

AMHERST - PELHAM *Regional* SCHOOL DISTRICT  
AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS

Amherst Regional High School  
21 Mattoon Street, Amherst, MA 01002  
Phone: (413) 362-1701 Fax: (413) 549-9704  
<http://arhs.arps.org>

Mark Jackson, Principal  
Miki Lee Gromacki, Assistant Principal  
Ericka Alschuler, Interim Assistant Principal  
Rich Ferro, Athletic Director

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Dear ARHS Parents, Guardians and Students,

Earlier in the week, I wrote to the ARHS community about the Holyoke High School allegations that our fans, during the September 23rd girls varsity soccer game, were inappropriate and used a racial slur. I assured Holyoke officials that we would take their allegations seriously and fully investigate. The purpose of this letter is to communicate the results of the investigation and, importantly, clarify how we will move forward.

Our investigation included interviews with the two league referees who officiated the game, the police officer who was on duty at the game, all four members of our event staff and 10 ARHS students. This morning I spoke with Holyoke High School principal and informed him of the results of our investigation. The findings are two: while there was considerable evidence that ARHS fans were inappropriate, we found no evidence to corroborate the allegation that racial slurs were used. I apologized to the Holyoke High principal and assured him we would use this experience as an opportunity to develop clearer behavioral expectations for our fans. And it is to the issue of behavioral expectations that I want to turn.

To begin, I'd like to distinguish 'fan' from 'fanatic'.

On the surface, they share many similarities: both are loud, animated, wear school colors and track the ebbs and flows of the game with great passion. What distinguishes them is that the fanatic loses sight of the fact that there are considerations far more important than the final score and whether or not the losing team has been sufficiently humiliated for ending up on the wrong side of it.

In a word, then, my interest is that we conduct ourselves like fans. I care little about what the rest of the athletic world considers normal. Right now, my only concern is that we reset our own standards.

A final qualifier: I have no interest in turning athletic contests into a library. Home field advantage should continue to mean something. Fans have plenty of room to yell and enjoy the game experience.

So, here's the Fan Framework:

- The core principle is this: 'for, not against'. A fan cheers for his or her teams, not against the other team. Whether our teams do well or poorly, the focus is on supporting them. How the other team fares is besides the point.
- More concretely, calling out the names or numbers of opponents, or the name of the school, and then proceeding to call them 'lousy players' is prohibited. This goes for all other synonyms of 'lousy'.
- The same holds true for officials. Fans can express frustration with what they perceive as a bad call - 'you're kidding?!' - but they stop short of aiming personal attacks at officials - 'you're lousy!'. The synonym rule also applies here.

- Lastly, these two chants are prohibited; ‘warm up the bus’ and ‘if you’re winning, clap your hands...’ If there are other chants or cheers that I haven’t yet heard that have the same intent - to humiliate a losing team - they, too, are prohibited.

Homecoming is this weekend. There is a full slate of games scheduled. This framework is effective immediately.

I’m mindful that the framework may take some getting used to and that are still issues to clarify. I’m patient. But to disregard it altogether will result in removal by our event staff.

On Friday morning, I will speak to the student body over the PA and summarize this letter, which we will also post on our web site. I will also make myself available during lunch to answer students’ questions and take their feedback.

Please let me know if you have questions or concerns.

Thank you

Mark Jackson  
Principal