



HARBOR BEACH
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
402 S 5TH ST HARBOR BEACH MI 48441 989 479 3261

June 6, 2020

Dear Pirates,

Openly and honestly reflecting on your core values isn't easy and therefore far too often easily delayed. We live in a world of excessive fear over saying or doing the "wrong thing" in someone's eyes, which results in leaders often feeling safer saying nothing. Yet, for just over a week now most everyone who has been living in major cities or listening to or reading about our country has likely been reflective to some degree. The conversations I've had with family, staff, and friends have been heartfelt and forced probing and reflection. I try my best to be a listener first and to truly be one who clearly hears stories, pain, and emotions of others.

To some degree I realize I am a leader in our community. We all know our small community lacks a great deal of diversity, yet that does not abdicate us from responsibility. I debated whether to remain safely silent, and I have found myself using the excuse "I know I'd struggle to find the right words if I speak." Yet, I realize being completely silent would be a missed opportunity and perhaps even accidentally complicit with behaviors we've seen. It is because of this that I feel I should not stay silent.

We state, "We are Pirates," and we imply, "We're all in this together." If that is even true to a small degree, we need it now more than ever. We need it to show through not just thought but through our behaviors. It takes objectivity and reflection to realize we all can learn from each other and to admit we have work yet to do. All people are created equal, and all life has infinite potential and value. We have an opportunity to seek to fight against racism. We have an opportunity to show that regardless of skin color we all stand under the same sky, same stars, stand on the same land wanting to live freely and fairly while striving equally to achieve happiness.

Should we decide to take advantage of it, this is an opportunity for unity and commitment to making tomorrow better for all. These are big problems which take large effort and honest, gritty commitments to solutions. We've risen to the occasion before, and I see no reason we can't again. We must commit to doing better. We can seek to move forward from the past, taking in mind the lessons we've learned, and be determined to build a stronger future. Our children need us to build the roads and bridges to a better future for them to cross. We must support each other. We must love each other. And we must unite to end injustice, if not for ourselves, then for our children and their children and grandchildren... all of whom follow us... all we are and all we aspire to be depends on our actions now.

Sincerely,

Dr. Shawn Bishop, Superintendent
Harbor Beach Community Schools