the pics and videos of ALL the great moments from this day!
Dress appropriately

The best advice regarding graduation apparel is not to wear anything too warm. It will be hot and humid, and you will be wearing a graduation cap and gown. Find a pair of comfortable, yet appropriate shoes to wear and you will be happy you did. Wear a pair of shoes that you will be able to stand/walk in for extended periods of time. The last thing you want is to get blisters on your big day and be forced to limp across the stage when your name is called. Save the fancy fit for your graduation party! Graduates: Please, no stiletto heels!

Eat a small snack ahead of time

Make sure that you don't head out to the ceremony without getting a few snacks ahead of time. Remember, the ceremony could take much longer than you anticipate, and you need energy so that you can tread across the stage and shine in all your glory. That, or suffer a potentially hangry fate.

Arrive early

Nothing is more stressful than arriving at an important event late. Give yourself time to relax and get acquainted before the ceremony by arriving early, which will further help ease your nerves. Traffic will be heavy, so be prepared!

Use a ride-share service or carpool

Parking spaces are limited, so you might want to consider carpooling with others so you don't have to spend any time looking for parking. Each graduate and their family only have two parking passes. Or you can also use Lyft or Uber, if that's an option and you're under a time crunch.

Each person must have a ticket

Don't forget that all guests must have their tickets and parking passes to enter. **Every person is required to have a ticket to enter Klein Memorial Stadium except for the graduate.** Each graduate receives 7 tickets for family and friends and two parking passes.

Arrange a meeting spot with family and friends
Once the ceremony ends, everyone will be in a rush to leave making it difficult to spot family and friends in the crowd. You may also want to meet up with classmates and teachers, so choose a landmark where you can meet everyone after the ceremony.

Although this might seem easier said than done, the best way to ensure that your graduation day is as memorable as possible is to relax and enjoy it. Most importantly – don't forget to smile when you step on stage! Take a deep breath, smile, and be proud of your academic achievements thus far. Before you know it, the day will flash by and life will go on. High school graduation day only happens once, so enjoy it! We are proud of you!!

**GRADUATION QUESTIONS**

**In person**
- Each graduate will receive 7 total tickets for family and friends to attend the ceremony.
- Graduates do not need a ticket to attend.
- Each graduate will receive 2 parking passes total.
- As conditions continue to improve in our local community, face coverings and masks will be optional at the ceremony for graduates and guests.
- Klein Memorial Stadium is located at 16607 Stuebner Airline Rd., Klein, TX 77379
- Every person sitting in the stands must have a ticket to enter the facility. Small children who can sit in an adult's lap are not required to have a ticket.
- Tickets and parking passes may not be duplicated.
- Umbrellas, tents, or any other objects that block visibility are not permitted in the stands.
- In case of inclement weather, ceremonies will take place during the first available make-up time from June 6-11. All tickets and parking passes will be valid for the new time.

**Virtually**
- Each graduation ceremony will be available to view through live streaming on the Klein ISD Website for family and friends who are unable to attend in person. Make sure to save the date and like and share on Facebook!
  - June 3, 8 pm - Klein Collins
  - June 4, 8 am - Klein High
  - June 4, 8 pm - Klein Forest
  - June 5, 8 am - Klein Cain
  - June 5, 8 pm - Klein Oak
GRADUATION DO'S AND DON'TS—STUDENTS

SHOES

- Flat shoes, wedges, block heeled
- No stilettos, flip flops, soccer slides

DRESS CODE

Stay in dress code—dress for heat & humidity; keep graduation gown zipped
Stay in school dress code & dress nicely

WEAR YOUR CAP & GOWN

Wear your cap and gown to the stadium
Do not decorate your graduation cap

WHAT CAN I TAKE TO MY SEAT?

- Cell phones only—we’ll provide water
- No purses, bags, or backpacks
* Masks are optional.

GRADUATION DO'S AND DON'TS—FAMILY & GUESTS

Small fans & Bottled Water & Rain Poncho

No umbrellas or tents

Flowers

No Balloons or confetti

Cell Phones and Cameras

No Air Horns or fireworks

Remember to bring your Graduation Tickets and Parking Passes!

* Masks are optional.
Parking passes were printed on security paper to prevent them from being replicated.

Unique graduation tickets were created for each campus.
Day of Graduation

As part of the Class of 2021 Graduation Ceremonies, we had three priorities:

- Allow as many people to attend as possible—whether in person or virtually
- Take a picture of every graduate to make available for families to access
- Ensure that we mitigated the impact of weather in our outdoor stadium as much as possible with an actionable weather delay plan

Each campus had a unique hashtag to make the events more interactive, and tweets were displayed before the graduation ceremonies using Taggbox:

- #KleinCollinsCO2021
- #KleinHighCO2021
- #KleinForestCO2021
- #KleinCainCO2021
- #KleinOakCO2021
One of the highlights of the graduation ceremonies was the all-senior orchestra. These students didn’t have the opportunity to perform as much as they normally would have because of COVID. However, they ended their high school orchestra careers as the featured musicians for graduation performing “America the Beautiful,” “The Star-Spangled Banner,” and “Pomp and Circumstance.” To ensure excellent audiovisual quality for the outdoor ceremonies, LD Systems assisted with the recording.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ti3pcs-zO4OerkjYrbopgmWht1Qbfva/view?usp=sharing

Each graduate’s picture was taken by a communications team photographer as they walked to their seats while in the processional line. We felt that it was important to give families a picture of their graduate that they wouldn’t be able to take from the stands. The albums contain thousands of pictures celebrating the graduates, and are by far the most viewed photo albums in Klein ISD’s Flickr Gallery.
We created two videos to conclude “graduation season”— one capturing the excitement of the graduates and the other capturing the bittersweet emotions they felt as they achieved this important milestone in their lives.
Because graduation ceremonies were being held outdoors, we had an inclement weather plan in place. To communicate updates, we utilized campus and district websites, social media, School Messenger, and Remind. Rainy weather occurred during two of the three days and affected two ceremonies. It was raining during Klein Collins’ graduation, and we made families aware that we would continue with the event. A thunderstorm delayed Klein Oak's graduation ceremony, and we updated families regularly before beginning the event.

**Inclement Weather Plan**

In the event inclement weather occurs, Klein ISD will make every possible attempt to adhere to the scheduled graduation times.

**RAIN/MIST** - Ceremonies will not be postponed for rain or mist, but we may delay the start of a ceremony if the weather is forecasted to clear quickly. As always with inclement weather decisions, we will take our guidance from local weather officials to ensure safety. Please bring a poncho if rain is forecasted during the ceremony.

**DELAY BEFORE THE CEREMONY** - If lightning occurs before a ceremony within 10 miles of Klein Memorial Stadium or there is very heavy rain at the stadium, Klein ISD will delay the start of the ceremony in coordination with local weather officials. Graduations may be delayed up to three hours that day, weather permitting.

Should there be a need for a ceremony delay, information will be posted on the Klein ISD graduation site (https://kleinsd.net/graduation), on district and campus social media, and directly sent to families of graduates by 5:30 AM or 5:30 PM the day of graduation. Families and students who have previously received text messages from Klein ISD will receive these direct graduation updates.
Evaluation

Finding ways to continuously improve our events is part of our workflow process. We analyze social media analytics and review feedback that we receive. We were very pleased that the majority of our stakeholders were engaged and enjoyed the graduation ceremonies.
Several positive comments were posted on social media:

Angela Caby Hernandez
Was so beautiful enjoyed every minute of it thank you so much and loved it at the football field 😊

Lucy Smith
THANK YOU SO MUCH! We are truly blessed. 💜

Amanda Smith-Raciel
It was beautiful 😊

Ve Ro
Blessings and the best of luck to all our future generations 😊

Mary Peter Ambriz
It was hot but other than that it was beautiful. I had tears of joy seeing our grandson walk across the stage to receive his diploma. Bravo Klein Cain. Thank you for the memories.

Angela Yates
Thank you so much, Klein ISD. It was a difficult call to make on the location of the graduation. No human being has control over the weather. So grateful that the event was not rescheduled for next week, since rain is still in the forecast. It did my heart well to see my baby boy walk across the stage. So grateful.

Lynda Beam Morse
Kudos to all responsible for planning this graduation! It was awesome, even in the rain! Much much easier in and out than NRG, better sound system, and incredible treatment of the multiple jumbo trons!!! Klein Memorial should be the home of all future graduation ceremonies!!
We conducted an after action review of the graduation ceremonies with the Grad Squad to make improvements for next year.

Sample of responses from after action review survey:
As a result of the positive feedback about holding graduation ceremonies at Klein Memorial Stadium, we sent a survey to graduating seniors and families about plans for the Class of 2022's graduation. Once again, the majority of respondents requested that the events be held at Klein Memorial stadium. The community's confidence in last year's graduation and preference for Klein ISD to hold the event “at home” has been our truest marker of success.

**Graduation Ceremonies - Klein ISD**

We are already busy preparing for the graduation ceremonies for the Class of 2022. In June, we asked for your feedback. With thousands of students and families responding to the email survey, the majority favored graduation at Klein Memorial Stadium in late May. Please see the dates, times, and location information below for planning purposes.

As a reminder, live-streaming of each ceremony for families and guests who cannot attend in person will be available. As we get closer to graduation, we will provide detailed information for students and their families. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact feedback@kleinisd.net.

Our Klein Family will have a wonderful day celebrating our graduates for their outstanding accomplishments, and we look forward to honoring the Class of 2022 seniors and their families and friends right here at home in Klein ISD!

**LOCATION**
Klein Memorial Stadium
16607 Stuebner Airline Rd., Klein, TX 77379
(Directions Using WAZE)

**SCHOOL**
Klein Oak
Klein Collins
Klein High
Klein Forest
Klein Cain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Klein Oak</td>
<td>Wed, May 25</td>
<td>8 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klein Collins</td>
<td>Thur, May 26</td>
<td>8 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klein High</td>
<td>Fri, May 27</td>
<td>8 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klein Forest</td>
<td>Sat, May 28</td>
<td>8 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klein Cain</td>
<td>Sat, May 28</td>
<td>8 PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**MORE INFORMATION**
Each high school will share more specific information with graduating seniors about the details of the event through senior class websites and email communication.

- [Klein High School](#)
- [Klein Forest High School](#)
- [Klein Oak High School](#)
- [Klein Collins High School](#)
- [Klein Cain High School](#)

*As mentioned in our previous communication, in case of inclement weather, the ceremony will be rescheduled at the next earliest available time and communicated directly to graduates and their families.*