

HARTSHORNE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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To Our Seniors and Students in Spring Activities

I wanted to take this time to address those students who have lost a significant part of their high school experience due to the current pandemic that our country and the world are facing. These are unprecedented times that most of your parents and grandparents are experiencing for the first time in their lives, as well. Not since World War II has our country seen this type of national response to a crisis. I want you to know that we have not overlooked the impact it is having on our students and their families.

To Our Seniors

You are a special group. Your world began with the 911 terrorist attacks and now your academic careers are book ended with a global pandemic. Don't let these events discourage you. Every generation faces unique challenges and it's those challenges that shape your resolve. I know the disappointment you must be feeling with the loss of the final months of a senior year that has been 14 years in the making. We have fought the good fight and we've advocated for your school year, your activities, and your well-being. To be safe and protect you and your families, we have to make some gut-wrenching decisions. I never wanted to lose a state basketball tournament, the state stock show, or our spring seasons. Our students, especially our seniors, deserved so much better of an ending. After two weeks of making calls, writing letters, and making our case to leave the door open, we now have to accept that we are not going to be able to see those events through to the finish. The Oklahoma State Department of Education and the Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activities Association voted over the last two days to cancel these events and focus on the health of our state. I don't envy their position and I'll respect their decisions as they had to consider so many factors beyond extra-curricular events..

You are losing an opportunity to compete, but we are losing the chance to appreciate your talents, your work ethic, and your love for being a Hartshorne Miner. The community loses our common thread and identity for a while, but this new challenge is much greater than any we've faced in our past. This DOES NOT diminish your contributions and what you have meant to our school. We hate to have to close this chapter on some of the most successful Miners to ever wear Blue and White, but books are made of many chapters and yours is going to stand out among the best.

Our girls basketball team has been to three consecutive state tournaments. The only other state tournament appearances in school history before this current run came in 1928 and 2001. Coach Woolard, Coach Hackler, and these Lady Miners have hung up some pretty impressive credentials over the last four years, but they have also been excellent representatives for our community. The level of expectations they have injected into this program are immeasurable. The summer camps and leagues, the time spent individually to develop skills, and the commitment to each other more than paid off. This group of seniors leaves as the winningest class in the history of the program. Thank you for taking us on this ride with you and being driven to compete at the highest level.

Our FFA and 4H students were a few days away from completing their season at the Oklahoma Youth Expo. Projects that are purchased months, even a year in advance come down to March in Oklahoma City. Our agriculture program is known across the state as one that must be reckoned with on the biggest stage. Students and parents invest so much time in getting an animal through the season. The work is tedious and it's hard. Mr. Sparks and Mr. Edmond have developed a reputation for putting our kids in a position for success every year. We were well on our way to ringing the bell at OYE, again. We can't forget our judging teams and speech contestants. Their competitions were set to begin after spring break and we've always had quality groups that compete at just as high a level as our show teams. Thank you for taking on the labor of hard work and responsibility. Thank you for continuing a tradition of agricultural excellence as the backbone of our school and community.

Our band and choir have grown in numbers over the last several years and the number of award winners have grown, as well. That places more responsibility on Mrs. Rosso and Mr. Skinner to spend the time required with each student to reach their full potential. The spring concerts and the state competitions that were still on the horizon were to be the culmination of the practices and the time spent developing these God-given talents. Our students practice many hours to hone their craft and prepare for these competitions. We all get to see the Christmas and spring concerts, the football games and the parades, but these are just the tip of the iceberg in what it takes to be competitive at a state level. Thank you for not wasting those gifts and committing your time to our band and choir.

Our baseball team had gotten off to a great start in what was a mission to make their 5th state tournament in 6 years. Hartshorne has become a program that is mentioned in the same conversations as the great programs around the state. That is a testament to Coach James, Coach Cumbie and Coach Akins for building a program that has stood the test of time. It is an example of our community expectations and those of our student athletes to compete at the highest levels. The seniors were trying to make their 3rd state tournament in 4 years. This would put them in rare company. Thank you for keeping the tradition alive and ensuring that Hartshorne Baseball is just as elite when you leave as it was when you got your first varsity jersey.

Our slow pitch softball team was patiently waiting for the basketball season to come to a championship conclusion. These ladies were poised to bring Hartshorne Softball back to statewide prominence and their growth over the last few seasons was pointing to their first state tournament run in over 15 years. As many girls have started to gravitate toward fast pitch, Coach Martin, Coach Tucker, and the Lady Miners have committed to being successful in both sports. Understanding the amount of work it takes to successfully transition between the nuances of each game, these ladies have become very versatile. Their hard work was evident in their successes as this team continued to grow. Thank you for your commitment to bringing Hartshorne Softball back to a championship level.

Our track program has historically delivered state qualifiers at several events and the prospects were looking just as promising this year. As the program has continued to develop, the athletic ability of

our students continues to prove that with hard work and dedication, anything is possible. Coach Beare and Coach Countz have put in place a program that provides consistent opportunities for our students to chase medals each spring. These athletes have unique gifts and the coaches have to work with a wide range of events. We were looking forward to seeing what the winter and spring work would lead to this time around. We've become accustomed to having the Pick and Shovel at the state track meet each spring. Thank you for the personal sacrifice it takes to make our track team a constant at the state meet.

I want our seniors to understand that the challenges you may be facing right now are exactly what your coaches and teachers have been preparing you for since you first put on the Pick and Shovel. There will be many things in your lifetime that are unfair and some will be completely out of your control. Draw from your time as a Hartshorne Miner and what it took to be a champion or earn that position when you have to make the defining decision to fight through or give in. We expect great things from you because you have proven that GREAT is in your DNA. GREAT is your standard, not simply your aspiration.

To Our Underclassmen

You now hold the responsibility of shaping and adding your history to our history. Time and the hand we were dealt weren't on our side this spring, but eventually we will return to the classrooms, courts, rings, fields, and concert halls. As our seniors can tell you, every class, every conversation, every game, every lunch with your friends could be the last time you get to experience that part of your life. Embrace each practice, cherish each friendship, and appreciate each opportunity to be a Miner. You have been left a great legacy and it's now up to you to take it to new heights. This community, this school, and your fellow students are looking to you to display the excellence and determination that has come to be expected from a Hartshorne Miner.

In closing, our administration recognizes that we have all lost many things with the closure of our schools. As students, you have the most personal investment in those losses. We wanted you to know that we are not closing the door on a prom, a sports banquet, a graduation, or other school related events that we schedule each spring. We hope that the summer may provide us a window to coming back together to pay tribute to these students and their achievements. We will continue to monitor CDC recommendations and the state allowances on these activities.

I personally want our seniors to understand how each of you has made our school and community very proud. It has been an absolute honor to follow your careers. It may not have concluded the way we all envisioned, but it has been one heck of a journey. We've enjoyed being able to celebrate with you in the good times as much as we've been encouraged to see your strength in the tough times. I ask that you display that strength now as we turn our focus to protecting our families and supporting our community. My hope is that this letter finds you healthy and safe. We'll get through this the same way we get through every adversity we encounter, together, as THE Miner Nation!

Sincerely

Jason L. Lindley
Superintendent
Hartshorne Public Schools