



Morris Hills High School



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Several years ago, I took the opportunity to communicate with the Morris Hills High School community in the form of an appeal – an appeal to reflect on sporting event conduct and decorum, always demonstrating the highest degree of respect toward players, toward competitors, toward fans, toward our own school community, and toward other school communities as well. The response to that communication was overwhelmingly positive. As a result, I share it here once again in its entirety as we approach the Hills vs. Knolls football game.

Dear All Scarlet Knight Students and Fans,

Every once in a while it feels imperative to a building Principal to share a piece of communication with the school community and the community at large, focusing on decorum and appropriate conduct at school events. The nature of this announcement is not necessarily pleasant to share but certainly necessary. It involves an expectation and a standard of conduct required by your Administration and by the entire district – an expectation to project and uphold a profile of behavior that speaks to the kind of tradition that has long defined Morris Hills High School, in all of its many dimensions. That tradition runs deep, anchored by pride, by school spirit, and by a foundation of respect that must remain uncompromised by all. That tradition must be visible and consistent on every playing field, at every event, at every function. That tradition represents who we are, what we require of ourselves, and how we embrace a spirit of respect and civility. Just as our athletes and our coaches hold themselves to the highest standards of personal conduct, so too must our fans and our spectators. Ethical conduct is central to our history.

I chose to make this announcement this morning, as we approach the Hills/Knolls football game scheduled at Caruso Stadium. My message, however, is one that holds true for all contests and events, regardless of the school. Unfortunately, several years ago, the athletic contest between Hills and Knolls resulted in conduct unbecoming a Scarlet Knight fan, and we will not tolerate a repeat performance if even by a few. Instead of healthy and spirited competition, we witnessed some disappointing and serious infractions: some students came to the game under the influence of alcohol, resulting in suspension consequences; some students displayed blatant disrespect toward members of the Morris Knolls marching band; and some decided to chant and cheer in a derogatory way rather than to join a chorus of good, clean, spirited support for our athletes and coaches. All of this created an atmosphere of negativity and ill will, certainly not reflective of our character as a high school. We compete with Morris Knolls as our sister school within one district. We are athletic competitors, not enemies. The same is true for all schools we meet competitively. Any student or spectator who intends to exhibit behavior that falls short of the highest standards of conduct should really remain home. Last year, I appealed to our students and fans to re-visit their conduct and their responsibility to uphold our high standards. The response was overwhelmingly positive. I make that appeal once again this year and trust the response shall be positive. None of us can afford to tolerate immature, hurtful, or disrespectful exchanges; and we will not. To ensure an atmosphere of respectful competition, I have instructed game officials, site managers, security personnel, and Mr. Haraka to stop an event if need be, and remove any misguided individual or group from the arena without an option to return. Please do not ever place yourselves in the position of dismantling a reputation that serves us well.

Please know that I am extremely proud to be your Principal and to partner with you on whatever turf we occupy. Let's continue to count on each other and command the kind of personal dignity that puts schools on the map in the most positive of ways. How we represent ourselves is how we represent Morris Hills High School. We find no joy in consequencing poor behavior. Rather, we want to celebrate spirited and appropriate behavior. Let's join the chanting for that.

In the Spirit of Partnership,
Todd M. Toriello, Ed.D
Principal