

February 11, 2022

Highland CUSD No. 5 Parents and Staff,

This week's update will hit a couple of crucial points and be brief. We are one week into the transition from required masks to optional masks and I am overwhelmingly happy with the professionalism and cooperation we have seen from our staff and parents. There have been many difficult conversations with families and staff who continue to have elevated concerns over mitigations and hope to continue working with them to create comfort in coming to school.

I received much feedback from parents and staff this week. Some are confused, some are concerned and some are seeing wonderful things come from the transition. We have students and staff who have taken on a whole different personality this week given the option to wear a mask. Teachers have seen increased participation in class, more social interactions taking place between students, and students who feel more confident. On the other hand, we have students who are still confused about whether it is safe to be around friends. We have many supports for all students that need to be available during this transition time and in the future to ensure their social emotional health. We have similar issues with staff who are struggling with health concerns and anxiety moving forward. We will continue to work together and heal together from the effects of nearly 2 years of pandemic life.

The pandemic has caused many challenges directly and indirectly. Some of the issues we now face concern workload issues for our staff. Many families are taking vacations and trying to get away during the school year, understandably so. However, the stress and additional work to plan for and prepare work for several days of missed school is taking its toll. Please have patience with our staff in gathering materials for absences, it takes a lot of work on the front end. We will be discussing how we can make this effort more manageable for our staff moving forward. It is never a good time to take kids out of school for a length of time, but many have not had opportunities to do so over the last couple of years and we get that.

Our COVID numbers for the week: Highland Primary reported 7 new positive students. Alhambra Primary reported zero new positives. Highland Elementary reported 7 new positive students and 1 new positive staff. Grantfork Elementary report 2 new student positives. Highland Middle School reported 3 new positive students and 1 new positive staff. Highland High School reported zero new positive students and 1 new positive staff.

I hope everyone can take some time this weekend to rest and relax after a hard, emotional week. Perhaps the Super Bowl will be as entertaining as the games played over the last couple of weekends have been. Have a great weekend!

Sincerely,

Michael S. Sutton, Superintendent