

February 19, 2021

Highland CUSD No. 5 Parents and Staff,

Good afternoon,

It seems really strange to say this has been a short week when it really seems to be a week that won't end for me. I like when the decision to cancel school for snow is easy like say Tuesday. Wednesday was a little more difficult, but fairly obvious. Now Thursday was much more difficult. Yes, I was up at 4 a.m. and looking at the weather. It was a dusting at best and the radar seem to show things clearing up, but then between 4 a.m. and 5 a.m. some fairly significant snow fell (after I had gone back to bed fyi) making things pretty messy for the morning commute.

For the individual who left a message that I ruined their day, mine wasn't so fun either. These types of situations happen from time to time when the forecast really doesn't reflect what happens. Once it happens, I can only say "Suck it up buttercup". I say that jokingly, but what I want you to know is that our buildings and grounds folks really stepped up for us and worked their tails off to get the parking lots and sidewalks ready for staff and kids. Our bus drivers did a wonderful job taking their time on routes to ensure kids were safe. It is easy to find something to complain about in a critical time like that, but I didn't hear too many complaints, mostly compliments actually. I think the COVID pandemic has certainly brought to light just how much the Highland School District means to our students, parents, community and staff and vice versa. This is just another proud moment☺

Enough about that, a couple of weeks ago I provided some information on the proposed Illinois teaching standards and provided some links. I continue to be asked about the progress of those standards by some concerned staff and parents. To close the loop for now, I would like to provide you a link to an announcement sent out this week from the Illinois State Board of Education: [ISBE Weekly Message](#)

One very exciting announcement that I failed to mention in last week's update was the return of many athletics and activities due to the region's change in phases. It is unbelievable how this has impacted our student athletes, parents, coaches and staff in a positive way. However, all is not necessarily rosy. IHSA has worked with the Illinois Department of Public Health to create guidance for the return of athletics. Again, these are rules created for us, not by us☺ Some of the rules are particularly difficult to accept, like the spectator capacity limits, currently 50 under certain conditions (even outside events). In some cases, spectators are not allowed at all. Many districts have taken different approaches.

I can't imagine having a child participating in an activity or athletic contest and being told I can't attend. Actually, I can imagine it because I have lived it, having a senior athlete this year. I have been asked by parents what the ramifications are for not obeying the rules. Let me just say, this puts our administrators in a very difficult position. We have attempted to follow the guidelines since Day 1 so that we can keep kids in school.

If you are a parent put in a difficult situation, my hopes are that your child's coach and/or athletic director is communicating clearly what the expectations are. If the expectations are not followed, please do not judge our administrators, coaches, and athletic directors when they are forced to take action to enforce the rules. We are extremely happy that kids are able to return to the activities they

love and we will not do anything to jeopardize their ability to do so. Of course, the rules change from time to time and we will adjust accordingly.

COVID Numbers for the week: Highland Primary reported 1 positive staff resulting in 11 quarantines, 18 students and 3 staff on quarantine due to exposure within and outside of the building. Alhambra Primary reported 1 student quarantine due to outside exposure. Highland Elementary reported 1 positive staff member resulting in 3 quarantined staff and 6 students. Grantfork Elementary reported 1 student in quarantine due to outside exposure. Highland Middle School reported 2 students quarantined due to outside exposure. Highland High School reported zero cases this week.

Let me remind you that we have a Board of Education meeting on Monday, February 22, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. If you wish to view the live stream, here is the link to the meeting: [Link to Board Meeting](#) The next several weeks are full 5-day weeks so it should be a grind over the next couple of months. Meet the challenge with enthusiasm and excitement☺ Have a wonderful weekend!

Sincerely,

Michael S. Sutton, Superintendent