

## OFFICIAL STATEMENT REGARDING HOMECOMING ACTIVITIES

Late in the evening on October 26, 2021, I was I was made aware of concerns raised by photographs that were posted on the Hazard High School Athletic page. The first thing I did on October 27th, was initiate an investigation into the incident. I found photos of inappropriate student- led activities that had since surfaced on social media. The district has the responsibility to address these issues that arise out of school-based activities. As a district, we are doing exactly that.

First, I wish to address some questions around the incident. The activities were part of Homecoming festivities and were driven by the students. We strive to foster creativity in our students, but unfortunately, this time it was carried too far. Spirit Week at Hazard High School has a long and celebrated tradition. Homecoming activities were planned as a celebration for students, staff, and the school community. All were intended to be fun and good-natured however, the activities did not play out as intended. While Homecoming is an annual tradition, there has never been any issue raised prior to this year. Now that an issue has arisen, we are taking this opportunity to review policy and procedures to make certain that it does not happen again.

1. Appropriate disciplinary action has been taken following the investigation. As it is a personnel matter, we are not allowed to disclose any further information regarding the specifics of the discipline.

2. Moving forward a student activity committee will be developed to review all student led activities, which should prevent any such skits from being performed in the future. While we value our student's creativity, we also must ensure that it is focused in an appropriate direction and will be more vigilant toward that goal in the future.

3. Also, training will take place on policies and procedures with all district staff and SBDM's to ensure this doesn't happen again. Using this as a teachable moment, we will provide social media training for our students and staff. In today's society students must understand that anything posted online is permanent! It is there on public display for everyone to see and share around the globe. We would hate to see a single youthful indiscretion haunt one of our children for their entire life. We have a dress code that is to be followed at all times. It is apparent that it was not in this case, but we will assure you that it will be enforced in the future at all school activities, for both males and females. Costumes will be reviewed for appropriateness in addition to being required to meet the dress code. Any costume referencing drug or alcohol use will be strictly prohibited.

At the end of the day, the light-hearted activity simply got out of hand, and for that, we apologize. In the future, we will strive to keep the lighthearted, fun nature of school activities without the inappropriate behavior. We will continue to seek to involve our students and foster their creativity, but with more direction. They are young and we will be there to offer better guidance for their ideas in the future. We love our students and only want to provide them with the best education and foundation for a successful life. We only ask that not judge a district with a century long tradition of striving for excellence on a single incident where fun trumped judgment.

Our district would like to apologize for the activity that has been portrayed in the media and we regret how this has unfolded. This is not the type of event that typically occurs here at Hazard High School, and we sincerely regret any embarrassment this has caused our school community. We love our Hazard High School students, staff, and community at large.

Sondra Combs, Superintendent  
Hazard Independent School District