

September 9, 2021

Highland CUSD No. 5 Parents and Staff,

I want to start this week's update by thanking our first responders and military personnel. This weekend will mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the terror attacks on our country that took the lives of thousands of Americans and instigated a long drawn out war on terror. To all of you who have served, Thank You. In a couple of months, we will be celebrating Veteran's Day. Each year, I attend a number of ceremonies around our district celebrating the service of our heroes and continue to be amazed at the sincerity of our students and staff in honoring them. I am hopeful that we are able to conduct all of those activities this year just as we have in the past provided we can do them safely for our honored guests.

You are receiving this update a day early this week due to a conflict I have in writing you tomorrow. I thought about creating an update and sending it tomorrow, but so much changes from day to day that it is better I send it a day early.

Last week I reported on the latest executive order mandating vaccines/tests for all school staff. We are still waiting for rules/guidance on the executive order to be issued. Once the rules/guidance are available, we will begin discussions on what courses of action are available. My greatest concern is making sure in-person learning is not impacted by any action taken by the district. I will continue to send updates regarding this mandate as we proceed through this latest challenge.

We are not yet a month into the school year, but it appears students and staff are settled in with this year's look. Each of the last couple of years have presented a number of changes for our daily schedules and procedures due to COVID, but everyone has remained resilient and committed to making things work. Our teachers have adapted to new classroom procedures and schedules, our students have followed all protocols allowing us to be here safely, and our parents have supported our decisions even though they sometimes do not agree. It has been a true team effort to get to where we are today. The challenges are going to keep coming so we need to work together to ensure our students have the experience that they deserve at a time in their lives that is so important.

COVID Numbers Update: Highland Primary reported 3 student positives and 12 student quarantines related to outside exposure. Alhambra Primary reported 1 student positive and 1 student quarantine awaiting test results from an outside exposure. Highland Elementary reported 5 student positives and 11 new student quarantines resulting from outside exposure. Grantfork Elementary reported 2 student quarantines due to outside exposure. Highland Middle School reported 4 student positives and 6 student quarantines due to outside exposures. Highland High School reported 9 student positives, 2 student presumptive positives, 1 student quarantine, and 1 staff positive.

We are seeing an uptick in the number of cases right now, but fortunately they are feeling some symptoms over a couple of days and making quick recoveries. Each time a positive case is identified many hours are put into reviewing potential close contacts and sometimes communicating at length with families. Our school nurses have been fantastic in talking with parents, teachers, and students about the cases and safe protocols. They have to review schedules, seating charts, classroom procedures, and other information to ensure a continued safe school environment. They deserve a huge KUDOS for their efforts!

That is enough for this week's update. The weather has been beautiful the last couple of days with cool temperatures in the morning and warm sunshine in the afternoons. I wish you all the very best in getting out and enjoying it. I expect next week's update to be the normal Friday afternoon. Have a great rest of your week!

Sincerely,

Michael S. Sutton, Superintendent