

June 8, 2022

Highland CUSD No. 5 Parents and Staff,

I hope that everyone has had an opportunity to transition into the summer peacefully and healthy. Last year was a tough one for many and the summer break should be an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and spend some time with family. Our work in the district continues through the summer as we try to fill vacancies, complete facility work, clean classrooms and buildings, and prepare for the year ahead. We have many vacancies in certified staff and non-certified staff. Many opportunities in the custodial department, office positions, and classroom program assistants exist if you have interest in pursuing those opportunities.

We had a stark reminder a few weeks ago about the importance of staying vigilant in our efforts to make our students and staff safe at all times. It was easy during the pandemic to focus on other things. The Uvalde, TX school shooting brought out many emotions and emphasized the need to continue to plan and prepare for senseless acts that could happen in any school district across this great country. I want to ensure that our parents and staff know that we continue to have monthly conversations with our local law enforcement and first responders to put into place plans to PREVENT and PREPARE for unconscionable circumstances that we hope will never occur. Please talk with your children about what is going on at school, social media, their lives and partner with us to keep them safe at all times.

The Uvalde shooting was also a reminder that there are some things that remain in our control. Procedures regarding locking doors and access to buildings remain a high priority when it comes to securing the campuses. Our building administrators met this week to revise our emergency operation plans further to address any new concerns within the buildings. One of the major weaknesses we identified in our facility study is the insecurity at our Lindenthal campus where we have students walking through the parking lot many times during the day to access different programs and classrooms. This should be a reminder of the importance of getting ALL of our PreK through 2nd grade students under one roof. With kids and staff traveling through multiple doors throughout the day, it is very concerning. We will be having conversations to address these concerns to the best of our ability.

Highland Primary is our highest priority in the facility strategic plan and we are attempting to address this by constructing a new primary school to house approximately 650 students ages 3 years to 7 years old under one roof. As you should know by now from my previous mentions, the question is on the ballot for the June 28 election. Information regarding the referendum is on our district website at www.highlandcUSD5.org. There is information about the finances, how the tax rates will remain level due to previous bonds being paid for, location of the new school, timeframes, etc. Please take some time to review the information and let me know if you have questions. I have done a number of presentations throughout the community and welcome the opportunity to discuss our priorities, how it works, and/or any questions pertaining to this matter.

We are also completing projects this summer to create more secure entrances at Alhambra Primary and Grantfork Elementary Schools. These projects are costly, but not so much that a referendum was necessary. We are hopeful the new entrances will provide an added level of security to our most rural

settings. We are very blessed with a community in which many law enforcement professionals reside and offer some additional response should an emergency ever occur within our district.

My tendency is to start looking forward at some things coming up over the next couple of months (like registration), but I will refrain from going there so that you can take some additional time to reflect on the past year and simply enjoy the summer for a little while longer☺ I will take some time to update you on our progress of several projects as summer comes and goes. For now, have a wonderful and healthy summer and enjoy the opportunities all around us to recoup and get fresh for a new year of celebrations, accomplishments, and probably even some challenges☺ Thank you all for another great year and talk to you again soon.

Sincerely,

Michael S. Sutton, Superintendent