

Dear Swanson Band, and Orchestra Families,

I hope that this letter finds you all safe and sound, surrounded by your loved ones. As I write this, our concept of normal seems to be changing by the minute due to the global Corona Virus crisis. I know that for all of us, the safety of our children is paramount. The Arlington Public Schools have had to make some difficult decisions in the last few days. As a result of these decisions, it is with a heavy heart that I must inform you that we have had to cancel both of our music department trips this year.

We are working with all entities involved (Charter Buses, Hotels, Music Festival personnel, etc...) in regard to refund possibilities. While we are certainly hoping to receive some refund, I think we should also consider the plight of the people that work in these services to make our music trip opportunities a reality. Their families are dependent upon them to bring home a paycheck in these difficult times. Obviously, this is happening to schools nationwide. The domino effect of virtually every school in the country cancelling their trips and receiving refunds could have a catastrophic impact on the lives of these workers. I trust that our Swanson Music Department parents will be patient, and compassionate as we work through this process.

As we navigate these uncharted waters, I ask that we all take a step back and look at the big picture. The well-being of my family, my students, their families, and my colleagues is foremost on my mind at the moment. I have no doubt it is the same with you all.

In regard to distance learning, Mr. Hartman, and I will do our best to provide meaningful opportunities for our students to continue their musical journey. All students should have activated their band or orchestra classes on "Canvas" by now. If any student has not activated their Canvas Band/Orchestra class yet, please make sure they do so immediately. We will be posting musical assignments and activities on a daily basis, so that when we have the opportunity to return to Swanson, we will be in shape to pick up right where we left off in preparation for our Spring concerts.

The next few weeks will be challenging to say the least. On a personal level, I will miss working with our outstanding young musicians in preparation for our Spring performances. Please take care of yourselves, and each other, until we are able to gather again as a unified music department.

With warm regards, -Paul (AKA Mr. Norris)

P. S. As I was drafting this letter, I received an email stating that our district solo & ensemble festival in April has been cancelled. Full refunds of entry fees will be made.