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CONCERT ENSEMBLES • MARCHING BAND • JAZZ ENSEMBLES • CHOIR • MARIACHI • DRUMLINE • COLOR GUARD

Dear Music Dept. Families,

As we enter the final stretch of our fall season, I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the students on an incredibly rewarding journey thus far. Our staff has put together a show that is challenging and rewarding. The progress of the ensemble in these three seasons is remarkable. To put it into perspective, the ensembles final show in the Fall of 2015 had an identical score for our first show out this season with a performance we were all less than satisfied with. In one week, they increased that score by more than 5 points, which is no small feat.

Because our program is about more than just Marching Band, I must commend the students on their performance on Wednesday the 18th at the RCHS PAC. The performance featured Jazz I, String Orchestra and the Symphonic Band. The performance was the strongest top to bottom showing on that stage from our students from any time of the year since I have been at ACHS. To reach that level in a few short weeks was inspiring. Many programs do not do a fall concert because it is hard to put together a respectable performance, but it was clear that the students were ready to step up.

Beginning that Wednesday, I had to rely on my colleagues, administration, booster parents, staff and the students to step up as I was needing to spend more time at home to deal with an urgent family matter. During our busiest week long stretch on the calendar for almost the entire year, I was able to be the father and husband I needed to be in this trying time without worrying about what would happen with all of our commitments and events. I was fortunate enough to have Assistant Principal, Ms. Chadwick fill in for me at the concert call time and our students led by an incredible leadership team did everything needed in order for our concert to be successful. I received nothing but compliments about their professionalism and maturity throughout the process without me being present. Thursday required our staff to play a larger role as I could not attend the full rehearsal and it concluded an incredibly productive week of rehearsals. Friday included our normal routine with the addition of 41 eager middle school students that were in awe with our young performers. Saturday required several logistics to be taken care of and a more than 2-hour trip down South to Anaheim for a Field Competition and then the overnight portion of our trip with a most of our Marching Band students where Dr. Stephenson and her family filled in for me. People behind the scenes are making the magic happen, day in and day out to keep our program functioning at its best, but this team of people felt more critical than ever this past week and a half. People like John Ponti, Jeff Betancourt and Rick Reese who handle our equipment truck and trailer logistics and they do far more than just driving these to and from. The entire Booster Board that wear so many hats on top of steering the booster organization in a

direction that is best for our students and ensembles which includes Ha Nguyen, Lauri Barcelona, Susan James, Alicia Hoffman, Tim Ward and Julie Rutherford. In addition to these people, we had a slew of chaperones that insured our students had a safe and enjoyable trip. This included Cindy Nigh who made sure all students were checked out from the show before heading home. This also includes a huge thank you to Juliette Resor for all that she has done for two straight years to help organize the overnight trip. It is no small feat to do a trip like this and the organization and follow-up from a head chaperone is critical. While I never want to have to step away from the group, it is relieving to know that we have such a strong group of student leaders and parent volunteers that do so much for the entire group.

I must take a moment to address the football game on Friday, October 22nd. It is no secret that there has been added attention to the Marching Band for better or worse on campus. There has also been more attention to the band and when it plays at football games. Despite my efforts to my extremely mindful of when and when not to play, some spill over is inevitable. There have also been unfortunate circumstances like opposing team injuries that have caused some inopportune playing. All this tension seemed to have boiled over at this last home game when we were warned for our playing about 15 seconds into our first pep tune of the entire game in the first quarter. The warning made its way to the band by way of a yelling from an assistant coach on the track. While I do understand the heat of the moment and the moment of the game, I do not accept or dismiss the optics of anyone coming up to me or our students and yelling at them, regardless of circumstances. Aside from the buildup of frustration from previous conversations of what the rules state for CIF, I was also concerned about our 41 middle schooler guests and their experience. It was unclear at the time, but it seems to have been a complaint initiated by the Oaks Christian sideline. While when we played was not at all a violation of the rules per CIF rulebook, the referees at that particular game interpreted a "live ball" as including anything outside of the huddle. The Oaks Christian HS offense spent a majority of the game, including the beginning, in a no-huddle offense. Not much longer after this situation was made clear, and the referee interpretation of the rule, we scored a touchdown. When we did, the band did what they have always done: play the fight song all of the way through. I was then contacted by administration let me know that due to the previous warning, the team would like me to not play anymore during extra points following touchdowns. On the following touchdown, we obliged, then had our extra point field goal blocked by the opposed team. It seemed very inappropriate to play after a blocked field goal, so the band was silent. Once it was time for our ensemble to move down to the field to prepare for halftime, there was a lot of starting and stopping due to our team approaching the end zone where we warm-up to score. We were incredibly mindful of this and then staged for our performance. Due to a variety of reasons, we did not get on the field or set in the time that would allow us to perform our complete show. I warned the kids of this and let them know that they would need to run off of the field following their performance. I had hoped to get through two of our three movements, but it was pretty clear that it would not be an option. Due to the previous warning and no time to collaborate on logistics, I decided to call the performance following the first movement. It is not safe to cut a performance in the middle of a movement and I did not want to earn our team a penalty. There seemed to be confusion

about this event as parents have expressed concern for the coaches putting a stop to our performance. They had not done that, nor did administration or the referees. I was the only one who made this decision for the safety and well-being of our performers. I knew it could build to a tense situation had we performed up to the final seconds of the allotted halftime and I chose to remove that variable. A combination of this moment and the clear lack of ability to play, combined with the extremely long first half due to penalties as well as our middle schooler pick-up time being scheduled for 9:00pm, it was best for us to leave the game and load for our long weekend. I did not take this decision lightly, but knew it was what was best for our students considering all of the variables.

I am not happy with the situation at games and have become aware of many more situations like it all over Southern California. In all of my years of teaching, I have never observed so much disdain for the Marching Band during games. There is a larger movement at play that reaches far beyond the ACHS campus and that is something that needs to be addressed at a separate time. What I do have an opportunity of addressing is how we are treated and respected on our campus and at our events. I keep a constant dialogue with our administration and athletic director regarding these matters and always am trying to adjust for the best for all involved. Whenever you feel like you need to voice a concern about the atmosphere or dynamic at football games or anything else at all regarding the program or your child please reach out to me first. This allows me to compile all of the parent concerns and present them at the most ideal time in a sit down with those that make the decisions.

Thank you all for everything that you do for our students and allowing them to be a part of this remarkable activity.

Mr. Daniel Cook
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