

October 22, 2021

Highland CUSD No. 5 Parents and Staff,

With the exception of Spring and Summer, Fall is my favorite season☺ Now that we are closing in on the end of October, I really appreciate the cooler temperatures and shorter days. I can't say that I am excited about what comes next, but hopefully we will have a mild winter. I didn't send an update last week and I would like to share a little about that.

Every October it seems I have the pleasure of dealing with severe sinus infections and generally I end up at the doctor to get my annual shot for the infection. I usually feel 100% better within hours after getting the shot as is exactly what happened about a week and a half ago. The only difference this year is the doctor recommended I get tested for COVID due to the severe symptoms I showed. Since I felt better after the shot, I was very surprised to have tested positive for COVID the next day and as a result received an extra week's vacation (I would have much preferred to be at work). Other than the severe cough I developed and the accompanying body aches due to the heavy coughing I survived quite well. I am back 100% and feel great to be pecking away on the keyboard this beautiful Friday morning.

My experience last week reminded me of the stress and added work students and staff experience when they are away from school. Most teachers are very aware that missing days of school often create more work than if they were at school. This motivates most to miss as few days as possible. The same goes for students when they miss several days of school. I would like to emphasize the importance of being at school/work throughout the school year. We know that periodically staff and families have opportunities to get away during the school year and we realize that many learning opportunities come during these experiences. We fully support family vacations and learning opportunities. I would encourage families and staff to make every effort to plan travel opportunities to minimize absences at school as much as possible. We obviously value school attendance very highly exemplified by our efforts for the last 18 months to stay in-person.

Related to that issue, we are considering making November 12 a "not in session" day on the school calendar. Thursday, November 11 is Veteran's Day and many staff and families have expressed the possibility of being gone on Friday to extend the weekend to 4 days. With our ongoing challenges to find substitutes, it would be difficult to make any sort of quality instructional day possible. We have a regular board meeting on Monday night and I will recommend we adjust the calendar as suggested. The last day of school would still be projected for May 31, but only 6 emergency days would be included in the calendar for this year. If we do not use any snow days, the last day of school would be 6 days prior to May 31. I wish our calendar committee (led by me) would have foreseen this issue when we created the calendar, but we did not. I hope that we are providing enough advance notice to not cause any major issues for our families. Thank you for your understanding.

The regular school board meeting will begin on Monday, October 25 at 6:00 p.m. Our meetings are open to the public and have seating available. If you prefer to view the board meeting via YouTube, it is still available using this link: <https://youtu.be/X4L342M0w1I>

COVID numbers for the week as reported from each building and include only numbers from this week: Highland Primary reported zero new COVID positives and 1 new student quarantine related to outside exposure. Alhambra Primary reported zero new cases. Highland Elementary reported 2 new student quarantines due to outside exposure. Grantfork Elementary reported zero new cases. Highland Middle School reported zero new cases and zero new quarantines. Highland High School reported zero new cases and zero new quarantines.

The month of October has been very exciting with Highland High School homecoming activities and several field trips and activities occurring throughout the district. We have a group of 8th and 9th graders leaving today for a trip to Washington D.C. This was a combined trip since the 8th grade trip was cancelled last year due to COVID. It is marvelous to see kids doing the activities we have not been able to provide for them during the pandemic. I look forward to the days of debating which nightly activity I am going to attend each evening, especially in December with Christmas programs 4-5 nights each week.

Thank you to all of our students, parents, community members, Board members, teachers and staff for making Highland CUSD No. 5 the best school district around. We are all fortunate to work together every day to fulfill our mission to “Ignite Bright Future to Build a Better Community”.

Sincerely,

Michael S. Sutton, Superintendent