

9/25/2020

Good afternoon Highland CUSD No. 5 Parents and Staff,

Six weeks into the school year and the seasons are about to change. It will be interesting to see how things go in the coming months when flu season and COVID collide. Many of the same symptoms will rear their ugly heads making it very difficult to know whether to treat kids per COVID or the flu. We hope the flu takes it easy on us as we maneuver the challenges. Please be cautious and proactive to ensure kids are not coming to school when they do not feel well.

We had a very good week when comparing cases of COVID and quarantines to previous weeks. HHS experienced 1 positive student case this week that resulted in zero quarantines. As has been the case since the beginning of COVID, there have been some students and staff voluntarily quarantine due to not feeling well and/or exposure to an outside positive case. HMS has four students in quarantine due to a student positive exposed from a family member. I am not aware of any positive cases reported this week at the other district schools at the time of this writing.

This is great news at a time when the number of cases in the county appear to be decreasing. It also means that the outlook to maintain our current schedule is strong at this time. I will be providing an update to the Board of Education on Monday night with the numbers and a recommendation to continue the current schedule at all district schools. I know parents need piece of mind to know what school is going to look like in the coming months. If you wish to view the board meeting via YouTube Live, here is the link: https://youtu.be/z132qL_sCas I have stated several times that we desire to keep kids in school until we can't do it any longer. Right now, I believe all students every day continues to be doable.

Our staff's ability to stay healthy will be a driving force. This brings me to another point. We need substitutes who can report to work during times that staff cannot. The last couple of days were the first really difficult days we experienced with the shortage of substitutes. It is not that we had an enormous number of staff absent, we simply do not have enough substitutes. If interested in being a substitute, please contact Dena Henricks at the main office to express your interest. She can be contacted at 654-2106 ext. 1002. A person must have a 2-year degree and submit to a background check to be eligible. The district currently pays \$100 per day for general substitutes, \$110 per day for substitutes with a teaching license, and \$120 per day for retired HCUSD teachers.

Now that I got that plug for substitutes in, let's talk about the in-person versus remote option. The deadline was today to make changes to your student's learning environment option. When I last looked (Thursday), we had 80 requests for changes. 73 of them requested to move from remote to in-person. We are reviewing the impact this will have on in-person numbers and how they are assigned to a teacher. We will attempt to minimally impact class-sizes, especially at the primary and elementary levels. Our protocols will remain the same as this shift occurs.

This is a relatively short update in Week 6, which is good news due to the number of positive cases and quarantines being less than the last couple of weeks. I hope you can get out and enjoy the wonderful weekend weather, it looks to be cooling off some next week. Be careful and be safe!

Sincerely,

Michael S. Sutton, Superintendent