

October 23, 2020

Highland CUSD No. 5 Parents and Staff,

This was a short week with only three days of instruction due to parent/teacher conferences. In light of the short week, I will keep this week's update short. I actually enjoy time during parent/teacher conferences because it gives me an opportunity to get out and visit some of our staff one on one. I am so proud of our staff and the enthusiasm that shows when I talk with them. They are genuinely happy to be in the lives of our students on a daily basis. It should be clear at this point that in-person instruction is our preferred method moving forward. Unless something changes in the guidance or the severity of the illnesses increase, we will be staying with the current schedule.

I have received a number of questions regarding a full day schedule for HMS and HHS. With the current guidelines, we cannot staff or manage providing lunch for students during the middle of a school day for those schools. We also have an entirely different method of providing remote instruction at HMS and HHS as compared to our primary and elementary schools. As long as remote instruction is required and the current group limitations are in place, the shortened schedule at HMS and HHS is our only option. I always appreciate concerns and recommendations from our stakeholders and felt this topic needed to be clarified.

Regarding our experiences this week, we had one positive student case reported at Highland Elementary resulting in five quarantined students. We also have one teacher from Highland Elementary on quarantine from an outside exposure. We had one positive student case reported at Highland Middle School resulting in zero quarantines. We had 2 positive student cases at Highland High School resulting in 8 quarantine students. We also just received a report of an additional presumed positive at HHS and contact tracing is currently being done. I am not aware of any other positive cases in the district for this week. It has been reported that spiking has started to occur in many places in the United States so we will keep our eye on any additional mitigation strategies that might be pushed down to the schools.

I actually had the luxury of attending an in-person meeting of many superintendents this week and heard a number of stories regarding their district challenges with different aspects of COVID and different learning environments. We are very fortunate to have support of our staff and community and to have experienced 10 weeks of in-person instruction. As I do each week, I need to stress the importance of maintaining our focus on mitigation strategies. Please remind your child to wear a mask when coming to school in the morning. Some students have forgotten them or have broken bands preventing them from being worn appropriately. We still have thousands of masks if a family is in need of spares. In addition, social distancing to the extent possible, washing hands frequently, and staying home when sick continues to be our other focus areas.

I hope your weekend is off to a great start. Enjoy the time with family, but most importantly stay safe. Have a great weekend!

Sincerely,

Michael S. Sutton, Superintendent