

April 25, 2020

Dear Fourth Grade Class of 2020,

As I write this letter, I am preparing to pack up your lockers and send home the last work I have for you this year. The hallways and classrooms are empty. I can sit at my rocking chair, but I don't have your smiling faces sitting at my feet. I'm thinking of the days we have laughed and cried together. My heart swells with pride when I think of how much you have grown this year. I feel confident that you have learned all you needed from the Texas list of things to know.

However, there is one Texas story I didn't get to tell you that I think is very important, so I'm going to tell you a short version in this letter. There is a lesson that I think applies to you maybe more than any class I have ever taught. It is the story of the Galveston Hurricane of 1900.

Many say that the Galveston Hurricane of 1900 is the worst natural disaster to ever happen in the United States. This hurricane occurred before the weather tools we have today were invented. Today, people usually have days to prepare for a hurricane and leave the area. When this storm hit on September 8, 1900, there was little warning. So many people died that there isn't even an accurate count. All we know is that between 6,000 and 12,000 people died. The city was almost completely destroyed. It was so bad that people said Galveston should be abandoned. There was no way that it could be cleaned up and rebuilt. It was too hard. Impossible.

In Texas, we often say, "If you want something done, tell a Texan they can't do it." The people of Galveston didn't believe it was impossible. They got right to work. They even decided to build an enormous sea wall to protect the island from future hurricanes. People said that it couldn't be done, but they did it anyway.

Each of you have bravely faced challenges this year as well. You have taken every hard thing you had to learn this year at school and mastered it. You faced friendship challenges on the playground and overcame them. Perhaps you had challenges outside of school that you never shared with us, but I have no doubt you can overcome those. Today, like me, you may be sad over the way school is ending. Things aren't going as planned. Maybe you're worried about what the future holds. This entire pandemic is a challenge. Here's the thing though, just like the people of Galveston were able to overcome their obstacles, so will you. Think about all of the Texans you have learned about. I can't think of a single story where their lives were easy, yet they accomplished so much.

I am so proud of who you are right now, and I can't wait to see how you overcome the challenges you are facing both now and in the future. You will do great things. Don't give up. Work hard. Most of all, remember how very much I love you.

