

Santa Fe Trail High School
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September 30, 2020

Mr. Lentz and Mr. Graham,

It is with great sadness that I write this letter to inform you of my intended retirement at the end of the 2021 school year.

I started my career at Santa Fe Trail in 1995 as a para educator. For most of my adult life I was mostly a mom with four children and eventually three step-daughters. But when my youngest son was a sophomore at Santa Fe Trail there was an opening for a para educator. I applied for the job thinking this would be a good way to stay in touch with what was going on in my son's life. For the next three years I was content with my job, but when he graduated in 1998, I realized I would be an empty nester for the first time in 37 years. So, at 53 years old, I began to think about the rest of my life. I began to dream of having my own classroom, but knew it would be a long road to achieve that dream.

Before I started college classes, I asked Brady Anshutz, who I had been a para for, if it was silly to start college at my age. He told me that education is something no one can ever take from you, and it's never too late to get an education.

For the next two years, I was a para during the day and an Allen County student in the evening. In two years, armed with my Associates Degree, I resigned my para job and became a student at Washburn University. I still couldn't believe I was actually doing this. The next two years whizzed by, and in 2002 I received my Bachelor of Education in English, thanks to a wonderful husband who put up with erratic meals and a wife who studied all the time. But, as a man with several degrees, he knew the value and importance of an education.

I was fortunate to student-teach at Santa Fe Trail. That semester I taught one of my grandchildren senior English. Over the last 19 years I have had the joy of teaching seven other of my grandchildren. For years, I promised the youngest grandchild, Theron, that I would stay until I taught him freshman English. That was last year, so I completed that goal.

I've also been a cheerleader sponsor for many years. I'll always remember cheer camp at my house with sleepovers and swim parties. Again, my husband never complained about being chauffeur to a van load of bubbly, talkative teenage cheerleaders.

One of my favorite parts of teaching has been being an assistant for the plays and musicals at Santa Fe Trail. I was an assistant for the musical when my son was in the cast in 1997, and I have been there when all four of his children were in both plays and musicals. I would say being a part of those extracurricular activities has been an amazing joy for me.

This has been a great life. I didn't want to teach anyplace else and I'm thankful I've had this opportunity. I've made amazing friends in the teaching staff and I will miss them greatly. But mostly, I'll miss the students. Nearly every day one of them asks me, "Mrs. Hoffsommer, how's your day been?" I always respond with, "Just wonderful." And I mean that.

Never did I think when I began this journey that I would still be teaching at 75, but I wouldn't change it for the world. For the last 10 years, many of my friends have asked me why I still teach when I could be retired and enjoying life. They just don't get it. I am enjoying life. I'm doing what I love. And I always tell people that it's never too late to get an education.

So, it is with heavy heart that I submit this letter to notify you of my retirement in 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Hoffsommer". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Karen Hoffsommer