

January 15, 2021

Highland CUSD 5 Parents and Staff,

The first 5-day week after Christmas break is finally coming to an end☺ The end of every week seems to be a celebration of some sort, perhaps it's the weekend arriving or perhaps simply because what seemed like an insurmountable challenge has become a reality. This particular week has been increasingly difficult due to the amount of political strife that has occupied our state and nation. Significant events are taking place that concern me a great deal. Highland Schools continue to believe in respect for all individuals and will continue to communicate with parents and our community about the content and process of the education of our students. We desire to earn the confidence of our stakeholders that children will leave our schools ready for the next step of life, whether it be into college or career.

In an attempt to refine and simplify my methods of communication with our stakeholders, I would like to encourage all individuals receiving this message and desiring to continue receiving my weekly updates to download our Highland School District App. The App is available through the apple store or on android devices. I was made aware that the apple store may have some issues right now with the app, but these issues are being worked out. The messages will continue to be sent through the app, email, text, and on the district website under the Live Feed. Throughout the winter months all news regarding school cancellations will also be available through these avenues as well as major television stations as has been done in the past.

In the update last week, I mentioned efforts to plan and coordinate distribution of vaccines to individuals in the 1B priority group. This group includes individuals 65 and older as well as school personnel considered essential employees. In Madison County there are over 15,000 individuals included in this group. We have been told that the process will be slow and potentially several weeks away. Educators will likely be prioritized by age within this group. I have a great deal of concern about the impact this process will have on our staffing during this period of time. Because the vaccine will require two doses, this will impact staffing twice over the next several months. This information may be premature since discussions are ongoing about the process. I will continue to provide updates as we are informed.

The district calendar committee will be meeting next week to discuss the 2021-2022 school calendar. I am hopeful that a calendar will be ready for approval at the Monday, January 25 board meeting. Once approved, the calendar will be made public through our district website. I will send a link to view the board meeting at a later date.

Our COVID numbers for this week: Highland Primary reported 5 staff quarantines due to both in school and outside school exposures, 1 student positive resulting in 4 quarantines, 1 additional presumptive positive resulting in 5 additional quarantines, 15 students in quarantine due to outside exposures. Alhambra Primary reported zero additional positives or quarantines. Highland Elementary reported 2 student positives resulting in 10 student quarantines, zero staff positives or quarantines. Grantfork Elementary reported zero additional positives or quarantines, but 2 students showing symptoms and staying home. Highland Middle School reported 5 staff in quarantine or awaiting test results, 4 student

positives resulting in 64 quarantines and 2 students in quarantine due to outside exposures. Highland High School reported 2 student positives resulting in 24 student quarantines.

Please remember that school will not be in session on Monday in observance of Martin Luther King Day. It's Friday so "Let it Snow, Let it Snow...". Have a wonderful 3-day weekend and enjoy the nice cold weather!

Sincerely,

Michael S. Sutton, Superintendent