

October 2, 2020

Good afternoon Highland CUSD Parents and Staff,

I can't believe that it is October, but the cooler temperatures confirm that fall is here. Highland CUSD No. 5 continues to bustle with energy throughout the district. Many sports teams are competing and doing very well, I hear excitement about the primary Halloween parade, an outdoor drive-through musical by our HHS students, and many other activities prove that folks are excited about things that have been taken for granted in the past. I encourage you to download the app for Highland Schools called Apptegy, if you haven't already. This is the best way to keep up with great information and exciting news from each of the buildings in the district. There is no cost!

Each week we are able provide in-person learning with students and staff is another great accomplishment. This week was another good week as it pertains to COVID. Certainly, I wish I could report that there were no positive cases and no quarantines throughout the week, but it is not so this week. We had one positive case confirmed at Highland Elementary with four additional students quarantined and one positive case at Highland High School with 15 additional students quarantined. With weekly updates it is easy to get comfortable with the news of additional cases and quarantines. I assure you we are not relaxing or getting comfortable with this fact. I know that with every positive case and/or quarantine, there is a negative impact on a family. Unfortunately, we are living with these consequences to achieve a large positive impact on the daily lives of so many kids who need to experience the social and academic benefits of attending school.

The window for opting into remote or in-person has closed for 2nd quarter and we appreciate the cooperation from all of our parents in making a very tough decision in some cases. We had approximately 135 requests to change learning environments with 17 going from in-person to remote and 118 from remote to in-person. I hope this is a sign that we are being trusted even more to provide a safe environment for your children to attend on a daily basis. I am also not naïve to the fact that some of these kids have been home since March 17th and it is time for them to move out☺ Please sense the humor!

Last week I didn't take the opportunity in my update to remind you about the amazing efforts of so many people. I have repetitively complimented our teaching staff and support staff for their efforts on a daily basis to remain healthy and at school. That remains the case and without them, we would certainly be providing education remotely. Look, I admit that I am the guy that perhaps tears up during hallmark movies. I have admitted before! So when I drive through town and see a line of 8-10 school buses with masked drivers and think about the what they do on a daily basis to get kids to school and home safely, it brings a tear to my eyes. That same is true of our cafeteria staff who have expanded the number of locations to serve meals due to capacity limits in one space. This happens every day we are in session. Thank you.

Parents, thank you as well. I see the lines forming at the primary and elementary schools about 1.5 hours before dismissal. Why? We asked parents to help us by transporting kids to and from school so that buses were not at capacity. This has made a very difficult situation on buses far better. I also

appreciate the kind words for our teachers and staff on those social media sites, I think they call it Facebook. Those things do not go unnoticed, so thank you.

By the way, I also want to thank you for reading my weekly updates. Last week I included an advertisement about our need for substitutes. We had ten responses from folks signing up to sub in our schools. This is fantastic and certainly helps the district as we move closer to flu season and the challenges that will surely surface. We can use even more substitutes, even if certain days of the week do not work in your schedule. If interested, please contact Dena Henricks at 654-2106 ext. 1002 or email dhenricks@highlandcUSD5.org.

Please remember that no school will be in session on Friday, October 9 due to a Teacher's Institute and Monday, October 12 due to Columbus Day. Tuesday, October 13 will be the start of week 9 and second quarter! Let's not get too far ahead though, next week is week 8 so let's remember to mask up, social distance as much as possible, wash your hands often, and stay home if you experience any symptoms of COVID. Have a wonderful weekend and be safe!

Sincerely,

Michael S. Sutton, Superintendent